

# Book of Acts - Short Overview

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon provides an overview of the Book of Acts, emphasizing the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the early church's response to challenges.*

**Duration:** 4:16

**Scripture:** Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:42, Acts 4:29-31, Acts 4:33, Acts 9:1-6

**Topics:** "Overview"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of fervent prayer and bold proclamation of the Word of God in the face of opposition. The story of Peter and John being threatened by the religious establishment and their subsequent prayer for boldness and divine help is highlighted. The speaker emphasizes that the same principles of prayer and proclamation are still relevant for Christians today. The sermon also emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers and producing strong leadership in the early church.

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## Transcript

The book of Acts tells of the birth of the Christian Church and its phenomenal growth as the good news about Jesus was preached throughout the Roman Empire. The book's author is Luke, who used the same investigative procedures for writing his gospel narrative on the life of Christ. Acts can be viewed as the continuation of all that Jesus began to do and teach while here on earth.

After ascending into heaven, he supernaturally empowered his followers to fulfill the great commission of proclaiming the gospel to the whole world and discipling those who put their trust in the Lord. The key to understanding the book of Acts is found in the promise Christ gave the apostles he had chosen to represent him in his absence. Instead of detailed orders on how to carry out their ministry tasks, Jesus simply instructed them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift God had promised his people, which would be the power of the Holy Spirit equipping them for service.

It was this spiritual energy that would enable them to be strong witnesses for Christ in a very hostile first century world. The Holy Spirit's grace produced strong leadership in the early church. Peter, the former fisherman who had failed in so many ways while walking with Christ, now becomes the bold leader Jesus predicted he would be.

We also see Saul of Tarsus change from a violent persecutor of Christians to a divinely equipped preacher named Paul, who repeatedly risks his life in spreading the message of salvation. The seeming impossibility of such drastic, life-altering changes became living reality as the Holy Spirit's supernatural power accompanied the preaching of God's word. The book of Acts tells the story of the early church as it really happened, so we may know the problems that arose from within as well as the continual opposition they faced from without.

But God's grace brought victory as new converts continued by faith in the footsteps of those first added to the church in Jerusalem. These devoted believers gave themselves to the word of God, to fellowship with other believers, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. As the early church held tightly to the Lord, He gave them fresh power and strength to stand firm for Him.

Probably one of the greatest lessons for Christians today from the book of Acts is found in the church's response to the first persecution directed against it. This story is told in chapter 4. After Peter and John are threatened by the Jewish religious establishment and warned not to preach at all about Jesus Christ, they returned to the other believers for a time of fervent prayer to God and asked for divine help. Their petitions are still as important for us to consider today as they were 2,000 years ago.

They first asked for boldness from God to preach His word despite the strong opposition facing them. Then they asked God to stretch out His hand of power on their behalf as they preached and prayed in the name of Jesus. God responded immediately as they were all filled afresh with the Holy Spirit and proceeded to speak the word of God boldly everywhere they went.

All the dilemmas facing the Christian church today can still be resolved by fervent prayer, a bold proclamation of the word of God, and repeated experiences of the Holy Spirit's grace in our lives. Let us listen with our hearts to the book of Acts and its stirring reminder that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Lord is still alive.

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