

# MISSION *in* ACTS

Steve Walton

Handout: <http://stevewalton.info>

# The theme of mission

- Pentecost Acts 2
  - God pours out his Spirit vv 4, 16-17
  - believers proclaim God's praise vv 4-11
  - Peter's speech focuses on how God is acting vv 14-36
  - response invited from those whom 'the Lord our God' calls v 39

# The theme of mission

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
  - 3:6, 13 ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus’
  - 3:8, 9 ‘And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.’
  - 3:11-12 ‘While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s, astounded. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people...’

# The theme of mission

- The man at the Beautiful Gate Acts 3–4
  - 4:19-20 ‘But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right **before God** to listen to you **rather than to God**, you judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”’
  - 4:24 ‘And when they heard it, **they lifted their voices together to God** and said, “**Sovereign Lord**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them...”’
  - 4:29-30 ‘And now, **Lord, look upon** their threats **and grant** to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while **you stretch out your hand** to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’
  - 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.**’

# The theme of mission

- Samaria 8:4-25
  - ‘And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.’ 8:6-7

# The theme of mission

- Samaria 8:4-25
  - ‘And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip **when they heard and saw the signs that he did**. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.’ 8:6-7

# The theme of mission

- Samaria 8:4-25
  - ‘And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip **when they heard and saw the signs that he did**. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.’ 8:6-7
  - ‘you thought you could obtain **the gift of God** with money!’ (8:20)

# The theme of mission

- The Ethiopian eunuch 8:26-40
  - 8:26 'Now **an angel of the Lord said to Philip**, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.'
  - 8:29 And **the Spirit said to Philip**, 'Go over and join this chariot.'

# The theme of mission

- The Ethiopian eunuch 8:26-40
  - 8:30, 32-33 'So Philip ran to him and **heard him reading Isaiah the prophet** and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ...Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "**Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.**"
  - 8:39 'And when they came up out of the water, **the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away**'

# The theme of mission

- Cornelius 10:1-48; 11:4-17; 15:7-9
  - **God speaks** to Cornelius by an angel 10:3-6, 31-32; 11:13-14
  - **God sends** Peter a vision 10:9-16; 11:4-10
  - **God times** the arrival of the visitors 10:17; 11:11
  - **God tells** Peter to welcome the visitors 10:19-20; 11:12
  - **God sends** the Spirit on Cornelius and his household 10:44-47; 11:15
  - God's action convinces the Jewish believers that it is God—and **they praise God** 10:47; 11:18

# The theme of mission

- Saul's Damascus road experience 9:1-19; 22:3-21; 26:2-23
  - an experience of the intervention of God-in-Jesus
  - 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth' 22:14
  - 'I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision' 26:19
  - '[I] declared...that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.' 26:20
  - 'I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers' 26:6

# The theme of mission

13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'

3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

# The theme of mission

13:1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'

3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

# The theme of mission

16:6-10 'And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.'

# The theme of mission

16:6-10 'And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, **having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them**. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that **God had called us** to preach the gospel to them.'

# The theme of mission

16:6-10 'And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, **having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them**. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And **a vision appeared to Paul in the night**: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that **God had called us** to preach the gospel to them.'

# The church lagging behind God

- 11:2-3 ‘So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, **the circumcision party criticised him**, saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”’
- 15:1-2, 5 ‘But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “**Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.**” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question... But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “**It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.**”’

# The church lagging behind God

- Peter 15:7-11

‘7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days **God made a choice** among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And **God, who knows the heart, bore witness** to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9 and **he made no distinction between us and them**, having cleansed their hearts by faith. 10 Now, therefore, **why are you putting God to the test** by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

# The church lagging behind God

- Barnabas and Paul 15:12

‘And all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related **what signs and wonders God had done** through them among the Gentiles.’

# The church lagging behind God

- James 15:13-21

13 ‘...“Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simeon has related how **God first concerned himself** about taking from the Gentiles a people for his name. 15 And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written, 16 ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 that the remnant of humankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things 18 known from of old.’ **[Amos 9:11-12]** 19 Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of **the Gentiles who turn to God**, 20 but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood...”’

# Some implications

- ‘Your thoughts concerning God are too human’  
(Luther to Erasmus)
- forgetting God’s passion
- over-activism
  - assuming it all depends on us
  - God is actively seeking people
- inactivism
  - because it all depends on God
  - we need to work with God