

# Acts Highlights - Part 9

by George Verwer

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*The book of Acts highlights the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to the entire Roman Empire, emphasizing the importance of witness, prayer, the local church, and the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 32:00

**Scripture:** Isaiah 6:9, Matthew 6:33, Acts 26:15, Acts 28:23

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the highlights and key messages found in the book of Acts. They emphasize the importance of witness and world missions, as well as the need for mobility, flexibility, and adaptability in spreading the gospel. The speaker also highlights the providence of God and the role of travel in reaching the world with the message of Christ. They mention the trials and journeys of the apostle Paul, particularly his defense of himself and his testimony of encountering the resurrected Lord Jesus. The sermon concludes by encouraging listeners to reflect on these highlights and consider any necessary changes in their own lives based on the teachings of Acts.

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## Transcript

God bless you. Welcome to our final session on this highlights in the book of Acts. We're looking at chapters 25 right through to 28.

I remember once in a church announcing that I was going to speak from Acts 29 and seeing everybody open their Bibles looking for Acts 29, I think including the pastor, but of course there is no Acts 29, which they quickly learned, but we are Acts 29. We have, we as the Lord's servants today, we continue the same Holy Spirit who is the key person in the book of Acts continues working, including right there in your own Zion fellowship and other fellowships. I doubt if there's anyone that has seen all nine of this series, but if you have, you can get a reward.

You can get a copy of Peter Maiden's book, Building on the Rock. Peter Maiden during this time and this series has gone to be with the Lord. And I was at his very small family funeral on Monday, way up north, my first journey in five months due to the lockdown.

And it was a very, very special time, especially to meet up with so many grandchildren. And of course, I've started rereading this book that I, on the cover when it first published said, this has been the most important message in my life. And of course, it's the message of the crucified life.

It's the message of our identity in Christ. So if you've done all, these are hard to get actually, but if you've done all nine in the series, you can email me your address and I'll send you this beautiful copy of his book and also his book on discipleship. He wrote one of the very best books on discipleship called Discipleship Matters.

Many of you may have the earlier book, which we published in India and gets distributed more widely just called Discipleship. But this is a more recent. His latest book, which is just released this week, you can get them.

And I can also send you the tribute to Peter Maiden where they offer this book, I think on a special basis and it's called Radical Gratitude. So again, thank you for sticking with us. And in this final session, I really want to review the highlights that we've covered in these eight and now nine sessions.

So we're only going to look very briefly at these chapters. They're mainly about the trial, the journeys, and of course, Paul arriving there in Rome. And I guess one of the highlights is when Paul is defending himself in chapter 26, the 15th verse.

And he shares again his testimony. This is, I think, a third time he has shared his testimony to make it clear that he has had this first direct contact with the resurrected Lord Jesus. And so the Lord Jesus speaks in my Bible.

This is just such a powerful passage right from the Lord himself. I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Now stand up, for I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and my witness, as my servant and my witness.

And that is such an important challenge for us that we are his servant, but we also are his witness. And I apologize for the telephone ringing. You are to tell the world, referring to the whole world, you're to tell the world about this experience and about other times I will appear to you.

And I will protect you from both your own people and the Gentiles too. Yes, I'm going to send you to the Gentiles to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. They are very strong words.

And in these days, when we talk about Satan, some people just, they just laugh or make fun of us. But the Lord Jesus himself clearly spoke about Satan and his opposition. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people who are set apart by faith in me.

He's addressing, of course, King Agrippa. And later on, Agrippa interrupted him and said, do you think you can make a Christian, make me a Christian so quickly? And Paul replied, verse 29, whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains. And it just, again, shows the importance of our own testimony and the importance of being willing to speak out what God has done in our life.

And here Paul is so boldly in front of these, in the King, speaking out. And of course, those next verses are also very important. Picking up at verse 25, Paul replied, whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except these chains.

Then the King, the governor, Bernice, which is his wife, and all the others stood and left. And they talked it over and they agreed. This man hasn't done anything worthy of death or imprisonment.

And Agrippus said to Festus, he could be set free, but he has appealed to Caesar. Very interesting. And Paul, in order to being kept from a previous attack, maybe imprisonment, of course, said that he was a Roman citizen.

And now because of that. So that's often true in life, something that one moment is very positive. In another moment, of course, it seems to get us in trouble.

But I don't think Paul can thought this way because he had already sensed from the Lord that he was going to go to Rome. I don't think he expected to go in prison. And of course, in chapter 27, we read about the storm.

We read about the shipwreck. It's all very interesting reading. We don't have time to go through this long section and still give you this little summary statement I want to give.

But it's important to know that again, the Book of Acts is preparing us for the epistles of the Apostle Paul, which are such basic foundational and ethical teaching for all of us. Also, we can only get a full picture of Paul and his convictions by studying chapters like Galatians 2, Galatians 4, I was studying them this morning. Actually, they're both referred to in Peter Maiden's book where he talks about how because of his own background, he was performance oriented.

In other words, he would give out tracks in the street or he'd stay at the night of prayer. He talks about those things because he thought that would get approval. And of course, he grew up in an environment where he constantly was doing things to get approval, quite courageous for him to write about that.

And it's somewhat the theme of my new book that I'm in the middle of working on, Toxic Perfectionism. I could send you the first chapter. So we have this information about Paul, we don't have time to go into it, including his arrival in Rome, his having a place to stay, God providing you a place to stay, and opening the door to share his faith.

And the Book of later on, the Book of Luke, probably was written with the Romans in mind, a Roman leader who wanted more information about the faith. And I think I touched on that in the beginning of our lecture. I'd like to read verse 23 in chapter 28.

So a time was set, and on that day, large number of people came to Paul's house. He told them about the kingdom of God, and taught them about Jesus from the scriptures. Of course, he didn't have a New Testament.

So he's referring to the Jesus that's prophesied in the Old Testament. It says that very clearly, from the five books of Moses, and the books of the prophets, he began lecturing in the morning, and went on to the evening, talk about long times of ministry. Some believed, and some didn't.

But after that, they had argued back and forth among themselves. They left with a final word for Paul. The Holy Spirit was right.

When he said to our ancestors, through Isaiah the prophet, go and say to my people, you will hear my words, but you will not understand. You will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning. For the hearts of these people are hardened.

Their ears cannot hear. They have closed their eyes. Their eyes cannot see.

Their ears cannot hear. And their hearts cannot understand. And they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.

And so I went to you to realize this salvation from God is available to the Gentiles, and they will accept it. For the next two years, Paul lived in his own rented house. He welcomed all who visited him, proclaiming the kingdom of God with all boldness, and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And no one tried to stop him. So there, he had more freedom in Rome to actually share his faith. I hope you have read the whole text as we've gone through this series.

And maybe after going through this series, you can read it again. I listen to it also by audio, which I find so helpful. And of course, it's a great way also to redeem the time.

Now looking back, right back to chapter one, I just want us to do a summary of what I believe the Holy Spirit has been trying to say to us through his word. And it's actually 16 different highlights. There's at least 16 different highlights that we've looked at in the book of Acts.

And let's just refresh our memories and think of these things and ask ourselves, have I made any change in this area in the light of what I have seen here and read and listened to in the book of Acts? Of course, number one, witness at world missions, right there in Acts 1.8, the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth. Number two, prayer and prayer meetings. Remember right there in the first chapter, there was suddenly a prayer gathering.

And remember later on, Peter was in prison, but the church gathered together praying. He went to the house after he was released in an amazing way. And he found people gathered praying.

And then the very next chapter, five men were praying and the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Barnabas. And then number three, the local church. We've seen the establishment of the local church, the beautiful picture of the church in Jerusalem.

We've seen the appointing of elders. And it does seem that the book of Acts emphasizes more plural leadership, elder leadership than it does what we have in many churches today. Often one person is a senior pastor with tremendous authority.

One well-known Bible teacher is very strong on the authority of the pastor. And then we have churches that have priests. And of course, this is why I wrote my book, Messiology, because, you know, God works in different people in different ways.

It's 2000 years, but I probably still believe, when possible, there should be a team helping to lead a church. Of course, we saw how some were given those practical responsibilities, like Stephen, so that the elders could give themselves more to the ministry of the word. Of course, he went out preaching and got martyred.

That was one of our more exciting chapters. And we had that beautiful picture that we tried to look at in Acts 13, about the local church. I think we gave seven principles connected with the local church.

And of course, the sending out of Paul and Barnabas. We tried to emphasize that the local church is absolutely crucial in the great work of global missions. Most of our people, all these 50, 60 years in O.M.'s

history, excuse me, have been prayed for and sent out by local churches.

Much more difficult in India, because the local churches so often are struggling just to pay their salary. And it was not a custom to send out missionaries. That has changed over the years.

I celebrate churches in India, where they actually send out workers. And our brother Bhaksin, also over the years, changed and started to send out workers. Otherwise, he would have never embraced so powerfully Operation Mobilization.

And then number four, we saw very clearly in the book of Acts, that in God's work, we will have lots of problems. Things will go wrong. There will be misunderstandings.

We saw the bust up of Paul and Barnabas. And of course, most of the epistles are written trying to correct, Paul is trying to correct and bring people back to the biblical way and the narrow way, especially the book of Galatians, as the legalists, what were called the circumcision party, were trying to drag people back under the law. And Paul in the book of Galatians, actually comes across stronger than he does when he speaks in the book of Acts.

And then of course, number five, the book of Acts has the gospel of the resurrection. And we see that when they preached, they preached the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, that he had risen from the dead, which was a stumbling block to some, but others came to faith. And number six, we saw a boldness in suffering.

So much in the book of Acts is about suffering, Paul's suffering, Stephen's martyrdom. Peter also suffered in prison and in other ways. And we need this reminder because so often people just want to emphasize the blessing, but we have this theology of suffering that we really all need.

And then number seven, we saw the emphasis on teamwork. Generally, Paul was with the team. Now that team originally from Antioch, Mark ended up leaving, so they had their problems.

Later on, the division between Paul and Barnabas came because Barnabas wanted Mark back and Paul said no, but we certainly saw Timothy brought into the picture. A number of characters as we study the book of Acts were part of the teams that were often with the apostle Paul. And then number eight, we saw the emphasis on what I say, mobility, flexibility, and adaptability.

We see Paul quickly having to adapt at complete changes 40 people said they're not going to eat until Paul is dead. And soon Paul had to make a big change of plans. We see the providence of God operating in page after page.

And we also have this picture that to reach the world with the gospel, we have to be ready for travel. Some people find travel easy. Peter Maiden, who just went to be with the Lord and was my associate for 18 years and was 10 years the international leader of OM.

He didn't particularly like to travel, especially according to his family and preferred to be home. He was a hometown person in Carlisle. The amount of travel he did for preaching and to help in the leadership of OM, which was spread across the world, including visits to the ships, of course, was huge.

Well, the apostle Paul set the pace in terms of travel in God's word. And then number nine, of course, perhaps the most important, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. We see the Holy

Spirit right from chapter one through chapter eight.

And we see the emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit much more later in the epistles. We see the strong emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit. We see the gifting that Paul had.

I don't think everybody has this gifting to see people so wonderfully healed. We'll touch on that in a moment. And then number 10, of course, we see principles of leadership.

And those of you who are leaders in God's work, these 16 points that I'm sharing with you in summary, that they are surely valid in your efforts to be a godly leader. Of course, we need to adjust to the very different day we live in. Just now with this pandemic, suddenly we're not even able to gather into church buildings.

And it's amazing how we've been able to have so much ministry through the internet. So things have changed. People who are, I really believe, biblical and put into practice what we read in the book of Proverbs and many other places using wisdom and common sense, which we so clearly see as we follow Paul in dealing with governors, in dealing with kings, in dealing with very difficult situations on that ship.

Even the wisdom he had on that ship probably saved the lives. And God had spoken to him about that, which is really quite amazing. And then number 11, unity.

We see this strong emphasis on unity and how we long to see the body of Christ united. I don't think, of course, when we're looking at the church in the very first century, it's the same as looking at the church 2,000 years later, when we now have 40 different denominations. And I think it's a false teaching that all these denominations should be all one, all different languages, all different parts of the world.

God's unity is in the midst of great diversity. Even within a local church, if we're realistic and look at the epistles, there are going to be difficulties, there are going to be problems, but we should always have that goal of greater love and unity. Those two things always go together.

I think Peter Maiden's book, *Leadership Matters*, could be a great help. *Discipleship Matters* could be a great help also to anybody who's in leadership, especially in connection with building unity. And then my 12th highlight principle is tied up with this word growth.

We see a number of places that word growth is used. We wanted the Christians to grow. Being born again is just the beginning, and we need to see believers come into maturity.

And that's probably one of the main purposes that we've done this series in the book of Acts, that people could get the word of God into their heart, into their DNA, and grow stronger. Later on in the epistles of the letter to Timothy, be strong in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. So that emphasis is there in the book of Acts.

And then number 12 is the supernatural and healing. It's a lot of healing emphasis, and it's clear that Paul had an unusual anointing, similar to his Savior, not the same. And to presume that you have that same anointing, the apostle Paul could lead you down into a very tragic road.

But God still heals the mystery because often in that area, our prayers don't seem to get answered. And I try to emphasize how it's wrong for people to always feel if a prayer is not answered, that there's something wrong with himself. Some teachers infer that and cause people to carry excess guilt, and even

do very sad things like suicide, because they're just so trapped by the shame of what supposedly they have done.

And then number 14, of course, is baptism. Often people believe and were immediately baptized. Again, that has changed.

Different churches have a different approach to it. And that's why often you find me emphasizing the word mystery, because even groups like the Salvation Army that have been so mightily used to bring many into the kingdom, they don't practice baptism. And again, you have to read my book on messiology, but I certainly believe it's important for people to be baptized.

And I think I shared my own story of how I was baptized in a local church. And then number 15, of course, is messiology, a word I've tried to teach you, which I invented myself. And in the book of Acts, we see a couple of dozen messy situations.

What about Ananias and Sapphira? You can't find anything more messy and heartbreaking than that. And yet, God was working through it, and God was working in the midst of it. And then number 16, the emphasis on grace.

And I was especially, as I said, ministered to rereading Peter Maiden's book, Building on the Rock, which I'm offering to send as a gift for those that have gone through this whole series, which, by the way, is on YouTube. We see the message of grace coming through the book of Acts. But to get the power and the real strong emphasis, you must read the book of Galatians.

So I'm praying that this series on the book of Acts will cause you to get into Galatians, to get into Ephesians, to get into Philippians, to get into the Pauline epistles, to get into what are referred to sometimes as the prison epistles. And verses like Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I, but Christ liveth within me.

The life I now live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. And Paul in the book of Galatians is very, very strong against the law and legalism. And I remember hearing as a young Christian, a great pastor and Bible teacher, Donald Gray Barnhouse preaching, and I had it on a phonograph record.

Some of the first phonograph records, we call them vinyls today, that came out with Bible teaching. I ended up working for that company part-time. I recruited Dale Roton to work with me, and we sold audio Bibles, these great Bible teaching messages on records, on vinyl.

We went door to door. We got other people to sell them. It was one of our little tent making projects.

But Donald Gray Barnhouse's message on grace set the foundation in my life to preach salvation is by grace. It is not by works. And yet so many people today think they're somehow going to get to heaven by good works.

Of course, if we are saved, then there will be fruit as a result of that. And actually, Paul touched on that in one of those final chapters, how this conversion experience, this new life experience must be seen in our lives. He even says this is a proof.

When people see this, it'll be a proof of God's transforming grace. So it isn't a matter of works or grace. It's grace.

But when we are saved by grace, and then we're living daily in a grace-awakened way, which we've also talked about, then there will be that impact. There will be that transformation. Again, in our ministry, we've tried to hit hard against perfectionism.

And I hope I'm able to finish the book on that subject and that many of you will be able to read that. Thank you so much for being with us during these sessions. And I'd like to now have prayer.

Father, we thank you for the book of Acts. We thank you for 28 powerful chapters. We thank you for 16 highlights, 16 life-changing biblical principles.

And Lord, we long with all of our hearts that these principles be functioning in our lives on a day-by-day basis. Lord, we thank you that you know all about us and you love us still. And when we think of the difficulties that the Apostle Paul went through, we think of the martyrdom of Stephen, we think of all the problems that Paul had, and then that church has had.

It helps us, Lord, to be encouraged in the midst of difficulties that we're perhaps struggling with right now and adjusting to so many changes due to this pandemic and everything that's come along with it, especially so many people losing their jobs. Lord, strengthen us as we embrace this New Testament lifestyle, as we embrace this New Testament reality of salvation by grace, as we also look forward to your return. We'll give you all the praise and all the glory in Jesus' name.

Amen. God bless you. I think most of you have my email, [george.verworth@om.org](mailto:george.verworth@om.org), and you can be sure it would be a great blessing to hear from any of you, even if you've only done one.

There's the email address. Even if you've only done one or two sessions, I still would love to hear from you. In reality, you don't hear from many people after ministering like this because people are busy.

We're all on information overload, and this can just be one little step along the road. I understand that, but it's great to hear from people, to be able to send them books, to be able to pray for them. I have a little team that helps me, so I'm not on my own, especially getting all the books out.

So God bless you. Keep on keeping on, and I close with this favorite verse from Corinthians. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Hallelujah. Amen.

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