

May 2017 Missions

GOING

Drawing Nearer to the World
Missions 2017

The Prophecy and Strategy,
of
Local and Foreign Missions

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church
May Missions Month 2017

Jesus Christ

Our Highest Calling

Our Greatest Purpose

Our Soul's Source and Joy

And Our All-Consuming Passion

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INTRODUCTION

What is Mission? What are my responsibilities? And what does personal discipleship play in all this? Like Discipleship, Missions is not necessarily a place we go, or a task we take on, but is more of a perspective of who we are in Christ, and grasping why we are, where we are.

For some Christians, "missions" is a rather misunderstood and intrusive concept and often presents an uncomfortable guilt of which they would prefer to steer clear. Missions is often perceived as a message for other people and may even be considered irrelevant to them personally.

Many Christians are not interested in missions because they try to ignore it, are overwhelmed by it, or are guilty because of it. Hopefully this series will help each of us grasp the exciting challenge of partnering with God in His kingdom work and being used by God to reach the lost and help them pass from death into life, in Christ.

Missions Yesterday and Today

"The Spread of the Gospel and Persecution"

5th Sunday Missions Sunday

April 30, 2017

Theme: Missions in the Bible and the Early Church

Text: Acts and others

"Now those who were scattered, went about preaching the word." --Act 8:4 ESV

Persecution is precious, because it reveals whether a person Lives with real faith.

-Leo Tolstoy

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Mat 28:18-20 ESV And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So where is the command in the Great Commission? "Go"? Actually it is "*make disciples*". "Make Disciples" is the imperative command. "Go" is literally, "Having gone"... The text implies that God assumes we are already going, or that we are on the move. So *having gone*, or as you are going about your day,...***Make Disciples!***

It implies that Discipleship is not something that we are to necessarily try to fit into our schedule or one more task to do on

our list. It is not something more to do, but to do what we are already doing, but with a different perspective or purpose. Our church's mission statement is: "Connecting with Others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers". And in light of the grammar in the text, we might state things this way: "As I am going about my daily routines, I am looking for ways to connect with others relationally, which I come in contact with naturally, with the purpose of connecting them to Jesus Christ, and to other Christ followers, which is His church."

It is not something else we do or another appointment we cram into our already full schedule. But it is doing what we do with a new sense of vision and purpose that God has put me and you into the lives of others, as a Kingdom moment with an eternal purpose of helping other come to Christ. This is the most natural means of viewing this text and carrying out the Great Commission most effectively – that is, "*as we are going.*"



Imagine you have a large stone and you toss the stone into the lake. What happens? First, we notice there is an initial splash, then ripples go out away from the point of entry, to the far side of the pond.

Now let's view the stone as the Gospel Stone and the ripples are the effects of the Gospel in the lives of those who hear and believe. Today we are looking at the Spread of the Gospel from its beginnings in Israel and the persecution that accompanied it.

THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS

In Acts 1:8 We are given the Prophecy as well as the Promise, and the command, as well as the Strategy through which Jesus expects His disciples to reach the world for Him.

Act 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The promise would be that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples, and in doing so, would bring the power of the Holy Spirit into their lives and ministries as they obey Christ's Great Commission. Accompanying that power, is promised effective outreach in the disciples being Christ's witnesses and the spread of the Gospel message around the world, which was from Jerusalem (which was where they were in the beginning), then further out to area of Judea, then farther out to Samaria, and eventually to the uttermost part of the earth. This was a prophecy, but was also intended to be a strategy.

So in Acts chapters 1-7 the Stone of the Gospel fell, through the power of the Holy Spirit, but thus far, it had not gone out as stated in Acts 1:8. Then we get to Acts 8:1 and persecution arises because of the message of the gospel, and it spread to Jerusalem and Samaria but was not "**GOING**" as intended. So the persecution begins in chapter 8 and the believers begin fleeing for their lives and are scattered even farther from home base, in the direction of the "uttermost part of the earth" and as they Christians were fleeing, they were also – "preaching the Word as they went"(8:4). Persecution was a means through which God ensured the message of the gospel would indeed reach around the world. The gospel sparked persecution and persecution propelled the gospel farther out to others who had not heard and would not *have heard*, were the proclaimers not forced out from the comfort zone of their familiar home area.

So this is a look at the spread of the gospel and of Christian persecution.

We have an overview of...

The Times of the Apostles

The stone of the gospel has fallen and the Holy Spirit is causing the ripples to work its way from the point of impact. First let's look at the far reaching effects of the ministry of the original Apostles.

SIMON the Zealot: Most historical accounts place his missionary work in Egypt (with **Mark**). According to a sixth-century tradition, he preached the Gospel in Persia with Jude (Judas, Thaddaeus or Bartholomew), where they were both martyred.

THOMAS was probably most active in the area east of Syria. Tradition has him preaching as far east as the area we know as India, where the ancient Marthoma Christians revere him as their founder. They claim that he died there when pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.

PETER and **PAUL** were both martyred in Rome about 66 AD, during the persecution under Emperor Nero. Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified, upside down at his request, since he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

ANDREW went to the "land of the man-eaters," in what is now the Soviet Union. [Christians](#) there claim him as the first to bring the gospel to their land. He also preached in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and in Greece, where he is said to have been crucified.

PHILIP possibly had a powerful ministry in Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.

MATTHEW the tax collector and writer of a Gospel, ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Some of the oldest reports say he was not martyred, while others say he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.

BARTHOLOMEW had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas; then back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and **Southern Arabia**. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the gospel.

JAMES the son of Alphaeus, is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.

MATTHIAS was the apostle chosen to *replace Judas*. Tradition sends him to *Syria with Andrew* and to death by burning.

JOHN is the only one of the company generally thought to have died a natural death from old age. He was the leader of the church in the Ephesus area and is said to have taken care of Mary the mother of Jesus in his home. During Domitian's persecution in the middle 90's, he was exiled to the *island of Patmos*. There he is credited with writing the last book of the New Testament--the Revelation. An early Latin tradition has him escaping unhurt after being cast into boiling oil at Rome.

These are what we know to be the accounts of the original Apostles taking the gospel message out from Jerusalem and into foreign mission fields. Next comes a look at the early church after the Apostles.

The Early Church Forward

POLYCARP was a disciple of the Apostle John and one of the most widely-publicized martyrs in the years following the New Testament. He was the much loved bishop of Smyrna (Turkey). For some 50 years he wielded powerful influence in his position. It was in AD156 that anti-Christian persecution broke out in the province of Asia. Civil authorities, for reasons not fully clear, decided to kill a few Christians, and Polycarp was one of those martyrs.

ARICA: African missions trickled down over the centuries from Carthage, Ethiopia and on by early Church leaders: Origin, Augustine, Tertullian, Didymus the Blind, Ticonius, Cyprian, Athanasius, and Cyril.

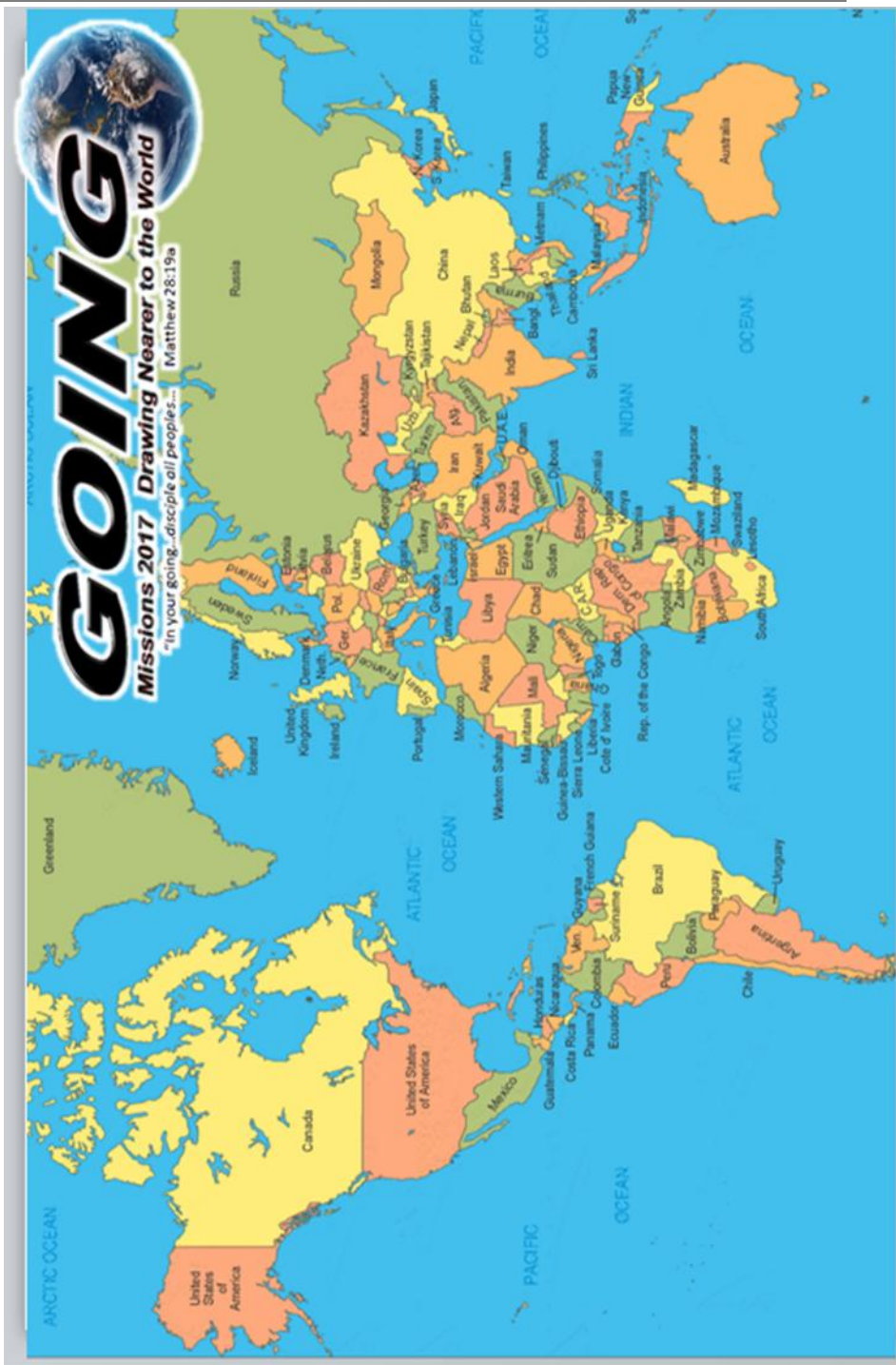
CHINA- The first documentation of Christianity entering China recorded that Christians reached the Tang dynasty in 635ad and were allowed to establish places of worship and to propagate their faith. The leader of the Christian travelers was Alopen.

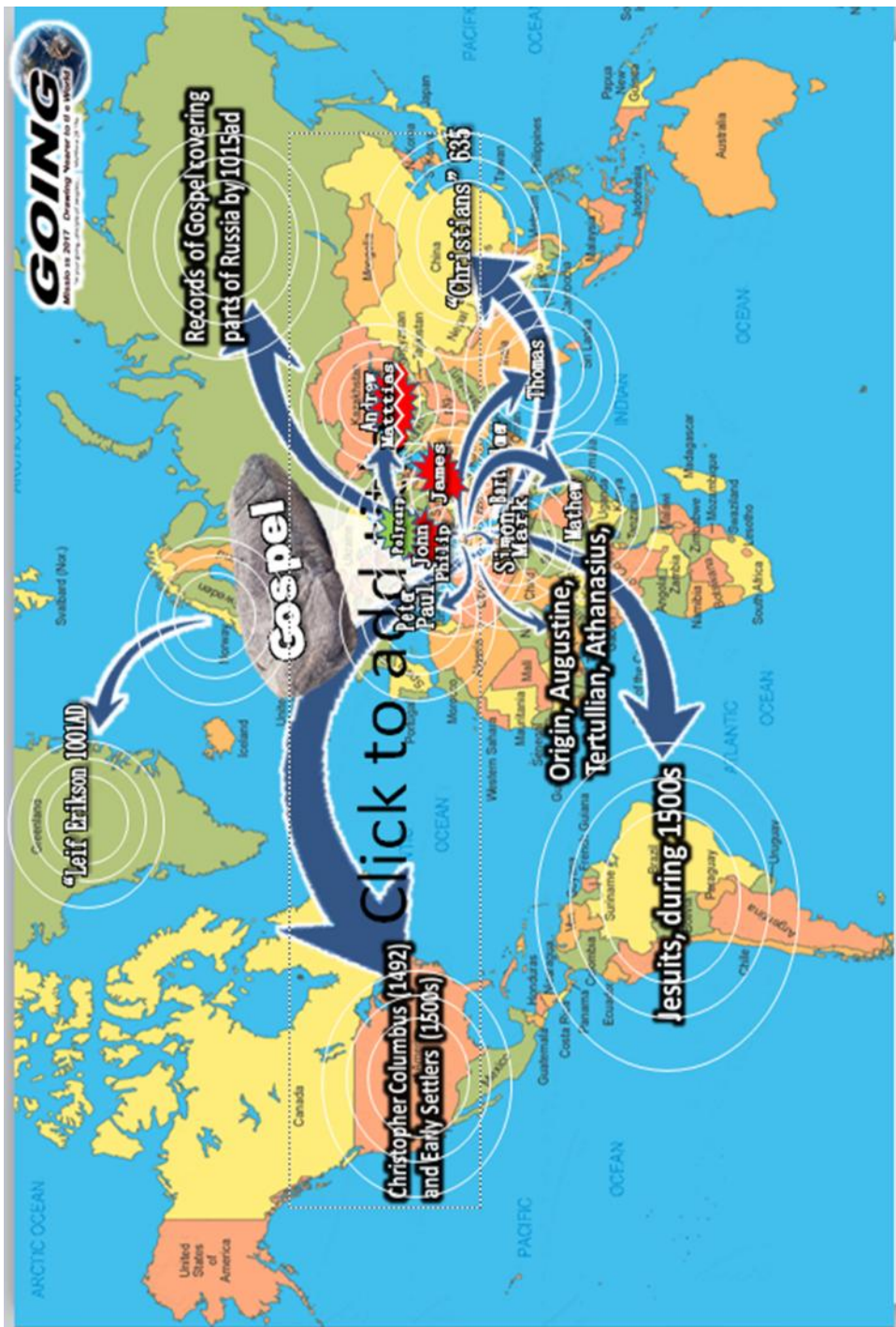
GREENLAND: Leif Eriksson known as "Leif the Lucky," sailed from Greenland to Norway around 1000ad, where King Olaf I Tryggvason converted Eriksson to Christianity, and a year later sent him back to Greenland with a commission to spread the faith among the settlers there

SOUTH AMERICA: There is evidence of Jesuits missions there during the 1500s.

RUSSIA: Records of the gospel spreading through much of Russia by 1015ad.

NORTH AMERICA: Christianity is known to have come to America commissioned through Christopher Columbus 1492 and subsequently through the influence of the pilgrims as they settled the area in the early 1500s.





And as a result of nearly 2000 yrs of world missions, here we are in our own home area of [*your town here*]. Acts 1:8 is both Promise and Prophecy, Command *and* Strategy.

Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."



Witnessing is like dropping a stone in the pond. The stone hits the water, the ripples go out until they reach another shore. The ***gospel*** is the ***stone***. The ***ripples*** are ***lives*** touched and changed.

It is the ***church's*** job to drop the ***stone***. It is the ***Holy Spirit's*** job to make the ***ripples***. He ***will*** do his job. We ***must*** do ours!

World Missions is of crucial importance. But without effective *home* missions, we fail to utilize the "stone & Ripple" strategy give to us by Christ Himself, before ascending into heaven.

When Paul shares the gospel, In 1 Cor.15, he states that it is of utmost importance.

1Cor 15:2-4 ESV and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

"As of first importance"... doesn't mean one portion of Scripture is more important or more inspired than any others. But this must refer to the foundational importance of the Gospel, message, that as the gospel goes forth, all faith and all believes arise from believing the gospel and growing from there.

When it comes to missions, I do not believe any area of missions is more important than the other – both foreign and domestic missions are of equal importance. HOWEVER, to minimize in anyway, home missions, that is missions in our community – in our own homes – in our own places of employment – in our own back yards – to minimize or discount that, is to fail to understand the value of the strategy in Acts 1:8, in implementing the stone and ripple effect of the spread of the gospel and making disciples which the Holy Spirit gives Luke to give to us in Acts 1:8.

I don't see Scripture as implying that foreign missions is any more holy or any greater a calling than home missions. For if we had no home missions, then Acts 1:8 would not be implemented and the means of which God intended missions to be accomplished, would fail. Home missions is only home to the reader. Likewise, foreign missions is only foreign to the reader. Our home missions is someone else's foreign missions and our foreign missions is someone else's home missions.

Therefore we must never minimize nor underestimate the need for each one of us, to obediently carry our own part of the Great Commission, in allowing God to use each of us, in promoting the gospel message to our own mission field. In that, we are sharing our own faith experience, communicating in our own area of influence, the message of the gospel as we have personal opportunity. And in the process we develop relational connections with others, in order to connect them to Jesus Christ, and to other Christ followers, which is His church.

THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH THROUGH TODAY

Our specific focus today is North Korea, which is the focus of our

missions project for this year. Our VOM NK project will connect us with our brothers and sisters in Christ, around the world in South Korea, in partnering with them, as they attempt to do what they can to reach people in NK. Historically, we know that martyrdom does not quench the fire of missions, it fuels it.

Tertullian (197ad) – "The blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church."

The History of Korea

Korea has a history of conflict and war, even prior to the dates and events below, but here is where we begin.

1592: Japan invades Korea (then one nation). With help from China, Korea repels the Japanese forces.

1876: Following a treaty with Japan, Korea's mostly isolationist policies shift, and the peninsula is opened up to the West.

1894: During their own Donghak Peasant Revolution, The Korean government requests aid from China. The Qing Dynasty of China sends 2,700 soldiers to squelch the rebelling, without alerting the Japanese. This begins the Sino-Japanese War for control of Korea, between China and Japan.

1895: The Treaty of Shimonoseki ends the Sino-Japanese war; Korea gains independence.

1904-05: The Russo-Japanese War. Japan defeats Russia in a battle for influence in Korea and Manchuria.

1910: Japan formally annexes Korea, bringing the Yi Dynasty to an end.

1945: World War II ends, and Korea is divided at the 38th parallel. Administration of the two halves is divided temporarily, with the

USSR administering the northern half and the USA administering the south.

1948: Two separate nations — North Korea and South Korea — are formally established. The "Republic of Korea" was created in the south with the backing of the US and Western Europe and the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" (DPRK) in the north with the backing of the Soviets and the communist [People's Republic of China](#). The new premier of North Korea, [Kim il-Sung](#) launched the [Korean War](#) in 1950 in an attempt to reunify the country under Communist rule. After immense material and human destruction, the conflict ended with a cease-fire in 1953, but the two nations officially remain at war because a peace treaty was never signed. [History of Korea, Wikipedia]

Christianity in N Korea

The practice of **Christianity in Korea** revolves around two of its largest branches, Protestantism and Catholicism. Roman Catholicism was first introduced during the very early 1600s when Yi Gwang-jeong, Korean diplomat, returned from Beijing carrying several theological books written by [Matteo Ricci](#), a Jesuit missionary to China. He began disseminating the information in the books and the first seeds of Christianity were sown.

Ricci's works, spawned both academic interest as well as formation for practical Christian beliefs. Many scholars viewed Christianity as an ideological basis for their beliefs and were therefore attracted to what they saw. When Christianity was finally established in Korea, there was already a substantial body of educated opinion sympathetic to it.

So a point of significant interest as we think about North Korea and missions - Christianity was introduced into Korea, not by an organized missions movement or planned endeavors, but by indigenous lay-workers, not by foreign prelates. Since Christianity

began as largely a [grassroots](#) effort in Korea, it spread more quickly through the population than it would if it had originated with outsiders with no initial popular support.

After the division from WWII, Christianity eventually prospered in South Korea, while in N Korea, the ruling Kim family has isolated the nation from much of the outside world, not only from Western influence in general, but from Christianity specifically. North Korea is now one of the top, most closed countries to Christian influence.

In Acts 1:8 we read:

Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

However that did not begin to take place until Acts 8:1

Act 8:1 ESV And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

ASSIGNMENT:

As we go through this month:

- 1) we will learn more about North Korea.
- 2) We will also be participating in prayer for NK.
- 3) We will consider taking on our Youth group's challenge for raising funds for the VOM North Korean Gospel Balloon project.
- 4) We will plan to attend our upcoming Missions Banquet on May 12. This is all very exciting.

"The Rock and Ripple"

May 7, 2017

Theme: The work of the Gospel ripples through eternity.

Text: Acts 1:8

*"... and you will **BE** my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." -Acts 1:8b*

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

--Robert Kennedy

Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Being a Witness for Jesus

INTRODUCTION

To be afraid of "witnessing" is ultimately: (1) fear of How God will choose to use you; (2) fear that God is not capable of using you, that He is powerless; or (3) Fear that God will not keep His side of the bargain, in this promise.



Perhaps there is fear that I'm going to be obedient and go out on a limb, and open my mouth and I'm going to get stumped or stick my foot in my mouth. That may well be what happens. God has ways of revealing our weakness and causing us to trust in Him all the more.

Today we look at why we should fully believe that God *can* and *will* use each and every one of us to reach those still outside His family. Today we focus on the promise of God for missions. Missions is based on God's Promise.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1:4-8a

Luke gives us the promise of the Holy Spirit as our power source for missions ministry. We are reminded that "**GOING**", refers to going about our daily lives and connecting with others in order to connect them to Jesus Christ and His church.

Promise of the Holy Spirit (v:4

Act 1:4-5 ESV And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; (5) for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Joh 14:26 ESV But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. [Jn.14:16]

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit's job is to teach us and to bring to our minds that which we will need to speak, at the time we need to speak.

Luk 12:11-12 ESV And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, (12) for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Yes, we may be temporarily stumped and we may be at a loss for the right words – but God promises the Holy Spirit will supernaturally give you the right words at the right time to share with others.

* God's Holy Spirit is *key*. Our obedience is also key. Our perfection however is not key; our ability is not key. Our inabilities are not hindrances, because the power, effect and results do not depend on us.

*The message of the gospel goes forth,
rippling throughout eternity.*

The Promise of Power (1:8a)

The Holy Spirit is God's Promise for power in our missions endeavors. "You will receive power, when **the Holy Spirit has come upon you...**" Interestingly that when the angel announces to Mary that she will give birth to a baby, in disbelief she states, "how can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Luk 1:35 ESV And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God.

He is not our *re*-source, but He is our Source. He is not our assistant but HE is our power source, before, during and after our mission endeavor or our witnessing opportunity. His Power partners with our obedience to reach the lost.

Missions work is God's work. Our witnessing is God's business. Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and the Uttermost Part of the earth, is not just foreign missions. Hayfield Estates is as important as Papau New Guinea. Your place of employment is just as important a mission field as China. Your neighbor is just as important as the people living in North Korea. Wherever there is one lost soul, there is need for a missionary, no matter where that person is.

*For Personal discipleship, Jesus gives the Promise
of the power of the Holy Spirit.*

THE PROMISED EFFECT (1:8b)

Next we are given the promised effect of the Holy Spirit's power. Then we are given the Promised Effect of the Holy Spirit's power. It is He who works through us.. We become His tools and His mouth piece. We must assume God is fully able to do what He has promised. We must believe He is fully capable of equipping us to do what he has called us to do.

You *will* be My witnesses (1:8b)

This is a command. This is a Promise of power. This is not something we grit our teeth and strain to do, it is what God does as we are obedient in being available, and willing to be a witness for Jesus Christ, wherever we go, whatever we do, to whomever we meet. I see this as both prophetic, as well as strategic.

This refers to what He will do and How He will use us. This is what God will do through us, but also what we must choose to obey Him.

You *will* have a far-reaching effect (1:8b)

In this promise we are given God's intent of using us far beyond

our natural capabilities. Your witness *will* have far-reaching effect

Our weakness and obedience. Dropping the Rock is our job.

Making the ripples is God's job. ***The Rock and Ripple*** – ripples may rock a boat beyond your line of sight. Our witness can have an effect far beyond what we are able to see, or perceive. We cannot see nor fully know the far-reaching effect of our loving, prayerful witness for Christ, until it is one day revealed in eternity.

Another aspect of God's strategy may be that many are involved and we do not serve alone.

1Cor. 3:6-9 ESV I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. (7) So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. (8) He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. (9) For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

People move in and out of your life – that is part of God's plan. One person does some initial plowing and another may pull out stones. One sows while another waters. Still others weed, and another may reap the harvest. But God is the one who brings the increase and He is the one who gets the glory. We cannot accurately measure our discipleship efforts nor our missionary endeavors, because we are not working alone.

GOING – Wherever you are going, Whatever you are doing, to whomever you are influencing towards Jesus Christ.

You may invest your life into a person or persons and they may not grow spiritually as you had hoped. Then God brings someone else into their life and that person picks up where you may have left off. And they build upon your influence in their life.

God promises that the effect of our gospel focused discipleship efforts will be far-reaching and that we are not alone in these missions endeavors.

Being a Witness

As we step out of our comfort zone and into the ministry zone, we must view this as something we are becoming. Stepping out in faith to be a willing, obedient witness for Christ, is like planting a garden. We pray, we connect, we converse with others and that seed starts germinating as Gods' Holy Spirit does His appropriate work. His power, touches and draws the person we are connecting with, to a point of openness, a point of interest, and eventually to a point of faith. And as the seed of God's Word and the person of His Holy Spirit brings the person to saving faith in Jesus Christ, mission takes place.

Think of the people in your life whom you desire to influence for Christ. Someone has already influenced them, praying for them, sharing with them, coming along side and doing some level of discipleship work in that person's life. And there will be someone else when you are no longer part of that person's life. Many people may play important roles in the faith formation of a single individual.

OUR PART – DROPPING THE ROCK

A Visual Impression

Our Life in Action – Our faith lived out. This is the world around us looking into our life and our trials and struggles and seeing how we live and respond. Do we believe what we say? Do we live what we believe and proclaim? A visual impression is an important confirming component to sharing Christ with others.

A Verbal Profession

The Gospel Message is all-important. Tradition tells us that St. Francis of Assisi once stated: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words."

The truth of the matter is, **THE GOSPEL MUST ALWAYS INCLUDE WORDS**. If someone leads a good life and the world looks on, but hears no gospel – you can be certain, there will be no one expressing saving faith in the death – blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There is always need for words – always need for someone to clearly share the good news, along with a lifestyle that compliments that gospel message, rather than negating it.

Rom 10:13-15 ESV For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (14) How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? **And how are they to hear without someone preaching?** (15) And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Our part is living the Christian life and proclaiming the gospel message. It is making a Living Impression, and sharing a Verbal Profession – that is Dropping the Rock of the gospel. That is our responsibility. WE must always be alert and ready, as we never know who is watching, listening and needing to hear the message of hope in Christ.

THEN COMES GOD'S PART

A Supernatural Work- Ripples

Ripples are the impact of the gospel upon the life of those who hear – going out from you, throughout your mission field, to the ends of the earth. This is God's part. This is the job of the Holy

Spirit. This relies on a power outside of ourselves – that is supernatural and working in a way that is beyond us.

Being a witness, means living a life with supernatural purpose, rather than scheduling and performing a task.

ASSIGNMENT:

The term "Witness" in ACTS

Act 2:31-32 (31) he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. (32) This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. .

Here is a "witness" is a living testimony, of a 1st hand report, of an eyewitness account.

Act 3:14-15 (14) But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, (15) and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

Act 13:30-31 (30) But God raised him from the dead, (31) and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

Act 22:14-15 ESV And he said, "The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; (15) for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard.

They were living testimonies of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The term "Witness" In Revelation has a twist.

Rev 1:4-5 ESV John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ the faithful **witness**, the firstborn of the **dead**, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

Rev 2:13 "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful **witness**, who was **killed** among you, where Satan dwells.

"Witness" in the book of Revelation takes on the meaning of a believer in Christ who has **died** for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Rev 6:9 (9) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been **slain** for the word of God and for the **witness** they had borne.

Rev 11:3-7 ESV And I will grant authority to my two **witnesses**, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." (7) And when they have finished their **testimony**, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and **kill** them,

For some, being a witness for Jesus Christ means suffering and possibly dying for their faith. But for most of us, being a Witness means being a Living Testimony and a Verbal Profession, giving a 1st hand report of the work of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ in your own personal life.

Being a witness for Christ is not something you schedule in your calendar to do, it is what we are to be at all times. In our **GOING...**

Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will **BE** my witnesses....“

Foreign missions is nothing more or less than the far reaching effects of our own personal discipleship efforts. It's the Rock and Ripple Effect. What we may view as personal discipleship with another person, is the "Jerusalem" or home part of the whole missions prophecy and strategy.

I would like to challenge everyone here today, to take this prayer from the early church and make it our own, throughout the missions month of May.

Act 4:29-31 ESV *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*" (31) And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Make this our prayer this month. "Lord, grant us to speak your Word and share your gospel with boldness."

"My Witness, My Responsibility"

May 14 & 21, 2017

Theme: The Power of the Gospel in the Workplace.

Text: Acts 1:8

"... and **YOU** will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." -Acts 1:8b

The Gospel is only Good News if it gets there in time.

Carl F.H. Henry

Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Being a Witness for Jesus

INTRODUCTION

Series Title: *"The Gospel & the Promise"*

Acts "Our Jerusalem; Missions - My Personal Responsibility"

We will look at some considerations from Christ commission of the 72 obedient disciples. Today our focus is Reaching our Jerusalem,



Fulfilling our Responsibilities, and Partnering together with the Holy Spirit in Ministry.

Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.



This is a promise, a prophecy, a command and a Strategy. Last week we were challenged to make the prayer of the early church our own prayer throughout the month of May and see what God will do.

THE PRAYER THEY PRAYED

Act 4:29-30 ESV (29) And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all **boldness**, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

THE ANSWER THEY RECEIVED

Acts 4:31 (31) And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all **filled** with the Holy Spirit and **continued** to speak the word of God with **boldness**.

Being a Witness for Jesus in the workplace in your "home" area.

INTRODUCTION

May 14 – "the Power of the Church in the workplace." Today, I would like to challenge you to view any place you are, as a potential missions outpost for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Your

home, your place of employment, your office, cubical, work station, bowling group, or ever your classmates.

Your job can be a missions outpost and you can be the missionary in residence, if you consider your work as your mission field.

I believe that America has yet to see or experience the power of the Dormant Church at work in the workplace – the mission field to which God has called them.

On a normal week we spend 40 hours at work. 40 hours either used for God's kingdom or 40 hours doing your job, getting your tasks done and watching the clock until you can clock out, and get out of there. While some don't mind working to make money; yet for some Christians, that is as far as their vision for their job goes. Making money, doing whatever you do – but keeping it void of kingdom purpose – being very careful not to make any waves and for all practical purposes, remaining inside our closet.

There is a Sleeping Giant in America and it is the church. ***The workplace in America is the future of effective missions in America.***

Can you imagine what our communities would be like, if everyone who claims to be a Christian woke up, stood up and began living each work day with a greater purpose than the typical boring, frustrating, grind that you have experienced for the past decade – but with the renewed purpose and vision of being a witness for Christ, if He opens the door and provides the opportunity for you. Imagine what could happen in a year.

All that we consider to be missions – is home and foreign. Scripture gives no delineation in missions in terms of importance, merely in terms of proximity. As a local congregation, we have the opportunity to reach our Jerusalem. The birth of the church has always been the result of the work of the HS partnering with

obedient courageous believers, to spread the gospel, make disciples and grow His church.

OUR HOME MISSION FIELD (5:32)

* We are to be witnesses in our own Jerusalem which is our home area or home missions. As you begin to see your section of the world as a missions outpost and yourself as the missionary in residence, You will be afraid. You will feel embarrassed. It will be an awkward experience at first. You know why? Because up until now, you have not been living the Christian life in a manner that others around you would know you are a Christian. That is why it is awkward at the start, because you will be doing something you have not been doing thus far; because you are not comfortable talking this way and engaging people for the kingdom of God.

But this I promise you, that once you break that barrier – once you come out of the closet and begin viewing yourself as a missionary and an ambassador for Jesus Christ and you are now using your work, your class, your home for that which God meant for you to use it – once you start doing that – the awkwardness will dissipate. Your embarrassment will be eliminated and your fear will be turned into productive passion and excitement over this new purpose in living the life you were created to live. When you make your resolve, when you come out of the closet, when you begin fulfilling your calling as a follower of Jesus Christ, “you will **BE** my witness”.

But this won't change until we acquire...

A Vision for God's purpose

"GOING"

Act 3:1-2 ESV Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. (2) And a man lame from

birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

They were going. In other words, "**as they were going**" about their daily routine, on their way from point "A", to point "B", they met a man in need. They experienced a kingdom moment. They made a connection with another person, to make a supernatural, eternal, kingdom impact.

Now at this point, if we were in Peter's or John's shoes, any one of us may feel immediately uncomfortable with the situation – mainly because our chief purpose for the day was not to connect with others in order to connect them to Christ, but our purpose was to get to point "B" and finish what we came to do. Or perhaps we would be uncomfortable because we wouldn't know what to say or how to handle this unexpected connection.

But once we begin living differently, and we begin viewing our workplace or daily routine differently or view our life and chief purpose differently, this situation will no longer become so uncomfortable or feel so awkward. Why? Because you have begun to live as you were meant to live; to engage people as we are called to engage them, and to have a sense of our high calling and chief purpose, as we were commanded to. "You will be my witnesses". ***This is the promise, prophecy, command and strategy to reach the world around you and ultimately, reach the world.***

In chapter 7, Stephen has just been martyred for his faith...

Act 8:1-4 ESV And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. (3) But Saul was

ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (4) Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

"...Went about preaching the word." Or **As they were GOING**...they were witnesses for Christ. Remember the prayer of the early church? (Acts 4:29-30) "Lord, give us boldness to continue speaking your word with boldness". This is also the prayer we are praying throughout our missions month of May. And The answer they received, was that the place where they were gathered together was shaken and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness."(Acts 4:30)

As they prayed, we are praying. As God answered their prayers, I believe we can expect an answer, much like the early church received.

Peter preached...

Act 5:31-32 ESV God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (32) And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

1) the power of the gospel – Romans 1:16, "...the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe..." This is the responsibility for each of us, wherever God has placed us –where we already have natural connections with other people. Home missions is about taking advantage of our present, natural already existing connections with people in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, His church. **The Gospel is the power of God.**

2) the work of the Holy Spirit: IT is our job to drop the rock of the gospel and to be available for God to use. It is the Holy Spirit's job

to make the ripples and to open hearts, to use our testimony and obedience to bring others to saving faith in Jesus Christ. We are His tools and His mouthpieces. The Holy Spirit is the power Source for obedient Christians, as we drop the rock of the Gospel.

We are promised that the Holy Spirit will be our power Source.

3) Obedience of local Christians: Obedient Christians are participants with the Holy Spirit, placing ourselves in the midst of a supernatural experience. God has ordained this strategy. He prophesied supernatural power, and promises today - we will be His witnesses. ***As obedient Christians, we are partnering with the Holy Spirit of power.***(Acts 1:8)

4) the builder – Jesus – Mat.16:18 – While we are the witnesses and mouthpieces, the Holy Spirit is the power source, and Jesus is the Builder. “I will build my church and the very gates of hell will not prevail against it.” And we, as His disciples get to partner with God in this supernatural missions endeavor.

I have often wondered what would happen if, for one year, all foreign missions work was put on hold. What is all the people who were fervently serving Christ around the world - who had existing relational connections within their own culture and in their own community – What if for just one year – every Christian, and every missionary directed their passions, their prayer and fastings, their missionary endeavors, their service and sacrifice for Jesus Christ, to their own home area. What if they focused, not learning another language or not infiltrating another culture, but simply on reaching those around them with the gospel and discipling them right where they were. For just one year.

I don't think for one minute that this would put foreign missions on hold. On the contrary, I believe this would bolster foreign missions as we have not seen nor experienced since the early days of the birth of the church. ***Foreign missions is nothing more, nor less***

than the far-reaching effects of our own personal discipleship efforts.

What if everybody focused on dropping the rock right where they were, and seeing what the Holy Spirit would do with those efforts. The difference between a *mere* Christian and a *real* missionary is one thing: Purpose. Mission.

A Christian may think to him/herself – I must get up and be about my day. I have responsibilities to carryout, a job where I must work, chores I must do, appointment I must keep. I must be a light for Christ if I have the opportunity.

A Missionary thinks to him/herself: "Today, I must reach the Lost for Christ. I must be filled with the Spirit today in order to effectively and supernaturally impact each and every person I reach for Christ." I have a heavenly mission to accomplish, a divine calling to fulfill and, Oh yes, I have a job to do, tasks to perform, money to be made, and grass to be cut. etc.

For the missionary at heart, the purpose and mission is to be used of God to reach the world around them, wherever they are, whatever they are doing, to whomever God brings into their path.

What if Miracle Mountain Ranch's goal was – 1) our goal is to provide horses and riding experiences for young people. We want to develop discipline, maturity and a respect for animals.

Or it may be --We want to impact each and every person for Christ, and horses and camps, etc are a means to accomplishing that missionary end. The focus is why we exist – that is our mission and purpose.

Example of living with different vision

Miracle Mountain Ranch's purpose and Mission.

A Christian Training Center helping others obtain...

- Freedom from sin and bondage
- Focus for life goals
- Fruitful and productive lives

Primary vehicles of ministry are...

- Traditional summer camping
- Intensive year-long School of Discipleship
- Customized adult and youth ministries
- Creative methods of outreach
- Camp, horses, **VEHICLES**, tools, a means to an end, a path to achieving a greater goal.

Do we see the difference? Christ is the goal and mission. Horses, and camps are vehicles to accomplish the mission; they are tools of the trade to connect people to Christ.

God has given us His promise. We must be obedient to be His witnesses.

A MAN OF PEACE (Lk.10:1-

In Luke chapter 9, Jesus presents a warning for his followers to count the cost of true, devoted discipleship. Jesus now provides great example for us, as He sends out 72 disciples.

As you seek to connect with others...

Luk 10:1-9 ESV After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. (2) And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. (3) Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. (4) Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no

sandals, and greet no one on the road. (5) Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' (6) And if a **son of peace** is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. (7) And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. (8) Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. (9) Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

"*After this*" refers to the content of chapter 9. Some will be responsive to our message. Some will be oppositional to the same message. We are not to get bogged down and overly discouraged by the negative response to the gospel, but to focus our efforts and energies toward those who are receptive.

Identifying God's person of help (v1-9)

"Man of peace" – Greeting; blessing; God's favor (v6). This is someone who is receptive, open; prepared; supportive; willing; provider; person God uses to help advance His kingdom and fulfill His mission for you.

This person of peace may or may not be a believer. "Bruno" was a man in our community who, though he was not a true believer at that point, was a person of peace and influence and was supportive of what we were doing and our relationship with him and his influence in the community, enabled us to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers.

"Kenny" was my foreman in my work place. Initially, he did not seem to be a genuine believer in Jesus Christ, though he was somewhat religious minded. It was Kenny who used our relationship (unknowingly of course), to connect me with others in the shop and eventually opened the door wide, for spiritual conversations with many of the men in the shop and providing

many effective discipleship opportunities during the time I worked there.

“Man of Peace” - People of influence, whom God has chosen and put in place to aid in our kingdom, missions endeavors. This person or persons of peace may or may not be a believer, but will be used of God to open doors, provide resources (perhaps even a place of ministry), and ultimately aid in relational connections for God’s kingdom work.

Assignment couples (v1)

1) Couples (v1): 2 x 2 – ministry partners were assigned to be co-laborers together in ministry. Many people prefer to work or even minister alone, but ministry couples is a better, more sensible, Biblical model for ministry.

2) Pray (v2): pray first; *then* go; pray as you go; pray after you contact; pray for followup, and be sure to pray for that person of peace.

3) Go – (v3) Go is not merely leaving and moving, but accepting and obeying their assignment; plan is in action. Go does not refer only to locational movement, but may refer to the activity of obeying, sharing together and overall ministry connections.

4) Lambs (v3) Gentle, meek, humble, dependent on the Shepherd.

1Pet. 3:15 ESV but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with **gentleness** and respect,

We are to be courageous, while manifesting gentleness.

5) No purse or sandal (v4): living by faith – trusting God for the contact and for physical and ministry provisions, as you are trusting God together.

6) Take note of the person of peace as God's provision, as you seek to minister in His name. This person may provide open door to ministry opportunities; maybe even help you connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ.

The person of peace will be instrumental in opening doors of opportunity, developing community connections and enabling overall ministry progress, even though he/she may not presently be a believer.

WORK, SCHOOL, HOME

Your own area or environment as a Missions Outpost and you as the missionary in residence.

Setting Up Your Missions Environment

* This is not to set up a **broadcasting station**, but ways to give **subtle notifications** that your area is a missions outpost and a haven of eternal hope, for those who may be interested.

Some ideas for giving subtle notifications:

(1) Small Christian poster around your workstation. (*see poster at end of this chapter)

(2) Christian radio played low vol.

3) Christian Coffee mug

(4) Dedicate your workplace or school day as a missions outpost

(4) Conversation starters to divert from typical, familiar greetings: GREETINGS that are (1) responses to greetings given to you and (2) statements that will make others think, perhaps become curious, and cause them to ask you a question or clarification in return.

Greeting: "HEY HOW'S IT GOING?"

My Response: "You wouldn't believe me if I told you." This leaves them thinking and perhaps a bit curious. Be sure to be prepared in the even someone replies; "Well try me !"

Greeting: "HEY, WHADDA YA KNOW"?

My Response: "Good News, nothing but Good news"

Eventually someone may say; "Well are you going to tell me the good news or not?"

Greeting: "WHAT'S UP? / WHAT'S GOING ON?"

My Response: "God is Good!" or "God is still on the throne!" Be prepared for both positively receptive, as well as negatively oppositional responses, even perhaps insulting. Your responsibility is to hold it together and allow for another time of interaction when the individual is more open or more curious.

Greeting: "HOW'VE YOU BEEN? OR HOW'RE YOU DOING?"

My Response: "Overwhelmed, pretty overwhelmed" A man might just respond, "Huh!". But a woman might respond something like, "well girl, lets get together for some coffee, sounds like we've got some talking to do." Be prepared for an open door. Remember it's our responsibility to be obedient and ready to drop the rock of the gospel. It is the Holy Spirit's job to open doors, open hearts, prepare the person and make things come together.

And these Conversation Starters can work with your evangelistic attempts as well as imparting boldness to other closet Christians.

While working at a print shop, I met Dudley. We had not spoken nor even met before this. But I was in the rest room and Dudley walks in and states -- "***The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof;***" (Psalm 24:1a). I thought for a minute and actually thought it sounded like he was giving a code that I was expected to

respond to. Almost jokingly I responded, "***The inhabitants and all that dwell therein.***" (Ps.24:1b) At that point Dudley turned to me and exclaimed: "Well you must be a brother in the Lord!"

It was Dudley who used this "coded" greeting, that brought me out of my Christian closet on that job. His Christian life on the job gave me courage to step out of my Christian closet and live like I belong to Christ.

Most Christians seem to need another Christian to give them boldness to live obediently for Christ. Once you come out of your Christian closet, and God answers your prayer for boldness... and you start to live the Christian life without fear, shame or embarrassment - you will be surprised at the other Christians who will begin coming out of their own closets, because of the boldness they saw in you.

Your environment as a mission outpost and you as a missionary in residence.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT: OPERATION WORKPLACE

(1) So consider your work place a Missions Outpost and you as the missionary in residence.

(2) Begin quietly but boldly setting up your "area or environment" – not as a broadcasting station, but as a place that offers subtle notifications that you are a believer in Christ and your environment there is a haven of hope in Jesus Christ.

This will not happen overnight. But gradually, subtly, little-by-little, yet more-and-more, people will notice, opportunities will arise and your missions outpost will become an active and exciting place.

(3) Enlist prayer supporters with whom you share your intent and desire to be a workplace influence of Jesus Christ.

(4) Continue praying the prayer of the early church (Acts.4:29-30) and anticipate God to answer with boldness and a supernatural "shaking" of your area, work place for Christ.

Remember: We have yet to experience the power of the Dormant Church, awake and at work in the work place, in the school system, on the sports team, in the gym or the dance class or the bowling team... or even in your neighborhood. We have one family today, who is having a block party in their neighborhood to meet neighbors and to bring people together. What to great and awesome start at making their home a missions outpost!

I'll tell you this: Once you start living like this – you will never be satisfied with living inside your Christian closet ever again. Living in boldness and obedience to God and experiencing the Holy Spirit using you to reach others, is the life we were created to live.

View your work environment as a mission outpost and you as a missionary in residence; A missions project strategy that is bursting with exciting, ministry possibilities.



How Much

are YOU

Worth?



GOD thought
YOU were
worth the price
of His **Son.**



“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” --Romans 5:8 ESV

SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

"The Supernatural Element of *PRAAYER*"

May 28, 2017

Theme: God at work in the early Church

Text: Acts 1:8

"But you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." -Acts 1:8a

"Prayer is the Supernatural connection and communication
with our Supernatural Life Source"

Being a Witness for Jesus
INTRODUCTION



**The Supernatural Work of the birth and
Growth of the Early Church.** *The History of the Early Church is
the story of where we, as Christians have come from. ----*

"GOING"

THE PROMISE GIVEN

Act 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This is about a Supernatural Promise, in a Supernatural partnership, to participate together in a Supernatural Strategy to reach the entire world with the Supernatural message of the good news of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION ~~DRAWING NEARER~~ Series is our focus for the entire year of 2017. Our Missions focus is ~~DRAWING NEARER TO THE WORLD~~, reaching those for which Christ died.

What did the early church look like? How did the early church minister? What did the early church experience? How are we to minister today? Are we to experience the Supernatural work of God in our lives, ministries and churches today as the early church did? What can we expect Today? These are the questions that come to my mind. The answer, I believe, is... **We can expect the Holy Spirit of God, to move as He wills, in His time and as needed in any given situation.**

Joh 3:8 ESV The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

To think we can prescribe or predict what the Holy Spirit of God is going to do, is to greatly **under**estimate the workings of God and to greatly **over**estimate our own ability to predict what God, in His Sovereign purposes has planned. It is like attempting to predict the wind. Sometimes you get it right, sometimes you are completely wrong. It must come from God. We must not attempt to do what only God can do. We must minister in faith. We must pray in faith. We must be obedient in faith. We must trust God for His Supernatural work which only He can do. And we allow God to move as He desires, and to work as only He has planned.

As I view it, as we act obediently and faithfully, we are acting as tools in the hands of Almighty God, led, moved, and empowered

by the Holy Spirit of God. The hammer does not dictate to the carpenter what He is to do. The brush does not tell the painter what he can or cannot do – which colors to use or which shades to include. Likewise, the *Rock* does not command the ripples to travel through the water and back again, its just what happens when a rock hits the water. It is a natural occurrence.

When Christians are obedient in sharing the gospel message and our own faith testimony, there is something Supernatural that is set in motion. ¹**Prayer. Obedient** ²**Proclamation of the gospel message of salvation and sharing of our personal faith.** ³**The Holy Spirit demonstrating His power in causing the ripples to go out, touching hearts, performing** ⁴**Supernatural deeds that only God can perform.** ⁵**People believing and being saved, and even** ⁶**Opposition to the work of God, through persecution. And ultimately an** ⁷**Awe inspiring Reverence in the lives of those who are experiencing the mighty works of God, moving men, building the church and Convicting the world.**

These are Supernatural elements – prevalent in the early NT missions, which I believe we can and should expect to experience in our mission endeavors today, whether in home or foreign missions.

So, we can expect the Holy Spirit of God, to move Supernaturally, as He wills, according to His plan and as needed in any given situation. This is what Christians have always expected from God, and what we can expect from Him today.

PRAYER – A SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT

* **PRAYER** is the Supernatural connection and communication with our Supernatural Life Source.

PRAYER is referred to over 30 times in the book of Acts. Prayer – Supernatural Connection and Communication, seems to be the precursor for all Supernatural work in the NT. Please notice the prayer card in your bulletins, from Every Home for Christ entitled: "What Just Happened?" After you pray for someone, you can hand this flyer to them and simply ask them to read it. It is not argumentative, but communicates interest and compassion in the person's well-being and points them to the God of Heaven, who hears prayers.

This is General prayer for the Spiritual life

Act 1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to **prayer**, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

This was general prayer, followed by a Supernatural occurrence, which was Pentecost.

Act 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the **prayers**.

* This is following Pentecost and was the general practice of the early Church and the precursor of the many Supernatural workings of God in missions or the spread of the gospel and growth of the church.

* By The Way: "*Church Growth*" in the Bible was not focused on how big the gathering church was, but in how the church was spreading throughout the known world.

IN PERSECUTION

Act 4:29-30 ESV And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all

boldness, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

This is Specific prayer regarding our circumstances, needs or troubles.

Specific Supernatural prayer, was followed by Supernatural Answers to prayer, in the form of Supernatural boldness, demonstrated in the lives of the early church, as they were faithfully and obediently sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Act_4:31 And when they had **prayed**, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

IN FACING DEATH - (While visiting with a family at a funeral...)

Act_9:40 But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and **prayed**; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

IN ENDURING TRIALS

Act_12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest **prayer** for him was made to God by the church.

Prayer is the Supernatural connection and communication with our Supernatural Life Source. Prayer is the Supernatural element in the life of the Church and is a Supernatural partnership with the God of Heaven, prior to any work, deed or ministry.

Act_16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were **praying** and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

Have you found yourself engaged in a **Supernatural** partnership with God this week? Perhaps you have, but weren't thinking about

it to notice it. When we are involve in mission work, our efforts are human, limited and they are natural efforts. But when the Holy Spirit moves and intervenes, His Supernatural power transforms our natural work into A Supernatural partnership with God Himself.

When we are praying together, we are partnering with one another, as well as with God – seeking God to move as He wills, in the present situation at hand. Often in prayer we aren't thinking so much about the supernatural partnership, until after God has answered the prayer and moved in such a way as to cause us to stop, remember and take notice that we were involved in a Divinely ordained, Supernatural occurrence.

We can expect God to move as He wills, according to His plan, in His time and as needed in any situation.

"The Supernatural Element of *PREACHING*"

June 4, 2017

Theme: Proclamation of the Gospel message

Text: Acts 1:8

"...For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." -- Rom 1:16 ESV

"Preaching is the Supernatural Proclamation of the
Supernatural Gospel message of Jesus Christ"

----"GOING"

**The Supernatural Work of the birth
and Growth of the Early Church.** *The*

*History of the Early Church is the story of where we, as Christians
have come from. The Supernatural Elements of the Early Church
from ACTS.*



Act 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This is about a Supernatural Promise, in a Supernatural partnership, to participate together in a Supernatural Strategy to reach the entire world with the Supernatural message of the good news of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

So, what did the early church look like? How did the early church minister? What did the early church experience? How are we to minister today? Are we to experience the Supernatural work of God in our lives, ministries and churches today as the early church did?

Q: What can we expect Today? **A:** We can expect the Holy Spirit of God, to work and move as He wills, in His time, in accordance with His plan and as needed in any given situation.

This is always how God works. Supernatural elements of the early church, that we can expect in our day are: ¹**Prayer.** ²**Obedient Proclamation of the gospel message and sharing of our personal faith.** ³**The Holy Spirit demonstrating His power,** ⁴**performing Supernatural deeds;** ⁵**People believing and being saved.** ⁶**Opposition to the work of God, through persecution.** And ultimately an ⁷**Awe inspiring Reverence in the lives of those who are experiencing the mighty works of God, moving men, building the church and Convicting the world.**

These are Supernatural elements – prevalent in the early New Testament church, which I believe we can and should expect to

experience in our mission endeavors today, whether in home or foreign missions.

So - We can expect the Holy Spirit of God, to move Supernaturally, as He wills, according to His plan and as needed in any given situation. This is what Christians have always expected from God, and what we can expect from Him today.

DEFINE – “Supernatural” is outside or beyond the natural realm or scientific understanding of laws of nature; superhuman, occult; Divinely or demonically performed; magical or paranormal; Divinely ordained and performed.

Our working definition: unexplainable miraculous workings; that which is outside the normal laws of nature or science, or natural understanding; the manifestation of the presence and power outside the natural human realm. Particularly relating to the Supernatural work of the divine being of God Almighty.

PREACHING

This is Supernatural Proclamation of the Supernatural Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

“Guy” was a young convert to Christ, who in his passion of urging others to whom he was witnessing, began telling others they needed to believe in Christ and begin preaching the gospel. He had people thinking they each had to begin standing on the street corner to preach, shouting judgment at the passing world.

Preachers in Acts, are those who proclaim, make known, share or otherwise communicate the gospel of Jesus and the reality of their own faith with others, along the course of their day.

*** PREACH, PREACHED OR PREACHING occurs at least 16xs IN ACTS.** Proclamation of the good news is an act of obedience that

God promises to bless with power and the powerfully positive kingdom results of salvation, and is a **Supernatural** partnership with the Holy Spirit of God in ministry.

Rom 1:15-16 ESV So I am eager to *preach* the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

* **PROCLAMATION** is the Supernatural communication and declaration of the Supernatural message of the good news of Jesus Christ. The Gospel itself is the Supernatural power of God for the salvation of the lost.

This presents the importance of Supernatural prayer, in the Supernatural proclamation of the Supernatural good news.

Mat 9:37-38 ESV (37) Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; (38) therefore *pray* earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Prayer prior to proclamation and prayer for proclaimers or preachers of God's word to be sent out, is crucial.

Bold proclamation of God's kingdom in general;

Act 8:4 Now those who were scattered, went about preaching the word,

And Great Joy followed those who received it. Preaching here is the Greek word **euangeliz** which is our word for *evangelism*. It means to make known or to announce good news.

Act 8:25 Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Preaching here, refers to an utterance or a communication;
Testified, refers to being a witness(1:8) ; to personally confirm;
 Preaching was not something like yelling from the street corner,
 but information that was shared.

Act 8:40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he **preached** the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Phillip preached "*as he passed through*" – or *As He was GOING...* from one point to another, or as he was going about his travels...

And as this bold Supernatural Proclamation took place, many repented of their sins and many turned to faith in Christ.

Preaching was also the Bold proclamation of the good News of Jesus Christ specifically

Last week, I was having one of our vehicles in the shop for state inspection. There was no one else in the waiting room to talk to, so I put a track on the table in front of me and began reading my book. A while later a woman came walking through the waiting room, stopped at the table, looked down at my track and asked, "Is that yours?" I said, Yes. [awkward silence]. Then I told her it was a Christian tract to tell others about Jesus Christ, but from a purely non-argumentative position. [awkward silence] So I asked her if I could explain to her just why it was so non-argumentative? She said "yes. So I shared the whole tract, "***Is There A God***" along with the message of the gospel.

In this conversation with the tract, I was "preaching" the gospel from a Biblical sense. I was not standing up shouting at anyone, but I was communicating the message of Christ and announcing his good news.

In the early church, as the gospel of Christ was proclaimed, many came to faith quite supernaturally as many were added to the church, demonstrating the Supernatural power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Act 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the *Christ is Jesus*.

Teaching is closely connected to preaching. Proclaiming included teaching which was instruction, interaction, while asking and answering questions.

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of Godand the name of *Jesus Christ*, they were baptized, both men and women.

The idea here is not that Philip did a really great job, but that God was at work in his obedience.

Act 9:27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in *the name of Jesus*.

God invites us into a Supernatural partnership with Him today in Supernatural ministry. Does God work TODAY, exactly like He did in history past? No. Not exactly. Perhaps you'll understand that God deals with Americans, somewhat differently than He dealt with the Jews. God deals somewhat differently with a billionaire oil tycoon, as He would with a "slum dweller" in Calcutta. Its not that God changes or that the means of salvation changes, but He works and moves, as we wills, according to His plan, in any given situation.

His means of reaching different people and how the good news is communicated may vary, but the Supernatural message itself

remains unchanged. So each and every time we obediently prayer or share the gospel, or step out in faith - we are partnering with our Supernatural Power Source, in a Supernatural Endeavor and we can expect to experience Supernatural occurrences, whether we can necessarily detect those occurrences or not; and whether it was as we had expected or not.

**God Always works and moves, as He wills, in His time,
according to His plan and as needed in any given
situation.**

My sister loves Paul McCartney. If he is appearing anywhere in the Northern Hemisphere, she and her husband travel to see him. I on the other hand have listened to his more recent songs and they are good – but they are either new, or remakes or newer renditions of old songs, which I find a bit disappointing because they are never like the original recordings. I want to hear “She Loves You Yeah, Yeah, Yeah”, “It’s Been a Hard Days Night”, or maybe even “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band”. But I never am satisfied with Paul’s music today. I guess the difference is, My sister likes Paul McCartney just the way he is, because its Paul! I on the other hand, am looking for a “**repeat performance** of the 60s”.

Often times, we think that way about God. We may think, “God doesn’t work like that today”; We don’t perceive God working today, because we are looking for “**repeat performances**” from days gone by, as He has worked or performed in Biblical times.

We can never predict nor prescribe How God should work or move in our day. If we simply want a repeat performance from God, we all will probably be disappointed. Perhaps this is where part of our problem lies. We learn about how God works and moves from the past and that is how we tend to understand Him -- that is, from the past. Therefore, **how we understand Him working in the past, is**

often how we explain Him at work today in the present. And how we explain Him at work in the present, is how we expect Him to work in the future. But Gods' doesn't work that way. In eternity past, through eternity future -- **God always works, according to His Supernatural will and purpose, as is needed in the given situation in the present.**

CONCLUSION:

Prov. 14:25 MKJV A true witness delivers souls, but a deceitful witness speaks lies.

A True witness "delivers souls" or "saves lives", as opposed to a *false* witness or *no* witness.

When you know the Truth but remain silent, *that is deception.*

When you know how to save a life but don't, *that is destruction.*

When you know how to deliver a soul from hell, but don't try, *that is disobedience.*

Lest we forget the dark side of missions... that those who do not believe in Christ are ¹eternally and supernaturally lost; ²they are eternally and supernaturally separated from God; and ³they are eternally and supernaturally judged for their sins in hell.

Someone once stated:

"Silence in the face of evil is itself, evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak, is to speak. Not to act, is to act."

(Many attribute that quote to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but has been called into question today)

"Supernatural Elements of the Early Church"

Personal Faith & Church Growth

June 11, 2017

Theme: Personal Faith and the Corporate Church

Text: Acts 1:8

"... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." -Acts 1:8b

"INDIVIDUAL FAITH and Church **GROWTH**, is the Supernatural work of God, extending the family of God to the ends of the earth, through the ripples of His mighty power."

HOLY SPIRIT AND BELIEF AND CHURCH Growth in the early church.

THE PROMISE CHRIST GAVE

Act 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The Holy Spirit is our Supernatural power Source, working and moving in and through His obedient and faithful servants. This is about a Supernatural Promise, in a Supernatural partnership, to

participate together in a Supernatural Strategy to reach the ends of the earth, with the Supernatural message of the good news of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

So the identifiable Supernatural elements, at work in the early church were: ¹**Prayer;** ²**Obedient Proclamation of the Rock of the message of the gospel;** ³**The Holy Spirit demonstrating His power in causing the ripples to go out;** ⁴**Supernatural deeds that only God can perform.** ⁵**People believing and being saved. And** ⁶**Opposition to the work of God, through persecution. And ultimately an** ⁷**Awe and Reverence in the lives of those who are experiencing the mighty works of God, moving men, building the church and convicting the world.**

These Supernatural elements are what Christians have always expected from God, and what we can expect from Him today. Will things happen today, exactly as they did in the past? Most likely not, exactly.

When God moves, it is in accordance to His plan, yet unique and tailor made for the situation at hand. God sent a flood upon the whole earth. God sent Manna from heaven for 40 yrs.(Ex.16:35) These miracles were according to the will of God and the need at hand, and as near as we can tell, has never been replicated.

So we are looking at the Supernatural elements in the Growth of the Early Church. ...

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE HOLY Spirit is referred to over 70 xs in Acts. The Holy Spirit is our Supernatural, Indwelling power Source, which is outside of ourselves, yet dwelling within each believing Christian. The power of God's Holy Spirit is not accessed when we look inside ourselves and reach down deep, try harder and do a better a job. The Holy Spirit's job is to do what we cannot do, because we are, in ourselves, powerless.

Pentecost, a time of fulfillment

THE HOLY SPIRIT is the Supernatural presence and power of Almighty God, living in and working through every obedient Christian, not just a few special folks. Pentecost occurred, according to God's plan and in His time, was the promised power of the Holy Spirit being poured out, to work in and through His faithful, obedient servants, in the situation at hand.

Act. 1:8 But you will receive **POWER** when the HOLY **SPIRIT** has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The emphasis here is on the work and ability of the Holy Spirit. Not when you spit polish your presentation well enough. Not when you replicate the latest church growth strategies; not when we finally get our offerings to a higher level. But when the Supernatural power of the Almighty Holy Spirit of God comes upon you, then you will have power – then you will be my witnesses.

Act 2:4 And they were all filled with the HOLY SPIRIT and began to speak in other tongues as the **Spirit** gave them utterance.

The emphasis here is in the power of the Holy Spirit. This was not something they were expecting or could prepare for. It was not something planned or scheduled. It was not something they could

know to try to do for themselves, but by the Supernatural power and work of the Holy Spirit, within the perfect will and eternally ordained plan of God.

Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was SHAKEN, and they were all FILLED with the HOLY SPIRIT and continued to SPEAK the word of God with boldness.

This was not tongues, as tongues was not God's plan here. It was not needed in this situation. However, this was exactly what they prayed for, that is for the power of Christ's message to be shared boldly and without fear, as Christians were living obediently to their **Great Commission**, in the middle of rising persecution.

And it was the Holy Spirit of God, moving, working, responding, answering Prayers and empowering His Servants with Supernatural Power for the Supernatural work of God.

Pentecost was part of God's plan and timing for the need at hand.

Prayer and Obedience

Desperate Prayer and Obedient Proclamation of the Gospel were partnerships with the Holy Spirit in experiencing Supernatural Occurrences, as God was powerfully adding to the church daily. The Holy Spirit of God is the power Source and the One who empowers us, and is the manifestation of God's power in our kingdom work and church ministry.

Eph 3:20-21 ESV Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, (21) to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

The emphasis here is on His Supernatural Holy Spirit power, at work in us, not our own power or abilities or even giftedness. "To

Him be glory in the church". Not glory *to* the church, but glory *in* the church, being the glory of God, displayed in His workings, in and through the body of Christ.

I believe we are all part of Heaven's History books being written and being compiled throughout eternity. What if a Church history book was written about God's work in Saegertown Pa, in the 21st century. In the year 2525, People might be asking the question: "Does God still work today as He did back in 2017 with Christ E Free Church of Saegertown?" "Does God still provide boilers today?" "Does God still protect from Tornadoes as he did May 18, 2017, when wind destroyed part of the forest, but God spared the church and the pavilion? Does God still work like that today?" And probably someone may answer; "well not exactly. But God does work and move as He wills, according to His eternal plan, as needed in the given situation at hand." Past Present and future, this is how God has always worked before it is how He will work in the future.

So throughout the book of Acts and the growth of the Church, Supernatural prayer has preceded the Supernatural growth of the Church, and the power and Supernatural Occurrences of miracles, signs and wonders were experienced, through the power of the Holy Spirit, affecting people's lives, bringing spiritual life to the world, through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Is God at work today, supernaturally? Yes. Is Supernatural prayer a key component in the working of God in the world today? Yes.

Prayer and proclamation was and is a Supernatural partnership with God in the work of the kingdom and the ministry of the church.

PERSONAL BELIEVING

In Acts, **BELIEVING unto salvation**, or saving faith **occurs over 20 times**, depending how it is used; such as faith, believed, or trusted. This is the Supernatural life and growth taking place in the early church. Saving faith is the by product of a Holy Spirit prepared heart, which hears the Supernaturally empowered gospel message, believing the message and receiving Christ and the forgiveness and life He offers. This is the Ripple Effect of the Rock of the gospel being shared, and the Great Commission of the Promise, Prophecy, Command and Strategy of Acts 1:8, being accomplished. This is the witness of Jesus Christ spreading to the ends of the earth.

Today we are part of the Holy Spirit ripples going out from the early proclamation of the gospel in Jerusalem, as those ripples are making their way through eternity.

Acts records Individual Belief experiences

* **Individual FAITH** and Church GROWTH, is the Supernatural work of God, extending the family of God to the ends of the earth, through the ripples of His mighty power,

Act 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were **added** that day about three thousand souls.

Act 4:4 But many of those who had heard the word **believed**, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

The idea that Scripture is presenting, as the church was growing like crazy – was not that everyone was doing a really great job of preaching and evangelizing etc. Nor was it due to motivational or charismatic personalities in the church – but that the Holy Spirit of God was supernaturally, miraculously and unmistakably at work in the world, doing the work and performing the tasks that only the Holy Spirit could do then, and only what the Holy Spirit can do today. It was Supernatural then, and it is Supernatural *TODAY*.

Act 4:32 Now the full number of those who **believed** were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

Act 8:13 Even Simon himself **believed**, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Peter raises Tabitha from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit...

Act 9:42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many **believed** in the Lord.

“It”, referring to Peter raising Tabitha from the dead. While salvation is a point in time, the process of coming to that point is lengthy. God uses you, He was using someone else before He was using you. He will use someone else after you.

1Cor. 3:6-8 MKJV I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. (7) So then neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (8) So he planting, and he watering, are one, and each one shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

We think ‘I have to share; I have to disciple; I am fully responsible to disciple someone.’ Not necessarily so. Yes, we each have responsibility to do what we can in the lives of those whom God brings into our path, but make no mistake about it – it was “**God who gave the increase**”.

As individuals were coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ, the church as a whole was growing and spreading to the ends of the earth.

CONCLUSION:

In closing, I would like to ask you for a personal favor, pertaining to this past month's focus. When you go to work, do you feel you are entering into your mission field? Are you attempting to make your workplace environment or home neighborhood a missions outpost? Do you view yourself as a missionary in residence? Has missions month encouraged you to follow through with anything that is missions oriented?

When we engage in prayer we are entering the unseen Supernatural realm in which God works. If you believe this, if you are viewing yourself as a missionary, your home, work, class, sports group as a missions outpost in order to reach the lost, I need to hear from you about it. I need to know something is happening.

--Thank you.



"Supernatural Elements of *Miracles & Holy Awe*"

June 18, 2017

Theme: Supernatural Divine Miracles and AWE in the church

Text: Acts 1:8



"And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles." -- Act 2:43 ESV

MIRACLES, signs and wonders, are Supernatural occurrences as God is moving as He wills, in His time, in accordance with his Plan, as needed in any given situation. **HOLY AWE** and Reverence refer to the Supernatural awareness, of the presence and work of God, in the ministry for Jesus Christ, to believers and unbelievers alike.

This is the Supernatural Work of the birth and Growth of the Early Church. The History of the Early Church is the story of where we, as Christians have come from. ----**"GOING"**

As we have been focusing on throughout this series, **We can expect the Holy Spirit of God, to move and work as He wills, in His time and in accordance with his Plan, as needed in any given situation.** This is what Christians have always expected from God, and what we can expect from Him today.

Some of the Supernatural elements in the early church were:

¹**Prayer.** ²**Obedient Proclamation of the gospel message.** ³**The Holy Spirit demonstrating His power;** ⁴**Supernatural deeds that only God can perform.** ⁵**People believing and being saved;** ⁶**Opposition to the work of God, through persecution. And ultimately an** ⁷**Awe and Reverence in the lives of those who are experiencing the mighty works of God, moving men, building the church and Convicting the world.**

Previously we learned that the book of ACTS records individual belief experiences and personal salvation. Today we follow up the individual faith experiences with the Church Growth records. As individuals believed and multitudes were added to the church, the attention begins to focus on the overall growth and spread of the church as a whole.

Multiple Individual believers is Church Growth

*** SUPERNATURAL CHURCH GROWTH IS** mentioned in acts more than **10 times**, by descriptions like; "...the church was strengthened, or increased, or multiplied, or "...the Lord added to the church". And when I read on this topic in ACTS, I think about the beginnings of this church – the testimony of this church is the story of the Supernatural work of God, accomplishing His plan, as needed in the situation at hand.

Yet "Church Growth", in Scripture, is *not* a reference to how large a given church was growing, but is the reference to how the "Church" of our Lord Jesus Christ was spreading to *the end of the earth*..

Act 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the **Lord added** to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Act_5:14 And more than ever believers **were added** to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

Act_6:7 And the word of God continued to **increase**, and the number of the disciples **multiplied greatly** in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts Highlights the undeniable, Supernatural workings of God in the life of His church and must be viewed as the work of Christ Himself, at work, building His Church. ^[Mat.16:18]

Act_9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it **multiplied**.

Act_11:24 for he [Barnabas] was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great **many people were added to the Lord**.

Act_12:24 But the word of God **increased and multiplied**.

Act_16:5 So the **churches were strengthened** in the faith, and they **increased in numbers** daily.

These are true, **Historical** accounts of the Supernatural will and plan of God; the Supernatural power of the gospel message; the Supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, along with the obedience of faithful believers. The book of ACTS has 28 chapters and some refer to our present day church life as Acts chapter 29, until the Lord returns.

ACTS gives us examples of people whoIn Their Going, were partnering with God and participating in His Supernatural work. Acts does not document how skilled and qualified the people were, but rather it documents what happened when people supernaturally partnered with the plan of God and the power of His Holy Spirit.

"Church Growth" does not occur by hearing what someone's strategy for Church Growth is and then trying to replicate it in our situation and expect the same results. Church Growth did not occur by seeing what some group did and trying to do the same thing, and expecting a repeat performance by God in their own circumstances.

I don't think or at least I can't recall ever personally attending a "church Growth" seminar, that was focused on prayer and fasting for revival; obedience and surrender to the filling of God's Holy Spirit; the promised power of the gospel message; the plan and will and timing of God; or opposition from the enemy in spiritual warfare, as is presented in the book of Acts.

Typical Church Growth topics or issues addressed are: ¹learning the strategy from a new book; ²better vision casting; ³capital campaign and better financial planning; ⁴more effective advertising; ⁵higher quality of personnel; and ⁶location, location, location. The last Church Growth seminar that I attended, focused on: "*spending your most money on your best people*". For me, It was extremely disheartening. I believe with all my heart that: (1) We cannot prescribe nor purchase the power of the Holy Spirit, nor can we replicate His work from the past. (2) It does NOT cost one cent, to lead a lost soul to saving faith in Christ, when the Holy Spirit is involved.

"NO MONEY...
does not mean,
... NO MINISTRY."

***I would rather have 10 Christians
devoted to praying and fasting,
than \$10 million dollars donated
to our church's bank account.***

I am more confident in the power of God, than in dependence upon finances. What Church Growth **IS** about, is God at work in mysterious and Supernatural ways, in the history of mankind, through the lives of His obedient servants.

There was a time when it was believed that the Church in China was extinct. At the time there was no records or statistics; there was lots of persecution, but very little available documented evidence or missional studies of the country. Yet as we now know, the church was thriving.

Revivals in Wales and the Great Awakening have staggering statistics and documented accounts and testimonies. But the Church in North Korea is undocumented, with no statistics as we know of. But we do know of certain training camps in other parts of the world who are training people in NK and we know there are several Christian home groups that have been established. WE know of efforts to send Christian literature into North Korea through balloons.

As mentioned earlier, it doesn't cost one cent to reach a lost soul for Christ. "**No money**" does ***NOT*** equal "***No Ministry***". Neither can the Supernatural Work of God necessarily be detected or even documented..

God is at work in NK, God is at work in Saegertown and in our own church – certainly not in the exact same ways, but He is at work in *His* way. We cannot always see or record the Holy Spirit's work, but we have confirmation that His ***Supernatural*** work is occurring.

When we engage in ministry we are partnering with our Supernatural Source. We place ourselves as instruments into His hands in His Supernatural Work. So Historically, Church Growth is the history of the Supernatural power of God on display as Jesus

Christ is building His church.^[Mat.16:18] The next Supernatural elements in the early Church were miracles.

THE EARLY CHURCH AND SUPERNATURAL OCCURRENCES

The Early Church was characterized by the Supernatural Occurrences of God, or miracles, working and moving as He willed. Miracles in the book of ACTS were to confirm and authenticate the message of the gospel of Christ. It seems that after the NT and throughout Church history, this was largely the case.

It also seems that higher levels or numbers of miracles occurred as the gospel spread to new geographical areas and new people groups for the very first time.

GOD'S DIVINE WORKINGS, through signs, wonders, miracles, healings, divine manifestations, or other supernatural occurrences are referred to in ACTS, **20 times** or more. Supernatural manifestations of the power of God, are performed by God, working and moving at his choosing, in His time and in accordance with His Supernatural plan, as needed in the given situation.

I would not hesitate to say, we have experienced some of that in our church, that is Supernatural Occurrences, as God is working, in His way, in His time, in our present situations; **providing** for our needs – like the boiler and broken doors, as well as **protection** from destructive dangers, such as tornados or micro-bursts, and more.

Miracles and the Message of the Gospel

We must acknowledge the Sovereignty of God at all times, and in all situations. This was an **outer focus**, pertaining to the works of

God which supernaturally affected the hearts and receptivity of the lost, to the gospel message.

Joh 3:8 ESV The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The working of the Holy spirit is as unpredictable as the wind. Pentecost wasn't planned or scheduled. The Growth of the church was not prescribed or expected, or programed. It was undeniably and unmistakably the Sovereign work of the Holy Spirit of God at the time.

Now I am not advocating that we learn from no one else, but I am unapologetically stating that we must not depend on anyone, or anything else for the Kingdom results we seek, than God's plan and power. God's work today is a Supernatural work and we are active participants with that work.

Larry Crabb, Christian Counselor and Author, states: "If our results are to be Supernatural, then our *means* must be Supernatural."

Act 2:43-47 ESV (43) And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done **through** the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the **Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

"**Through**" is a word that can mean "**by**", or "through". For instance: "many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles." What might this imply? Credit goes to the apostles. But if we say, "many wonders and signs were being done **through** the apostles", what is the difference? The implication, and I believe this to be more accurately so – the apostles were the tools or the means or the channel through which some power outside of themselves was responsible for using the apostles, - not just the apostles themselves.

Act 4:30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and **signs** and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Act 5:12 Now many **signs** and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

Act 14:3 So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting **signs** and wonders to be done by their hands.

We cannot imitate the power of God, nor should we attempt to. We can pray, be obedient and proclaim the good news. We can be tools used by God in any given situation. But we must remain humble, seeking God's hand in His work, - accepting what He does or does not choose to do in the life of His church, or in our ministry endeavors.

Miracles and Church relations

Supernatural works of God affected the hearts of the early Christians in a manner that opened their hearts to one another.

This was an **Inner focus** pertaining to personal possessions and church needs, to supernaturally draw them together.. Miracles

were not a means whereby certain leaders made themselves rich, but was something God did for His purpose and for the need at hand – bringing great AWE and Reverence and affecting the church. They didn't make anyone rich, but they took on the welfare and concern of one another, so that all had their needs met.

Act 2:43-46 ESV And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46) And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Act 4:32-34 ESV Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. (33) And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (34) There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

Our final point to today regarding the Supernatural elements at work in the early church is...

AWE, FEAR & HOLY REVERENCE

HOLY AWE AND REVERENCE is referred to over **8 times** in ACTS and refers to the Supernatural awareness, of the presence and work of God, in the ministry for Jesus Christ, to believers and unbelievers alike." This was a purifying work of God within the

church. As miracles were experienced, it fostered a holy reverence within the church, which for a time, had a purifying effect.

Holy Reverence for the Lord

Awe, Reverence, Fear affected believers and non-believers.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY, AW. Tozer

The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking.

With our loss of the sense of majesty has come the further loss of religious awe and consciousness of the divine Presence. We have lost our spirit of worship and our ability to withdraw inwardly to meet God in adoring silence. Modern Christianity is simply not producing the kind of Christian who can appreciate or experience the life in the Spirit. The words, "Be still, and know that I am God," mean next to nothing to the self-confident, bustling worshipper in this middle period of the twentieth century.

This loss of the concept of majesty has come just when the forces of religion are making dramatic gains and the churches are more prosperous than at any time within the past several hundred years. But the alarming thing is that our gains are mostly external and our losses wholly internal; and since it is the quality of our religion that is affected by internal conditions, it may be that our supposed gains are but losses spread over a wider field.

Does that sound relevant to the modern church today? Tozer lived 1897-1963. He was addressing the "modern" church 50-60 years

ago. He had some of the same concerns for the church *then*, as we may have for the church of our day.

Act 2:43 And **awe** came **UPON** every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles

Act 5:5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great **fear** came upon all who heard of it.

Act 5:11 And great **fear** came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Act 9:31 So the church throughout all **Judea** and **Galilee** and **Samaria** had peace and was being built up. And walking in the **fear** of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Act 16:29 And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with **fear** he fell down before Paul and Silas.

Act 19:17 And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And **fear** fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.

“Fear” is an awe inspiring reverence for our Holy God.

A New Perspective on the presence of God

In Acts chapter 5:1 Scripture tells of a couple named Annanias and Saphira who were actively serving in the local church. They had lied to the church and to God and God dealt quite sternly and supernaturally with their sin. As a result God struck both Annanias and Saphira and both died.

Act 5:5 ESV When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great **fear** came upon all who heard of it.

“Fear” here is genuine fear of the Lord, Reverence and a holy Awe which, as they realized God meant business regarding sin, had a purifying effect on the church.

OUR ASSIGNMENT:

(1) LOOK FOR AND EXPECT THE SUPERNATURAL

Look for and expect the unexpected and unexplainable workings of God in the life of His church. Expect God to be at work in the church. Expect God to work and move in unexpected ways.

Dr. Thomas Constable: The feeling of awe that the obvious working of God in their midst continued among all the people in Jerusalem. The wonder-inspiring miracles that the apostles performed pointed to God's hand at work and kept this spirit alive. Not the least of these wonders must have been the remarkable unity and self-sacrifice of the believers.^[Acts2:22] Peter stated that Jesus had done "wonders and signs," and Luke wrote that the apostles performed "wonders and signs." This shows again Jesus' continuing work through His servants following His ascension.

A Christian Supernatural Occurrence, is a demonstration of the power and an evidence of the presence of God, through the ministries of His servants, in the name of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Psa 77:12 ESV I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Psa 150:2 ESV Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!

So open your eyes to recognize and acknowledge the wonderful works of God in our church life and in your personal life situation.

(2) PRAY FOR AND EXPECT THE SUPERNATURAL

* Pray for the things that God wants to do, that only God *can* do.

This is not prayer for wild, unBiblical, crazy, fanatical experiences. But it is, prayer for the unmistakable, undeniable, Miraculous, Supernatural, workings of God that only God can do, as is needed in the situation at hand. And it is the prayer of the early church.

Act 4:29-30 ESV And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

We must not be afraid of praying that God's power be demonstrated and His glory be displayed in our day, in our situation. Signs and wonders or Supernatural occurrences are God's works, in His time, in His way to address the need at hand, evidencing his own divine present and involvement. If they are not his will, He simply will not perform them.

CHALLENGE:

1) View Yourself as a Missionary in Residence, wherever you are, and to whomever you meet.

2) SET UP YOUR LIFE ENVIRONMENT as a Missions Outpost and you as the missionary in residence. This would be your class, cubical at work, home area, sports team, etc.

3) DROP THE ROCK of the Gospel in the sea of the unbelieving world.

4) CONTINUE TO BE SUPERNATURALLY and obediently partnering with God in reaching our area of the world for Jesus Christ

5) TRUST GOD TO WORK According to His Supernatural ability, his perfect will and plan, in as needed in any given present day situation.

We have a way of making time for the most important things or the most desirable things in our lives. How we prioritize life will determine who we spend our time and resources. How we spend our time will demonstrate how important each component of our Christian life really is. Where is the component of prayer in your life? Where is the priority of corporate prayer in your life? Corporate prayer is often prioritized below everything else that regularly keeps us from gathering together with other Christians to spend focused time in focused prayer.

If corporate prayer is not a priority, we may not really believe it is all that powerful or all that Supernatural. **Wednesdays** is our church's day for prayer and fasting for Gods' overall kingdom advancement and our own Church's health and growth.

Prayer and Fasting is the key to ministry and to the life of any church congregation.

Mat 26:40-41 ESV And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? (41) **Watch** and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

If our results are to Supernatural, then our means must be Supernatural. WE must look for and pray for, expect and experience God's Supernatural work in our partnership with Him.



"Supernatural Elements of *Christian Persecution*"

June 25, 2017

Theme: Suffering for the word of God and testimony of Jesus

Text: Acts 1:8

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in
Christ Jesus will be persecuted" 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

PERSECUTION is the demonically supernatural attack and
oppression, upon the divinely Supernatural work of God to spread
His glory to the ends of the earth.

The Supernatural PERSECUTION In the Early Church.

INTRODUCTION

Joh 15:17-21 ESV These things I command you, so that you will love one another. (18) "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

(21) But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Joh 16:1-4 ESV "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. (2) They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. (3) And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. (4) But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

So we're looking at the Supernatural Elements in the life of the Early Church.

¹Prayer; ²Proclamation of the gospel message; ³The Holy Spirit demonstrating His power; ⁴People believing and the Church Spreading; ⁵Miraculous deeds and Supernatural occurrences; ⁶Awe and Reverence in the lives of those who are experiencing the mighty works of God. ⁷Opposition to the work of God, through persecution.

These are Supernatural elements – prevalent in the early NT church which I believe we can and should expect to experience in the church today.

What is Christian Persecution? Christian Persecution is any hostility, experienced from the unbelieving world, as a result of one's identification with Jesus Christ. This can include hostile feelings, attitudes words, social treatment and/or physical actions. [OpenDoorsUSA]

Jesus Himself, gives us some useful information about how Christian persecution might be expressed and experienced.

Luk 6:22 ESV "Blessed are you when people ***hate*** you and when they ***exclude you*** and ***revile you*** and ***spurn your name*** as evil, on account of the Son of Man!

- (1) "hate you" – emotional detest;
- (2) "Exclude you"- relational rejection;
- (3) "Revile you"—Personal disrespect, dishonor, shamed;
- (4) "Spurn your name" – Social slander; to equate your name with evil.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

* **PERSECUTION OR SUFFERING** for Christ is mentioned in specific terms nearly **20xs** in Acts; in addition were many actions like beatings, scourging, imprisonments, putting to death, etc. In regard to Christian persecution, we must be prepared and expectant. The enemy does what He can to disrupt what God is doing; To discourage us, as we are witnesses of Christ, sharing His gospel and our own personal testimonies. This is something of which we must be aware.

* **PERSECUTION** is the demonically supernatural attack and oppression, upon the divinely Supernatural work of God to spread His glory to the ends of the earth. It is spiritual opposition.

When opposition occurs, we need not necessarily think we have done something wrong. Opposition to Jesus was common place. Opposition to the message of Jesus and the present day servants of Jesus should not be surprising, discouraging nor distracting from the work He has given us to do.

Throughout the New Testament and Church History..

Suffering *for* Christ is considered as suffering *with* Christ

The Apostle Paul writes:

Rom 8:16-18 ESV The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (18) ***For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.***

Paul was a religious terrorist, bringing persecution to the Church only to become part of the church and one who also experience persecution.

Act 8:1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

The Apostle John wrote:

Rev 1:9 ESV I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Throughout Church history, Persecuted Christians considered...

It an honor to suffer *for* Christ.

*It was expected and was considered an honor to suffer for their faith. New Testaments Christians were not deterred nor defeated by persecution.

Paul gives this testimony...

Php. 3:8-10 ESV Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith-- (10) that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and ***may share his sufferings***, becoming like him in his death,

It's not that they want to die serving Christ, but many are willing to face death, if that is what it comes to. The persecuted church considers "persecution" as suffering *with* Christ and an honor to suffer *for* Christ.

A very brief look at ...

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN THE NT CHURCH

* Persecution is Supernatural. Its purpose is 2 fold. (1) The devil uses persecution to attempt to destroy the church. (2) God allows persecution in order to purify and build up His church. "What the devil meant for evil, God means for good." ^[Gen.50:20]

Testimonies and Examples of Persecution.

* Persecution reveals human weakness and released God's strength in the situation at hand.

2Cor. 4:7-11 ESV But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (8) We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying in the body the death of ***Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*** (11) ***For we who live are always being given over to***

death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Christian persecution reveals our weaknesses, but also releases and displays god's Supernatural strength in the situation at hand.

Heb 11:36-38 ESV Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated-- (38) of whom the world was not worthy--wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Spiritual Battles

PERSECUTION is the demonically supernatural attack and oppression, upon the divinely Supernatural work of God to spread His glory to the ends of the earth. The early church knew that persecution was a spiritual battle.

Eph 6:12 ESV For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

2Cor 10:3-4 ESV (3) For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Persecution is a spiritual battle between God's work and the devil's work. Those who realize this, can experience persecution, while not hating their persecutors, but loving them.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY

* Church History is the story of the global church over the past 2000 years. "Many Americans view the global church as "third-world", needy, uneducated and poor - sorely lacking in much of what we assume the church needs to function well. but the irony is that we are in much greater need of them." – Dr Carl Moeller, "the Privilege of Persecution".

Early Church Martyrs

While unfortunate and grievous, it is not unusual for Christians to die *for* their faith in Jesus. Throughout history, many Christians have considered persecution an honor to join *with* Christ in His sufferings. Even as they died, many did not complain, but they praised God for the opportunity to suffer *with* Him and die *for* Him.

i) **POLYCARP**, (69-155AD) a disciple of the Apostle John. Served as the Bishop of Smirna and, ardantly addressed the heresies of his day, Polycarp had been a Christian since he was a child, but the Romans didn't get around to killing him until he was in his eighties. Whatever the reason for the delay, it is still the first recorded martyrdom in post-New Testament church history.

In the *Martyrdom*, Polycarp is recorded as saying on the day of his death, "Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong". (ChristianityToday.com)

"How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior? You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season, and after a little while is quenched; but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment that is prepared for the wicked." Polycarp was burned at the stake and was pierced with a spear for refusing to burn incense to the Roman Emperor.^[14] On his farewell, he said

"I bless you Father for judging me worthy of this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ." [Eerdman's Handbook of the History of Christianity, p81]

Polycarp's testimony is one of honor in suffering for Christ.

ii) **RICHARD WURMBRAND:** In his book "Tortured for Christ", Romanian Pastor Richard Wurmbrand writes these words about his 15 years of torture, prior to his release in 1964. .

God is the Truth. The Bible is the Truth about the Truth. Theology is the truth, about the Truth, about the Truth. Christian people live in these many truths about the Truth and because of them, they have not the Truth. Hungry, beaten and drugged, we had forgotten theology and the Bible. We had forgotten the truths about the Truth, therefore we lived in the Truth. It is written, "the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him". (Mat.24:44) We could not think anymore. In our darkest hours of torture, the Son of Man came to us, making the prison walls shine like diamonds and filling the cells with light. Somewhere, far away, were the torturers below us in the sphere of the body. But the spirit rejoiced in the Lord. WE would not have given up this joy for that of kingly palaces." -R.Wurmbrand

It was an honor to suffer for Christ and in it, the Supernatural strength and presence of the Lord was displayed in their given situation.

What can we expect in the future?

IN THE WORLD? Dr Moeller writes:

"There is definitely a place for understanding persecution in the West. (West referring to USA and Western Europe). If Scripture says that all believers who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted (2Tim.3:12), what will that look like to us? The concept of persecution comes with a certain acknowledgement

that there is going to be a struggle. What is our struggle? How well are we doing with it? These are just a few of the important questions we are attempting to think through, in this book.”
(Priv.of Persecution,p14)

We who are free, need to understand the privilege of persecution, used in the hands of the Savior to align our priorities and focus our ministry on the things that will matter most for eternity.”(p15)

IN AMERICA?

Is America experiencing Christian persecution? I believe, yes at certain places and at lower levels. Persecution often begins by nearly unnoticeable events or sentiments. They grow into more severe and more widespread levels of persecution, attitudes, treatment and physical actions.

I believe America is experiencing persecution, when Christians are forced to bake cakes for gay weddings. I believe the removal of Prayer and the Bible from our educational system and other public places are low level persecution.

In America, pressure and pain seem to drive people away from God. But in the global church outside North America, it tends to drive people toward Him and there is often a genuine sense of honor that they get a chance to suffer for Jesus Christ.”(PoP, p19)

1Pet. 2:19-21 ESV For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. (20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. (21) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

And while we may be experiencing Christian persecution in America, it is a far cry from the persecution experienced in the closed countries around the world, where prison, torture, beatings, death, and even imprisonment and death of 3rd generation family members, as is practiced in NK, is common place.

More of the same, if not worse

* Remember the purpose of persecution. God doesn't stop His work on and through the church, even in persecution.

Joh 15:18-20 ESV "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

16:1-2 ESV "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. (2) They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

Joh 16:32-33 ESV Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. (33) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; ***I have overcome the world.***"

"But understand this, that in the last days there will come ***times of difficulty***." (2Timi.3:1-5)

"Then they will deliver you up to ***tribulation*** and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake."
(Mat.24:4-13)

Assignment:

Persecution is more about God purifying the church and spreading the gospel of Christ, than it is the loss of Christian rights and the shame of Christian suffering. Too often as Christians, we spend more time complaining that our rights were violated, than we do thinking about being honored to experience the same treatment that Jesus received.

Persecution at any level will prove to be character developing and faith forging; revealing the inner quality and deepest convictions of the person or group being targeted.

Keep this in Mind...

1) Expect Persecution and expect it to *increase*. Do not be lulled when there is peace and safety and religious rights, thinking that this is what we deserve and this is the way it will always be for us.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall **tribulation**, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

2) Pray for brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering and experiencing serious persecution for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Rom 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in **tribulation**, be constant in prayer.

Pray for the persecuted. One day they may be praying for us.

3) Be ever hopeful that though we experience suffering and tribulation, Jesus is still the Victor, we still have the Victory in Him. God is in control over all He has created and will one day bring all things under the Lordship and Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joh 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have **tribulation**. But be courageous; *I have overcome the world.*"

4) Remember, Christians throughout Church History have experienced extreme circumstances and severe persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ, and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is still spreading; Jesus is still building His church. (Mat.16:18) "Be of good cheer, *I have overcome the world.*"

5) There is a Supernatural, eternally positive aspect of persecution.

i) In persecution, there are blessings of Kingdom inheritance.

Mat 5:10 ESV "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Regardless of what we experience on earth, we have as our eternal home – an eternal righteous dwelling place.

ii) In persecution, there are blessings of joy.

Mat 5:11-12 ESV "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12) Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Why can we rejoice in suffering? We know that our reward in heaven is great.

iii) In persecution, there is proof to whom we belong

Persecution highlights what we believe, where we stand and who it is we represent – that is, our Lord Jesus Christ!

The history of Christian persecution is also the history of Christian prayer, Revival, God's plan and blessings and the spread of the church, worldwide.

* **PERSECUTION** is the demonically supernatural attack and oppression, upon the divinely Supernatural work of God to spread His glory to the ends of the earth. It is spiritual opposition, against the Almighty and those who belong to Christ.

2 Cor.11:30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. (2Cor.11:24-30)

Persecution: James 1:2, 17; 1 Pet.1:6-7; 1:21; 3:14, 17; 4:12, 19; Acts 14:22; Rom.1:9; 7:14; 8:35; 12:12; | 1Cor.4:10-14; 2Cor.4:7-12; 2Cor.11:24-30; 12:10; Phil.1:29; 3:10; 4:11-13; | Col.1:24; 2Cor.1:4; 4:17; 6:4; 1Thes. 1:6; 3:3,7; 2Thes.1:4; Heb.10:30; 11:37; | **Prison:** Acts 5:18; 8:3; 12:5; 16:23; 22:4; Heb.11:36; Rev.2:10;

Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--Rom 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
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Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...
your highest calling,
your greatest purpose,
your soul's source and joy,
and your all-consuming passion.*

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Life Line Resources

May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

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