

The Cheers of Heaven

Day 15

Scripture Reading

Read Acts Chapter 15

Power Quote

We must be ever thankful for small miracles, and ever hopeful for receiving greater ones.

Glossary

Disputation

A disputation is a disagreement or argument.

Dissention

Dissention is a disagreement that leads to discord.

Residue

A residue is a small amount of something that remains after the main part has gone, or been used.

Prayer

Lord, Thank you for accepting us as Your children. Help us to accept others as you have accepted us. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration - Acts 15:1-2

And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Observation

In the book of Acts the New Testament church achieved unprecedented growth largely because of their willingness to take the gospel to people in cities and towns that they thought were ineligible to receive the gospel. Through no small amount of contention or conflict, the believers moved beyond their limited frame of reference to access the fullness of their Christian witness to reach non-Jews. Heretofore, they thought only Jews had a privileged relationship with God. They thought only those of the circumcision as were eligible to know God. Paul had compassion for the gentiles. This was big!

Forced with rejection and the apprehension of the Jews to accept him, Paul followed the call of God to minister to the Gentile community. The Gentiles accepted Paul's message and Paul's God! The Holy Spirit fell on them, just like it did on the apostles. Paul couldn't explain it, but he knew it was of God! He couldn't explain it, but he wanted to remain in the flow and movement of God. This new movement, with the Gentiles was so powerful, that more than half of the New Testament is dedicated to Paul's ministry and mission to the Gentiles. Why? Because Paul was willing to reach those who others thought were unreachable.

Questions to Ponder

1. Name a time when you felt rejected by others. How did you resolve that issue? How did you respond to the person that showed you rejection?

2. Name a time when you stood up for someone else that was mistreated. How did it make you feel? How was the situation resolved?

The Cheers of Heaven

Day 16

Scripture Reading

Read Acts Chapter 14

Power Quote

We must be ever thankful for small miracles, and ever hopeful for receiving greater ones.

Glossary

Mercury

According to Greek mythology, Mercury is the Grecian god of science, commerce, eloquence, and thievery.

Jupiter

According to Greek mythology, Jupiter is the Grecian god of thunder and the sky.

Glory

A wreath of flowers and leaves, worn on the head or hung as decorations.

Prayer

Lord, Help us to always acknowledge Your active movement in our lives. Help us to give you all the glory for all that you do. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration - Acts 14:8-13

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Observation

A man crippled all of his life was healed by the Apostle Paul. Amazed, the people of the town recognized that such a miracle was possible only through super human means. They attributed this miraculous event to the power of a god. As such, they believed that both Paul and Barnabas were gods that came to dwell among humans. They went as far as naming Paul the god Mercury, and Barnabas Jupiter.

They were correct in the fact that the healing took place by a power greater than human power or human capability. They were wrong to attribute that power or miraculous event to anyone but God. They didn't understand that when the people of God walk in the wisdom, way and will of God, they possess God-like qualities. In fact as believers we must be reminded that if we want to possess the power of God we must stay in the way of God, follow the will of God, and walk in the wisdom of God. Equally important, as believers, we must not allow others to give us the credit, honor, or glory for that which rightfully belongs to God. So when others notice God like qualities in us, we must use that as another opportunity to give God the glory for what He does through us.

Questions to Ponder

1. Name a time when you were proud of an accomplishment. How did you feel? Who did you give credit to? Who did you forget to acknowledge?

2. Name a time when you accomplished a task, but someone else received the credit. How did that make you feel? How did the other person respond? How do you think God feels when you take credit that He rightfully deserves?

The Cheers of Heaven

Day 17

Scripture Reading

Read Acts Chapter 16

Power Quote

We must be ever thankful for small miracles, and ever hopeful for receiving greater ones.

Glossary

Market Place

A marketplace is an open area for competitive and commercial trading.

Magistrate

A magistrate is a civil officer or lay judge who administers the law especially with minor offenses.

Soothsayer

A soothsayer is fortune teller or someone who predicts the future through the means of a medium.

Prayer

Lord, Thank you for every situation that life presents. Help us to know that every situation provides an opportunity for you to bless us, and so that we can be a blessing to others. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration - Acts 16:25-33

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Observation

Today's church is charged with the responsibility to reach the unreached. We are charged to go outside the walls and confines of the congregation to witness for Christ. Because we don't always go willingly, God sends us to unexpectant places at unexpecting times to confront or converse with individuals who under normal circumstances they would not encounter. Such was the case with the jailer in the book of Acts. Paul and Silas ended up in the Philippian jail, to minister to the jailer. But how else was God going to get His message to the jailer!

God had Paul and Silas placed in jail. Paul and Silas ended up as wards of the state, and had the opportunity to pout, grumble, or complain, but instead they responded by praying and singing praises to God. Rather than soak in sorrow, or mope in the personal misery, they decided to walk in victory, even when it looked like they were being defeated. But victory was inevitable because all things continue to work together for the good of them that love the Lord.

Paul and Silas were delivered from the Philippian jail, but that's not the end of the story. It was through their deliverance that Paul and Silas was able to reach the jailer, and convert him and his household to Christ. Rather than place an exclamation point on the victory of the God over Satan, and the believers over the world; Paul and Silas used the opportunity of their deliverance to deliver the jailer and his household from their spiritual bondage and imprisonment. The Apostle Paul teaches us that rather than fret over a negative circumstance, we should focus on how God's deliverance and victory can reach others for the kingdom.

Questions to Ponder

1. Name an unlikely situation you found yourself in, and now from hindsight, you know it was orchestrated by God. How did you handle it while you were going through the situation?

2. Name a time when you were able to witness to someone else in the midst of your trouble. What impact did your situation have on others?

Center Stage

Day 18

Scripture of the Day

Acts Chapter 17

Power Quote

Like what you do. If you don't like it, do something else.

Paul Harvey

Glossary

Areopagus

A court named for the hill on which it once met

Judgment Seat

The judgment seat was a large, raised stone platform in the marketplace, situated in front of the residence of the proconsul, where public cases were tried.

The Unknown God

The Athenians were super naturalists – they believed in supernatural power that intervened in the course of natural laws. They acknowledge the existence of someone beyond their ability to understand who had made all things.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the grounding of my faith. Help me to stand up for you at all times, in all places, under all conditions. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Acts 17:22-28

Observation

Historically, Apollo has been known as the center stage of entertainment. For artists looking for a ticket to the American dream, Apollo provided the venue for their discovery. Mars Hill was the Apollo for the New Testament Church. Developing philosophers, intellectualists, and the “who’s who” of the then known world, came to Mars Hill to share their thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and doctrines about every aspect of human life and existence.

One of the most prominent representations on Mars Hill was the “presentation of the gods,” more formally known as the pantheon of the gods. It was there where the gods of the then known world were represented, and a spokesperson of that faith or belief system, spoke on behalf of their God and faith. To ensure that every god was named and represented, they had a podium or altar to the “unknown god.” Paul used that altar to preach to the people about Jesus.

In reforming the world for Christ, we often find ourselves competing with the standards of the world. We are often bombarded with various philosophies, thoughts, options, and opinions of this world. In many conversations, the voice of God is left out. There is no one speaking on His behalf. Like Paul, we are called to speak up. We are called to be His voice. We are called to declare and represent His presence and principles. Had Paul not spoken up, who would have been the voice of God? If we don't speak up, how will the voice of God be heard?

Questions to Ponder?

1. Name a time when you were apprehensive about sharing your faith. What were you afraid of? Have you overcome that fear? If so how? If not, why not?

2. Name a time when you were bold in sharing your faith. What was the outcome? How often do you find the opportunity to share your faith? Name one of those times.

World Changers

Day 19

Scripture of the Day

Acts Chapter 17

Power Quote

The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that outlast it.

William James

Glossary

Epicureans

Epicureans were philosophers who taught that the chief end of man was the avoidance of pain. As materialists, they did not deny the existence of God, but they believed He did not become involved with the affairs of men.

Stoics

Stoics were philosophers who taught self-mastery. The goal of a stoic was to reach a place of indifference to pleasure or pain.

Athens

The cultural center of Greece. At its zenith Athens was home of the most renowned philosophers in history, including Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the testimony of my faith. Help me to live my life so that I may be a positive testimony for You and Your kingdom. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

Acts 17:1-6

Observation

One of the greatest weapons in the Christian's arsenal is his or her testimony. The biggest blow to the devil is not how many Bible verses we can recite (and we ought to commit Scripture to memory), or how much time we spend in prayer (and we ought to pray without ceasing), but our greatest weapon is our testimony. Our testimony is revealed through the power of prayer, the significance of Scripture and the authoritative anointing of the Almighty. Such was the testimony of the New Testament Church. Their testimony was that they turned the world upside down.

Our cities are mired in misery. Our country is plagued with social ills. Our schools, families, and economies are failing miserably. Yet there is still hope. Our hope is in our Christian witness. Our hope is in our testimony. Our hope is that we, like the New Testament Church, Zion will turn this world upside down – or better yet, right side up.

Questions to Ponder?

1. If you were on trial for being a Christian, would you be found guilty or innocent? Who would testify on your behalf? Who would testify against you?

2. What testimony would you like said about you at the time of your death? How are you living up to that now? What needs to be put in place to achieve that?

Center Stage

Day 20

Scripture

Acts Chapter 18

Power Quote

I firmly believe that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfishness and ambition and self-seeking and everything that is contrary to God's law, the Holy Ghost will come and fill every corner of our hearts; but if we are full of pride and conceit and ambition and self-seeking and pleasure and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God, and I believe many a man is praying to God to fill him when he is already filled with something else.

**Dwight L. Moody
Harvey**

Glossary

Conversion

Conversion is the turning point of a life from self and the world to a life for Christ.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the removal of sin and condemnation because of God's grace.

Baptism

Baptism symbolizes regeneration and salvation and is acknowledged through the person being baptized dying to self, being buried in a watery grave, but rising to a new life in Christ.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the power of the Holy Spirit that encourages us, empowers us, and enlightens us. Help us to know when Your spirit is absent in our lives. Let us not go further until Your Spirit is restored in our lives. In Jesus Name I pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Acts 19:1-6

Observation

After making great strides in Corinth, Paul shifted his ministry to Ephesus, and began fellowshiping with the Christians in that town. It didn't take long before he sensed something was missing. Organizationally they were sound, financially they were fit, and programmatically they were relevant, but something was spiritually missing. Their praise and worship team was phenomenal, their commitment to service was exceptional, and the preached word was Biblically sound and doctrinally correct, but something was still missing.

They seemed to lack power and anointing that comes from an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. To address the issue, Paul asked one simple question, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" The newly acquainted disciples responded, they didn't even know that there was such a thing as the Holy Ghost.

We order our personal lives to insure success. We pursue educational excellence, professional development, life coaching, and social elitism, yet like the newly acquainted disciples, we find ourselves lacking spiritually. We lack the Holy Spirit. The need for the Holy Spirit is not relegated only to the church. We need the Holy Spirit in our personal and professional lives. As we seek success, and plan goals for our own lives, we must not forget to follow the lead and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must "trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and not lean to our own understanding. In all our ways we must acknowledge God and then we can be assured that the Holy Spirit will direct our paths.

Questions to Ponder?

1. Survey your life, what are the things that are working? What's missing? How do you add the spiritual ingredients necessary to make your life complete?

2. The work of Christ requires each member of the church to possess the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you walking in that power personally? If yes, what evidence do you have? If not, what do you need to do to walk in that power?

They Changed

Day 21

Power Quote

Scripture for the Day

Read Acts Chapter 19

Power Quote

The miracle is not to fly in the air, or to walk on the water, but to walk on the earth.

Chinese Proverb

Glossary

Exorcism

The act, practice, and ceremony of casting out demons.

Vagabond

A vagabond is a vagrant, wanderer, or person without a permanent home who moves from place to place.

Evil Spirits

Satanic and demonic spirits that influence immoral, wicked, and godless thoughts and behavior.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for filling us with the precious gift of the Holy Ghost. Help us to demonstrate its power and presence in our life everywhere we go. In your name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Concentration

And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Acts 19:8-12

Observation

Miracles by themselves are impressive, but in the case of the apostle Paul, the Bible says he performed special miracles. Handkerchiefs and aprons that had been touched by the hands of Paul were given to the sick and possessed, and they were healed and delivered. God chose to use Paul in a special way, largely because of the special situation Paul found himself in.

Battling disbelief, contrary spirits, and hardened hearts for more than two years, Paul did not relinquish his role or responsibilities in fulfilling God's kingdom agenda. Amidst Paul's fight with religious authorities, Paul possessed the favor of God. Instead of retreating, Paul vigorously fought the religious authorities of his time. Rather than relinquish his role and responsibilities as proclaimer of the truth, Paul remained a vigilant and vital defender of the faith. In response, God empowered Paul to perform special miracles.

Since Zion's inception in 1865, God has shown His strong hand to Zion by providing miracles for and through Zion. However, more is needed. Base on the spiritual battles and warfare that the church is fully engaged in, we need more than miraculous support, we need the ability to perform special miracles. More than just a handkerchief or apron, we need the power and anointing that will stabilize family values, Christianize cultural norms, reverse moral trends, and universalize Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

Questions to Ponder?

1. How has the power of God been evident in your life? In what ways do you give God the glory?

2. How do you keep yourself humble when others try to exalt you above measures? How do you acknowledge God in your victories? How do you bless God when you are blessed?
