PREACHING the CHURCH



50 Plus Sermons from the Book of Acts

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by Alger Fitch


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(50+ Sermon Ideas from the Acts)

by

Alger M. Fitch, Jr.

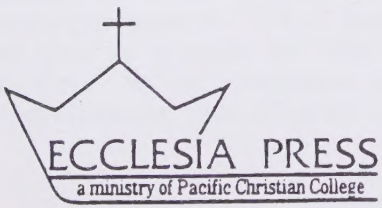
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The church needs to be preached. In this day the world ought to hear of the glorious Christ of the church. It also needs to hear of the glorious church of the Christ. The populace should be challenged to see the church through the eyes of Jesus as "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but...holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

To preach Christ is to preach the church. To proclaim the kingdom is to announce the king. How do we honor the groom, if we do not respect his bride? How are we true to the Head, if we down-grade the body?

John the Baptist announced the kingdom. The twelve and the seventy preached the kingdom. Mark records that "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14-15). If we follow the example of the earliest Christians, we, with Philip, will preach "good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12)

Between the years 1880 and 1920 the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ were the fastest growing religious movement on the face of the earth. It is not hard to find the reason. The members coming out of denominationalism, or straight out of the world, knew the beauty of building congregations patterning their faith and practice after apostolic norms.

Evangelists and elders taught constantly about the beauty of being simply Christian and exclusively following the New Testament teaching.

In some geographical area today a generation has arisen that has little knowledge of the dream to restore New Testament Christianity. Some would have a very limited awareness of the distinctives that marked the "Restoration Movement."

Now is the time to correct the omission. The people are ready to hear sermons that exhalt the church as Jesus planned it. This book is offered as a challenge to you to preach on the church, to use the Book of Acts as a resource and to lift the people's appreciation of the church for which Jesus died.

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At the end of the services you preach, may every member sing:

> "I love Thy kingdom, Lord, The house of Thine abode: The church our blessed Redeemer saved With his own precious blood; I love Thy church, O God! Her walls before Thee stand, Dear as the apple of Thine eye, and graven on Thy hand.
>
> "For her my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend; To her my cares and toils be given, Till toils and cares shall end. Beyond her highest joy, I prize her heavenly ways, Her sweet communion, solemn vow, Her hymns of love and praise."[1]

[1]Timothy Dwight, "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord," E.L. Jorgenson, Compiler, Great Songs of the Church: Number Two (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1949), p. 406.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you recently been to L. A.? I do not mean Los Angeles. I refer to Luke's Acts. The book (Acts of Apostles by Luke) gives answers to questions about "what" to preach, "how" to preach and "why" to preach.

WHAT SHOULD I PREACH?

The teacher and the preacher constantly asks what text or what topic should become his or her next message to the congregation. An examination of the word "preach" in a concordance brings interesting results. Note a few examples:

Paul admonished Timothy to "preach the word" (II Timothy 4:2 cp. Acts 8:4).

Jehovah urged Jonah to enter Nineveh and "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2 cp. Matthew 28:20).

Jesus instructed his disciples to go into all the world and "preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15).

Colossians 1:28 asks that we preach Christ in the words: "whom we proclaim" (cp. Acts 8:35).

I Corinthians 1:18 calls for "the word of the cross" (cp. II Corinthians 4:5).

Ephesians 2:17 records that Jesus "preached peace" to both those near and those far off (cp. Act to:36).

Luke 24:47 commands "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name."

Luke 16:16 quotes Jesus saying, "The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached."

It is time to draw a conclusion. Whatever the text--whatever the topic--whatever the occasion--to preach the word is to preach the gospel. To preach what God bids is to proclaim Christ and his cross and the ensuing peace that comes upon repentance.

Hear the bottom line. To preach the kingdom is the same as to preach Christ. What God hath joined together let no man put assunder.

Another way to arrive at the same conclusion is to listen to the counsel of the Book of Acts. Sample sermons in brief form are found in its 28 chapters.

Condensed as they are, they reveal the burden of the message and the movement of the argument.

If we place Paul's defenses in a category by themselves, we then have remaining eight sermon samples. Three by Peter, three by Paul and two by deacons.

I think that Luke purposefully has given examples of apostlic miracles by Peter and Paul to show them equals. Then he shares with Theophilus that they preached the same gospel. Acts 2,3 and 10 present Peter's messages. Acts 13, 17 and 20 contain Paul's. Acts 7 is a message from Stephen and Acts 7 contains the proclamation of Philip.

Never would these early saints have talked up "Christianity" and talked down "churchianity" as some moderns do. Any reading of "the word" or "the gospel" in the pages of Acts and you are aware of the spokesman's love for Christ and the church. To herald one was to honor the other.

HOW SHOULD I PREACH?

The Bible not only has much to say about "what" is to be proclaimed, it is very revealing on "how" the message ought to be delivered.

All public speakers would be benefitted by this suggestion. Take your Bible and read with care the adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases that describe the delivery of the gospel message.

In one of my classes I have the students make such an examination of the words evaluating how Jesus and His apostles spoke. We then list our conclusions from A to Z with chapter and verse documentation.

Since this book suggests we preach a series from Acts, you may profit from noting not only what the apostles preached but observing how they spoke. Whatever else you find; you, without doubt, will see that they "spoke the word with all boldness" (Acts 5:29 cp. 19:8). Learn the A and the Z and your preaching will improve. "A" stands for audibly. Peter "lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them" (Acts 2:14). With all your courses in speech and your P.A. system, can your elderly members in the rear of the bulding hear your message? I am not pleading with you to conduct divine-healing services,

but I pray the deaf shall hear. Your well-prepared message should not be missed. Project!!!

The "Z" stands for "zealously." Acts 14:1 reads that they "so spake that a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks believed." If that Bible passage says anything to a speaker, it says that it not only matters what you say but how you say it. Faith comes by hearing a speaker that obviously believes what he is saying. Have the truth on fire, not on ice.

The sermon of Acts 2 alone reveals that preaching ought to be Audible (verse 14), Biblical (verse 16, 25), Clear (verse 8), Decisive (verse 21, 37-41) and Evangelical (verses 21-36).

WHY SHOULD I PREACH FROM ACTS?

"That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed" reads Luke 1:4. In these words Luke explained to Theophilus why he was writing his gospel regarding Christ. The same reason is appropriate to his account of the early church (i.e. the Book of Acts).

The congregation has the need to know, and the right to know, "the certainty" regarding Christ and the church. Luke was the traveling compainion of Paul as he established churches across the Roman world. He left us a rich resource for teaching the preaching Christ (the King) and the Church (His kingdom).

In the Acts of Apostles is a mine of information about apostles and their unique place in the province of God. That invaluable data is not slighted when we observe that the teaching-well is deep on other themes also.

Change the Greek word "Apostle" to its Latin equivalent "Missionary" and you lift the curtain on an additional revelation in the book. Search for the acts of apostles in the Acts of Apostles and then scour the document for the acts of missionaries. Read the chapters asking for Paul's methodology and technique. Where would he go? How would he start? What class, if any, would he target? How long would he stay? When would he find them ready for elders or deacons? Did he write letters or revisit them? etc., etc.?

If we look in the Book of Acts for the acts of apostles and the acts of missionaries, can we ask about the acts of elders and deacons? Did the preacher appoint them or did the congregation do the selecting? If either, by what standard was the choosing done? What function did the workers carry out?

What does our New Testament book say about the acts of Saints? How did they worship individually and corporately? How did they live in their society? How did they understand Jesus' great commission regarding what to preach and what response to expect? How did believers show concern for one another? How did they find unity coming from such varied backgrounds? The list of questions is endless, but the answers uncovered are worthy of consideration. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit was guiding the church the way He desired it to go.

Some have suggested that the title Acts of Apostles is too limiting. They propose that we call the writing of Luke, the Acts of the Holy Spirit. I, Personally, am content with the name Acts of Apostles because of the key position Christ gave to those who were chosen to be his spokesmen. However, to search the manuscript for the acts of the Father, or the acts of the Son, or the Acts of the Spirit opens the door to the further spiritual wealth at our finger-tips in this treasure-chest of truth.

If you choose to preach the Church and the Christ from the ancient book, you will find your congregation or Bible class blessed and your personal life enriched beyond measure. Acts begins with the gospel in Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, and ends with the message in Rome, the heart of the world empire. May your investigation and preaching of the book move your church from where it is to where it can be under the guidance of His Spirit.

Outine of the Book of Acts

Key word: "witness

Key verse: Acts 1:8

Introduction: Preparation for witness (1:1-26)

A. Preparation by instruction (1-3)
B. Preparation by promise (4-11)
   1. Of the Holy Spirit (4-8)
   2. Of the return of Christ (9-11)
C. Preparation by prayer (12-14)
D. Preparation by organization (15-26)

I. Witness in Jersalem (2:1-6:7)

A. The first converts (2:1-47)
   1. The coming of the Spirit (1-4)
   2. The miracle of tongues (5-13)
   3. The sermon of Peter (14-36)
   4. The results of the sermon (37-47)
B. The first opposition (3:1-4:31)
   1. The healing of the lame man (3:1-10)
   2. The sermon of Peter (3:11-26)
   3. The imprisonment and threatening (4:1-22)
   4. The church's intercession in prayer (4:23-31)
C. The first discipline (4:32-5:11)
   1. The generosity in benevolence (4:32-37)
   2. The pretense of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)
D. The first presecution (5:12-42)
   1. The church's rapid growth as its cause (12-16)
   2. The imprisonment and deliverance (17-25)
   3. The reimprisonment (26-32)
   4. The defense of Gamliel (33-39)
   5. The disciples freed (40-42)
E. The first organization (6:1-6)
   1. The need felt (1-2)
   2. The need met (3-6)
F. Progress report on Jerusalem (6:7)

II. Witness in Judea-Samaria (6:8-9:31)

A. Stephen (the first martyr and the beginning of dispersion) (6:8-8:3)
   1. The charges (6:8-15)
   2. The defense (7:1-53)
      a. Regarding blaspheming God (1-16)
      b. Regarding blaspheming Moses (17-43)
      c. Regarding blaspheming the temple (44-53)
   3. The martyrdom (7:54-60)
   4. The resulting general persecution (8:1-3)

B. Philip (an example of the results of dispersion) (8:4-40)
   1. The gospel goes to Samaria (4-25)
   2. The gospel reaches an Ethiopian (26-40)

C. Saul (the persecutor turned preacher) (9:1-30)
   1. The Damascus Road experience (1-9)
   2. Ananias baptizes Saul (10-19)
   3. Saul preaches Christ (20-22)
   4. Saul's life is threatened (23-25)
   5. Saul goes to Tarsus (26-30)

D. Progress report on Judas-Samaria-Galilee (9:31)

III. Witness in Phoencia-Syria (9:32-12:24)

A. Peter in Lydda and Sharon (9:32-35)
B. Peter at Joppa (9:36-43)
C. Peter at Caesarea (10:1-11:30)
   1. The man Cornelius (10:1-8)
   2. The messengers from Cornelius (10:9-23)
   3. The meeting of Peter and Cornelius (10:24-33)
   4. The message of Peter to Cornelius (10:34-43)
   5. The miracle of the baptism of the Spirit (10:44-48)
   6. The members from Jerusalem (11:1-18)
   7. The mission to Gentiles (11:19-26)
   8. The ministry to Jewish brethren (11:27-30)

D. Persecution by Herod (12:1-23)
E. Progress report on Phoenicia-Syria (12:24)

IV. Witness in the Uttermost Parts of Cyprus-Galatia (12:25-16:5)

A. The commmissioning of Paul and Barnabas (12:25-16:5)
B. The Cyprus mission and Sergius Paulus (13:4-12)
C. The Galatian mission (13:13-14:28)
   1. In Antioch (13:13-52)
   2. In Iconuim (14:1-7)
   3. In Lystra and Derbe (14:8-18)
   4. The return to Syria (14:19-28)
D. The Jerusalem conference (15:1-16:4)
   1. The problem (15:1-5)
   2. The speeches (15:6-21)
      a. Of Peter (6-11)
      b. Of Paul and Barnabas (12)
      c. Of James (13-21)
   3. The epistle (15:22-6:4)
      a. It's content (15:30-6:4)
      b. It's delivery (15:30-6:4)
E. Progress report on Cyprus-Galatia (16:5)

V. Witness in the Uttermost Parts of Macedonia-Archaia-Asia (16:6-19:20)

A. The Macedonian mission (16:6-40)
   1. In Philippi (16:6-40)
      a. Paul's call (6-10)
      b. Lydia's conversion (11-15)
      c. Jailor's conversion (16-40)
   2. In Thessalonica (17:1-9)
   3. In Beroea (17:10-15)
B. The Achaian mission (17:16-18:17)
   1. In Athens (17:16-34)
      a. The setting (16:21)
      b. The sermon (22-31)
      c. The response (32-34)
   2. In Corinth (18:1-17)
      a. With Aquila (1-4)
      b. With Titus Justus (5-11)
      c. Before Gallio (12-17)
C. The Asian mission (18:18-19:19
   1. The confirmation tour (18:18-23)
   2. Apollos in Ephesus (18:24-28)
   3. Paul with Baptists in Ephesus (19:1-7)
   4. Paul with Tyrannus in Ephesus (19:8-12)
   5. Paul versus Sceva in Ephesus (19:13-19)
D. Progress report on Macedonia-Achaia-Asia (19:20)

VI. Witness in the Uttermost Parts of Italy (19:21-28:31)

A. Paul's plans for Rome (19:21-22)
B. The riot in Ephesus (19:32-41)
C. The confirmation and offering tour (20:1-21:16)
    1. Macedonia and Achaia (21:1-4)
    2. Troas to Miletus (20:5-16)
    3. With the Ephesian elders (21:17-38)
    4. Miletus to Caesarea (21:1-14)
    5. In Jerusalem (21:15-26)
D. Paul's imprisonment (21:27-26:32)
    1. The temple arrest (21:27-36)
    2. Paul's defense before the mob (21:37-22:22)
    3. Paul's defense before the council (22:23-23:11)
    4. Paul's defense before Felix (23:12-24:26)
    5. Paul's defense before Festus (24:27-25:12)
    6. Paul's defense before Agrippa (25:13-26:32)
E. Paul's voyage to Rome (27:1-28:15)
F. Paul in Rome (28:16-19)
G. Progress report on Italy (28:30-31)

Sermon Suggestions

Introduction

Acts 1:1-26

Suggested Incident:
Forty Days of Instruction Before Christ's Ascension

Suggested Scripture: Acts 1:3

Suggested Title:
"I Love Thy Kingdom Lord"

Suggested Outline

I. The Kingdom Is The Church
(Matthew 16:18-19; Hebrews 12:23; I Corinthians 12:12)

II. The Kingdom Is Present
(Mark 9:1; Revelation 1:9; Colossians 1:12-13)

III. The Kingdom Is Spiritual
(John 18:36; 6:15; Philippians 3:20)

IV. The Kingdom Is Planned
(John 6:15; Ephesians 3:10-11; Acts 2:23)

V. The Kingdom Is Conquering
(Revelation 11:15; Daniel 2:44)

Suggested Incident:
The Fifty Days Before Pentecost

Suggested Scripture: Acts 1:1-26

Suggested Title: "The Cost of Pentecost"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

The birthday of the church, like other birthdays, can be remembered but not repeated. But the healthy growth of the early church can be repeated where these pre-pentecost ingredients are found.

I. Prayer (14)

II. Expentancy (6)

III. No Excuse (8)

IV. Teaching (3)

V. Example (13)

VI. Conviction (3)

VII. Organization (15-26)

VIII. Singleness (14)

IX. Testimony (Acts 2-28)

Suggested Incident:
The Organization of the Apostles for Pentecost

Suggested Scripture: Acts 1:15-26

Suggested Title:
"Election of a New Church Treasurer"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Judas was a disciple

B. Judas was an apostle

C. Judas was their treasurer

D. Judas was replaced by Matthias

I. An Apostle Of Christ Had To Be A Witness That Christ Was Resurrected (Acts 1:3, 21-22; 10:40-41; 22:14-16; 26:16; I John 1:1)

II. An Apostle Of Christ Had To Be Selected Directly By Christ (Acts 1:24; Luke 6:13; Galatians 1:1)

III. An Apostle Of Christ Had The Promise Of Inspiration (Acts 1:8; John 14; 26; 16:13; I Corinthians 2:9-10, 13)

IV. An Apostle Of Christ Was Given Miracle Power To Confirm His Words (Acts 2:43; Mark 16:19-20; Hebrews 2:3-4; II Corinthians 12:12; Matthew 10:1-8)

I. Witness in Jersalem

Acts 2:1-6:7

Suggested Incident:
The Founding of the Church in Jerusalem

Suggested Scripture: Acts 2:1-47

Suggested Title:
"How Pentecostal is the Christian Church?"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

"Pentecost" was the celebration of Israel's becoming a theocracy and became the day Christian's celebrate the founding of the church (God's New Covenant Israel).

I. The Christian Church Is Pentecostal in Origin (2:1-13)

II. The Christian Church Is Pentecostal In Message (2:14-36)

III. The Christian Church is Pentecostal In Faith Response (2:37-41)

IV. The Christian Church Is Pentecostal In Worship (2:42-47)

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1-15-84

Suggested Incident:
The First Full-Gospel Sermon and its Response

Suggested Scripture: Acts 2:14-42

Suggested Title:
"Have You Ever Met an Asterisk?"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Standard Publishing's Hymnal "Great Songs of the Church Number Two uses the asterisk to mark verses that can be left out without materially affecting the thought. I question the asterisk in "Take My Life and Let it Be" at the verse "Take My Silver and My Gold."

Often the asterisk is on the 3rd verse.

Compare Acts 2 and the modern asterisk on the 3rd point.

I. Early Believers Preached Christ's Death, Burial And Resurrection (14-36)
(Liberalism puts an asterisk in point three)

II. Early Believers Taught Faith, Repentance And Baptism (37-41)
(Fundamentalism puts an asterisk on point three)

III. Early Believers Worshipped In Apostolic Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking Of Bread And Prayer (42) (Denominationalism puts an asterisk on point three)

Suggested Incident:
Description of the Early Church in Jerusalem

Suggested Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Suggested Title:
"The Undefeatable Fleet of the Lord"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. The church is compared to an army (Ephesians 6:10-17)

B. Making a play on words, we compare it to an unbeatable fleet.

I. Scholarship In The Apostolic Teaching (42)

II. Fellowship In The Christian Community (42)

III. Stewardship In The Meeting Of Need (42)

IV. Worship In The Church's Supper (42)

V. Membership In The Lord's Body (47)

Suggested Incident:
Healing of the Lame Man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple

Suggested Scripture: Acts 3:1-12

Suggested Title: "When Lame Men Walk"

Suggested Outline

I. The Symptom Is Begging
   A. It is more blessed to give than receive
   B. It is more blessed to carry than be carried

II. The Disease Is Sin
   A. Sin cripples us with fear
   B. Sin paralyzes us with hate
   C. Sin makes us beggars

III. The Cure Is Christ
   A. For those at our temple door
   B. In the name of Jesus
   C. By stretching out our hand

Suggested Incident: Peter's Second Sermon

Suggested Scripture: Acts 3:13-26

Suggested Title: "Simon Says 'Thumbs Up'"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Children play a game with "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" or "thumbs wiggle-waggle." The real Simon's sermons are "thumbs up" for Christ.

I. Christ Is The Victor Over Death (13-16)

II. Christ Is The Healer Of Men (16-17)

III. Christ Is The Theme Of Scripture (18)

IV. Christ Is The Savior Of Sinners (19-26)

Suggested Incident:
Admission of Sanhedrin that Apostles are Working Miracles

Suggested Scripture: Acts 4:13-14

Suggested Title: "Men Who Have Been With Jesus"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

The apostles reflected the same traits the Sanhedrin had seen in Jesus.

I. Boldness (Moral Courage) Was Such A Mark (13)

II. Out-Spokenness Was Such A Mark (13)

III. Enablement Was Such A Mark (13)

IV. Transformation Was Such A Mark (14)

Suggested Incident:
Ananias and Sapphira

Suggested Scripture: Acts 5:1-11

Suggested Title: "The Original Sin"

Suggested Outline

I. The Original Purity (4:32-37)
   A. Oneness in their diversity
   B. Generosity in their need

II. The Original Sin (5:1-4)
   A. At the beginning of human history Adam's sin related to greed
   B. At the beginning of church history Ananias' sin related to greed

III. The Original Punishment (5:5-11)
   A. We need reminding that our loving God is just
   B. We need reminding that our forgiving God will punish

Suggested Incident:
Apostles Imprisoned and Released

Suggested Scripture: Acts 5:17-42

Suggested Title: "Angels to the Rescue"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Christ's messengers were ordered to keep still. Angelic messengers brought encouragement to keep talking.

I. If You Are Jailed: Keep Talking (17-25)

II. If You Are Ordered To Silence: Keep Talking (26-32)

III. If You Befriended: Keep Talking (33-39)

IV. If You Are Threatened: Keep Talking (40-42)

Suggested Incident:
The Choice of the Seven "Deacons"

Suggested Scripture: Acts 6:1-7

Suggested Title:
"A Church With Growing Pains"

Suggested Outline

Introduction
Team-work

I. The Problem: Too Much Work For Only A Few Workers (1)

II. The Question: What Is Our Primary Job? (2)

III. The Solution: Divide Up The Work (3-6)
A. Give place to the apostolic recommendation
B. Give place to the apostolic requirements
C. Give place to the congregation's choice

IV. The Result: Continuing Victories (7)
A. It was good for the apostles: the word increased
B. It was good for the church: the murmuring ceased
C. It was good for the community: they obeyed the faith

II. Witness in Judea-Samaria-Galilee
Acts 6:8-9:31

Suggested Incident:
Stephen's Appearance as he Addresses the Jewish Council

Suggested Scripture: Acts 6:15

Suggested Title: "Faces That Glow"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Faces glow when hearts are full

B. Filled deacons can be beacons

I. Stephen Was Full Of The Spirit (3)

II. Stephen Was Full Of Wisdom (3)

III. Stephen Was Full Of Faith (5)

IV. Stephen Was Full Of The Grace (8)

V. Stephen Was Full Of The Power (8)

Suggested Incident:
Stephen's Response to Jewish Accusations

Suggested Scripture: Acts 6:9-7:53

Suggested Title:
"The Objectionable in Christianity"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. The charges against Christians were three
   1. Anti-God (6:11)
   2. Anti-Moses (law) (6:11,13)
   3. Anti-Temple (6:13-14)

B. The defense responds to each of the three
   1. Christian attitude toward God (7:2-19)
   2. Christian attitude toward Moses (7:20-42)
   3. Christian attitude toward the temple (7:43-50)

I. False Charges In The Early Centuries
   A. Treason
   B. Atheism
   C. Anti-social
   D. Lust
   E. Cannibalism
   F. Fansticism

II. False Charges In The Nineteenth Century
   A. Think they are the only Christians
   B. Believe in water regeneration

III. False Charges In The Modern Century
   A. Christiantiy is impractical
   B. Christianity is disturbing
   C. Christianity is narrow
   D. Christianity is demanding
   E. Christianity is imperfect

Suggested Incident:
Martyrdom of Stephen

Suggested Scripture: Acts 7:54-60

Suggested Title:
"How to Look Like an Angel"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

The only death of a disciple of Christ given in detail.

I. Dying Like Jesus (The Result)
   A. Stephen's trial (Acts 6:12)
   B. Stephen's false accusers (Acts 6:13)
   C. Stephen's accusations (Acts 6:11, 13-14)
   D. Stephen's transfiguration (Acts 6:15)
   E. Stephen's criticism of the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:51-53)
   F. Stephen's sight of Christ at God's right hand (Acts 7:55-56)
   G. Stephen's removal from the city (Acts 7:58)
   H. Stephen's judgment of death (Acts 7:58)
   I Stephen's committal of spirit (Acts 7:59)
   J. Stephen's prayer of forgiveness (Acts 7:60)

II. Living Like Jesus (The Cause)
   A. Stephen's works (Acts 6:8)
   B. Stephen's teaching (Acts 6:10)
   C. Stephen's character (Acts 6:5)

Suggested Incident:
Early Persecution in Jerusalem

Suggested Scripture: Acts 8:1-8

Suggested Title:
"The Church's First Missionary Board"

Suggested Outline

I. The First Missionary Board Had An Angry Persecuter As Its Chairman (1-3)

II. The First Missionary Board Had Personal Evangelism As Its Method (4)

III. The First Missionary Board Had Christ As Its Message (4-5, 12)

IV. The First Missionary Board Had Baptisms As Its Result (12-13)

Suggested Incident:
Conversion of Simon the Sorcerer

Suggested Scripture: Acts 8:9-25

Suggested Title:
"Can the Living Communicate with the Dead?"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Communication with the dead is forbidden I Chronicles 10:13-14; Isaiah 9:19-20; Deuteronomy 18:14-15; Luke 16:30-31; I Corinthians 10:21-21

B. Communication with the dead is not needed II Timothy 3:16-17; John 16:13

C. Communication with the spiritually dead is essential

I. The Mortality Of Lost Sinners
Ephesians 2:1; I Timothy 5:6; Revelation 3:1; Luke 15:24; Romans 6:23; 5:12

II. The Message Is Life In Christ
Colossians 2:13; I Corinthians 15:22

III. The Mediums Are Loving Christians
Romans 10:15-17

Suggested Incident:
Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Suggested Scripture: Acts 8:26-40

Suggested Title: "Mirage on the Desert"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Has your picture of the event been accurate or "a mirage?" (Were there only two people? Was the Eunuch driving? Did the chariot have wheels? Did the "desert" have water?)

I. God's Interest In Individuals Is No Mirage
   A. Note the angel (26)
   B. Note the Spirit (29)
   C. Note the timing (27-28)

II. Philip's Willingness To Serve Is No Mirage
   A. He could have hesitated on the grounds of not knowing the destination (26)
   B. He could have hesitated on the grounds of fearing a deserted road (26)
   C. He could have hesitated on the grounds of inferiority to a queen's treasurer (27)
   D. He could have hesitated on the grounds of prejudice against an Ethiopian (27)
   E. He could have hesitated on the grounds of timidity (28-29)

III. Old Testament's Revelation Of Christ Is No Mirage (30-35)

IV. Gospel Element Of Baptism Is No Mirage
   A. No apostolic hands were required
   B. No congregational vote was required
   C. Faith and water were required (36-40)

Suggested Incident:
Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Suggested Scripture: Acts 8:26-40

Suggested Title:
"The Church of Jesus Christ of Early Day Saints"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Christian unity is enhanced by stressing the "universal truths" (i.e. what has been believed in all parts of the church at all times of its history).

B. Christian division is caused by stressing sectarian doctrine (i.e. what a segment of believers at some time has deemed important).

I. The Early Day Saints Used A "Catholic" Book (32-33)

A. Philip did not quote the Book of Mormon, Science and Health, Apocrypha, etc.

B. Philip's test was the widely-received Isaiah

II. The Early Day Saints Preached A "Catholic" Message (35)

A. Philip did not preach a protestant not Roman Catholic hero

B. Philip preached the universally received Jesus

III. The Early Day Saints Upheld A "Catholic Creed (37)

A. The eunuch did not affirm the Nicene or Chalcedonian confesion

B. The enunch did confess faith in Christ

IV. The Early Day Saints Practiced A "Catholic" Baptism

A. No infant is baptized, nor convert baptism postponed

B. Baptism of a believer has never been a questioned practice

V. The Early Day Saints Wore "Catholic" Names And Belonged To The "Catholic" Church

Suggested Incident:
Christ's Appearance to Paul on the Damascus Road

Suggested Scripture: Acts 9:1-22

Suggested Title: "Seeing Jesus Everywhere"

Suggested Outline

I. Paul Saw Jesus In (Damascus) Syrian (3) cp. I Corinthians 9:1

II. Paul Saw Jesus In Every Scripture (20-22) cp. Acts

III. Paul Saw Jesus In Every Saint (4) cp. I Corinthians 12

IV. Paul Saw Jesus In Every Supper (19) cp. I Corinthians 11

V. Paul Saw Jesus In Every Stream (6, 18) cp. Romans 6

III. Witness in Phoenecia-Syria

Acts 9:32-23:24

Suggested Incident:
Peter Cures Aeneas and Raises Dorcas

Suggested Scripture: Acts 9:32-43

Suggested Title:
"Crossing the Border From Fact to Fiction"

Suggested Outline

I. Regarding Peter (32)
   A. The fact: Peter is overseeing the work in Palestine
   B. The fiction: Peter is reigning as Pope in Rome
      1. Was there a papal office?
      2. Was Peter its first incumbent?
      3. Did Peter reign from Rome for 25 years?
      4. Does Peter have successors?

II. Regarding Saints (32)
   A. The fact: all Christians are saints
   B. The fiction: very few Christians are saints
      1. They are the dead Christians who have been canonized.
      2. They are the modern Christians who follow Joseph Smith.
      3. They are the pious Christians who attain holiness.

Suggested Incident: The Conversion of Cornelius

Suggested Scripture: Acts 10:1-33

Suggested Title:
"The Conversion of the World's Best Lost Man"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. This account is of great significance for it reveals gentiles can be converted

B. This account is of great significance for it reveals moral men must be converted

I. His Position Did Not Save Him (1)

II. His Devotion Did Not Save Him (2)

III. His Creed Did Not Save Him (2)

IV. His Example Did Not Save Him (2)

V. His Generosity Did Not Save Him (2)

VI. His Prayers Did Not Save Him (2)

VII. His Righteousness Did Not Save Him (22)

VIII. His Reputation Did Not Save Him (22)

IX. His Heeding The Gospel Saved Him (33) cp. 11:14

Suggested Incident:
The Conversion of the First Gentile (Cornelius)

Suggested Scripture: Acts 10:1-48

Suggested Title: "I Believe in Miracles"

Suggested Outline

I. It Took A Miracle To Convince The Preacher That He Should Preach To Gentiles
   A. Peter's vision was that the distinction in meats is gone (9-16) Mark 7:19; Romans 14:2, 17; I Corinthians 10:23; Colossians 2:16; I Timothy 4:3-5
   B. Peter's vision was that the distinction in men is gone (17-36) Galatians 3:28

II. It Took A Miracle To Convince The Church That They Should Baptize Gentiles (44-48)
   A. The Baptism of the Spirit on Cornelius' household was not to save them (Acts 11:14)
   B. The baptism of the Spirit on Cornelius' household was not to cleanse them (Acts 15:9)
   C. The baptism of the Spirit on Cornelius' household was not to give them faith (Acts 15:7)
   D. The baptism of the Spirit on Cornelius' household was to convince the Jewish Christians to baptize Gentiles into the body.

III. May It Not Take A Miracle To Convince You That All Men Are Saved The Same Way
   A. Hearing of Christ (Acts 11:14)
   B. Believing in Christ (Acts 11:18)
   C. Repenting toward Christ (Acts 11:18)
   D. Being baptized into Christ (Acts 10:47-48)

Suggested Incident:
The Giving of the Name "Christian" in Antioch of Syria

Suggested Scripture: Acts 11:19-30

Suggested Title:
"Christians First, Last and Always"

Suggested Outline

Introduction
"Christians" only - a preferred designation
A. By Reformers
B. By Protestants (Whitfield, Wesley, Luther, Spurgeon, etc.)
C. By God? Acts 11:26 (Isaiah 62:2)

I. The Name Fit, For They Were Missionary (19) cp. Acts 13ff

II. The Name Fit, For They Were Inclusive (20)

III. The Name Fit, For They Were Christ-Centered (20-21, 23-24)

IV. The Name Fit, For They Were Visibly Different (23)

V. The Name Fit, For They Were Evangelistic (24)

VI. The Name Fit, For They Were Benevolent (27-30)

Suggested Incident:
Herod Agrippa I Kills James and Imprisons Peter

Suggested Scripture: Acts 12

Suggested Title: "Believe It or Not"

Suggested Outline

Introduction
The facts in Acts explode some popular notions.

I. Some Hold Strange Ideas About Angels: That They Are Soft (7-11)

II. Some Hold Strange Ideas About Church-Membership: That Christians Fare Better ~~In~~ Than The World (1-4)

III. Some Hold Strange Ideas About God's Will: That God Always Wills Deliverance From Sickness And Trouble For His People (2) cp. Stephen's martyrdom

IV. Some Hold Strange Ideas About Prayer: That Prayer-Meeting Is The Least Important Service Of The Church (5)

V. Some Hold Strange Ideas About History: That The Size Of Armies Determines The Future (20-24)

IV. Witness in the Uttermost Part of Cyprus-Galatia
Acts 12:25-16:5

Suggested Incident:
Paul and Barnabas Commissioned From Antioch

Suggested Scripture: Acts 13:1-12

Suggested Title: "Missionaries that Cannot Fail"

Suggested Outline

Introduction
What guaranteed Paul's success on the mission field?

I. Paul Had Experience Beneath Him (1)

II. Paul Had A Friend Beside Him (2)

III. Paul Had A Church Behind Him (3)

IV. Paul Had God About Him (4)

V. Paul Had The Word Within Him (5)

VI. Paul Had An Opportunity Before Him (6-12)

Suggested Incident:
Return of Paul From the Galatian Mission

Suggested Scripture: Acts 14:19-28

Suggested Title:
"Strengthening the Churches"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

After stoning in Lystra, threatening in Iconium, expulsion from Antioch Paul returns to "confirm" (22) his converts.

I. The Church Is The Stronger When You Evangelize (21a)

II. The Church Is The Stronger When You Baptize (21b) cp. Matthew 28:19

III. The Church Is The Stronger When You Catechize (22)

IV. The Church Is The Stronger When You Organize (23)

V. The Church Is The Stronger When You Utilize (27)

Suggested Incident:
Barnabas Takes Mark to the Mission Field

Suggested Scripture: Acts 15:36-41

Suggested Title:
"God, Make Me a Friend Like Barnabas"

Suggested Outline

I. Barnabas Befriended The Poor (Acts 4:32-37)

II. Barnabas Befriended The Unwanted (Acts 9:26-27)

III. Barnabas Befriended The Outcast (Acts 11:19-26)

IV. Barnabas Befriended the Fearful (Acts 15:36-40)

V. Witness in the Uttermost Part of Macedonia, Achacia, Asia

Acts 16:6-19:20

Suggested Incident: The Conversion of Lydia

Suggested Scripture: Acts 16:10-15

Suggested Title:
"The Heart of Heart Religion"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

The heart of Lydia is mentioned, but more hearts are involved.

I. The Heart Of God (6-13)
   A. The Philippians were not seeking God
   B. God was seeking the Philippians

II. The Heart Of Lydia (14)
   A. Her intellect (Proverbs 23:7; Acts 8:22; Luke 2:19; Mark 2:8; Matthew 13:15; Psalm 19:14; Genesis 8:21)
   B. Her emotions (Matthew 6:12; Proverbs 17:22)
   C. Her will (Daniel 1:8; II Corinthians 9:7)
   D. Her conscience (I John 3:12; Acts 2:37; 7:54)

III. The Heart Of The Gospel (14-15)
   A. Faith indicates a changed intellect (Acts 8:37)
   B. Repentance indicates a changed emotion (II Corinthians 7:10)
   C. Confession indicates a changed will (Romans 10:9-10)
   D. Baptism brings a changed conscience (Romans 6:17-18; Hebrews 10:22; I Peter 3:21)

Conclusion

The key used to open the heart is "the Word" (Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31; 17:21)

Suggested Incident:
Conversion of the Philippian Jailor

Suggested Scripture: Acts 16:30

Suggested Title:
"The Most Important Question Ever Asked"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

"What must I do to be saved?" Each word of the question can be emphasized, but to raise the cry is the beginning of the answer: "Christ."

I. The Cry Of A Warring World

II. The Cry Of A Divided Home

III. The Cry Of A Wanting Brotherhood

IV. The Cry Of A Guilty Soul

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Suggested Incident:
Paul at Thessalonica and Berea

Suggested Scripture: Acts 17:1-15

Suggested Title: "Recipe for Revolution"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Christians are guilty of turning the world upside down (6)

I. Satan-Inspired Revolution
   A. Closes mindes (5)
   B. Shouts for violence (5-6)
   C. Waves the flag (7-8)

II. God-Inspired Revolution
   A. Opens minds to hear (11a)
   B. Opens Bibles to test (11b)
   C. Opens hearts to receive (12)

Suggested Incident: Paul's Sermon at Athens

Suggested Scripture: Acts 17:28

Suggested Title:
"Even as Your Own Poets Have Said"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Sermons have been preached that are entirely the quotation of Scripture. Try to create one that is entirely poetry. You already know more poetry than you are aware: choruses, hymns, etc.

I have my wife play quiet organ background music, while I quote poetry. Be sure they are on a single theme, logically arranged and in variety of styles.

Suggested Incident: Sermon in Athens

Suggested Scripture: Acts 17:16-34

Suggested Title:
"Introducing the Unknown God"

Suggested Outline

I. The True God Is An All-Wise Creator (24)

II. The True God Is An Omni-Present Lord (24)

III. The True God Is An All-Sufficient Sustainer (25)

IV. The True God Is An All-Loving Father (26)

V. The True God Is An All-Powerful Ruler (26-29)

VI. The True God Is An All-Righteous Judge (30-31)

VII. The True God Is An All-Sufficient Savior (32-34)

Suggested Incident: The Gospel Goes to Corinth

Suggested Scripture: Acts 18:1-17

Suggested Title:
"The Good, the Bad and the Best"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

As you read the text the mind echoes the words "good" and "bad".

Verse 1 - "Corinth" - "that's bad"; Paul arrives - "that's good"

Verse 2-3 - Jews ejected from Rome - "that's bad"; Paul finds a home - "that's good"

Verse 4-5 - Truth is proclaimed - "that's good"; verse 6; truth is rejected - "that's bad"

Verse 7 - Justus is tolerant - "that's good"; verse 12-13; Jews revolt - "that's bad"

Verse 14-15 - Gallio is wise - "that's good"; verse 16; Gallio is indifferent - "that's bad

But, the best is (Acts 18:8):

I. God's Love Reaches Even Wicked Corinth

II. The Gospel's Power Transforms Even In Wicked Corinth cp. I Corinthians 6:9-11

III. Men Are Reachable Even In Wicked Corinth

Suggested Incident: Paul Sails from Ephesus

Suggested Scripture: Acts 18:21 (Textus Receptus)

Suggested Title: "I Must Keep This Feast:

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Roman Catholic Holy Days

Old Testament Holy Days

Acts 18:21 "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem." This text is not in the best manuscripts, and a modern Christian's effort to go the Jersalem is not in our list of Priorities yet we have a Lord's Supper Feast in a Lord's Day assembly that is a "must" to us.

I. The Lord's Supper Is An Essential, For Christ Is Our Lord And We Must Obey Him

II. The Lord's Supper Is An Esential, For Christ Is Our Savior And We Need Him

III. The Lord's Supper Is An Essential, For Christ Is Our Friend And We Want His Fellowship

Suggested Incident:
Apollos Taught by Priscillas and Aquilla

Suggested Scripture: Acts 18:24-28

Suggested Title: "The Conversion of a Preacher"

Suggested Outline

I. The Preacher Had the Right Training (24)

II. The Preacher Had The Right Text-Book (24)

III. The Preacher Had the Right Creed (25-28)

IV. The Preacher Had The Right Spirit (25)

V. The Preacher Had The Wrong Baptism (25)

VI. But The Preacher Had The Right Attitude (26)

Suggested Incident:
Paul and the Disciples of the Baptist in Ephesus

Suggested Scripture: Acts 19:1-7

Suggested Title: "Should I Be Baptized Again?"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

In the light of the "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), why are John's disciples asked to be "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus?"

Are any today, after Christian baptism, to be rebaptized?

I. What If I Was Not Immersed?

II. What If I Was Not Immersed In Water (Only "In the Spirit")

III. What If I Was Not Immersed By An Ordained Clergyman?

IV. What If I Was Not Sincere At The Time?

V. What If I Was Only An Infant At The Time?

VI. What If I Have Sinned Since?

VII. What If The "Formula" Was Not Stated Properly By The Baptizer?

VIII. What If I Was Not Fully Aware Of Baptism's Significance?

Suggested Incident: Paul in Ephesus

Suggested Scripture: Acts 19:8-20

Suggested Title: "Protestant Purgatory"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Catholic dogma of cleansing fire after death (1438 A.D.). Biblical teaching of cleansing from sin before death.

I. Ephesians were Cleansed Because Christians Were On Fire (10) (All Asia In Two Years!)

II. Ephesians Were Cleansed Because Consciences Were On Fire (11-18)

III. Ephesians Were Cleansed Because Satanic Books Were On Fire (19)

IV. Ephesians Were Cleansed And Avoided The Eternal Fire (20)

VI. Witness in the Uttermost Part of Rome
Acts 19:21-28:31

Suggested Incident:

Suggested Scripture: Acts 19:23-41

Suggested Title:
"The Clash Between the Profits of Gold and the Prophets of God"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Lost men cry: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians"
Saved men cry: "Greater is Christ of the Christians"

I. Compare The Wealth They Bring (25)
   A. Diana'a material wealth
   B. Christ's spiritual wealth (Matthew 5:12; Mark 10:30; I Corinthians 3:21-23)

II. Compare The Temple In Which They Dwell (27)
   A. Diana's past wonder of the world
   B. Christ's present wonder of eternity (I Corinthians 3:9-17; Ephesians 2:20-22)

III. Compare The Deity They Possess (26-27)
   A. Diana's supposed divinity
   B. Christ's real deity

IV. Compare The Domain They Rule (27)
   A. Diana's temporal reign in the Roman world
   B. Christ's unending reign in all the world (Revelation 11:15)

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Experience in Troas on His Return to Syria

Suggested Scripture: Acts 20:1-12

Suggested Title:
"The Danger of Sleeping in Church"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Reasons for falling asleep physically "in church"

B. Dangers of falling asleep spiritually

I. Eutychus Was Not Asleep Concerning The Lord's Treasury (1-5)
cp. Galatians 2:6-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 8:1-15

II. Eutychus Was Not Asleep Concerning The Lord's Day (7)
cp. Hebrews 10:24-25

III. Eutychus Was Not Asleep Concerning The Lord's Supper (7)

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Discussion With Ephesian Elders

Suggested Scripture: Acts 20:17, 28

Suggested Title: "Calling the Preacher Names"

Suggested Outline

I. The Name Elder Implies (17)
   A. Maturity
   B. Wisdom
   C. Experience

II. The Name Bishop Implies (28)
   A. Management
   B. Inspection
   C. Coaching

III. The Name Pastor Implies (28)
   A. Feeding
   B. Guiding
   C. Guarding

Suggested Incident:
Paul With the Ephesian Elders at Miletus

Suggested Scripture: Acts 20:17-35

Suggested Title:
"The Task Before, The Power Behind"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

We have several sample sermons in Acts but only one addressed to Christian workers.

I. The Threefold Task To Be Done
   A. Take heed to yourself (28)
   B. Take heed to the flock
   C. Take heed to wolves (29-30)

II. The Threefold Power By Which To Do It
   A. The power of God (32)
   B. The power of the Gospel (32)
   C. The power of work (33-35)

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Voyage From Ephesus to Caesarea
and Philip's House

Suggested Scripture: Acts 21:1-9

Suggested Title: "Reading Between the Lines"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. There is value in reading every line of the Bible

B. There is value in reading between the lines

In Acts 20:1-6 there is no mention of trouble in Corinth, offerings for the poor, or the writing of Romans. In Acts 21:1-9 let's read between the lines.

I. A Woman's Place Is In The Church (9)
(cp. Acts 2:17-18; I Corinthians 11:5; Luke 8:1-3)

II. A Man's Place Is In The Church (8)

III. A Child's Place Is In The Church (4)

IV. A Disciple's Place Is In The Church (4)

V. A Traveler's Place Is In The Church (4)

VI. A Sinner's Place Is In The Church (3-4)
(cp. Matthew 11:21)

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Address to the People After Being Mobbed in the Temple

Suggested Scripture: Acts 22:1-21

Suggested Title: "Testimony Time"

Suggested Outline

Introduction
- A. The value of personal teaching
- B. The value of apostolic testimony

I. Paul Gives Account Of Himself B.C. (i.e. Before Conversion) (3-5)
- A. His birth
- B. His education
- C. His zeal
- D. His persecution

II. Paul Gives Account Of Himself A.C. (i.e. At Conversion) (6-16)
- A. Meeting Jesus
- B. Meeting Ananias

III. Paul Gives Account Of Himself A.D. (i.e. After Deliverance) (17-21)
- A. His orders to go to Gentiles
- B. His objection to the orders

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Testimony to the People After
Being Mobbed in the Temple

Suggested Scripture: Acts 22:22

Suggested Title: "When Do You Stop Listening?"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Weymouth translates verse 22 "Until they heard this last statement the people listened to Paul." Do we have prejudices that close our minds to certain Bible teachings?

I. Some Minds Close At The Mention Of Racial Equality (21)

II. Some Minds Close At The Mention Of Foreign Missions (21)

III. Some Minds Close At The Mention Of Baptism's Purpose (16)

IV. Some Minds Close At The Mention Of Personal Responsibility (15)

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Defense Before the Sanhedrin

Suggested Scripture: Acts 23:1

Suggested Title:
"Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide"

Suggested Outline

I. Let The Bible Guide Your Definition Of The Conscience
(Proverbs 20:27 Moffatt Translation)

II. Let The Bible Guide Your Diagnosis Of The Conscience
A. Is it "good?" (Acts 23:1; 24:16)

B. Is it "weak?" (I Corinthians 8:7)

C. Is it "evil?' (Hebrews 10:22)

D. Is it "defiled?" (Titus 1:15)

E. Is it "seared?" (I Timothy 4:2)

III. Let The Bible Guide Your Data For the Conscience (Proverbs 16:25; John 16:2; Romans 2:15; II Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 9:1)

IV. Let The Bible Guide Your Deliverance From The Guilty Conscience (Hebrews 9:14; 10:22; I Peter 3:21)

Suggested Incident:
Accusation of Paul By Tertullus

Suggested Scripture: Acts 24:1-21

Suggested Title: "How to be a Perfect Pest"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Is the Christian church guilty of the charge "sect?" (5) Is the preacher guilty of being "pestilent?" (5) (The Sadducees were the doubters cp. 23:8)

I. Is It Sectarian To Have Faith In All The Bible? (14)

II. Is It Sectarian To Have Hope For All The Dead? (15-16)

III. Is It Sectarian To Have Love For All The People? (17)

Suggested Incident: Paul Before Felix

Suggested Scripture: Acts 24:24-27

Suggested Title:
"Delightful Delusions"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Magic when labeled magic is enjoyable

B. Magic when labeled religion is dangerous

I. It Is Delusive To Think Church Associations Will Mean Financial Gain (26)

II. It Is Delusive To Think Pleasing Men Will Buy Security (27)

III. It Is Delusive To Think All Fear Should Be Deleted From The Message (25)

IV. It Is Delusive To Think Conversion Will Ever Be Convenient (25)

Suggested Incident: Paul Accused Before Festus

Suggested Scripture: Acts 25:1-12

Suggested Title: "I Appeal To Caesar"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

When accusations fly, appeal to Christ.

I. When Falsely Accused Like Paul Appeal To Your Caesar For Strength
   A. Do not quit
   B. Do not answer back
   C. Do appeal to Christ for strength

II. When Hearing Others Accused Like Festus Appeal To Your Caesar For Wisdom
   A. Ask if it is true
   B. Ask if it is kind
   C. Ask if it is necessary
   D. Do appeal to Christ for wisdom

III. When Making Accusations Like The Sanhedrin Appeal To Your Caesar Mor Mercy
(cp. Romans 2:1)

Suggested Incident: Paul Before Agrippa

Suggested Scripture: Acts 26

Suggested Title:
"Where is Preaching Appropriate?"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Christ's commission asks everybody, everywhere, in everyway, to tell everyone everything about Jesus.

B. Luke's history (Acts 2 to our text Acts 26) records compliance.

I. Jesus Was Preached On The Street-Corner (Acts 2)

II. Jesus Was Preached On The Church Steps (Acts 3)

III. Jesus Was Preached On The Bus (Acts 8)

IV. Jesus Was Preached In The Jail (Acts 16)

V. Jesus Was Preached In The Market Place (Acts 17)

VI. Jesus Was Preached In Palace Halls (Acts 24, 26)

Suggested Incident: Paul Before Agrippa

Suggested Scripture: Acts 26

Suggested Title:
"The Fine Art of Becoming a Christian"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

A. Are Agrippa's word in conviction or jest?

B. Do Agrippa's words refer to a little time or little reasoning?

C. Do Paul's words (in little and in much) mean in a short time and to a great degree?

I. We Know Paul Wants Men Converted Without Hesitation
(i.e. quickly - in a little time)

II. We Know Paul Wants Men Converted Without Reservation
(i.e. completely - to a great degree)

III. We Know Paul Wants Men Converted Without Exception
(i.e. unanimously - all that hear).

Suggested Incident:
Paul's Voyage Toward Rome and Shipwreck

Suggested Scripture: Acts 27:1-28:10

Suggested Title:
"How to Have Smooth Sailing on Rough Waters"

Suggested Outline

Introduction
Life is comparable to a voyage.

I. Before The Storm Is The Time For Awareness That Storms Will Come (7, 10-14)
   A. They come into our world
   B. They come into our churches
   C. They come into our lives

II. During The Storm Is The Time For Assuarnce That God is In Control (21-25)
   A. We have a God of providence
   B. We have a God of purpose
   C. We have a God of Promises

III. After The Storm Is The Time For Advancement For The Gospel
   A. The gospel was furthered among the sailors
   B. The gospel was furthered among the prisoners
   C. The gospel was furthered among the islanders

Suggested Incident: Paul's Arrival in Rome

Suggested Scripture: Acts 28:14-24

Suggested Title:
"Friends, Romans and Countrymen"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

In Anthony's oration over Caesar's body he spoke the famous words: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears." As in the Shakesperian dramas, Luke's drama in Acts, ends with Paul calling for the ears of his friends, the Romans and his countrymen.

I. Paul Minister To The Ears Of The Friends (14-15)
   A. We need friends to speak to us
   B. Friends need us to speak to them

II. Paul Ministered To The Ears Of The Romans (16)
   A. Romans were acquainted with vice
   B. Romans were acquainted with power
   C. Romans were potential acquaintances of Christ

III. Paul Ministered To The Ears Of His Countrymen (17-24)
   A. Paul was a witness in Rome cp. Acts 23:11
   B. Paul was a winner in Rome

Suggested Incident:
Luke's Description of His Gospel

Suggested Scripture: Acts 1:1

Suggested Title: "To Be Continued"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

As Acts is volume II in Luke's writing, our church's history is the continuing story (Volume III).

I. The Giving Out Of The Commission
   A. The church is to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15-16)
   B. The church is to call for faith (Mark 16:16)
   C. The church is to call for repentance (Luke 24:47)
   D. The church is to call for baptism (Mark 16:16)
   E. The church is to call for faithfulness (Matthew 28:20)

II. The Going Out Under The Commission
   A, The early church followed the directions in Jerusalem (Acts 2,3)
   B. The early church followed the directions in Samaria (Acts 8)
   C. The early church followed the direction in Syria (Acts 9, 22, 26)
   D. The early church followed the directions in Caesarea (Acts 10)
   E. The early church followed the directions in Europe (Acts 16)
   F. The early church followed the directions in Greece (Acts 18)

III. The Getting Out Of Commission
   A. The change of order by Catholics
   B. The change of order by Calvinists
   C. The call back to apostolic order by Christians only

Suggested Incident:
Church History From 64 A.D. to the Present

Suggested Scripture: Acts 29

Suggested Title:
"The Twenty-ninth Chapter of Acts"

Suggested Outline

Introduction

Apostloic faith and practice should be the norm for every age of the church.

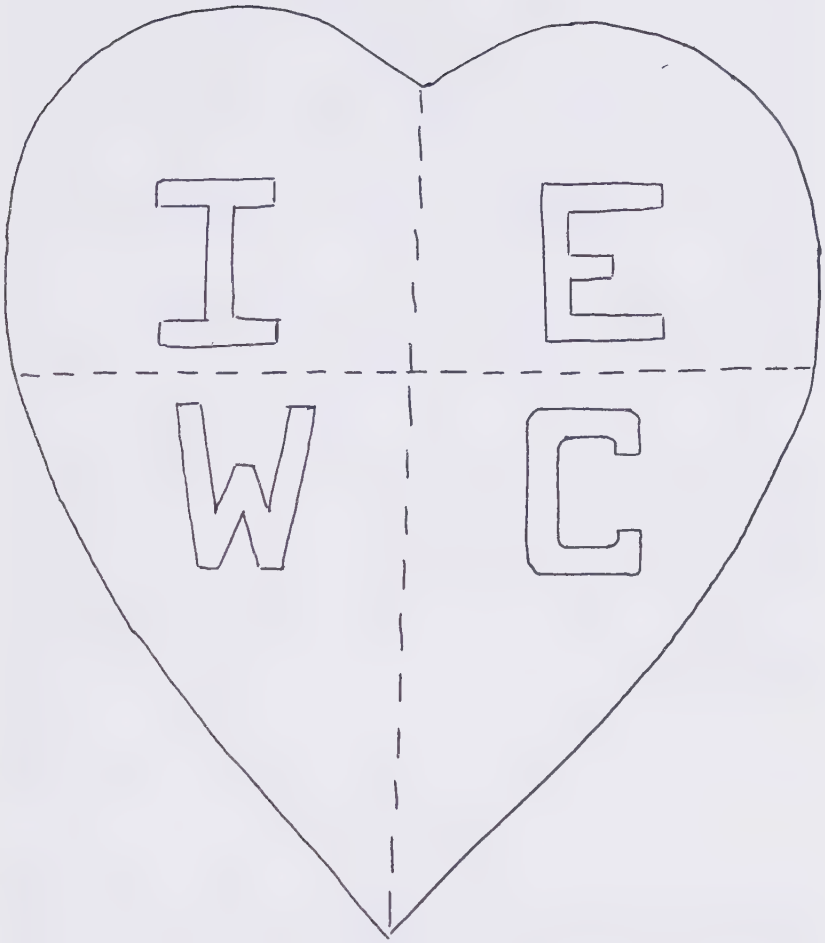
I. After Luke's History Book Ended Came Ecclesiastical Organizations

II. After Luke's History Book Ended Came Ritualistic Worship

III. After Luke's Hitory Book Ended Came Religious Holy Days

IV. After Luke's History Book Ended Came Alternate Steps Of Salvation

Sermon Samples


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C

"THE HEART OF HEART RELIGION"

The Bible teaches us to sing and make melody with our hearts (Ephesians 5:19). How do you sing with your heart?

One hymn goes "There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God, A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God." Another sings, Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, Feelings lie buried that grace can restore." What do we mean in this music by "the human heart" and by "the heart of God?"

At summer camp by the night bonfire, our young-people are heard to pray musically: "Into my heart, Into my heart, Come into my heart, Lord Jesus." Just what are they asking?

Since Acts 16:14 records that the Lord opened Lydia's heart, we are well-advised to ask what the Bible meaning of "heart" is, how the heart is opened, and what a whole-hearted conversion is.

Before we get to the heart of Lydia or to the heart of the gospel presented to her, we must begin with a look at the heart of God. No conversion would be recorded here, or anywhere in either Scripture or history, were it not for the heart of God beating for lost humanity.

I

THE HEART OF GOD
(Acts 16:6-13)

The great missionary Paul, having made converts in the Roman Province of Galatia, had plans of working next in the mission field of Asia to the immediate West. Luke, in Acts 16:6-10, tells of Paul's plans being interrupted by the "Holy Spirit" (verse 6) also called "the Spirit of Jesus" (verse7). A vision in the night, which we refer to as the Macedonian call, urged Paul to "come over into Macedonia, and help us." No qustions remained in the Apostle's mind. This was God's call to preach the gospel in Europe for the first time.

Compare what Paul likely expected and what actually happened. Paul's mission to Galatia had seen many converts. Now this special call to a new field probably made him visualize greater numbers flooding into the church.

Luke's next paragraph (verses 11-15) tells a very different story. There was no horde of people waiting on the shore at Neapolis. Paul headed for the central city of Philippi. Would the strategy of going first to a Jewish synagogue by especially effective here with burgeoning crowds listening to his every word?

Commentaries explain that had there been ten male Jews in town there would have been a synagogue. But there was none. In lieu of a synagogue, Paul's searching brought him to a river side where he supposed a small Jewish community might gather for prayer on the Sabbath.

The story ends with no male Jews at all. Rather, some travelling saleswomen from Thyatira became the audience for the day. Was Paul mistaken in his call? If not "men" from Macedonia, where at the least is the "man" of his vision?

The lesson of this Biblical account is the same as that of so many other Scriptural passages. Missionaries do not go to other lands with Christ's message because the peoples of those countries cry out for God, But because God's heart cries out for those people. Soul-winners speak of the Lord to neighbors, not because they are seeking salvation, but the other way around.

The parable of the lost sheep does not give account of animals appointing a committee, analyzing their need and searching for some shepherd to help them. The shepherd heart of Christ is searching for the lost. They may be totally unaware of him. The dead coins in the parable were not seeking the lady of the house. She is the one that is on the search.

On occassion in the class-room I will go to the blackboard. With a piece of chalk I will draw one arrow pointing upward and another pointing down. "Which arrow represents Christianity and which the other religions of the world," I ask?

The temptation is to choose the upward arrow. But in the religious devised by men the upward groping is asking "where did I come from?", "where am I going?", "why am I here?". The Bible reveals a loving creator reaching down for men. Reaching for men who do not want him. Stretching out toward many who have not given him a thought.

Was not the first verse of the Bible you were taught, "God is love?" Was not the first song you learned,

"Jesus loves me?" All salvation begins with that love. This story of Lydia's heart, also begins with an awareness that God's heart beats for his creation.

II
THE HEART OF MAN

The change of heart we seek is not a physical replacement of one blood pump with another. God's spiritual operation upon our inner-most being does compare, however, in a way.

The human heart has four parts: a left and right ventricle and a left and right avricle. A word study of Scripture seems to justify the conclusion that the term "heart" in the English Bible is used to refer to four parts on the inner man.

If you look at the heart I have drawn, you see four large letters in the four portions of that heart--an I, and E, a W and a C.

A. THE INTELLECT

The I stands for intellect. Consider some Bible verses with me. The K.J.V. of Proverbs 23:7 reads, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." The sinning Simon in Acts 8:22 was told: "Repent therefore...and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Hence, if we think with our heart and have thoughts in our heart, the mind or intellect is what is being described.

Luke 2:19 tells of Mary pondering things that happened in her heart. Mark 2:8 reports Jesus reprimanded certain scribes because of the reasoning they were doing in their hearts. Matthew 13:15 speaks of understanding with the heart. It is a fair conclusion that "pondering", "reasoning" and "understanding" are functions of the intellect.

If you ever belonged to Christian Endeavor, you could not forget the benediction that closed your meetings: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

If you recall the story of the flood in the days of Noah, you remember that stated reason for the

deluge is stated thus: "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21).

A heart change includes that we change our thinking. If I think, ponder, reason, understand, meditate and imagine with my heart, it is my intellect that needs transformation.

B. THE EMOTIONS

Sometimes in Scripture the word heart is applied to my affections or feelings. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart according to Matthew 22:37. Jesus knew human nature well, when he did not say that to get the heart would cause treasure to follow. Rather he taught "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). Where the investment is made the interest follows.

Hearts "sorrow" (II Corinthians 2:4), "grieve" (Duetronomy 15:10) and "rejoice" (Acts 2:26). Solomon's wisdom is that "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

As surely as one plus one is two, the intellect plus the emotions is the meaning of "heart" in the Bible. Yet, be warned, if I think different than I used to about God and his Christ, and I no longer love the things of the world but rather the things of eternity; I may yet be but half-heartedly converted. The physical and spiritual heart is four-fold not only two-fold.

C. THE WILL

The people in a Sunday morning service would not be here, in all probability, if they were not intellectually and emotionally in favor of the church's teaching. But, there will be some not ready to act, not ready to resolve, not ready to purpose. They are but half-heartedly converted. Their will is not surrendered to the heavenly king.

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he should not defile himself with the portion of the kings' meat" (Daniel 1:8). Corinthian churchmen were to give "every man according as he purposeth in his heart" (II Corinthians 9:7). Hearts in Old Testament days were said to make "resolve" (Judges 5:15) and in New Testament times to "decree" (I Corinthians 7:37).

D. THE CONSCIENCE

We have found the Bible "heart" to refer to the intellect, the emotions and the will. Take note now that the word points to the conscience as well. One of the great prayer promises is in I John where answer is promised "if our heart condemn us not" (3:21). That is a clear reference to the conscience.

As the divisions of Rueben had "great searchings of heart" (Judges 5:15), the three thousand respondents to Peter's sermon in Acts 2 "were pricked in their heart" (37). Those stoning the first Christian martyr, Stephen, "were cut to the heart" (Acts 7:54).

Conscience is that inner still small voice to which God's Spirit makes appeal. Immanuel Kant was profoundly impressed by the starry heaven above and the moral law within.

III.

THE HEART OF THE MESSAGE
(Acts 16:14-15)

One of the most vital questions before us is how the Lord opens hearts. What is the key? I believe the answer to be that God opens hearts through his word. At least no person in two thousand years has been found who converted to Christ that did not read or hear of him.

"Faith comes by hearing" today just as it did in the days when paul wrote Romans 10:17. According to the Apostle John, Christ's miracles written had the same faith-producing result as when they were wrought. "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31)

How well we recall Jesus' prayer for the unity of all those that will become his followers. Pay close attention to how that faith will be produced: "I pray...for them that believe in me through their word" (John 17:20). The seed planted in the human heart that produces faith is the word of God (Luke 8:11). So it was, when Philip spoke to Samaritans: "they believed Philip preaching good-tidings" (Acts 8:12). So it was, when Paul was in Achaia: "many of

the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). So it is in the passage before us as God's Spirit uses the tool (or "sword" (Ephesians 6:12)) of his word. The Spirit words through the word in the conversion of sinners. Paul was the voice speaking, but it was another instance of "the Spirit and the bride" saying come (Revelation 22:17). It was exactly thus in Acts 15 that Peter said, "God made choice...that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe" (verse 7).

So often people hear the way of salvation without an appreciation of the why. "Believe in Christ, repent toward Christ, make confession of Christ and be baptized into Christ, this is the way to respond to God's grace." Note with me now how these "steps of salvation" relate to the heart we have been studying.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

An Ethiopian Eunuch heard the story of Jesus from Philip. When he asked to be baptized, the response was, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:37). Belief, or faith, is a heart act. It indicates a changed heart.

In the same way, repentance reveals a changed affection. As the world needs to think differently about the Lord, they need to feel differently too. A converted man, who used to love the world and its ways and have no interest in the ways of Christ, now desposes what he once loved and loves what he once detested. Sorrow of heart leads to repentance (II Corinthians 7:10).

CONFESSION

How does the inward change of mind or feeling find outward expression? If we are only to baptize penitent believers, how will we know who is ready? They will confess that fact when the decision of their "will" (or "heart") has been made.

In evangelistic meetings I have preached to audiences when I knew every listener believed in Christ and loved that for which the church stood. I also knew that a half-hearted conversion was not

enough. It was when the individual came down the aisle to confess Christ, the big decision had been made.

Hear Paul as he ties inner faith and outer confession together as heart response: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

BAPTISM

The message as God gave it for the heart as God made it, asks for a four-fold response. Baptism is the response that related especially to the conscicence.

The great book of Romans is on the theme of justification by faith in Christ. The sixth chapter of the book is on baptism, for baptism is a part of justification by faith. Many, who mistakenly classify baptism as a work of merit, miss the beauty of the apostle's insight that baptism is an act of faith. Paul wrote highly of the place of baptism as it relates us to Jesus' death and resurrection. Then he speaks of our "heart" response: "thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to the form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered (6:17).

The Hebrew's author speaks of "our hearts sprinkled (with blood) from an evil conscience" and or "our body washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). The clearest text of all is I Peter 3:20-21, it speaks of "water," "baptism" and "conscience" in one breath. Interpret it as you will. It tells of Noah's family's salvation from the corrupt antediluvian society "through water." He goes on: "which also after true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interogation (appeal, asking) of a good conscience from God."

Lydia's heart was not just opened a crack. She "gave heed to the things spoken by Paul...she was baptized" (Acts 16:14-15).

The pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 5:8). Man's "heart is deceitful above all things; and it is exceedingly corrupt" (Jeremiah 17:9). God cleanses

such hearts by the faith that is by the gospel (Acts 15:9). There is no other way. The heart of God longs' for your response. The human heart is in desperate need. The heart of the gospel calls for a whole-hearted surrender. The choice is yours.

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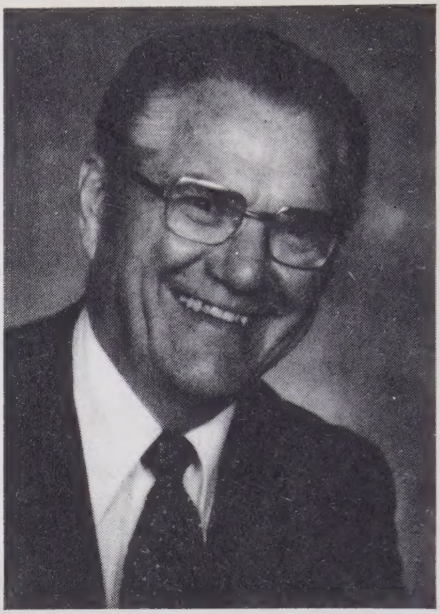
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He continues to preach evangelistic meetings and lectureships in churches and Bible colleges across the nation. He has strengthened several churches with lengthy interim ministries planned to assure continued growth and an evangelistic outreach on the part of each member of the congregation.

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