

15/09/19 RCF - Acts 1

I love book of Acts – it's warts and all:

- mistakes (Paul having to be sent away),
- disagreements (council of Jerusalem)
- falling out (Paul and Barnabas over John Mark)
- Paul arranging for Timothy to be circumcised which he'd later write wasn't necessary – sorry Tim!

BUT it is also a clear and strong story of the power of the HS at work in and through ordinary people and the consequences of that.

What He (HS) brings to us:

- Draws us to God
- Convicts us
- Brings cleansing – through cross of Christ
- Works out new Life in us – makes us like Jesus
- Produces fruit
- Gives gifts
- Leads (us into ALL truth)
- Opens the Bible (which He breathed)
- Comforts
- Guides – sometimes rebukes
- Empowers – way beyond the natural

And SO MUCH MORE....

Questions to discuss:

- 1) How do you feel when you're told to/have to wait for something?
- 2) How do you know God's leading when making big life decisions?
Home, job, retirement, marriage, calling etc

Feedback

On to chapter 1!

Two parts to this:

1. Wait for HS and effect of His power in you
2. What the disciples did while waiting

Read Acts 1 together

Part 1 - Verses 1-11

Vs4 HS already promised by Jesus – stay here, the HS is coming (already in us for all believers today)

Vs5 Baptized with HS – totally immersed not just a sprinkling – Eph 1:19-20 NIV

Vs6 'are we nearly there yet?'

Vs7 In the Father's good time!

Vs8 KEY VERSE:

'You' – all believers

'will receive' – not might or could

'power' – all the resources of heaven – God indwelling you with all His power

WHY? So we can have a 'bless up' and celebrate? NO

– there is a clear intended consequence of sending the HS – '*and you will be my witnesses*'

Who is this said to? – apostles. Who does it apply to? – all believers.

Exploring this a bit more.

Q: What does a witness do in a courtroom? A: Tells what they know as best they can.

They are not expected, required or allowed to tell what they don't know.

Q: Who are they telling this to? A: Those who don't know and so need to hear their testimony.

A witness in a courtroom will be for a specific side/person ie for the prosecution or defence.

Jesus says: 'you will be MY witnesses'

This is our calling as believers – ALL of us.

It's a word AND deed thing. We witness to Jesus in our whole lives BUT ALSO in telling people about Him.

NB. Witness is not the same as evangelist – this is a specific gifting (to the Church) that only some are blessed with.

Answer to the question: 'What has God called me to?' will be both general (ie applying to everyone) and specific (applying specifically to you).

General includes being a witness – tell what you know of Jesus - all called to 'live and tell/byw a dweud.'

Specific will be unique to you – meme quote 'when God determined your calling, he already took account of your stupidity' – that's reassuring!

AND for both general and specific, the power of the HS is both necessary and available.

Where? Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

Jerusalem – where they are put (for me Llandderfel)

Judea & Samaria – the area around (Penllyn)

Ends of the earth – wherever He leads you (all over Wales)

SO, at very least, you can know with confidence that you are called to be Jesus' witness – tell what you know of Him in your community/workplace/family/circle of friends etc because that is where He has put you.

How?

Love people – be involved in their lives

Serve people – look for opportunities to make a difference and express that love – maybe small ways

Keep going – long term (making disciples)

Begging the question 'why are they doing this?'

Creating the opportunity to answer the question in the context of relationship – and being ready to do so.

NB whether it seems like the right time to you or not (Timothy)

Refer to 'superglue sandwich' – develop a habit of talking about Jesus – not the church.

Look for opportunities to be His witness.

This is your calling – it's why God has put you where He has put you. It's why you're still here on earth and not called home where you would be better off.

Why don't churches grow, why don't people come to faith, why don't communities get transformed by the power of the Gospel? Because Christians are not living out the very reason the HS was given to us.

Vs9-11 Jesus is taken from them – ascension.

Part 2 – verses 12-end (quickly)

This begs a number of questions for me.

What had they been told to do by Jesus? A: Wait for the HS.

Starts OK – vs14 – 'constantly united in prayer'

Then Peter (the impatient one – remember 'I'm going fishing') comes up with an idea – lets sort the Judas vacancy now.

Were they supposed to do this? Maybe, maybe not. Sounds more like doing than waiting to me.

- a) Some commentators suggest that God's plan was for Paul to be the 12th apostle – clearly He was a significant apostle in the establishment of the early Church. So maybe they were jumping the gun. Maybe not. I note it's the last we hear of Matthias!

- b) Then there's the 'how' they did it – prayed and cast lots – the roll of the dice.

This was an established way of making decisions under the old covenant. Usually carried out by Jewish priests not ex-fishermen.

Temptation to make things easy by following their example.

BUT this is pre-Pentecost. There is a God accommodation for His Jewish people in decision making because He has not yet come to indwell them Himself by the presence of His Spirit.

WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT – God living in us. This is NOT a model for decision making for us.

God does not hide from us what He wants us to know. Sometimes we too are supposed to wait!

See Romans 12:1-2 – offer your body, don't conform with the world, let Him transform your mind....then you'll know (for sure).

It's about submission not reasoning or chance.

Question to discuss: What steps could you take to be a more effective witness of Jesus in your Jerusalem?