



# GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#198)

Visible evidence in the book of Acts.

1

- We've learned about **WORKS** and their importance in salvation ...
  - ↳ As the fruit of salvation, not the cause of it.

But that leaves us with a really important question:

**What was it REALLY like in the early church?**

- ✓ Was all this just a "theory"? – an "ideal" that people couldn't live up to?
- ✓ Or was it their "practice"? – something they lived by; a realistic goal for life?
- ➔ If we want to find the answer, the book of Acts is a good place to start!

2

- **IN THE BOOK OF ACTS, we discover:**
  - ↳ A God-honoring life was expected, not merely suggested!
  - ↳ This included doing good works, along with everything else that comes with the New Covenant's changes in one's nature.

**Good works and other godly character traits:**

- ✓ It was their **EXPECTATION** –
  - ♦ they said it was needed, and
  - ♦ they looked for it.
- ✓ It was their **CONDUCT** –
  - ♦ what they did; and
  - ♦ if they didn't do it, the others did NOT consider them "saved."

3

- **TODAY, people have lowered their standards and expectations for claiming a person is "saved."**



YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THOSE GOOD WORKS OR PURSUE HOLINESS!

WE'VE LOWERED OUR STANDARDS TO SOMETHING MORE REALISTIC!

THEY'RE LOCATED SOMEWHERE DOWN IN THAT PIT!

4

• **YOU WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHICH VIEW YOU WANT TO FOLLOW.**

• **WE CANNOT FORCE YOU TO ACCEPT WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT IT.**



COME JOIN US! OUR STANDARDS ARE "INCLUSIVE," NOT "RESTRICTIVE"!

5

SO, WHAT DO WE FIND IN THE BOOK OF ACTS?

Here's what it was like at the very beginning – starting with about 3000 people (with the number increasing daily):

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

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WHAT CAN WE OBSERVE  
FROM ACTS 2:42-47?

FIRST, we must note that  
this passage contains  
no commands!

This was their response to  
accepting the Good News!

- A strong desire to live and grow as the body of Christ.
  - ✓ Learning Scripture and its significance to life.
  - ✓ A God-focused interaction with other Christians.
- Taking care of each other.
  - ✓ With such interaction, they knew who had genuine needs.
- Fellowship and joy.
  - ✓ Interacting with each other and with "outsiders."
  - ✓ Having God as an integral part of their daily lives.

7

Some observations about this situation:

- They didn't spend all their time in a "church building" (which, for them, was the temple).
  - ✓ It was still an important part of their lives.
  - ✓ They were eager to grow in their salvation.
  - ✓ When they were at the temple, it wasn't necessarily all 3000 people at the same time! However, some of these things can't occur without group interaction.
- They didn't cease to do "daily living."
  - ✓ But God became an integral part of it.
  - ✓ Interacting with other Christians also became an important part of daily life.

OUR FOCUS IS ON WHAT THE PEOPLE DID.

- There are certain things they didn't do, but others did.
  - ✓ The apostles performed signs and wonders.
  - ✓ God saved people. (A few days later, there were 5000 people doing this.)

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An important question:

- Most of these people were Jews. They already knew much about Godly living from the Old Testament (unlike Gentiles, who would be saved at a later date).



- **SO THE QUESTION IS:** When the Good News was given to the Gentiles, did the standards change?
  - ✓ After all, they didn't know as much about such matters as did the Jews.
- **AND THE ANSWER IS:** There was **NO** change in standards.
  - ✓ In fact, there are more verses written to the Gentiles that stress the need for visible evidence, than to the Jews (who already understood what was expected of them).

9

YOU have to decide:

- Many people today describe Acts 2:42-47 as an unrealistic situation – something we shouldn't have as a goal.
  - ✓ Some claim it was good for them, but not for people today.
  - ✓ Some even claim it was wrong for them, and that it was the reason the church was later weak and impoverished! [They don't mention the persecution and scattering (Acts 8:1), and later famine (Acts 11:28) as factors.]
- **OBVIOUSLY, THERE WERE SOME UNIQUE (NON-REPEATABLE) CIRCUMSTANCES.**
  - ✓ Most of the first Christians were Jews, who were already following the God of the Bible, and were just "transitioning" to the New Covenant.
  - ✓ Gentiles who later became saved would have much more to learn about what it meant to "follow" Jesus.
- **YOU WILL HAVE TO REACH YOUR OWN DECISION... Hopefully after finding out how the Bible describes the genuine Christian life.**

10

In Acts: Salvation resulted in visible changes.

VISIBLE GROWTH IN THEIR FAITH AND LOVE.

- A strong desire to live and grow as the body of Christ; taking care of each other; fellowship and joy – Acts 2:42-47 (the passage we just looked at).
  - ✓ Another example of this in Acts 4:23-37.
  - ✓ These things continued until persecution scattered the Christians. But there is no evidence that it ended once the scattering occurred – though it had to change in some ways (such as it would involve smaller groups).
- Their love was evident in how they helped each other. It was an ongoing way of life – many examples in the book of Acts.
  - ✓ One example: Dorcas made clothes for the needy widows; she was always helping the poor – Acts 9:36-39.

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LIFE-CHANGES THAT COULD BE RECOGNIZED BY OTHERS.

- The effects of God's grace were visible.
  - ✓ When the apostles heard that Gentiles were turning to Jesus at Antioch, they sent Barnabas to investigate. He could see that God's grace was at work.

When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts, ...

Acts 11:23 (CSB)

- Even their enemies recognized a visible change.
  - ✓ Of course, being adversaries, they presented a distorted explanation of it!

"Those men who have made trouble all over the world are now here in Thessalonica, ..."

Acts 17:6b (GW)

12

### THE NEED FOR CHANGES IN THE WAY THEY LIVED.

- Everywhere Paul went, he taught both Jews and Gentiles the need for visible evidence.

✓ People were told to prove that they had repented.

First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

Acts 26:20 (NIV)

- Paul himself was an example, showing people how to live, as a follower of Jesus.

✓ This included the need to work for a living, so they could help others who were too weak to work.

I always showed you that you should work just as I did and help people who are weak.

Acts 20:35a (ERV)

THIS DOES NOT MEAN "LAZY"!

13

### "FAITH" – DESCRIBED IN TERMS OF OBEDIENCE AND GODLY CONDUCT.

- Accepting the Good News was described in terms of "obeying" the faith.

✓ This obedience was the result of salvation, not the means of gaining salvation.

So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:7 (CSB)

✓ Acts 15 shows us that we do not need to perform Jewish rituals in order to be saved.

- "FAITH" was linked to godly conduct.

[Paul] spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. [He] talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come ...

Acts 24:24b-25a (NIV)

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### In Acts: Salvation resulted in a desire to share the Good News with others.

- They "honored" God's Word by the way they lived – Acts 13:48. They held its message in high esteem and obeyed it.
- They shared the Good News wherever they went – examples throughout the book of Acts.
- Nothing stopped them. If people didn't want to hear it, they shared it with others.

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jewish leaders ... stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium.

Acts 13:49-51 (NIV)

15

### EVEN WHEN PEOPLE TRIED TO STOP THEM, THEY KEPT ON TELLING OTHERS.

But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than people."

Acts 5:29 (NET)

But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than God. For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:19-20 (BSB)

- They relied on God for the power to keep telling others.

✓ The entire church was involved in this.

When [the church] heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Acts 4:24 (NIV)

- They spoke the truth, even in the face of death.

✓ Example: Stephen warned the religious leaders about their sin (and need to repent), and they killed him – Acts 7.

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### PERSECUTION DID NOT STOP THEM.

- ✓ When those who killed Stephen started persecuting the other Christians, the Christians responded by telling others the Good News!

On that day widespread persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Most believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ...

The believers who were scattered went from place to place, where they spread the word.

Acts 8:1b, 4 (GW)

- ✓ From the beginning, they relied on God's power to keep going.

When [the church] heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. ...

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Acts 4:24, 29 (NIV)

17

### In Acts: Persecution was considered a normal part of following Jesus.

(Jesus had told them it would be that way... and they believed him.)

### THIS FACT INFLUENCED THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD PERSECUTION.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Acts 5:41 (BSB)

After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, ...

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, ...

Acts 16:23a, 25a (NIV)

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**THEY RECOGNIZED THE LINK BETWEEN PERSECUTION AND TELLING OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS. (EXAMPLE SEEN IN THE LIFE OF PAUL.)**

- Paul, the persecutor, was called by Jesus and saved. He was told that he would be persecuted for telling others the Good News.
  - ✓ How did he respond? Did he shrink back from the responsibility, out of fear of persecution?

At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.  
Acts 9:20 (NIV)

- ✓ When the Jews who opposed the Good News wanted to kill him, he left the city and went to Jerusalem... where this occurred:

He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him.  
Acts 9:29 (NIV)

- ✓ He often had to leave an area and move on. But anywhere he went, HE DID NOT STOP TELLING OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS.

19

**What about the rest of the New Testament?**

**THE REST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HAS A SIMILAR FOCUS.**

- Visible evidence was present the lives of those who followed Jesus (though "newborn" Christians were often quite imperfect).
  - ✓ This is true, whether the person was a Jew (who knew the Bible) or a Gentile (who started out ignorant of the truth).
  - ✓ If it was not present, the people were not considered "saved."
- Visible evidence is further defined in other N.T. passages.
  - ✓ We are not left to guess!
  - ✓ We need this information, because people often look at "evidence" that the Bible says is NOT evidence. Or they close their eyes to evidence that proves that a person is NOT saved.

**BUT I THOUGHT THAT ALL A PERSON NEEDED TO DO WAS "BELIEVE"!**

**THEY ALSO NEED TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENUINE AND FAKE "BELIEVING."**

20

**HOW TO RECOGNIZE GENUINE "BELIEVING" – ACCORDING TO JOHN.**

- ✓ In the gospel of John, he describes some of the events in Jesus' life, so that we can believe the truth and be saved:
  - But these are written so that you can believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Then, by believing, you can have life through his name.  
John 20:31 (ERV)
- ✓ In 1 John, he shows us how to know if our "believing" is genuine. This enables us to know if we are saved.
  - I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.  
1 John 5:13 (CSB)

1 John tells us that the proof of salvation is recognized by the visible evidence – specifically, our ongoing conduct. John warns us that claims to salvation without this evidence merely proves we are liars. (1 John 1:6, 10; 2:4 4:20; etc.)

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**Your mission:**

**YOU have to decide: WHICH view of the "Christian life" are you going to live by?**

- ✓ Is it the way described in the book of Acts?
- ✓ Or have you decided that the definitions of modern-day teachers are the better choice?

I know that fierce wolves will come to you after I [= Paul] leave, and they won't spare the flock.  
Acts 20:29 (GW)

**THAT VERSE IS FROM THE BIBLE. PLEASE IGNORE IT!**

22

**If you choose to live by the description given in Acts...**

- ✓ It will take effort; and at times, you will find yourself falling short of the goal.
- ✓ But the same apostle who tells you that we must prove our repentance by our deeds, and who tells us that God changes and enables us to do this ... he also left us with a good pattern for dealing with failure: When you fall down, get up and continue from where you are! (Philippians 3:12-14)

**I THINK THE LOWER STANDARD IS BETTER!**

**IT REQUIRES NO EFFORT TO LIVE BY; NO CHANGE NEEDED!**

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**Credits**

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