

## **The Book of Acts**

### **Four Divine Interventions to Activate the Church in Missions**

#### I. Acts 1: the call

- v. 6: The disciples are waiting for the kingdom to be restored to Israel. They still don't understand God's plan
- v. 7-8: The call to be witnesses to the ends of the earth

#### II. God's Four Interventions in Acts

- A. Intervention 1: the persecution of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8)  
The church was getting comfortable in Jerusalem and would have never moved out on its own, so God divinely orchestrated persecution to push them out
- B. Intervention 2: the conversion and appointment of an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9)  
See especially v. 13-16
- C. Intervention 3: God breaking through the defenses in Peter's theology (Acts 10)  
God convinces Peter that Gentiles are now welcomed into the gospel in the same way as Jews (see v. 34-35)  
God frequently works in leaders because leaders set the stage for what happens in the church
- D. Intervention 4: Setting apart Paul and Barnabas for missionary work (Acts 13)  
See especially v. 2

#### III. The centrality of the church in culture

- A. God established the local church to be at the center not at the periphery of human activity
- B. The church must combine practical social concern with preaching of the gospel
  - 1. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the debate over the inerrancy of Scripture split the church into two groups
    - a. one group abandoned the proclamation of the gospel and focused on social concern and meeting practical physical needs
    - b. the other group focused on preaching and teaching the gospel and let go of meeting practical needs
  - 2. Scripture combines these two needs into one gospel
    - a. We must reconcile people to God through preaching of gospel (Mt 28:18ff and Acts 1)
    - b. We also must reconcile people to people ("love your neighbor as yourself")
- C. The church must combine an understanding of salvation by grace with a call to action
  - 1. Ephesians 2:8-9: "saved by grace through faith"
  - 2. Ephesians 2:10: "created in Christ Jesus for good works"
- D. The Church is placed in this world and called to make a difference
  - 1. World Statistics
    - 1.2 billion hungry this year
    - 800 million go to bed hungry each night (300 million are children)
    - Every 3.6 seconds a person dies of starvation
    - 10 million children in the sex industry

- 1 million become prostitutes each year
2. God has placed us in this world to make a difference
  3. "How can I make a difference, I'm just one person?"
    - a. God uses individuals to accomplish his purposes (Jesus, Abraham, Moses, etc)
    - b. Jesus fed over 5,000 people using 5 loaves and 2 fish
    - c. What's needed is an open heart that says, "God, here I am." In God's economy, it's not the superstars but the insignificant people who make the difference.

#### IV. The New Challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- A. There is unprecedented church growth in the southern hemisphere and in Asia
- B. The key today is developing partnerships among churches that provide a foundation for missions. The church in the west can partner with these other churches and each have much to contribute.
- C. Each of us is uniquely gifted and poised to further God's kingdom in our particular part of the world

#### Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Review the four divine interventions God used to push and equip the church for its missionary task in Acts. Describe a time when you've seen God at work in the circumstances of a person's or a community's life to push them out into the world to share the love and truth of Christ.
3. Do you agree with Pastor Adrian that the gospel message must be a holistic message that includes both preaching reconciliation with God through Christ (the vertical) and also demonstrating a reconciliation between people by meeting people's practical, tangible needs (the horizontal)? How did that idea impact you? Which side of the horizontal/vertical spectrum do you tend to fall on generally, and why?
4. Based on an exposition of Ephesians 2:8-10, it was argued that the church must have a holistic message that combines an understanding of salvation "by grace" with a call to do "good works." In your experience how well has the church balanced that message? Where does it tend to make mistakes in that balance?
5. Where might God be tugging on your heart to make a difference at this time in your life?