

The Apostles' Teaching

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[0 : 00] You can turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 2.

It's got a short reading this morning, Acts chapter 2 and verse 42 to 47. This is the snapshot of the early Christian community that Luke gives us straight after the events of Pentecost and the pouring out of the Spirit and Peter's famous sermon.

Listen to the word of the Lord from verse 42. It says, It says, This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Let's ask for His help.

Let's pray for Christ's sake and His glory. Amen. So we're back in our series in Acts, slowly plodding along, chapter 2, verse 42 to 47.

[2 : 17] One of the big tricks as we continue to walk through this book, and if you read this book for yourself, you'll find, I think, something of this experience as you're trying to say, Well, I'm reading this book.

What does it mean for me living 2,000 years later? But one of the big tricks to understand and interpret the book of Acts is to figure out when Luke is telling us information that is descriptive in nature versus prescriptive in nature.

So, for example, there are things that are descriptive in nature, like, I would argue, the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost with tongues of fire and rushing wind, right?

It's not prescriptive.

Christ is clearly not supposed to be prescriptive. It's descriptive. Luke is describing how the Spirit of God was poured out on this infant church in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. That's what Peter explains to us in his sermon.

[3 : 43] But there are times when Luke, in the writing, does seem to stop and double-click on the life of this early church, as if to say to us, the reader, Hey, stop and pay attention to this.

Take note of this. This is more prescriptive in nature. I'm showing you a model of what a healthy and good church or a healthy and good Christian community or healthy and good practice looks like.

You should try and emulate this, as in try and do this all the time. This should be normative. It's prescriptive in that sense. See, we get in a lot of trouble when we interpret Acts, when we take descriptive passages and we make them prescriptive for the church in all times.

We get in a lot of trouble when we do that. But we also get in a lot of trouble when we miss the prescriptive passages and we think, well, they're just descriptive in nature. They're just keeping the story going.

And today's passage is a case in point. So many commentators on the book of Acts have looked at these six verses. They thought it really looks like Luke is trying to show us something here, trying to show us something of the key components that are supposed to be in the church.

[4 : 57] Like we're supposed to emulate the kind of church that we see here. And I think that's exactly right. I think we have something of a model church being put in front of us so that we would then go on and copy what they do.

Now, this short passage doesn't say everything that needs to be said about the nature of the church. We did a whole long series on that last year. You can go find it on our website. But it does point out some sort of indispensable elements or marks of church life that without them, you really don't have a church if you don't have these core things.

And they're all pretty much concentrated in verse 42. Remember, 3,000 people came to faith at the end of Peter's sermon at Pentecost.

So immediately after that, Peter tells us what these people were up to. What were they doing after they came to faith? Well, verse 42, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to

fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

There were four things there. Although I think the last two kind of go quite tightly together. And so what I want to do is this week and next, this week I'm going to look at the first of the four things.

[6 : 10] The apostles' teaching. And then we'll look at the other three next week. Now I want to do an entire sermon just on that first one, the apostles' teaching, because I think embedded in that term is something critical to faith and being a Christian.

So let me put it this way. If I was trying to come as objectively as possible to organized religion, to a new religion, I would want one really, really big, important question answered before I embrace that religion.

Like if you said, you're trying to sell me a religion, and I was coming, and I was saying, okay, tell me why I should adopt your particular religion. I would want this question answered. How do you know that you really speak for God?

Or that you speak accurately about God? Because every religion is trying to do that, right? Every religion is trying to put us in touch with the divine. But who knows who that is? Who knows who the divine is?

Who knows what the divine is? Who is God? What is he like? Is he a he? Is he a she? Is he an it? Is he one God? Is he many gods? Does he communicate? Does he actually communicate with us?

[7 : 18] What authority source are you appealing to when you tell me God is like this, or God has said this? Where are you getting information from?

And then most importantly, can I trust the place you're getting information from? I would think that's one of the most fundamental questions you'd want to ask as you are considering a particular religion.

Now when you look at our passage, it is pretty clear that these guys are getting their information from the apostles' teaching. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

They were devoted to it. What kind of word then do these apostles bring? Is it trustworthy? And so I want you to see three things.

They bring a human word. They bring a divine word. And they bring a saving word. I mean, look at those three things this morning. Is this microphone making funny noises? Do we need change to the handhold?

[8 : 17] I see some people nodding, some people... Are we good? Handhold. Trevor says handled. Let me do that. Right.

Is it better? Okay. Okay. They bring a human word. They bring a divine word. They bring a saving word. Let's look at those three things. Number one, the human word.

Obvious thing, when you read this and they say they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, is we don't have any of those apostles around anymore. I am not an apostle. Sadly, many of those people out there claiming to be apostles are also not apostles.

So how then do we devote ourselves to the apostles' teachings? Well, the answer to that is that we have the New Testament. We have the New Testament, which is really the apostles' teachings written down or authorized by them.

Thanks in part to Dan Brown. People think that the way that we essentially got our New Testament was the Emperor Constantine back in the 4th century took hundreds of early Christian writings that were all over the place.

[9 : 31] He put them in a bag. He shook it around for a while. Well, he then stuck his hand inside and he pulled out 27 and said, voila, this is your New Testament. If you think something along those lines, if you've read something along those lines, I want to say that is absolute historical nonsense.

Please always remember that Dan Brown is a writer of fiction, not actual history. The real reason we got the 27 books in the Bible that we have in the New Testament at least, quite some time before Constantine actually.

We have lists long before Constantine. The real reason we got those is because these books were either written by an apostle or were authorized by an apostle. So apostolic authority was the number one factor on deciding whether or not a book was going to be considered part of Scripture. John Stott, famous Anglican preacher, writes this. He says, Since the teaching of the apostles has come down to us in its definitive form in the New Testament, contemporary devotion to the apostles' teaching will mean submission to the authority of the New Testament.

Now that means that what we have in our Bibles, in one sense, is a human record. The record of the apostles of the life and teaching of Jesus, of these human apostles of the life and teaching of Jesus.

[10:54] It bears the marks of being a human text. Various personalities of the different authors, their various contexts, you will see as you read. They all come through in their writings when you read it.

These men certainly believe themselves to be commissioned by Christ, to authoritatively speak God's word to the people. So later, for example, in a place like the book of Colossians, the apostle Paul, one of the apostles, he'll introduce himself as Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

So he says, this doesn't come from me. This is God's will that I'm doing what I'm doing. In 1 Thessalonians 2, he'll say of himself and of the other apostles that we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.

So it's a human text, maybe authorized by Jesus. We'll come back to that particular claim in a second. But written by humans.

Now that causes a lot of problems for people when it comes to trusting the text of Scripture to speak accurately about God. Just over 100 years ago or so, scholars, informed mainly, I think, by enlightenment thinking, started saying things like, look, we really, really can't trust the New Testament, that it's an accurate reflection of the life of the historical Jesus and his teachings.

[12:17] I mean, it's written by people with all sorts of mixed motives. At a much later time, it was probably all written in the second century or later. It's probably been corrupted in its transmission.

And so we really, really can't trust this text as an accurate retelling of the life and the work of Jesus. Their general theory was that the New Testament basically came about as different interpretive communities from the second century onwards started crafting their own sort of views of Jesus and some of the key leaders like Peter and Paul in order to gain power and prominence.

And so the groups that had their sets of writings that were more successful, well, their writings got included. And the groups that had their sets of writings who were less successful in persuading people in their own theology, they didn't get included.

There's a few problems with that particular view. And I want to look at three of them. One of the problems is the early dates of the documents.

So we know now that the whole New Testament was written within the first century. The book of Galatians, which is probably the earliest letter in the New Testament, was written 15 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[13:27] John, the Apostle John's writings, which are the last books written, were probably written in about the 90s, AD 90. And increasingly scholarship, and there are more and more books actually, even to this day coming out in this particular field, increasingly scholarship is positing earlier and earlier dates for some of the writings.

Even the ones within that gap, pushing them early and saying, actually they're much closer to the timeline than we thought. So we know then that the whole New Testament was written within the lifetime of eyewitnesses of Jesus.

They were there. They saw him. They heard him. This is not second-hand or third-hand or fourth-hand information. These apostles and their associates who wrote, they saw him.

They were there. So that's the first thing, the early dates. Second thing is, these apostles and their associates wrote, even though their writing made them look bad at times, and even made Jesus look bad at times.

Remember that original kind of academic critical theory said that different communities wrote these documents that make up the New Testament in order to gain power. That's what they're doing.

[14:46] They're trying to gain power to portray their particular brand of Christianity in a better, more positive light. Now the problem with that view is that so many of the New Testament documents just don't do that.

If anything, they do exactly the opposite. So for example, none of the early major church controversies that we know were being debated in the second century do we find on the lips of Jesus.

You've got all sorts of big debates about circumcision and all sorts of things happening in the second century. If you want to persuade people that your view is right, what do you do? When

Jesus gets up at the Sermon on the Mount and he starts preaching, oh, he all of a sudden says a whole bunch of things that align exactly with your particular view of theology.

But Jesus never speaks about the debates that are going on in the second century. Another example of this is the writings often paint the leaders as cowards. Peter, who is pictured in these writings as the leader of the early church, particularly here in Acts, he denies Jesus three times. He calls out curses on himself rather than acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. It's not a good look. Another example is the writings often paint Jesus as weak, begging God not to have to go through with the crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane or on the cross saying, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[16:10] Those are not images of power in the first century. If early Christian communities were writing these documents in order to puff up their leaders and establish their theology over others, they did a terrible, terrible job.

Like I could have got alongside them and said, guys, there are better ways to do this. The fact of the matter is that the New Testament looks far more like the reporting and writing of people who were actually there.

People who actually met Jesus, who walked with him, who talked with him, who learned from him, and who passed on his life and his teachings as they happened, even when it made them look bad or in the context of that culture, seemingly made Jesus look bad.

But probably the strongest argument in favor of the New Testament being a faithful human recording of the life and teachings of Jesus is the fact that these writers kept on writing these documents and kept on passing them around even though they were being heavily persecuted for the content of the texts they were writing.

I mean, if you know that you have made some stuff up, fabricated stories, fabricated teachings, and that stuff that you have then made up is the cause of some people wanting to kill you or take your livelihood away, at some point you retract, right?

[17:41] At some point you say, guys, okay, joke's over. Some of those things are not completely true. We kind of just made it up. Please don't kill me. They didn't do that.

They never did that. They wrote despite persecution. Why do that? Why continue through that? Why not stop and give up your tall tales?

It's because the information that's recorded in the New Testament, although written by people, isn't a tall tale. Rather, it is an accurate and faithfully transmitted account of what they actually witnessed in the life and the teaching of Jesus.

So friends, I want to say this. It's important to get your heads around. The fact that it is a human text doesn't make it less authoritative as a source for us about the time that God came into this world in the person of Jesus Christ.

It's the first thing I want you to see. Second thing, though, the apostles' teaching is also a divine word. The apostles didn't just think they were giving their own uninspired accounts of Jesus' life and his teaching.

[18:54] They actually thought they were teaching the very word of God itself, on a par with divinely inspired scripture. So the same apostle Peter, who stands up and he preaches the sermon here in Acts chapter 2, quoting lots of Old Testament, divinely inspired Old Testament scripture.

That same Peter, who preaches there, the same Peter who is an apostle, whose teachings these early church people devoted themselves to, well, that Peter writes some books later in the New Testament.

We call them 1 and 2 Peter. In one of those letters, he makes some startling claims about the nature of scripture and even the nature of the New Testament documents themselves.

So in 2 Peter chapter 1, getting towards the very end of his life, realizing he doesn't have much time left, he wants to remind his heroes of what he has been teaching them.

And he says this, he says, I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it's right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus has made clear to me.

[20:03] And I'll make every effort to see that after my departure, you will always be able to remember these things. For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory saying, This is my son whom I love. With him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that comes from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Above all, you must understand, and here's the important part, that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human world, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So fascinatingly, he points out that, first of all points out that he was a really reliable witness to the life of Jesus, but then he goes a step further and he talks about how scripture is prophetic, and ultimately how it has its origin not in human will, but in the will of God.

[21 : 30] It's divine in nature is what he says. And then just when you think, well maybe, what is he talking about here exactly? Maybe he's only talking about the Old Testament scriptures, that everyone in the first century agreed, well that's from God, that's divine, not the New Testament writings.

Well just when you think that, if you go over a couple of chapters, to chapter 3 of 1 Peter, he starts talking about his fellow apostle, the apostle Paul, whose letters make up a huge chunk of our New Testament, and this is what he says about Paul, he says, bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction.

See what he's just done there? He's implied that Paul's letters are scripture. Now that is a very technical term that they're using in the first century, to mean divinely inspired writing.

He's saying Paul's letters are scripture, as in Paul's letters are the same as the book of Isaiah, the same as the book of Genesis, the same as the law of Moses. The apostles clearly thought they were writing scripture, when they wrote the New Testament.

[22 : 57] As much as the word comes to us through humans, into specific contexts, from specific situations, it is in fact rightly God's word. In other words, the word that God wanted written down, for his church, for his people.

Traditionally, kind of orthodox Christians have said, that the Bible is inspired by God. That's the language we've used. Inspired by God. Paul speaks about this, in well-known passage to Timothy 3.16.

He says, all scripture is God breathed. Breathed out by God. That's divinely inspired. And so historically then, Christians have believed, that the words that you have written, in your Bible there, are the words, God wanted to communicate with you.

Yes, they were written by different people, at different times, but they are God's word, through those people, to the world. So the early church then, in that sense, was not just devoted to the apostles' teachings, they were devoted to God's word.

I, as a person who, spends most of my, working life, studying and trying to teach scripture, one of the things, that has really helped me to, to believe this, is, what I would say, and there are many things, but I would say, is the internal coherence, of the theology, of the scripture.

[24 : 19] The theology just means, the teaching of the scripture. The things we learn about God, from scripture. It's written, over a period of more than a thousand years, the whole Bible, if you take now, from Genesis to Revelation.

It's written by, at least, 40 different human authors, but probably more, in three different languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, on three different continents, and yet it teaches, one, incredibly coherent, overarching, narrative.

How do you get that? How do you get, those 40 plus authors, over a thousand years, to collude with each other, and get that level of coherence? I've got a book, if you go up to my office, I've got a book on my shelf, it's a big fat green book, it's called, The New Dictionary, in Biblical Theology.

Now, you would say, well isn't all theology biblical, but, the term, biblical theology, is a special term, in the academic study, of the Bible, that pertains to, themes in scripture, how they unfold, and develop in scripture, so it traces different themes, from Old Testament, to New Testament, like a

theme like, covenant, or a theme like, temple, or a theme like, creation, or a theme like, kingdom, or sacrifice, or priesthood.

Now you would expect, a human document, written over such a long, period of time, by so many different authors, in different languages, different cultural settings, who are massively, culturally distant, from each other, you would expect, that to be an incoherent mess, but it's not.

[25 : 47] It's so coherent, that 2,000 years later, a bunch of different scholars, can write articles, on each of these different themes, running through the Bible, and the articles, make perfect sense, as you watch the theme, get developed, from Genesis through to Revelation.

And there are so many articles, of these, that they can fill up, a big fat volume, called the New Dictionary, of Biblical Theology. How do you get that, from a merely, human document?

I don't think you get that. I think it, pushes, the boundaries, of, incredulity, to think that, that is just, a human document.

The Bible is a divine document. God's fingerprints, are all over it. It's like, it's like, no other piece of, literature.

In fact, that's exactly what, C.S. Lewis, thought about it. That you can't treat it, like other literature. He said, in most parts of the Bible, everything is implicitly, or explicitly, introduced with, thus saith the Lord.

[26 : 52] It is not merely, a sacred book, but a book, so remorsefully, and continuously, sacred, that it excludes, or repels, the merely, aesthetic approach. You can read it, as literature, only by tour de force.

It demands, incessantly, to be taken, on its own terms. It will not, continue to give, literary delight, very long, except to those, who go to it, for something, quite different.

I predict, that it will, in the future, be read, as it always has been read, almost exclusively, by Christians. He's basically saying, that if you try, and read the Bible, just like any normal, piece of literature, it won't let you.

Its divine nature, will continually, keep reasserting itself. And then he kind of, cheekily at the end, says it basically, that if you keep, reading it long and hard enough, you'll end up, becoming a Christian anyway. In some ways, I don't need to, defend the Bible, or make a case, for the sacred nature, of the Bible.

It does it all by itself. Great Baptist, preacher, Charles Spurgeon, was asked, how he would, defend the Bible, and he famously said, defend the Bible, I would sooner, defend a lion, unchain it, and it will defend itself.

[28 : 00] If it's God's word, it will defend itself, it will prove itself, to be genuine. And it has done that. For 2,000 years now, for 2,000 years, people have read these scriptures, and been transformed, by these scriptures.

For 2,000 years, it has shaped nations, and philosophies, and institutions, and law systems. It is not an ordinary book. Think about that for a second.

The book that you have, in your hands, or maybe on your app, on your phone, is the word, of the transcendent, creator God, of this universe.

That is something, of a mind blow, is it not? Realize how precious, that makes this book. How valuable.

Growing up in a, largely Christianized, culture here in South Africa, many of us have grown up with, sometimes maybe even, multiple Bibles, in our homes. And that familiarity, has bred some contempt, I think, or at best, apathy, or disinterest, towards the Bible.

[29 : 12] We have this, unbelievably, unbelievably, precious item, sitting under our noses, and yet, we're sometimes, rather nonchalant about it. What are you doing, with that book, in front of you?

What role, does it play, in your life? Is it your life support? Or is it kind of like, an heirloom?

Intriguing, old, nice to have.

God. It's the word of God. And so, like this early church, you need to be devoted, to the apostles teaching. That means, to be devoted, to the Bible.

And then finally, the apostles, bring a saving word. So, there's that word, that word devoted, to the apostles teaching. That word devoted, is a really strong word.

This is not some Christians, kind of hanging out together, stroking their intellects, having engaging conversations, about what's in the Bible. It's not a philosophy club, it's not a book club. This is, the first Christians, devoted, to meeting together, to absorb, as much of the apostles teachings, as they

possibly can, so that it will shape, their entire lives, and the teachings, they relay to others.

[30 : 30] Devoted, almost fanatical, if you like. Now, I know, that being fanatical, about a religious text, makes people, uncomfortable in our culture. Because we look at, our divided, polarized world, people getting, increasingly, increasingly polarized, people increasingly, getting radicalized, and they're all, singing of their, particular hymn sheet, their sacred text.

And so we look at that, and we say, well, doesn't that sort of, analysis come from, a group of people, being a little bit, too preoccupied, with their religious texts? Taking them, a little bit too literally, submitting to them, a little bit too much?

And what would we say, to those two things? Because here, the Bible is saying, well, you actually need to be, a fanatic about this text. Two things, I want to say quickly. Number one, I think we are all, submitting to a text, somewhere.

Everybody, the people who are, sitting in church this morning, submitting to a Bible, and the people who are not, sitting in church, submitting to the Bible. Jonathan Adler, is a professor of psychology, and he says this, he says, life is increasingly, incredibly complex.

There are lots of things, going on in our environment, and in our lives, at all times, and in order to hold on, to our experience, we need to make meaning, out of it. The way we do that, is by structuring, our lives, into stories.

[31 : 53] We have to make stories, to make sense of our lives. Nobody, makes up their own story, in order to structure their life.

No one, processes their emotions, and their experiences, in a completely novel way. The way that we, interpret, our own story, is by latching on, to multiple other stories, out there, and creating some sort of, coherent view of ourselves, in the world.

So I give you examples of this. You might be the sort of person, whose story, is primarily shaped, by the kind of ethos, that you would see, in a publication, like the Daily Maverick, or the New York Times.

So generally, left leaning, secular, maybe even, atheistic ethos, a big focus on the individual, and individual autonomy, and rights. That might be you.

Or you might be, the person who primarily, has your story, shaped by the kind of, traditional culture, of your family. Big on community, big on family values.

[32 : 56] In your story, the community is more important, than the individual. So communal well-being, kind of trumps individuality. You might have your story, shaped by a kind of, Oprah-esque, positivity.

Which has elements, of Eastern karma in it. I.e. put good deeds, put good intentions, out into the universe, and you'll be rewarded. They'll be returned to you, in some form. You might have your story, shaped by an actual, religious text, from another religion, that emphasizes, a certain moral code, over others, and you feel that, strict adherence, to that particular, moral code.

That's what's going to bring, about human flourishing. Those are all, religious texts. One person's, religious text, is a Bhagavad Gita. Another person's, is the Daily Maverick.

One person's, religious text, is the Quran. Another person's, is CNN. They're all, religious texts, because they aim, to answer, for the individual, fundamental questions, about identity, and your place, in this world.

Why are you here? Why is the world here? How do you fit, into this world? Every single person, has tentative answers, to those questions. And you didn't make, those answers up by yourself.

[34 : 12] I know you think you did, but you didn't. You got them, from a religious text, written or not. We're all devoted, to religious texts. In fact, you might say, identity crisis happens, when your devotion, to your particular, set of texts, wavers.

Now, us all, desperately submitting, to our religious texts, probably does actually, cause almost all the, conflict and struggle, in our world, between different groups, of people. Probably does.

Well, just as an aside there, interestingly, if you use, religious texts, in the narrow sense, as in, actual, written texts, of the major world religions, one thing I came across, was that wars, and major conflicts, arising primarily, out of their interpretation, amount for between, six and seven percent, of all known wars, and major conflicts.

And that's according, to the two most, comprehensive encyclopedias, on the subject of war. The other 93 percent, conflict, also comes from, religious texts.

But that's religious texts, in the broad sense. We all have religious texts. And so you say, well that, where does that leave us then? Well if we can't get away, from religious texts, without defaulting, on our very identity, but we're also aware, of all the conflict, that it brings, we want to be free of that, then I think, the straightforward solution, the only solution, is to find, the religious text, that is most going to aid you, in being loving, welcoming, and kind to your neighbor, who has a different text, to you.

[35 : 52] I want to say, that I think the Bible, is that text. And this is particularly clear, in the teachings, in the life of Jesus. Because think about it this way, this text, this book, the Bible, has its basis, is centered, upon the man, who told his followers, to love his enemies.

The man, who told his followers, to turn the other cheek, when they were struck. It has its basis, in the man, who refused, to just out of hand, exclude people, on moral grounds, the way the religious, contemporaries of his day did.

Instead he ate, with sinners, and tax collectors. It has its basis, in the man, who would die, for countless people, who were reading, off of a very, very different text, from him.

They crucified Jesus. You know why they crucified Jesus? They crucified Jesus, because he wouldn't read, the text of the day, in the way that they, wanted him to read the text. That's why they killed him. And yet in his dying, he gives us all a new text, that saves us, empowers and enables us, to reach out in love, and kindness, to those around us, who are reading, off different texts.

I'm not sure, that any other religious text, does that for you. You can't get away, from having a text. It's impossible.

[37 : 19] So you best find a text, that saves you, that leads you, into life, that leads you into love, for God, for your fellow human being, regardless, of whether that fellow human being, accepts your text or not.

The early church, was devoted, to the saving message, of the apostles. And look what happened, verse 47. The Lord added, to their number daily, those who were being saved.

Friends, with this Bible in our hands, we have access, to the saving, word of God. In a world, that is so wracked, with conflict, and strife, and death.

And so I want to ask you, a simple question, that comes from the text. Are you, and it's a strong word, are you, devoted to this book? Are you devoted, to the saving Lord Jesus, who stands, in the center of this book?

We must be. There's no hope, without it. Let's pray together. Amen. Our gracious King and Lord, we look at this church, in the book of Acts, we see them, go through this incredible experience, of the Spirit being poured out, and hearing Peter's sermon, and then we find them gathering, and giving themselves, devoting themselves, to the apostles teaching, to your word.

[38 : 53] So we want to keep on doing Lord, we saw the amazing things, that happened then, thousands got saved, the Christian faith spread, and changed this entire globe. And so 2000 later Lord, 2000 years later Lord, we want to sit here, and we want to keep on, devoting ourselves.

Sadly often, because we have the Bible, around us, and because we've become, so familiar with it, in some ways we, we don't devote ourselves to it. And so we ask for forgiveness, when we don't do that.

But we ask us that you, we ask you that you turn us, into fanatics for scripture. Submitting to every single part of it, studying it, knowing it, having it change, and transform our lives.

Because it's a saving word. At the center of scripture, is your son Jesus Christ, and his sacrificial love for us. When we didn't want to read the text, the way he did.

Show us that love, save us, and then lead us, into that kind of love, as we submit to scripture. We ask this for Christ's sake, and his glory.

[39 : 57] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.