

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **ACTS LESSON 6**

### **The Gospel into All the World (Acts 20-22)**

#### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20: 32). Welcome to our study of Acts 20-22, where the apostle Paul continues to spread the Gospel to the entire world. What is so amazing about Paul is his determination—his ability to “stay the course” and never give up. In Acts 19 and the first part of Acts 20 we learn that an uproar has occurred. Paul embraces the brethren, does not give up and goes on about his work. He goes on to Asia, to Philippi, and eventually all the way to Jerusalem itself. Paul is thus seen as a man who never gave up. In the face of discouragement, this teaches us, too, that we must “stick in there” and never give up. Paul gives us a key to how to do this in Philippians 3:12-14 where he said,

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

This is the attitude that we need to have. Let’s forget about the things of the past. If someone does not want to hear the Gospel, we must not let that get us down. Rather, we must put that behind us and press on to “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Let’s keep doing the Lord’s will because ultimately Heaven **will** be worth it all! In Romans 8:18 Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us in Christ Jesus.” So, let’s have an attitude that we will not give up, and that we will do the will of God. We must be “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10), just like the apostle Paul.

As we enter into Acts 20, here we see a clear example of Christians partaking of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week. I want to turn your attention to Acts 20:7—“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” It was on the first day of the week when Christians had gathered together to worship. Their purpose in gathering on the first day of the week was “to break bread”—to remember the death of the Lord through the Lord’s Supper. The question arises, “How do we today as Christians find authority for the things we do in religion?” It is important that we have authority, because Colossians 3:17 says, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of [by the authority of] the Lord Jesus.” In 1 Corinthians 4:6 we are told not to “go beyond that which is written.” The Bible says in Revelation 22:18-19 that we must not add to or take away from the Word of God, but instead do exactly what it says. So how do we find authority for what we do today?

There are three ways we can find authority. First, we can find authority via an express, explicit command. If God says, “Do this,” then we do it. “Go into all the world...” (Mt. 28:18) is a direct command. Second, we can find authority by necessary inference. The authority is

given in such a way that we infer that it must be followed. For example, when Jesus said, “Go into all the world...,” we understand that we must use certain means to do that—whether it be by airplane, train, boat, or by car. The command includes other elements that are acceptable, and that do not get in the way of carrying out the command, but instead help us carry it out. Third, we find authority by approved example. We see examples in the New Testament of first-century Christians doing certain things, and so today we do what they did. Acts 20:7 falls into this category. It is an approved example of the regularity of the Lord’s Supper. What is interesting about the Lord’s Supper is that in Matthew 26:26-29 we see Jesus instituting the Lord’s Supper by saying, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Thus, the Lord’s Supper is a memorial of Christ’s death. The bread represents His body, and the fruit of the vine represents the blood that He shed for us.

Yet so many people are greatly confused about the regularity of the Lord’s Supper. In fact, many religious groups today partake of the Lord’s Supper only at times like Christmas or Easter. Others partake of it once a month. But what does the Bible say? Acts 20:7 says that the Christians came together “on the first day of the week to break bread.” Question: How many weeks have a first day? You may say, “That’s an odd question.” Yes, it is—because, as we know, **every** week has a first day. We understand that. It is common sense. What week, then, is being discussed in Acts 20:7? There is no particular week. Thus, from this particular example we learn that Christians came together on the first day of **every** week to remember the Lord’s death. There is an exact parallel to this in Exodus 20:8 as it relates to the Sabbath. God said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Every week had a Sabbath. God did not have to say to the Israelites, “You remember **every** Sabbath that comes around.” Rather, He simply said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The Jews correctly understood that meant that on every Sabbath that rolled around, they were to rest and remember that day. Look at the language of Acts 20:7, and compare it with the language of Exodus 20:8. Acts 20:7 records, “On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.” Every week has a first day. So we ought to follow that example.

But you know what is odd? People have no trouble understanding this language as it relates to giving. Any religious group you attend takes up a collection **every** first day of the week. Why is that? In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we find another approved example. The Bible says, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (vs. 2). The language of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and Acts 20:7 is a direct parallel. “On the first day of the week, let each of you lay something aside....” And, Christians came together “on the first day of the week to break bread.” On the one hand, we understand the language to mean that on the first day of every week we are to give to the Lord. But we have trouble when it comes to the language used to describe partaking of the Lord’s Supper? Do you see the inconsistency to this? If we are going to do what the Bible says and be New Testament Christians, then we need to go back and do exactly what God said regarding the Lord’s Supper. We need to partake of it every first day of the week because that is what is authorized in the Bible.

As we continue in Acts 20, we find Paul talking to the elders in Ephesus to give them some words of encouragement. They kneel together to pray in what is a very tender scene. But notice what Paul said to these elders. In Acts 20:20 he told them that had kept back nothing helpful. Then, in Acts 20:27-28 he said that he had preached “the whole counsel of God.” We learn from these two texts that we as Gospel preachers—people who proclaim the Word of God—must never hold back anything that is found within the Bible. The only way we can make sure that we are right with God is to preach “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). We need to “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2-4). We need to “speak as the or-

acles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11) and say only what God has said. We need more people who not only have the attitude of Balaam, but who will follow God's Word. In Numbers 22:18, Balaam said, "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." The prophet Micaiah said, "Whatever my God says to me, that will I speak" (2 Chr. 18:13).

In Acts 20:26-27, Paul said, "I am innocent of the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." How is it that we as Christians also can be innocent in regard to people's souls today? The only way is when we are careful (and ready) to spread the Gospel to a lost and dying world. Do you remember the opposite of being innocent of the blood of all men? It is found in Ezekiel 3 and Ezekiel 33 where we see the trumpeter who is to stand on a high tower and watch for the approaching enemy. When he sees the enemy and blows the trumpet, if the people do not heed the warning and die, then their blood will be on their own heads. But if the trumpeter sees the enemy coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people, then if the people perish, God will require their blood at his hand. Relate that to evangelism. The great enemy is the devil. The plan of salvation is the blowing of the trumpet—the call to the people to get ready (what we refer to as "the Gospel call," 2 Thess. 2:14-15). If we stand by, see people who are lost in sin, and do absolutely nothing, can we really say, "I followed the Lord's will, and I am innocent of the blood of all men because I have done what God wanted me to do"? Of course not! Part of being a faithful child of God is that we are willing to tell others about Jesus. Do you remember Jesus' dying request? The last command that He gave to His followers was, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). Because we have been saved, we should want to tell others about Jesus. According to 1 Peter 2:9, we have been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light." We ought to be willing and ready to tell every person about Jesus. In Colossians 1:28 Paul said, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

Now I would like you to turn your attention to Acts 20:28. In the section where Paul is speaking to the elders in Ephesus, notice what he tells these men that their responsibility is. What is the responsibility of true shepherds (elders) today? Paul said, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." These men had an awesome responsibility. They were to "watch out" for what was going on in the flock. They were to feed the flock. They were to lead the flock, and be careful about false doctrines that might affect the flock. The same is true of godly elders today. In the Bible, elders are men who meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and who have been set up as leaders among God's people to take them the proper way. We know that elders watch for people's souls, and will give an account on the Day of Judgment (Heb. 13:17). But what is important to understand is that elders have a serious spiritual responsibility. They are to "watch out"—but for what? They are to make sure that people do not fall into sin. They are to make sure that, among the congregation, no one is teaching false doctrine. They are to be leaders. People will get in line and follow a good leader. Elders are to be the ones who say, "This is the way God wants us to go, and we are ready to go that way. Get in line and follow us as we follow Jesus" (1 Cor. 11:1). Elders also are to ensure that the flock is fed. Just like a good shepherd who looks for green pastures for his flock, so elders are men who must lead people toward spiritual food. They are to make sure that the preaching is correct, and that Bible passages are used as they should be. Elders must make sure that opportunities are available, and plans are made, for people to get involved and to study the Word of God together. What an awesome responsibility that is.

But this responsibility is directly tied in to Paul's words of encouragement in Acts 20:32. Paul said, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Paul said to these godly, spiritual leaders, "You need to turn your attention to God and to the Word of God, which will build you up and give you a heavenly home." How can we make sure that we are edified? How can we make sure that we headed toward Heaven? The only way is to give ourselves over fully to a study of the Word of God. It is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Hebrews 4:12 tells us that "the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The power is in God's Word. That is what will save us. In James 1:21 James said, "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." In 1 Peter 1:25 we are told that we are born again by the Word of God "which lives and abides forever." "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Is. 40:8). The clarion call is made in Jeremiah 22:29, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" That call is made by Jeremiah on God's behalf because the only way by which people can be saved is by giving heed to the Word of God and its teachings.

In Acts 20:35, Paul mentions to these elders a teaching of Jesus that is not found in the Gospel accounts. Nor is it to be found in the Book of Revelation in the letters to the seven churches. The only words of Jesus that we have in the Book of Acts that are not found elsewhere are found in Acts 20:35—"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" No one could make that statement with any more assurance than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus really knew what it meant to give. He gave His whole life. He left Heaven, and then came to Earth to live as a sacrifice for us. **That** is what it means to give. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we are told, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Jesus left the halls of Heaven to come live among men. He did not even have a place to call His own. People laughed at Him, spit upon Him, and mocked Him. Why? It was because of His love for us. Doesn't that bring more meaning to John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life")? Jesus truly exemplified this teaching. But how is it practical for us today? The fact that it is more blessed to give than to receive teaches us that we ought not to be people with our hands out wanting something. Rather, we ought to be looking for ways that we can help others. The servant of God and follower of Christ in Scripture is considered to be a servant. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." We ought to look for ways in which we can help others. If there is someone hurting or in need and does not have the necessities of life, we need to ask, "What can I give them that will help them?" It is so true that it is more blessed to give. It makes us happier when we give than when we receive.

Just like the elders and Paul in Acts 20, we today need to be a people of prayer. One of the most encouraging passages in Acts 20 is found in verse 36 where we see Paul and the elders gathering together to pray. They kneel down and pray together, and Paul asks God to bless these elders and upon the work they are doing. We need to be like this today—a people of prayer. Oh, how often prayer is neglected in the Christian's life. In Luke 18:1, Jesus said, "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart." When we get discouraged, how can we overcome that? We must pray—"always, and never lose heart." In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we are told to "pray without ceasing." In James 5:16 we learn that "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Look at the example of Christ. In Mark 1:35 the Bible says that "in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went

out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Jesus knew the power of prayer. We need more people today like Daniel. In Daniel 6 when the edict was sent out that no one could pray to any other god, and that when the trumpet sounded all people had to turn toward the idol and pray to it, Daniel opened his window (as was his custom from his childhood) to pray toward Jerusalem three times a day. We need to be a people of prayer today. We need to turn to God in times of need.

Now I want to turn our attention to Acts 21, where Paul continues his journey toward Jerusalem. A little later in the chapter he reaches his final destination, and the events surrounding that do not seem to go very well for him. He arrives in Jerusalem, and because of his preaching and beliefs he is taken prisoner. The Jews wanted to kill him, but the Roman government was able to prevent that from happening. In Acts 21:13-14, Paul is warned about his ultimate situation. A prophecy is given that he will not go to Jerusalem without being bound, and that he may even die. But look at what Paul says in Acts 21:14, which is one of the great models in Paul’s life. He says, “The will of the Lord be done.” This is the exact attitude that we need today. Whether we live or die, may we say simply, “The will of the Lord be done through us as Christians.” As I think of this, I am reminded of Matthew 26. Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is in deep sorrow of heart. His sweat was like drops of blood. He was in deep anguish. So, in Matthew 26, when Jesus was suffering greatly, He said, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (vs. 39). **That** is the right attitude. Whatever God’s will is, we need to say, “God, **Your** will be done!” Whether we live or die, or regardless of what God has in mind for us, we need to let God’s will be done. I always enjoy hearing a prayer end with the phrase, “Father, **if these things be Your will**, let them come to pass.”

In the rest of chapter 21, Paul arrives in Jerusalem at the time of purification. He begins to work with some of the people there, and the Jews (who are very angry at Paul) have him taken prisoner. Lysias, the commander of the Roman regiment, takes him prisoner. He finds out from Paul that he is a Roman citizen. Lysias allows Paul to speak to the Jews. Then, in Acts 22 we see the conversion of Paul recounted. Remember that in Acts 9 we saw for the first time the account of Paul’s conversion. Now, in Acts 22, Paul recounts his conversion for the Jews in Jerusalem. He begins by telling them how he was on the road to Damascus, intent on taking Christians to prison. But a great light shone around him and he heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” Saul cried out, “Lord, who are you?” “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” Saul then asked, “Lord, what would you have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Thus, we learn what Saul had to do to be saved. The answer is found when Ananias comes to Saul with God’s command regarding his salvation. In Acts 22:16 we read, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” What did Saul have to do to be saved? He had been praying (we learn from Acts 9:10-12). If there was ever a man who uttered a sinner’s prayer, it was Saul. He was blind, and he was praying. But Ananias comes to him and tells him to get up, be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. We learn some very important principles about baptism from Saul’s conversion. At what point is a man’s sin washed away? We can know that at whatever point the sin is washed away, that is the point where salvation is granted. Sin is what separates a man from God. Isaiah 59:1-2 tells us that our sins have separated us from a holy God. Habakkuk 1:12-13 says that God is of pure eyes that cannot behold evil, and that He cannot look upon wickedness. So, sin severs man from God. Thus, at whatever point those sins are washed away, we can know that man’s relationship with God is bound together again and that salvation is granted. What point is that? Listen again to Acts 22:16—“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” When Saul was immersed into the body of Christ for the remission of his sins, that

is the point at which salvation occurred. Is belief important? Yes, it is. Is repentance important? Sure. Is it important that we confess the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:10)? Yes, it is. But you can do all of those things and still be lost if you are not baptized in order to have your sins washed away. A lot of people say that all a person has to do to be saved is to “call on the name of the Lord.” Acts 2:21 does indeed say that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Biblically speaking, however, at what point does a person “call on the name of the Lord”? Acts 22:16 tells us the point at which we call on the name of the Lord. A man or woman calls on the name of the Lord by being baptized in order to have his or her sins washed away. Listen again to Acts 22:16—“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” We call on God’s name by doing what God says, which includes being baptized for the remission of our sins.

Notice in Acts 22, as Paul recounts this, that he also tells us about the important mission on which God had sent him. In Acts 22:21 we find, “Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’” This was God’s command to Paul. God told Paul after he became a Christian, “Now I have a mission for you. I want you to get out of Jerusalem. I am going to send you far from here to go and teach the Gospel unto the Gentiles.” Paul had a mission (a purpose) as a child of God, which was to glorify God in everything he did, especially as he spread the blessed Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That same mission of the apostle Paul is our goal and purpose today. We want you to know that there is a God in Heaven Who loves you deeply, and Who wants to have a relationship with you. He loves you so much that He sent His Son to die on the cruel cross so that you can have the hope of Heaven. God loves you so much that He has made it possible for you to know His will and to obey Him. What must you do to become a Christian? You must do what they did in the New Testament. They heard the Word of God. They believed that Jesus is God’s Son. They were willing to repent of the things in their lives that were not right. They confessed the name of Jesus. And they were baptized to have their sins washed away. If you ask yourself, “Did I do those things when I became a Christian?” If not, then I kindly say to you that you are not a child of God. But you can be. It is my hope and prayer today that you will commend yourself to the Word of God and to God’s grace, which can build you up and give you a heavenly heritage.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST* is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today’s broadcast, please write to:

***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***  
**607 McLish Ave.**  
**Ardmore, OK 73401**

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at [www.thegospelofchrist.com](http://www.thegospelofchrist.com). We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where “the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached.”

## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR ACTS LESSON 6 (CHAPTERS 20-22)

1. What point was Paul writing to get across to Christians in Philippians 3:12-14?
2. What point was Paul making in Romans 8:18 ("For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us in Christ Jesus")?
3. What important "approved example" do we find in Acts 20:7 that we today must observe in our worship of God?
4. What does Colossians 3:17 admonish all Christians to do?
5. What does 1 Corinthians 4:6 admonish us not to do?
6. In Revelation 22:18-19, what are we admonished not to do?
7. There are three ways to establish biblical authority. What is the first way?
8. There are three ways to establish biblical authority. What is the second way?
9. There are three ways to establish biblical authority. What is the third way?
10. In Acts 20:20 Paul said that had not done something. What was it?
11. What important point regarding God's authority did the prophet Micaiah make, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 18:13?
12. What, according to Paul's statement in Acts 20:26-27, had he done that made him "innocent of the blood of all men"?
13. What, according to 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, are Christians supposed to do on the first day of the week when they come together to worship?
14. According to Colossians 1:28, what should be one of the goals of every Christian?
15. In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 we find the qualifications for a specific group of leaders in the church. Who are those leaders?
16. According to Romans 1:16, what is the Gospel?
17. According to James 1:21, what power does the Word of God possess?
18. Acts 20:35 contains the only words of Christ not found within the gospel accounts or the letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. What are those words?
19. What significant event in the life of Paul is recorded in Acts 21?
20. What is the common element running through both Acts 9 and Acts 22?