

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE MARVEL OF FAITH

(Acts 3:16-26)

#### OUTLINE

Key verse - 19

1. The power of faith (16).
2. The value of dependence upon the Scripture (18-19, 21-22, 24).

Peter depended upon the prophets, so should we.  
They point to Christ as the center of all Scripture.

3. The need of repentance (19, 26).
4. The danger of rejecting Christ (23).
5. The certain triumph of God.
  - a. God's plan will be carried out (18).
  - b. Scripture shall be fulfilled (18, 24).
  - c. God's covenant shall be kept (25).
6. Special responsibility accompanies special blessings (25-26).

We have special blessings, may we not neglect our responsibility. The lame man, who had been a cripple for over forty years, had been healed. The people were amazed. They wondered where the source of the apostles' power lay. Peter did not leave them long in doubt. He disclaimed any power in himself or in John, but attributed all the power to Christ in whose name this miracle had been wrought.

#### THE POWER OF FAITH

Peter said: **“And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all”** (3:16).

The name of Christ stands for all that He is; for His humanity, for His Messiahship and for His divinity. Faith in the name of Christ means faith in His Almighty power.

Jesus had told the disciples that if they had faith in Him nothing would be impossible with them. By faith they could heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead and remove mountains. Jesus had enabled them to perform miracles while He was yet with them in human form. They knew that he was still with them: that He had lost none of His power because He had ascended into Heaven. He had said, **“lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world”** (Matthew 28:20). The descent of the Spirit, the tongues of fire, the marvelous power of the Gospel, the signs and wonders which had been wrought including this particular miracle, had all been proofs that Jesus was still with them. Jesus was just as real to them as He had ever been. They could see Him with the eye of faith and believed that all power was His in Heaven and in earth.

A little later there were those, who, seeing the power of faith working through the disciples tried to imitate them. Some exorcists tried to cast out seven evil spirits. Seven sons of a chief priest, named Sceva, took upon them to name the name of Jesus over them that had evil spirits. The evil spirit said: **“Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?”** (Acts 19:15). The man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them and they fled out of the house naked and wounded. The Name without faith in the Name accomplished nothing. Rather, the Lord looked upon it as an insult to take His name upon their lips without faith. No man who spoke lightly of Him could perform miracles in His name.

An appeal to our Lord today through prayer accomplishes nothing unless it is made in faith. The missionary who works in power: the minister who reaches men for Christ does it through faith. Hudson Taylor once wrote to Mrs. Taylor concerning the funds on hand for carrying on the work of the China Inland Mission, “The balance in hand yesterday was sixty-seven cents! The Lord reigns: herein is our joy and confidence.” And to Mr. Baller he added, when the balance was still lower, ‘We have this and all the promises of God.’ ‘Twenty-five cents plus all the promises of God,’ wrote the latter, recalling the experience, ‘why, one felt as rich as Croesus! and sang -

“I would not change my blest estate  
For all the earth holds good or great;  
And while my faith can keep its hold,  
I envy not the miner’s gold.”

*(The Growth of a Work of God, p. 256)*

When Mr. Duncan, who had gone to Nanking to open up mission work, was almost without money we are told: “He was sure that the Master who had sent Him there, and was giving him acceptance with the people, would not fail in some way or other to provide. Still, his last piece of silver had to be changed; the strings of cast disappeared one by one; and the cook who was really anxious came and said: ‘What shall we do when the money is all gone?’ ‘Do?’ was Duncan’s reply; ‘we will trust in the Lord and do good; so shall we dwell in the land and verily we shall be fed.’

“Finally when the money was all gone and there was not enough money to provide another meal, “the cook stopped his master, who was going out to preach as usual, with the question: ‘What shall we do now?’ ‘Do?’ was still the answer; ‘we will trust in the Lord and do good; so shall we dwell in the land, and verily we shall be fed.’”

But Chu-meo watched his friend and teacher down the street with a sinking heart. “*Verily thou shalt be fed*” - it was a promise from God’s Word, he knew, and they were fulfilling the conditions; but would it, would it *prove true*, now they had nothing else to depend upon? That very morning, Rudland, who had been sent by Hudson Taylor, was limping painfully along twelve miles from the city. He fell in with a donkey-boy looking for a job. Oh, yes, he had heard of the foreigner living in Nanking! For a few tends of cash he would take his friend to his door. As the sun set that evening, returning from a long day’s work, what was Duncan’s surprise to see his faithful servant running with a joyous face to met him. ‘It’s all right, it’s all right,’ he cried, panting for breath; ‘Mr. Rudland - the money - a good supper!’ ‘Did I not tell you this morning,’ he replied, laying a kindly hand on his shoulder, ‘that it is *always* all right to trust in the living God?’”

(*The Growth of a Work of God*, p. 124)

## THE VALUE OF DEPENDENCE UPON SCRIPTURE

The witness for Christ must have confidence in the Word of God, he must use it and rely upon it to convince his hearers. Peter relied upon Scripture as his greatest source of proof (vv. 18-19, 21-22, 24). He said: “**But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled**” (v. 18). When he speaks of Jesus, in the sense of a servant, as he does twice in this chapter, and twice in the next, he does so evidently with the prophet Isaiah in mind, who used that expression at least three times in the latter part of his prophecy. Isaiah uses that term in the classic passage, the fifty-third chapter, which has been regarded by both Jews and Gentiles as referring to Christ. When he called upon them to repent that their “**sins might be blotted out**” he brought to their mind the first verse of the fifty-first Psalm, that great penitential Psalm.

When he told them that Moses said: “**For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you**” (3:22), he was quoting from Deuteronomy: “**The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken**” (18:15). These words were quoted by Stephen in his memorable defense before the Jewish mob (7:37), and one cannot but wonder whether Stephen was in the audience at this time and received a new impression of the meaning of these words as he heard Peter quote them. Peter told them also, that Samuel and all the prophets that followed after, had told of these days. There are many noted scholars who have written expositions of the prophets. Many have written with keen insight and profound wisdom. *Others have written mere trash, though perhaps couched in scholarly terms.* The student who makes no boast as to scholarship, but who realizes that all prophecy centers in Christ has gotten a deeper insight into Scripture, and a larger treasure from its study than many learned critics who pride themselves in their scholarship.

Christ calls upon us to come to Him and to His Word with the spirit of a little child, accepting and resting upon His truth in childlike confidence. If we come in this spirit we will find Christ in the Old Testament as well as in the New. There is an old legend which asserted that when lightning struck a tree all the leaves of that tree pointed to the spot from which the lightning came. All the prophets point to Christ. Until we have learned this we have not gotten the key to unlock the hidden things of the prophets.

There is no use of having medicine in the house unless we use it. There is no use of having the Word of God unless we believe it and apply it to our own hearts. In order to be effective with others we must make use of God's Word. Our own is not enough. The Lord honors His Word and He will not allow it to return to Him void. It shall accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. Too many arguments in the church and out of it are given without any reference to Scripture. **“the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”** (Hebrews 4:12).

Suppose a company of men are getting ready to go into battle; they are told to get their swords and their rifles ready: but they say, we do not need guns or swords, we will each take a lath which will do just as well. There is just as much lack of wisdom in taking a book on science, philosophy or psychology and preaching from it in place of God's own Word. God uses His Word to convince and convert men when Peter preached; He used it when Paul preached; He used it when Luther preached; He used it when Knox preached; He used it when Wesley preached; He used it when Edwards preached; He used it when Moody preached, and He will use it today.

### **THE NEED OF REPENTANCE**

When Peter showed that Jesus was the Christ and they had been guilty of putting Him to death, he called upon them to repent (vv. 19, 26). He said: **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord . . . Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”** Their sin had, in part, been committed ignorantly, but they were not on that account free from guilt. God had intended that Christ should die, but they were responsible for His death nevertheless.

In referring to the fifty-first Psalm, when he spoke of their sins being blotted out, he was possibly endeavoring to impress upon them that their sin, like David's, had been very great. They needed to have a deep sense of their sin and an earnest desire for forgiveness.

We likewise are sinners, and we also need to repent. The Son of Man came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He called upon Peter to repent, He calls upon us to repent, and then He calls upon others through us, as He did through Peter, to repent. **“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3, 5).

There can be no refreshing from the Lord until there is first repentance. If any man wants to be revived he must turn from sin and to God. If a church wants to be revived its members must turn from that which is offensive to God. If we are instrumental in bringing about a revival we must preach repentance. If men pray for a revival and are not willing to give up their sins, they pray in vain.

Dr. Len G. Broughton tells of the following experience: "Some time ago I was holding a series of meetings in a town out West, and one night there came into the meeting a committee from a very distinguished church of our denomination. I did not know that they were in the house until after they had gone. That night I preached on the judgment. They came back the next night . . . I did not know that they were there that night either, and I preached on hell. The next night they came again, unknown to me, and I preached on the blood. Shortly afterwards this committee had a meeting. There were twenty-seven on the committee, and I got two votes; somebody else got twenty-five, and when they wrote to me about it, here is what they said: "We enjoyed you, glad to have had you here in our midst," and the like, "but your theology has too much blood in it, and your sermon too much law." I began to make some investigations about that church, and I found that they had not received a soul on confession of faith in over three years, and I was not surprised. Men must be made to feel that there is something the matter before they can be brought to see the necessity of a Saviour."

### **THE DANGER OF REJECTING CHRIST**

The rejection of Christ results in destruction: "**And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people**" (3:23). There are men who think that they will not take sides either for or against Christ. But it is impossible to assume a neutral attitude toward Christ. "**He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad**" (Matthew 12:30). Failure to hearken to that prophet, declared Peter, is a sufficient reason for bringing destruction upon ourselves.

Jesus in describing the day of judgment pointed out that there would be many at that day who felt that they had not been rebellious against Him. Their pleas at that time will be in vain. If they have neglected Christ they will be cast into outer darkness. Those who are saved must take a definite, positive stand for Christ. All others shall be eternally lost. Those that are saved will not be ashamed of Christ, nor quiver in the shadows, but will make their stand for Him.

There are many who believe in a judgment, but who minimize the sin of rejecting Christ. They believe that there ought to be a judgment for the murderer, but they think that leniency ought to be granted to those who neglect to call upon the name of Christ for forgiveness and salvation. In this way the Devil has deceived men from the beginning. It is not a small sin, but one of the greatest, if not the greatest of all, to refuse to listen to the earnest, pleading of the Lord of Glory.

It would be well if every one who hears the name of Christ would come to the conclusion which a soldier did of whom I have read. Two young soldiers were talking about the service of Christ. One of them said: "I can't tell you all that the Lord Jesus is to me. I do wish you would enlist in His army." "I am thinking about it," answered his comrade, "but it means giving up several things; in fact, I am counting the cost."

An officer passing at that moment heard the remark, and, laying his hand on the shoulder of the speaker said: "Young friend, you talk of counting the cost of following Christ, but have you ever counted the cost of not following Him?" For days that question rang in the ears of the young man, and he found no rest till he sought and found it at the foot of the Saviour of sinners, whose faithful soldier and servant he has now been for twenty-seven years.

In the Cathedral of Lubeck, is the following inscription:

"Thus speaketh CHRIST our Lord to us;  
Ye call me MASTER, and obey me not;  
Ye call me LIGHT, and seek me not;  
Ye call me WAY, and walk me not;  
Ye call me LIFE, and desire me not;  
Ye call me WISE, and follow me not;  
Ye call me FAIR, and love me not;  
Ye call me RICH, and ask me not;  
Ye call me ETERNAL, and seek me not;  
Ye call me GRACIOUS, and trust me not;  
Ye call me NOBLE, and serve me not;  
Ye call me MIGHTY, and honor me not;  
Ye call me JUST, and fear me not;  
If I condemn you, blame me not."

### **THE CERTAIN TRIUMPH OF GOD**

1. God's plan will be carried out: "**But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled**" (3:18). God foretold the fact that Christ should suffer. God has planned that He would, in this way, glorify His Servant Jesus: "**The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go**" (v. 13). All the details of the birth, life and death of Christ were known to God from the beginning. He had told through the prophets, where Christ should be born, where He should live, how He should die and what He would say when on the Cross. Men did not believe that He would rise and they tried to defeat the prophecy of God. The Roman soldiers, however, were as nothing when they stood in the way of the plan of God. When the time came for Jesus to rise they fell backward as dead men. They could not prevent the breaking of the seal at the door of the tomb.

The brethren of Joseph tried to defeat the plan of God as revealed in dreams. They were determined that they would not bow down before Joseph as God had foretold. Pharaoh tried to defeat the plan of God and did all in his power to prevent Israel from being released to go to their own land. He thought that his voice was the voice of God, or at least the greatest power on earth. He found himself to be a weak mortal, helpless in the hands of Almighty God.

Haman tried to defeat the plan of God by destroying all of God's people. Backed by the great army of the Persian empire he thought that would be easy. When he had signed the decree of the king he sat down to eat and drink thinking that the deed was practically accomplished. The Lord who sits in Heaven laughed. He had him in derision. Haman was hung up in view of the vast multitudes of Shushan, who could see him hanging far up above the wall of his own palace. God's plan did not fail, His people were safe. One might as well, with a feather try to brush away Gibraltar, as to attempt to thwart the plan of Almighty God.

2. Scripture shall be fulfilled: **“But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled . . . Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days”** (3:18, 24). It is clear to us, as we review the life of Jesus, that the Word of God was fulfilled. Frequently we are told that certain things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled. It is just as certain that the promises of Scripture and prophecies which relate to the future shall be yet fulfilled. We are told that wars shall cease; that universal peace shall prevail; that all people and kings shall bow at the feet of Jesus; that unprecedented prosperity shall be enjoyed by men, and that Jesus shall come again in glory. There is no doubt whatever, that these and other prophecies shall be fulfilled. Simeon and Anna studied prophecy, knew of the coming of Jesus and were rewarded for it. It is well that we do likewise.

3. God's covenants shall be kept: **“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed”** (3:25). When God made a covenant with Abraham the promise of Christ was the central fact of the covenant. Paul points out this fact in the Epistle to the Galatians when he says: **“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ”** (Gal. 3:16).

God made a covenant with Abraham; promised that he should be the father of a great nation; promised that Christ should come through his descendants, when at this time he had no child. Nevertheless, Abraham believed that the covenant should be fulfilled. We have just as much assurance that all of God's covenant promises which He has made to His people shall be kept and all shall be fulfilled. Through Christ shall the Jews, the Gentiles, all the families of the earth be blessed.

### **SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACCOMPANIES SPECIAL BLESSINGS**

Peter reminded his hearers that: **“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities”** (3:25-26). Christ was sent unto them first to turn away everyone from his iniquities. He came to bless them, and through them all the families of the earth. When Christ is offered to men as their Saviour they are either more guilty or less guilty. They are more guilty if they do not accept Him; they are freed from guilt if they accept Christ who died in their place.

Those who accept Him have a responsibility of making Him known to others, that through them other peoples of the earth may be blessed. A wonderful blessing came to those of the early church who believed in Christ and were added to the church. The Jewish people, in general, rejected Christ and reaped terrible retribution. The Gospel came to them first. They were the most privileged people in the world. In less than forty years from this time Jerusalem was destroyed and they suffered one of the most awful calamities of history. To those who received the Gospel and passed it on to others, beginning at Jerusalem and going out to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth, we owe our blessings today. They were the salt of the earth; they were the light of the world. We, in this land of enlightenment, in this land of Bibles, in this land of schools and churches, have a grave responsibility resting upon us. Can we be satisfied to rejoice in these blessings without sharing them with others? Can we hold them to ourselves alone and please the Giver of all good? Most assuredly we cannot, and yet how often we act as though we thought we could.

A business man on his way to prayer meeting saw a stranger looking wistfully into an open window of the church, and, moved by a strong impulse, he invited him to go in with him. The stranger consented, and it was the beginning of a Christian life for him and his family. He afterwards said to the friend who invited him to the prayer meeting: "Do you know that I have lived in this city seven years before I met you, and no one had ever asked me to go to church? I had not been here three days before the grocery man and the dairyman and the politicians had hunted me up, yet in all these seven years you were the first man that had ever expressed an interest in my soul." Jesus even when weary and hungry, as He was passing through Samaria, would not stop to rest, would not stop to eat, though His disciples brought food and urged Him to eat, until He had told the sinful woman and those who came out of the city to hear Him, the way of life. He rejoiced more in doing the will of Him that sent Him, than in eating and resting. And that day there were many who believed in Him. If you will study the table-talks of Jesus you will find that upon every occasion He warned or entreated those who ate with Him or who were about Him. It was upon one such occasion that He told the parables of the lost sheep, and the lost coin, and the lost son; parables which have been used perhaps more frequently than any of the messages of Jesus to win men to Him. What a wonderful example He gives us! What a wonderful responsibility He places upon us to speak of, and for Him!

“The Lord Christ wanted a tongue one day  
To speak a message of cheer  
To a heart that was weary and worn and sad,  
And weighted with many a fear.  
He asked me for mine, but ‘twas busy quite  
With my own affairs from morn till night.

And the dear Lord Christ - was His work undone  
For lack of a willing heart?  
Only through men does He speak to men?  
Dumb must He be apart?  
I do not know, but I wish today  
I had let the Lord Christ have His way.”

May not we, who have received His richest blessing, be a blessing to the world!

**QUESTIONS**  
**(Acts 3:16-26)**

1. For what does the name of Christ stand?
2. What does it mean to have faith in the name of Christ?
3. What do wonders wrought in the name of Christ prove with regard to His presence in the world?
4. What with regard to His power over man and nature?
5. What evidence is there here to show that the prophets are true?
6. In whom does all prophecy center?
7. What did Peter teach us about the importance of using Scriptural arguments?
8. What is necessary that we shall do in order that our sins may be forgiven?
9. What is evident about a revival if there is no earnest repentance?
10. Do sins of which we have been ignorant need to be forgiven?
11. Where did Peter say Jesus should remain until the time of the restoration of all things?
12. Is His presence and power confined to Heaven?
13. Explain how He can be in Heaven and control things on earth?
14. Give facts to show that God's plan is carried out.
15. What will be the result if men will not hear Christ?
16. Show that all men are blessed through the children of Abraham?
17. What special responsibility rests upon those who have special blessings?
18. How was Christ like Moses?
19. Can one live such a pure life that he does not need to repent?
20. What is the danger if we put off the opportunity to repent?

**~ end of chapter 8 ~**

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