

Brentwood Bible Fellowship  
Reading thru the New Testament  
2017

Week 5  
The Book of Acts  
Acts 5 - 9

Suggested Weekly Memory Verse: Acts 5:29

*But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."*  
NAS Version

January 30 - February 5

Monday - Acts 5 (Sin in the Church)

Tuesday - Acts 6 (Choosing the Seven Deacons)

Wednesday - Acts 7 (Stephens Message – The First Martyr)

Thursday - Acts 8 (Persecution Begins – The Ministry of Philip in Samaria)

Friday - Acts 9 (The Conversion of Saul – Peter raises a Tabitha from the Dead)

Saturday - Review

Sunday - Review

## Questions and comments concerning the daily readings

### Acts 5-9

#### Week Five

### Acts 5 (The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira – The Civil Disobedience of the Apostles)

1. In Acts 5:1-16 we observe the first recorded sin in the early church along with God's judgment on that sin as well as the results within the congregation.
2. In the conclusion of chapter 4, the members of the early church were selling their possessions and bringing the proceeds to share with all those in the church who had need. Barnabas was specifically noted for selling his land on the Cypress and giving all that he received from the sale to the church. I am sure Barnabas was highly esteemed for his great generosity.

Beginning in Chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira also sold their home and brought the proceeds of the sale to the church. They were, I am sure, seeking the same praise that Barnabas must have received for his generosity. Covetousness and greed can result in great complications. When Ananias came with the money to give to Peter, he told Peter he was giving the entire income from the sale, when in reality, he and Sapphira had agreed together to only give a portion of the income, holding back the rest for themselves.

Were Ananias and Sapphira ever obligated to give any of the sale price to the church?

What enticed them to lie concerning the amount of the sale which they were donating to the church? Do we experience similar enticements to sin today? How can we avoid such temptations?

Who did Peter say that Ananias had lied to? (vs. 3) In the context with verse 4, Who is the Holy Spirit? A person cannot lie to a thing, or a force. You can only truly lie to a living being. The Holy Spirit must then be a person. This is one of the key passages in identifying the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead, the third person of the Trinity. The Bible clearly says that there is only one God, yet three persons are all called God in the Bible: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. This is one of the key passages that demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is a personal being and that the Holy Spirit is deity or God.

Ananias and Sapphira lied to God the Holy Spirit. They also lied and sinned against the church. This may be one of the most prevalent sins in the church even today. Besides

greed and covetousness which I have already mentioned, what other sin or sins might they have committed?

3. According to verse 9, what was the offense which Peter said they had committed? Should we ever expect God to bless a person when they seek to deceive?
4. According to verse 11, we read that the church feared God. Is it a good thing to fear God? Why or why not?

Confrontation escalates between the Apostles and the Jewish leaders. Verses 17-42

5. What caused the Jewish leader to incarcerate the apostles? (Vs. 17-18) What emotion does that elicit from you toward the leaders of the Jewish nation? Are there people in the American church today who may have similar attitudes as those of the Jewish religious leadership?
6. It must have been a tough morning for the Sadducees when they woke to find that the Apostles were no longer in prison where they had placed them, but rather were out in the temple teaching the people about Jesus, the very thing the Council had told them they could not do. Talk about civil disobedience. How do you think the Sadducees felt when the apostles chose to blatantly ignore their orders and continue to boldly preach the gospel?
7. According to verse 29, what was Peter's excuse for ignoring them? Is Peter's reasoning relevant for Christians today? How about for BBF?
8. In verse 30, Peter boldly, once again accuses the Jewish leaders of crucifying Jesus. Would we consider this a good negotiation practice if we were trying to gain some sort of favor with the opposition so they would grant us greater freedom to share our message without fear of punishment? What might we do if we were in Peter's place?
9. What truth do we observe in verses 31-32 concerning the Trinity? (Tri-Unity)
10. According to verse 33-39 the council wanted to kill the apostles. This seems to be their pattern for dealing with those who are in opposition to them. If they aren't with us, kill them. They do not seem to be open to negotiation or compromise.

11. Gamaliel was a well-known teacher in Jerusalem. In fact, he had been the Apostle Paul's teacher. Explain the advice he gave to the counsel. What examples did he give to justify the advice he gave?
12. According to verses 40-42, do you believe that the admonition by the counsel to the apostles not to share the God News and the flogging, in any way deterred the apostles from sharing their faith? Why or why not? What was the actual result?

Is this the result we might have expected considering normal human nature? How do you believe you might have responded if you had been in the apostles place?

## **Acts 6 Choosing the First Deacons**

1. Hellenistic Jews were Jews from outside of the border of Judea. Their primary language was Greek. The Hebrew Jews were Jews from Jerusalem and Judea. Possibly the Hellenistic Jews had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, and had remained after hearing Peter's message on that day. They were new converts but not well established in Jerusalem. Their elderly widows were not receiving the same care that Hebrew widows were receiving. It seems there may have been some evidence of favoritism or prejudice in the beginnings of the early church.
2. What was the recommendation of the apostles concerning the care of the Hellenistic widows? Was this a wise suggestion? Why didn't the apostles just oversee the care of the dispersion of food instead of recommending that someone else oversee it?
3. Many believe this was the beginning of the office of the church deacons. What did the apostles say should be the requirements for the deacons? Who chose the deacons? Who confirmed the choices?
4. What was the result for the church according to verse 7?
5. What have you learned concerning church growth through the first six chapters of Acts?
6. What have we learned from the first seven verses of Acts 6 concerning how a local church might function in 2017?
7. Apparently the early deacons were able to perform the authenticating sign gifts much as the apostles were. (v. 8)
8. Verses 10-14 What caused the Jews to rise up against Stephen? For what purpose did the Jews want to bring Stephen to trial? What do you notice about his trial?

9. I would love to have seen Stephen's face, as it was presented according to verse 15, as he stood before his accusers. That must have been an amazing sight.

## **Acts 7 - Stephen's Message – The death of the First Church Martyr**

1. As you read chapter 7, notice the pattern that appears in Stephen's message.
  - God chose a deliverer for Israel
  - The deliverer is rejected by his brothers
  - The deliverer is accepted as deliverer and savior

The outline of Stephen's message

Abraham 7:2-8

v. 2-4 Abraham believed God (His faith was evidenced in his obedience to God's directive.)

v. 5-8

1. Abraham received a promise, a covenant, but he did not receive the land tied to the covenant.
2. His descendants would have to wait 400 years to receive the land
3. God required circumcision as an evidence of the covenant

We are an "immediate," or "fast food generation." We want God to give us what we want immediately. How quickly we often give up trusting God to answer our prayers or to fulfill his promises for our lives. (400 years! You must be kidding!)

As you read the list of men Stephen shares from the Old Testament, ask yourself, how are Christians in 2017 like the Israelites of the Old Testament? How are they different?

Joseph 7:9-16

1. Joseph was rejected by his brothers. Vs. 9
2. Exiled to Egypt, - During this time his brothers suffered vs. 10
3. Joseph was exalted by God and received by his brothers. Vs. 12-16

He who was rejected became the savior of his family.

Moses 7:6, 17-36

1. God had promised that Israel would be exiled and then returned to the land 400 years later. Time to go home.
2. The time of the fulfillment of the promised return was near. Vs. 17
3. Moses was born – God’s chosen deliverer vs. 20
4. Moses was rejected vs, 23-28
5. Moses remained in exile for 40 years while the Israelites suffered. Then God sent Moses to be Israel’s deliverer. Vs. 29-36
6. In spite of God’s deliverance, the people returned to their rebellion and idolatry. Vs. 39-43
7. Notice the greatness of God according to verses 44-50.  
This Great God, the God of the promise, whose throne is in heaven and whose footstool is the earth, was rejected by men, yet He remained faithful to His promise and He remains faithful to this day!!!

Stephen wraps up his message 7:51-53

1. He accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit vs. 51
2. He accused Israel of a history of killing the prophets vs. 52
3. He accused them of killing Jesus the “Righteous One.” Vs. 52

Stephen’s Death - The First Christian Martyr 7:54-60

1. How was Stephen’s attitude in his death similar to that of Christ’s death? Vs. 59-60  
See Luke 23:34, 46

What example does Stephen leave for us on how to respond to those who reject or even abuse us in some way? Is it easy?

2. How do you think Saul, later renamed Paul, responded to Stephen’s death? How do you think the memory of Stephen’s death may have affected his ministry after he became a Christian?

What emotions rise up within you as you read the account of Stephen’s sermon and his death? Do you think Stephen was wise in what he preached? Why or why not?

Persecution often results in some blessing or spiritual benefit. With the persecution, the church began to expand into Judea and Samaria as Christ had directed his disciples in Acts 1:8. Without the persecution the church may have been content to have remained cloistered in Jerusalem.

## Acts 8 - Persecution Begins, The Church Scatters

1. In Acts 8:1-4, God used difficult circumstances of persecution in the church to expand the ministry out into Judea and Samaria. As we have seen previously, according to Acts 1:8, the expansion of the church from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria was God's plan. (Remember God is in control even in the worst of times. God is sovereign. We may not understand what all God is doing, but we can trust Him to do that which is best according to his will.) Do you think the church would have expanded as it did without the persecution? Does God use difficult circumstances today to accomplish His will in the church or in our lives individually? Can you give any examples? If God has used a difficult circumstance in your life to accomplish His will, take a moment to thank Him for that circumstance and the result that came as a result. If you are experiencing a difficult time right now, thank God for what He is going to accomplish, as you submit to His will.
2. Note the role of Saul in the persecution of The Way, or the early church. Do you think God used Saul to accomplish his will even before Saul became a Christian? If so, explain!

### The Ministry of Philip

1. 8:4-24 Philip is the second deacon used in active ministry within the church. After Stephen's death, the church scattered. Philip was used by God for the spreading of the gospel into Samaria. It was no longer just the apostles being used to spread the word.
2. How had God prepared Samaria to receive the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ? Hard soil normally needs to be prepared and Samaria, due to its relationship with Judea, would certainly have been hard soil spiritually. God had a plan and he had prepared the way. You may want to take a brief look at John 4 when Jesus shared with the woman at the well and ultimately stayed a few days with the towns people who lived nearby. Has God used some activity in your life to prepare you for some ministry he has for you now? (20/20 hindsight is much better than 20/20 fore sight. I can look back into my youth and young adult years and see exactly how God used my experiences to prepare me for where I am today. I did not realize it at the time, nor was I always pleased when I was going through a difficult experience, but it is evident to me today that God was preparing me for the ministry he has called me to today.)
3. Simon the sorcerer was a man who seemed to have a great deal of power in the community where he lived. Yet when he heard the gospel he seemed to receive Christ

along with all of the rest. (Vs. 13) Reading through verse 24, what do you believe was his motivation to become a Christian? In fact, do you believe he really was a believer? Why or why not?

4. The people of Samaria received the message of Philip, believed, and were baptized. However, they did not receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Can you think of any reason why they did not receive the filling of the Holy Spirit as they had on the Day of Pentecost? Why did God withhold the Holy Spirit until the coming of Peter and John? (vs. 16-17) What was Simon's improper understanding concerning the Holy Spirit?

#### Philip and the Ethiopian Official 8:26-40

5. How was the conversion of the Ethiopian official important to the spread of the gospel and the fulfillment of the command in Acts 1:8? You may wish to relate back to the deliverance of the demonic in Mark 5:19.
6. When Philip spoke with the Ethiopian official, he shared with him from where he was in his spiritual walk. He wanted to know about Isaiah 53 and that is where Philip started. It was from there that Philip preached Jesus to him. This is a good lesson for us when we share the gospel with someone. Don't start with where you want them to be, start with where they are. Start with their interests. Start with the spiritual understanding they already have. Work from that point to open the door to effectively share the gospel with them. Philip began with Isaiah 53 because that is where the Ethiopian was. He was apparently a Jewish proselyte and he was studying Isaiah 53. Do you think God planned that? He will go with you and prepare the way as you share with others as well.
7. The Ethiopian requested to be baptized. Philip must have explained the importance of baptism to him. Since he had already professed his faith in Jesus, why was it important for him to be baptized?

#### **Acts 9 – The Conversion of Saul**

1. Both Saul and the Ethiopian Official we read about yesterday, were converted to Christ. How were their backgrounds different? How were they similar?
2. According to verse 1, what was Saul's attitude toward Jesus Christ and the church?
3. 9:3-9 Sometimes God has to use drastic measures to get a person's attention. He certainly used drastic measures with Saul. Do you know anyone who God used drastic measures to get their attention and bring them into a relationship with Him? (I thought of



Jonah being swallowed by a big fish, but that is not very current. But it was drastic!) Describe what happened to get their attention, and their response.

4. In verse 5, notice how Jesus identifies himself with the church.
5. According to verses 6-9 what do you understand about Saul's immediate reaction to his interaction with Jesus on the road to Damascus?
6. How did Ananias initially react in verses 13-14 when Jesus told him to go to Saul? Have you ever responded in a similar manner when you feel that God is leading you into some opportunity for His service? When? What was the ultimate outcome?
7. What was it that God instructed Ananias to do in verses 15-16? How do you think He felt about going to Saul considering what he had said in verses 13-14?

What did God say concerning Saul's future work?

8. According to verses 19-20, what was the immediate action of Saul following his salvation and the restoration of his sight? What example did he set for us?
9. 9:21-22 How did Saul's message affect the believers in Damascus? How did it affect Saul? How does serving God impact our own lives?
10. How did the Jews in Jerusalem respond to Saul when he first arrived back? (vs. 26) He left a persecutor of the church, he came back an on fire believer! How might you have responded to Saul at that point?
11. In verse 28 we again meet Barnabas. Remember he sold the farm and gave the proceeds to the church. The name Barnabas means Son of Encouragement, he was an encourager. How did he live up to his name in verse 27?
12. 9:28-30 Saul was a bold witness for Christ. He did not seem to fear anything or anyone. His interaction with the Hellenistic Jews did not win him any new friends. In fact they planned to kill him. (There they are wanting to kill someone again.) When the apostles learned of this, they sent Saul to his home in Tarsus. What was the result of Saul's leaving Jerusalem according to verse 31?

Peter's Travelling Ministry Acts 9:32-43

13. What seemed to be special about the woman named Tabitha? What ministry did she have that made her special in the church? Think about it a minute. Maybe you do not see yourself as one to have a traditional ministry like teaching, or working with the children or youth, but God has a special ministry for you.

Read vs. 39 to get a better understanding to Tabitha's ministry. Now, what ministry might God have for you that will help build up the body of believers? The church needs people like Tabitha if it is to function effectively. Who benefited most from Tabitha's ministry? Who might benefit from you?

Did you realize that Peter, like Jesus, was used by God to raise someone from the dead? The miracles were used by God to authenticate the ministry of the early church and its leaders.