

Orchard Road Presbyterian Church

Bible For All (BFA) Studies

Overview

In these studies, we will see (1) how the council of Jerusalem established the unity of the church by uniting the Jews and Gentiles under the one Gospel of God's grace in Christ, and how this unity is nonetheless to be preserved through the efforts of the church in accommodating the cultural differences within without compromising on the truth of the Gospel (Acts 15); (2) how idolatry among the Gentiles in Athens were challenged by the resurrection message preached by Paul (Acts 17); (3) how this resurrection message is also the message of hope that motivates all our lives and ministries (Acts 24); and (4) how we may take courage in serving God tirelessly in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28).

New BFA Study Format

The BFA studies have been reformatted to follow a 4-step process that is designed to better help us arrive at the meaning of each passage and thus apply it in our lives. Each study will: (**Step 1**) introduce the *context* of the passage; (**Step 2**) lead us to make *observations* of the text; (**Step 3**) guide us in interpreting the *meaning* of the observations and thus draw out the main idea and intent of the text. This key step ensures that we have rightly drawn out the main message before (**Step 4**) discussing how we can make *applications* from the truths gleaned from the text.

Summing up the main idea and intent of the passage will likely be the most challenging part of each study. However, we hope that by practicing this 'COMA' method whenever we read God's Word, we will be able to observe, interpret, and apply the text with increasing competency and confidence.

Let each of us, therefore, "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*" 2 Timothy 2:15

May the studying and sharing of how God has spoken to us through His word bring us into an ever increasing awareness of His grace and presence among us, to build and unite us in this faith community of ours in His bond of love.

4 Nov 2018

Acts 15:1-21

You Will Work With Councils

11 Nov 2018

Acts 17:22-34

You Will Speak With Wisdom

18 Nov 2018

Acts 24:1-21

The Reason For Paul's Trial

25 Nov 2018

Acts 28:11-31

You Will Go To Rome

Sermon Date: 4 Nov 2018

Passage: Acts 15:1-21

Topic: **You Will Work With Councils**

Context

Acts 8-14 reveals the sovereign hand of God at work in the lives of individuals and we see how these stories are intertwined with the global movement of the Gospel: Paul received grace and became an apostle to the Gentiles; Herod was struck dead and was eaten by worms; Persecution and Stephen's death led to the spread of the Gospel to Antioch; A crisis between the Jews and Gentiles was averted through Cornelius; The Antioch church demonstrated its unity with the Jerusalem church by sending help through Barnabas and Paul; and the death of James led to the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile nations through Paul's first missionary journey. Acts 13-14 detailed how the gospel was first preached to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, each time accompanied by persecutions and suffering, thus fulfilling God's word to Paul in Acts 9:15-16. Acts 15 is part of this larger plan of God to bring the gospel to the Jews first, and then also to the Gentiles, thus uniting the two into one through the Gospel (Acts 1:8). God did so using the unflinching testimonies of His witnesses then and He continues to do so today.

Observations

- I. Scene 1. The conflict. vv. 1-5
 - a. Who are the main characters in this scene?

 - b. How was Paul and Barnabas received along the way to Jerusalem?

 - c. What is causing the tension in the text? How was the issue described?

- II. Scene 2. Peter's speech. vv. 6-12
 - a. What did the church leaders do to resolve the conflict?

 - b. In Peter's speech from v.7 to 11, how was God portrayed?

 - c. What warning did Peter give?

 - d. What conclusion Peter did draw from the episode?

 - e. What changes did you see in the church through her responses?

- III. Scene 3. James' speech. vv. 13-21
 - a. How did James see God in Peter's story?

 - b. How did James support his interpretation of God's involvement and intention in Peter's story?

 - c. What practical instructions did James give at his conclusion?

Meaning

- a) a) What was deficient in circumcision party's belief and teaching about the Gospel? What problems could their wrong belief lead to?
- b) What was the reason for the way Barnabas and Paul were received before reaching Jerusalem? Why was their warm reception highlighted?
- b) a) How is the Lordship of Christ reflected in the way the church leaders handled the conflict?
- b) What did the church see in Peter's explanation that caused her to change her response? What does this passage teach about God's sovereignty and His grace?
- c) a) How does Peter's account as a fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy cited by James contribute to our understanding of what God is doing in salvation history?
- b) How is James' instruction to the Gentile believers important for the unity of the church?

Sum up the main idea and intent of the text:

State the subject question (what key question is the text addressing?).

State the main idea (what is/are the text's answer(s) to the subject question?).

What do you think is the aim/intent of this text?

Sermon Date: 11 Nov 2018

Passage: Acts 17:22-34

Topic: **You Will Speak With Wisdom**

Context

Paul was on his second missionary journey having been to Corinth, Thessalonica, and Berea. He was waiting at Athens for Timothy and Silas to rejoin him when we are told in v.16 that the sight of the city filled with idolatry troubled Paul. So Paul spent days in the synagogue and marketplaces reasoning and preaching Christ to the people before he was invited to Areopagus, also known as Mars' hill, to present his message to the Athenian council.

Observations

- I. About Paul's audience (vv. 22-23)
 - a. Where was Paul preaching?

 - b. What kind of place and audience was Paul preaching to?

 - c. What observations did Paul make about his audience and their problem?

 - d. What was Paul's stated intent in his preaching?

- II. About Paul's preaching (vv. 24-31)
 - a. What did Paul teach about God?

 - b. What did Paul teach about who man is and his condition?

 - c. What did Paul teach about God's answer to man's condition?

- III. About the response to Paul's message (vv. 32-34)
 - a. What kind of response did Paul receive?

 - b. what was Paul's reaction to the responses?

Meaning

1. What qualified Paul to declare those words in v. 23? What does that tell you about the knowability of God?
2. What is the cause of the Athenians' idolatry? How did their idolatry obscure the reality of who God is and who they were?
3. What must a person do to know God and worship Him rightly?
4. What is the significance of the resurrection according to Paul?
5. Why did Luke show us how Paul walk out on his audience? What is the final cause of the Athenians' continuation in idolatry?

Sum up the main idea and intent of the text:

State the subject question (what key question is the text addressing?).

State the main idea (what is/are the text's answer(s) to the subject question?).

What do you think is the aim/intent of this text?

Applications

- A. How is the Athenians' spiritual condition representative of the spiritual condition of the world around us? What are some modern forms of idolatries that have obscured who God is and who we are made to be in our present society?

- B. Who are the people God has brought you to who are yet ignorant of the truth that God has already made Himself known to us? What can you do for them?

- C. Is the life of God or the life of the world more and more evident in your life, energising all that you do? If it is the later, can you identify idols that you are holding on to, and the dangers they posed in where they are leading you?

- D. How have/can you allow the way God has made Himself known to you through His creation and providence influence what is dearest to you?

- E. How have/can you allow Christ's death, resurrection and coming judgment to direct the preoccupation of your heart?

- F. Commit Ephesian 4:17 to memory.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

Sermon Date: 18 Nov 2018

Passage: Acts 24:1-21

Topic: **The Reason For Paul's Trial**

Context

As part of God's plan to bring Paul before the Jews, the Gentiles, and their kings to testify of the Gospel (Acts 9:15), Paul was arrested in Jerusalem as Agabus predicted (Acts 21:11) and brought before the governor Felix for an unfair trial. This arrest and trial would eventually lead Paul to Rome, to appear before Caesar. Like the plots that led to the crucifixion of Christ, behind these evil plots to harm God's servant is the divine hand to accomplish His pre-ordained purposes.

Observations

I. v. 1-9 The false reason for Paul's trial

- a. Who are the people involved in Paul's trial? Whose side are they on?

- b. What can you know about Tertullus from the way he put forth his accusation against Paul?

- c. What was the charge brought against Paul?

- d. How would you describe the odds Paul was up against?

II. V. 10-13 The false reason exposed

- a. How would you describe Paul's manners and posture during the trial?

- b. What facts in Paul's defense debunk the false charges against him?

III. V.14-21 The true reason explained

- a. What reasons did Paul give for always keeping his own conscience clear?

- b. What deeds of Paul showed his piety and innocence in God's sight?

- c. What reason did Paul say he was on trial for?

Meaning

1. What is the resurrection of dead? How is it related to the hope written in the Law and Prophets, dearly held on by the Jews? See Acts 24:15; Dan 12:1-3; Acts 26:6-7.
2. How does the good news of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus turn this Jewish hope into the Christian hope for which Paul is on trial? See Acts 17:31-32; John 5:28-29; Rev 20:11-15.
3. What can we learn from this passage about the driving motivation behind Paul's life and ministry?

Sum up the main idea and intent of the text:

State the subject question (what key question is the text addressing?).

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What do you think is the aim/intent of this text?

Applications

A. What situations have you faced that intimidate you from living for the Lord Jesus Christ?

B. How has/can this hope of the future resurrection empower you for godly living?

C. What would you say if you are asked to state the hope that is in you?

D. Commit one of these two verses to memory:

1Peter 1:13 (ESV)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1Peter 3:15 (ESV)

but in your hearts honour 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,

Sermon Date: 25 Nov 2018

Passage: Acts 28:11-31

Topic: **You Will Go To Rome**

Context

After Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, followed by three trials before governor Felix, Festus and King Agrippa, Paul's appeal to Caesar was granted and he was transported from Caesarea to Rome. Along the way, he was shipwrecked, but eventually arrived safely at Rome.

Observations

- I. The means by which courage was given to Paul. Vv. 11-16
 - a. What clues in the text shows that the ancient world realised the need for journey mercies through supernatural protection?

 - b. What provisions did God supply along the way to bring Paul to Rome as well as to strengthen him?

 - c. What in the text shows that Paul recognised God's hand in his entire journey? What effects did this realization had on Paul?

 - II. The context in which courage was given to Paul. Vv. 17-22
 - a. What was the situation that caused Paul to summon the Jews to hear him out?

 - b. How did the text show that Paul was innocent of betraying the Jewish faith, that his message was in fact rooted in Jewish tradition?

 - c. What did Paul tell the Jews was the real reason behind his imprisonment?

 - III. The reason for which courage was given to Paul. Vv. 24-31
 - a. What characterised *the effort* and *content* of Paul's preaching and teaching to the Jews?

 - b. How did Paul respond to the Jewish rejection of his message?

 - c. How did Luke describe the effects of the Jews' rejection of Paul's message on the propagation of the Gospel?
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Meaning

1. What was the purpose of God protecting and strengthening Paul, bringing him safely to Rome, and granting him a limited liberty despite his chains?
2. In establishing that Paul's belief was consistent with the tradition of the Jewish faith, what was Luke seeking to say about the message of the Gospel?
3. What is the significance of Paul's usage of Isaiah to indict the Jews for the rejection of the Gospel?
4. How does the way Luke end the book of Acts shows us what the message of Acts is all about?

Sum up the main idea and intent of the text:

State the subject question (what key question is the text addressing?).

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What do you think is the aim/intent of this text?

Applications

- A. How has/can God's provision to strengthen Paul in his journey to Rome give you courage in your own faith journey?
- B. Consider how Luke ends his message in Acts, how may we like Theophilus in Luke 1:4 gain courage and certainty in the message and work of the Gospel?
- C. In what ways have you witnessed or heard of testimonies about the unstoppable nature of the Gospel despite oppositions and persecutions.
- D. What attitudes characterised your work in the Lord? In what ways have you and your small group aligned or not aligned your life/lives to be an instrument of the Gospel? What mindset and behavioural changes is God calling you/your group to make to align your life/group life together to His kingdom agenda?
- E. Commit this verse to memory:

1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV)

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

Daily Prayer Guide

Sunday: The Church

- Church members & families
- Visitors
- Pastor & church leaders
- Sunday School teachers
- Worship leaders
- Small group leaders
- Other churches
- Outreach efforts

Monday: The Workplace

- Supervisor
- Co-workers
- Subordinates
- Customers & suppliers
- Difficult situations
- Work attitude
- Work performance

Tuesday: Acquaintances

- Mentors & mentorees
- Accountability partners
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Merchants
- Public servants
- Teachers & other school Workers
- Children's friends & their families

Wednesday: My Country

- Public officials - executive, legislative, & judicial
- Armed forces
- Public morality
- The media
- The economy

Thursday: The World

- International peace & understanding
- Missions and missionaries
- Persecuted churches
- Hunger, sickness, & disaster relief

Friday: My Spiritual Growth

- Maturity
- Understanding
- Faith
- Love toward God
- Love toward others
- Servanthood

Saturday: My Family

- Spouse
- Children
- Grandchildren
- Parents
- Brothers & sisters
- Extended family
- Unsaved loved ones

"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."-Jeremiah 33:3

Little Steps To Great Learning!

Preparation:

- Attempt all questions in the relevant Bible study before your group meeting.
- Expect spiritual growth by thoughtfully working on the Bible study questions (and the suggested reading, if any) throughout the week.
- Seek the Holy Spirit's insight and guidance by praying daily in reflection of what you have learned through the Bible study.

Group Time:

- On the following Sunday, take notes during sermon to assist in focusing your thoughts.
- Be punctual for your group meeting.
- Share the insight gained through the sermon with your group.
- Be frank in sharing your response to the questions in the discipleship pointers.
- Encourage others by attesting to God's goodness and reality by sharing to the group (and others) how the Word has changed your thinking and action in response to your study in the past week.
- Using the front sheet, summarise how the lessons have helped you to understand God's revelation in the Bible through Jesus Christ, and your response to the revelation.

THE BIBLE is to be...

Read through...

Reflected in...

Lived out...

Given away...