

# International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

April 2025

## GENERAL SUBJECT: ONE ACCORD AND CRUCIAL ASPECTS OF THE BOOK OF ACTS (Friday—First Morning Session)

### Message One The Continuation of the Book of Acts— the Corporate Continuation of Christ

EM Hymns: 549, 839

Scripture Reading: John 5:17; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:13-16; 5:25-27;  
Rev. 19:7-9; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 28:31

John 5:17	But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I also am working.
Matt 16:18	And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
Eph 4:13	Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
Eph 4:14	That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
Eph 4:15	But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
Eph 4:16	Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
Eph 5:25	Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
Eph 5:26	That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
Eph 5:27	That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.
Rev 19:7	Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.
Rev 19:8	And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.
Rev 19:9	And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.
Acts 9:4	And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
Acts 9:5	And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
Acts 9:15	But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
Acts 28:31	Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

#### I. The continuation of the book of Acts is the continuation of Christ with the corporate living of the perfected God-men as the reality of the Body of Christ—28:31:

Acts 28:31 Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ

with all boldness, unhindered.

- A. The Lord said, “My Father is working until now, and I also am working” (John 5:17); this shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord also is working.
- B. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God; after Acts 28 many of God’s vessels are still carrying on with His work; His work is continuing and has not stopped.  
*Acts 28 be omitted.*
- C. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and new earth; God is always advancing; He never stops; if we know this and believe in this, we will praise the Lord; even as the New Jerusalem, His slaves will serve Him as priests—Rev. 22:3; cf. Acts 13:36a.  
*Rev 22:3 And there will no longer be a curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him;*  
*Acts 13:36a Now David, having served his own generation by the counsel of God, ...*
- D. The work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time.
- E. The word of God is still growing and being multiplied for the increase of Christ— 6:7; 12:24; 19:20:  
*Acts 6:7 And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.*  
*Acts 12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.*  
*Acts 19:20 Thus, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*
1. *Grew* in Acts 6:7 refers to the growth in life, indicating that the word of God is a matter of life that grows as a seed sown into man’s heart for the increase of Christ, the growth of God, within us—Mark 4:14; Col. 2:19.  
*Acts 6:7 And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.*  
*Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.*  
*Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.*
  2. *Multiplied* in Acts 12:24 refers to the increase of Christ in numbers; actually, the multiplication of the disciples depends on the growth of the word.  
*Acts 12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.*
  3. New disciples are “added to the Lord” to become the parts of Christ, the members of Christ—5:14; 11:24; Rom. 15:16.  
*Acts 5:14 And believers were all the more being added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,*  
*Acts 11:24 For he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a considerable number was added to the Lord.*  
*Rom 15:16 That I might be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, a laboring priest of the gospel of God, in order that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, having been sanctified in the Holy Spirit.*
- F. Such an evangelistic work for Christ’s propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God’s New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (12:5) for the carrying out of God’s eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will; this is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow the book of Acts.  
*Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;*  
*Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*
- G. Since God is after a corporate, shining vessel, a vessel of testimony, His children must be

brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and learn to live the Body life; otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal—Rom. 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rev. 1:10-12.

- Rom 12:1 I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.
- Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.
- Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- Rev 1:10 I was in spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,
- Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
- Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,

## II. The continuation of Christ in the book of Acts is prophesied in the Bible:

- A. Isaiah 42:4 says that Christ will come again when He finishes the establishing of God's justice in the earth, which means to establish God's salvation as the issue of God's righteous judgment on Christ—see footnote 3.
- Isa 42:4 He will not faint, nor will He be discouraged, / Until He has established <sup>3</sup>justice in the earth; / And the coastlands will wait for His instruction.
- note 3 Justice (vv. 1, 3-4) is righteousness passing through judgment. It is the verdict of the judgment on righteousness. In this book it refers to salvation as the result of God's judgment on Christ, the righteous One, which was executed according to God's righteous law and completely fulfills all the requirements of that law (cf. Gal. 2:19 and note 1). To establish justice in the earth means to establish God's salvation as the issue of God's judgment on Christ. God's salvation is of two aspects — justification as the judicial aspect and the impartation of life as the organic aspect (Rom. 5:10, 18). God justifies and imparts life to the believers based on Christ's redemption accomplished through God's righteous judgment; this is justice. Christ will come again when He finishes the establishing of God's justice, God's salvation, in this earth.
- B. Isaiah 53:10 prophesies about the continuation of Christ in His resurrection— "He will see a seed, He will extend His days,/And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand":
1. The seed here, a corporate seed, is the church as the Body of Christ, comprising all the believers produced as the many grains by the death of Christ as the one grain and by His reproductive resurrection (John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3); Christ as the Servant of Jehovah is the resurrected Life-giver, the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17), to produce a seed for the building up of His Body as His continuation for Jehovah's pleasure and for Christ's satisfaction.
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- 1 Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 1 Cor 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- 2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.
2. For Christ to "extend His days" means that today Christ is extending His days by living in His believers (Gal. 2:20; see footnote 1 on Acts 28:9); His believers as His

Body are His extension.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Acts 28:9 And when this happened, the rest also in the island who had sicknesses came to him and were <sup>1</sup>healed.

note 1 On the sea in the storm, the Lord had made the apostle not only the owner of his fellow voyagers (27:24) but also their life-guarantor and comforter (27:22, 25). Now, on the land in peace, the Lord made him furthermore not only a magical attraction in the eyes of the superstitious people (vv. 3-6) but also a healer and a joy to them (vv. 8-9). All during the apostle's long and unfortunate imprisonment voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety. This life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes, a life that resembled the one that the Lord Himself had lived on the earth years before. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ! Paul in his voyage lived and magnified Christ (Phil. 1:20-21). It is no wonder that the people honored him and his companions with many honors (v. 10), that is, with the greatest respect and highest regard! An ambassador sent by God should be treated by men with such respect and regard.

3. The pleasure of God (Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 2:13) is to see many sons born of Him to become the members of Christ, who constitute the church as the Body of Christ, the corporate expression of Christ.

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

- C. Isaiah 53:11 says that Christ "will see the fruit of the travail of His soul, / And He will be satisfied"; the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul implies all the items produced in and through Christ's resurrection as His continuation:

1. As the processed One, the last Adam, Christ became the life-giving Spirit as the reality of the pneumatic Christ for His propagation through life-imparting—1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17.

1 Cor 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

2 Cor 3:17 And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2. As the preeminent One, the One who has the first place in all things, Christ became the Firstborn from the dead for the germinating of God's new creation and for Christ to be the Head of the Body—Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5a.

Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Rev 1:5a And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. ...

3. As the God-man, Christ was begotten of God in His humanity (Acts 13:33) to be the firstborn Son of God in both the divine and human natures, to be a model for conforming many sons to His image (Rom. 8:29b).

Acts 13:33 That God has fully fulfilled this promise to us their children in raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You."

Rom 8:29b ... He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He

- might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
4. As the resurrection life (John 11:25), Christ regenerated all His believers (1 Pet. 1:3), making them His brothers and the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10-12; Rom. 8:29b; John 20:17), who are the members of God's household to be God's kingdom (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10) and God's precious inheritance (Eph. 1:11).
    - John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
    - 1 Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
    - Heb 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
    - Heb 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers,
    - Heb 2:12 Saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You."
    - Rom 8:29b ... He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
    - John 20:17 Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.
    - Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,
    - Gal 6:10 So then, as we have the opportunity, let us do what is good toward all, but especially toward those of the household of the faith.
    - Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
  5. As the one grain of wheat, Christ became the many grains (John 12:24), who are His increase (3:30) and the components of His Body, that is, the one bread, the church (1 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 1:22-23).
    - John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
    - John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.
    - 1 Cor 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.
    - Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
    - Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
  6. Through His life-releasing death and with His life-imparting resurrection, Christ produced a corporate seed as the issue of the travail of His soul, which seed He saw in His resurrection and was satisfied (Isa. 53:10-11; cf. Gal. 3:29).
    - Isa 53:10 But Jehovah was pleased to crush Him, to afflict Him with grief. / When He makes Himself an offering for sin, / He will see a seed, He will extend His days, / And the pleasure of Jehovah will prosper in His hand.
    - Isa 53:11 He will see the fruit of the travail of His soul, / And He will be satisfied; / By the knowledge of Him, the righteous One, My Servant, will make the / many righteous, / And He will bear their iniquities.
    - Gal 3:29 And if you are of Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.
  7. As the life of the believers, the resurrected Christ is all the members and in all the members of the new man—Col. 3:10-11.
    - Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
    - Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

- D. Micah 5:2 prophecies concerning the incarnation of Christ in Bethlehem, and that “His goings forth are from ancient times,/From the days of eternity”:

Micah 5:2 (But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, / So little to be among the thousands of Judah, / From you there will come forth to Me / He who is to be Ruler in Israel; / And His goings forth are from ancient times, / From the days of eternity.)

1. Christ’s going forth, His appearing, is a continuous matter; at the time of His incarnation He began to come forth; after His incarnation, He continued to go forth through His human living, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His outpouring of the consummated Spirit (who is the reality of Christ Himself), and His spreading through the preaching of the gospel to the whole inhabited earth; all of these are great steps in Christ’s going forth.
2. His going forth has not ceased but is continuing today; Christ’s going forth, His manifestation, will consummate when He comes back with the overcomers as the mighty ones (Joel 3:11) to defeat Antichrist and cast him into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:19-20), when Satan is cast into the abyss (20:2-3), and when Christ sets up His throne to reign as King (Matt. 25:31, 34, 40); at that time His appearing will be complete.

Joel 3:11 Hurry and come, / All you surrounding nations, / And be gathered. / There cause Your mighty ones to descend, O Jehovah!

Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army.

Rev 19:20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone.

Rev 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years

Rev 20:3 And cast him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be loosed for a little while.

Matt 25:31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory and all the angels with Him, at that time He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Matt 25:34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matt 25:40 And the King will answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you have done it to one of these, the least of My brothers, you have done it to Me.

- E. These Old Testament prophecies culminate in the greatest prophecy in the Bible concerning the continuation of Christ; in Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus said, “I will build My church”; even today this prophecy still remains unfulfilled:

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

1. The prophecy on the building up of the church started by the Lord in Matthew 16 is continued by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:13-16, a prophecy concerning the building up of the church in a specific way that remains unfulfilled today.

Matt 16 be omitted.

Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,

Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together



through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

2. This prophecy may also be seen as the preparation of Christ's bride, which is still unfulfilled today (Rev. 19:7-9; Eph. 5:25-27); the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy concerning the building up of the church and the preparation of His bride will bring Him back; now is the time for the Lord to fulfill His prophecy.

Rev 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

Rev 19:9 And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

### **III. The apostle Paul, as a pattern to all the believers, the members of the Body of Christ, lived Christ for His magnification as His continuation—Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 9:4-5, 15; 26:18-19; 1 Tim. 1:16:**

Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...

Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

1 Tim 1:16 But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.

- A. Paul was a disciple of Christ—seeing Christ, hearing Christ, and learning Christ as the reality is in Jesus—Acts 9:1-19, 25-27; 22:14-15; Eph. 4:20-21.

Acts 9:1 But Saul, still breathing threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

Acts 9:2 And asked for letters from him to Damascus for the synagogues, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Acts 9:3 And as he went, he drew near to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?

Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.

Acts 9:6 But rise up and enter into the city, and it will be told to you what you must do.

Acts 9:7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

Acts 9:8 And Saul rose from the ground; and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. And they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

- Acts 9:9 And he was three days without seeing, and he neither ate nor drank.
- Acts 9:10 And there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.
- Acts 9:11 And the Lord said to him, Rise up and go to the lane called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas a man from Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying;
- Acts 9:12 And he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him so that he may receive his sight.
- Acts 9:13 But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many concerning this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem;
- Acts 9:14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name.
- Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
- Acts 9:16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer on behalf of My name.
- Acts 9:17 And Ananias went away and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent Me-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming-so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight and rose up and was baptized.
- Acts 9:19 And once he had taken food, he was strengthened. And he was with the disciples in Damascus for some days.
- Acts 9:25 But his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.
- Acts 9:26 And when he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples; yet all feared him, not believing that he was a disciple.
- Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took hold of him and led him to the apostles, and he related to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.
- Acts 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers has previously appointed you to know His will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice from His mouth;
- Acts 22:15 For you will be a witness to Him unto all men of the things which you have seen and heard.
- Eph 4:20 But you did not so learn Christ,
- Eph 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus,
- B. Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to contain Him, be filled with Him, and overflow with Him for His fullness—Acts 9:15; 2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19.
- Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;
- 2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- C. Paul was a man of prayer—Acts 9:11; 13:1-3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 28:8; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
- Acts 9:11 And the Lord said to him, Rise up and go to the lane called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas a man from Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying;
- Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
- Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church and had prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord into whom they had believed.



- Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.
- Acts 16:25 And about midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, sang hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them.
- Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down with them all and prayed.
- Acts 21:5 And when we completed the days, we went forth and went on our way, with all of them, including the women and children, escorting us until we were outside the city. And when we had knelt down on the beach and prayed,
- Acts 22:17 And when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I went into a trance;
- Acts 28:8 And the father of Publius was lying down sick with fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him, and having prayed and laid his hands on him, healed him.
- Eph 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Col 4:2 Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving,
- D. Paul depended on the Body, doing everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—Acts 9:11, 17-18, 25-27; 1 Cor. 1:1; 12:14-27.
- Acts 9:11 And the Lord said to him, Rise up and go to the lane called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas a man from Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying;
- Acts 9:17 And Ananias went away and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent Me-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming—so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight and rose up and was baptized.
- Acts 9:25 But his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.
- Acts 9:26 And when he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples; yet all feared him, not believing that he was a disciple.
- Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took hold of him and led him to the apostles, and he related to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.
- 1 Cor 1:1 Paul, a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Sosthenes the brother,
- 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.
- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
- 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
- 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
- 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
- 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
- 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

- E. Paul practiced calling on the name of the Lord—Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 10:12-13; Phil. 2:9-11.
- Acts 9:14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon Your name.
- Acts 9:21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, Is this not the one who ravaged those who call upon this name in Jerusalem and came here for this, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests?
- Acts 22:16 And now, why do you delay? Rise up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.
- 2 Tim 2:22 But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
- Rom 10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all and rich to all who call upon Him;
- Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
- Phil 2:10 That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- Phil 2:11 And every tongue should openly confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
- F. Paul lived by the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus (the Spirit of a man with abundant strength for suffering) for his preaching ministry, a ministry of suffering carried out among human beings and for human beings in the human life for the building up of the Body of Christ—John 7:37-39; Acts 9:16; 16:7, 22-34; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Heb. 6:19-20; 13:13.
- John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
- Acts 9:16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer on behalf of My name.
- Acts 16:7 And when they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, yet the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.
- Acts 16:22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore off their garments and ordered some to beat them with rods.
- Acts 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them securely,
- Acts 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, threw them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks.
- Acts 16:25 And about midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, sang hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them.
- Acts 16:26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken. And instantly all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened.
- Acts 16:27 And the jailer, waking up out of his sleep and seeing the doors of the prison opened, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.
- Acts 16:28 But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, Do no harm to yourself, for we are all here.
- Acts 16:29 And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in; and trembling, he fell down before Paul and Silas.
- Acts 16:30 And leading them outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
- Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.
- Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of God to him together with all those in his house.
- Acts 16:33 And he took them with him in that very hour of the night and washed their wounds. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household.
- Acts 16:34 And he brought them up into his house and set a table before them; and he exulted

- because he had believed in God with all his household.
- Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- Col 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church;
- 2 Cor 6:4 But in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,
- 2 Cor 11:23 Ministers of Christ are they? I speak as being beside myself, I more so! In labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, in deaths often.
- Heb 6:19 Which we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and firm and which enters within the veil,
- Heb 6:20 Where the Forerunner, Jesus, has entered for us, having become forever a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedec.
- Heb 13:13 Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.
- G. Paul lived in his mingled spirit (the divine Spirit mingled with his human spirit as one spirit)—Acts 17:16; 19:21; Rom. 8:4, 6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- Acts 17:16 And while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld that the city was full of idols.
- Acts 19:21 And when these things were fulfilled, Paul purposed in his spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.
- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
- H. Paul was filled with the Spirit of joy, essentially for his existence, and with the Spirit of power, economically for his function—Acts 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18.
- Acts 13:9 But Saul, who is also Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him
- Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.
- Eph 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
- I. Paul exercised himself to always have a good and pure conscience—Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9.
- Acts 23:1 And Paul, looking intently at the Sanhedrin, said, Men, brothers, I have conducted myself in all good conscience before God until this day.
- Acts 24:16 Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.
- 1 Tim 1:19 Holding faith and a good conscience, concerning which some, thrusting these away, have become shipwrecked regarding the faith;
- 1 Tim 3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
- J. Paul lived a life of always rejoicing in the Lord, praying unceasingly, and thanking Him in everything—Acts 16:25; 27:35; Phil. 4:4; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-18.
- Acts 16:25 And about midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, sang hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them.
- Acts 27:35 And when he had said these things and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God before all; and he broke it and began to eat.
- Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- 1 Thes 5:16 Always rejoice,
- 1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,
- 1 Thes 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- K. Paul was allied with God and assisted by God to speak the gospel boldly in the name of Jesus to spread the testimony of Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth—Acts 9:20, 27; 26:22-29; 28:31; 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:2; cf. Rom. 15:24, 28.

- Acts 9:20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, that this One is the Son of God.
- Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took hold of him and led him to the apostles, and he related to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.
- Acts 26:22 Having therefore obtained the help which is from God, I have stood unto this day, testifying both to small and great, saying nothing apart from the things which both the prophets and Moses have said would take place,
- Acts 26:23 That the Christ would suffer and that He, being the first to rise from the dead, would announce light both to the people and to the Gentiles.
- Acts 26:24 And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, You are insane, Paul. Much learning is driving you insane.
- Acts 26:25 But Paul said, I am not insane, most excellent Festus, but I am uttering words of truth and soberness.
- Acts 26:26 For the king knows about these things, to whom also I speak freely, for I am persuaded that none of these things have escaped his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.
- Acts 26:27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.
- Acts 26:28 And Agrippa replied to Paul, By so little are you trying to persuade me to become a Christian?
- Acts 26:29 And Paul said, I would to God that both by little and by much, not only you, but also all those who hear me today might become even such as I am, except for these bonds.
- Acts 28:31 Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.
- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- 1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
- Rom 15:24 Whenever I may go to Spain, for I hope to see you in passing and be sent forward there by you, if first I am filled, at least in part, by your company.
- Rom 15:28 When therefore I have finished this and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by way of you to Spain.
- L. Paul cherished the saints in the humanity of Jesus and nourished them in the divinity of Christ with all the truths of God's eternal economy, displaying in his living the word of the Lord Jesus that it is better to give than to receive—Acts 20:18-38; 1 Thes. 2:1-12.
- Acts 20:18 And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time,
- Acts 20:19 Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews;
- Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,
- Acts 20:21 Solemnly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance unto God and faith in our Lord Jesus.
- Acts 20:22 And now, behold, I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will meet me there,
- Acts 20:23 Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.
- Acts 20:24 But I consider my life of no account as if precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God.
- Acts 20:25 And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will see my face no more.
- Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men,
- Acts 20:27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed

- you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
- Acts 20:30 And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.
- Acts 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing.
- Acts 20:34 You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my needs and to those who are with me.
- Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
- Acts 20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down with them all and prayed.
- Acts 20:37 And there was considerable weeping by all; and falling on Paul's neck, they kissed him affectionately,
- Acts 20:38 Especially pained over the word which he had spoken, that they would no longer behold his face. And they escorted him to the ship.
- 1 Thes 2:1 For you yourselves know, brothers, our entrance toward you, that it has not been in vain.
- 1 Thes 2:2 But having suffered previously and having been outrageously treated, even as you know, in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle.
- 1 Thes 2:3 For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile;
- 1 Thes 2:4 But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.
- 1 Thes 2:5 For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness.
- 1 Thes 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.
- 1 Thes 2:7 But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children.
- 1 Thes 2:8 Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.
- 1 Thes 2:9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and travail: While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
- 1 Thes 2:10 You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe,
- 1 Thes 2:11 Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying,
- 1 Thes 2:12 So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.
- M. Paul's fourth ministry journey (Acts 27—28) shows in a particular way his life of living Christ, magnifying Christ, doing all things in Christ, and pursuing Christ in order to be found in Christ (Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:8-9, 14; 4:13):
- Acts 27-28 be omitted.
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but

that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

Phil 3:14 I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward.

Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

1. All during the apostle's long and unfortunate imprisonment-voyage, the Lord kept the apostle in His ascendancy and enabled him to live a life far beyond the realm of anxiety; this life was fully dignified, with the highest standard of human virtues expressing the most excellent divine attributes—Acts 28:5-9.

Acts 28:5 However he shook off the snake into the fire and suffered no harm;

Acts 28:6 And they expected that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited for a long time and beheld nothing unusual happening to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

Acts 28:7 Now in the vicinity of that place were the lands of the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and gave us hospitality three days in a friendly way.

Acts 28:8 And the father of Publius was lying down sick with fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him, and having prayed and laid his hands on him, healed him.

Acts 28:9 And when this happened, the rest also in the island who had sicknesses came to him and were healed.

2. This was Jesus living again on the earth in His divinely enriched humanity! This was the wonderful, excellent, and mysterious God-man, who lived in the Gospels, continuing to live in the Acts through one of His many members! This was a living witness of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and God-exalted Christ!

**IV. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression; this should be the reality and goal of all our gospel preaching today as we follow the pattern of the apostle Paul—"proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered"—28:31.**

**Excerpts from the Ministry:**

**THE CONTINUATION OF THE BOOK OF ACTS**

Scripture Reading: Acts 28:30-31; Rev. 1:11-12, 20

There are sixty-six books in the Bible. When we come to the end of many of these books, we can say that the book is finished. There are fifty chapters in Genesis, and when we come to the end, we sense that we have come to the end. The Gospel of Matthew has twenty-eight chapters. When we come to chapter 28, we feel that we have come to the end. When we come to the Romans 16, we also feel that this is the end. When we read Revelation 22, we also feel that this is the end.

But there is one book in the Bible that does not have an end. All the other sixty-five books have an end. But one book does not have an end. This book is the Acts of the Apostles. Why does Acts 28 end the way it does? When you read Acts 28, you feel as if the book has not yet concluded. This book does not have an ending. The Acts of the Apostles is a book without an ending because this book is still being continued. Perhaps the acts of the first-century apostles have ended, but the book of Acts as a whole has not yet ended. Until now we still have the Acts of the Apostles with us. This book has not yet ended.

The Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). This shows that since the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man, God has been working until now, and the Lord is also working. What is the book of Acts? The book of Acts is not a record of the work of Paul or a record of the work of Peter or John. The book of Acts is a record of the work of God. Who can say that God has done no work after Acts 28? Who can say that God's work stopped after Acts 28?



The book of Acts does not have an ending. After chapter 28, many of God's vessels are still carrying on with His work. His work is continuing and has not stopped. Everything was not over after Paul worked in Rome for two years. Paul lived in Rome and was later martyred. None of these things are recorded in the book of Acts. Peter, Paul, and John are three important persons, yet none of their endings were recorded. How can we say that the book of Acts has ended? God's testimony can never be finished. We could say the same thing even if there was a twenty-ninth chapter, or a thirtieth chapter, or even a hundredth chapter. If one wanted to write more, new things could always be added. This is why Acts stops at chapter 28. Although the written record no longer continued after chapter 28, God's work has been going on. The work in the first century was not the peak. For four thousand years God has been working. If we say that Acts 28 was the peak, we must be at the bottom of the hill; we must have come down from the peak. This is not true, because the Lord said, "My Father is working until now, and I also am working" (John 5:17). We should not assume that God's work reached its peak at the time of Paul, and we should not consider that God's work reached its peak at the time of Martin Luther either. No, the first century was not the end of God's work, nor was the sixteenth century the end of His work. Even the last century was not the end of God's work. His work will go on until the kingdom and even until the new heaven and the new earth. God is always advancing; He never stops. If we know this and believe in this, we will praise our Lord.

Man always has a misconception that his age is the worst age of the church. At the time of Martin Luther some thought this way. At the time of John Wesley some thought this way. We consider Martin Luther's time a marvelous age and John Wesley's time a marvelous age also. While we consider their ages marvelous, some who come fifty years after us will say that we were at a marvelous age. We are afraid that man will stop. But God never stops. Every year, He knows what He is doing, and He knows how much He will work. Every year, He does what He wants to do. He is a God who goes on day by day; He is always advancing. Hallelujah! God is a God who keeps on advancing!

Every time God advances, He finds some vessels. In the book of Acts, God found some vessels. At the time of Martin Luther, God found a vessel, and at the time of John Wesley, He also found a vessel. Every time there is a spiritual revival, God finds some vessels. Where is God's vessel today? It is true that the Father is working until now. But who is continuing to work together with Him? Who can say, "I also am working"? This is the crucial question.

Brothers and sisters, if God grants us light and if we see God's truth, we will admit that God is after the same vessel today that He ordained at the beginning. This vessel is the church. In other words, God is not after an individual vessel today but a corporate one. Since God is after a corporate vessel, His children must be brought to the awareness of the Body of Christ and the Body life. Otherwise, they are useless in His hand and can never fulfill His goal.

Revelation 1 tells us that the churches are golden lampstands. God does not simply say that the churches are golden; He says that the churches are golden lampstands. If the churches are just golden, they cannot satisfy God. God says that the churches are golden lampstands because golden lampstands shine and enlighten. God desires the church to be a shining vessel, a vessel of testimony. From the beginning God has ordained that the church be a lampstand. The church, not individuals, is a lampstand before the Lord. It is not enough just to be golden, and it is not enough just to be of God. There must be the shining for God and the testimony for Him before the church can be considered the lampstand.

Hence, the church exists for God's testimony. Anything that is not golden is not the church, and anything that is not a lampstand is not the church. Anything that does not have life within is not the church, and anything that does not have the testimony within is also not the church. The church must realize what God is doing and what He is after in this age; it must realize what God's testimony on the earth today is. Only then can the church be considered the golden lampstand.

Simply put, God's work is always advancing. He is still seeking this vessel. His vessel today is the same vessel He intended to have at the beginning; the church is this vessel, not single individuals.

Some may ask, What does it mean that the overcomers come out of the church? It is true that there need to be overcomers who come out of the church. But even the testimony of the overcomers is maintained on behalf of the corporate whole; it is not for individuals alone. The overcomers are not men who consider themselves extraordinary, better than others, and who put everyone else aside. The overcomers work on behalf of the whole church. They do the work, while the whole church gains the benefit. The overcomers are not for themselves; they stand on the ground of the church, and they are there to bring the whole church to perfection. They stand on the ground of the church and maintain their stand on behalf of the church. Even the victories of the overcomers are corporate victories.

The vessel God is after is a corporate one. Therefore, we have to learn to live the Body life. In order to live the Body life, we have to deny the natural life and be judged and dealt with by God in a deep way. We must learn obedience, and we must also learn fellowship. In this way, we will have the chance of becoming God's vessel. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 37, pp. 121-124)

### **ACTS HAVING NO ENDING**

[The book of Acts] was not actually ended; rather, it was left open that more may be added. The reason for this must have been that the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching Christ for His propagation, multiplication, and spread through the believers of Christ was not yet completed and needed to be continued for a long period of time. Such an evangelistic work for Christ's propagation, multiplication, and spread is according to God's New Testament economy for the producing of many sons for God (Rom. 8:29) that they might be the members of Christ to constitute His Body (Rom. 12:5) for the carrying out of God's eternal plan and the fulfillment of His eternal will. This is revealed in detail in the twenty-one Epistles and the book of Revelation, which follow this book. The church produced by Christ's propagation and multiplication is the sphere in which God is expressed and in which He reigns in Christ; hence, the church becomes the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, along with Christ's propagation and multiplication, grows out of and spreads from God's life. Acts is a record of the spreading of Christ; it is also a record of the kingdom of God, because the kingdom of God is the expansion of Christ. The gospel that is widely preached in this book is the very Christ as the gospel (5:42), the gospel of Christ, and it is also the kingdom of God as the gospel (8:12), the gospel of the kingdom of God. The preaching of such a gospel will continue and advance until the whole earth becomes the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15).

In the four Gospels God was incarnated, passed through human living, died, and resurrected, thus completing Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God (Col. 2:9). In Acts this embodiment of God, as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), spreads Christ into His believers, i.e., works the processed Triune God into His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people to make them the constituents of the church, through which God may be expressed. The ultimate issue of the church will be the New Jerusalem in eternity future as God's full and eternal expression, which will also be God's eternal kingdom as the sphere in which He reigns in His divine life in eternity forever and ever. This should be the reality and goal of all gospel preaching today. (Acts 28:31, footnote 2)