

03b ACTS

We are here in Acts chapter 1, looking at verses 4 through 8, although we have gone past this area in our study, because a good understanding of this section prepares us for what is about to take place in chapter 2. And I'm not sure we gave this sufficient shrift the first time. The points that we have already noted are that Jesus, in dealing with his disciples, has gathered them, has commanded them to sit tight, don't make any big changes, don't take any long trips, don't decide that you've got to take a big initiative and do something special. Just stay where they are, wait for the promise of the Father.

The power, the ability, is going to come from God. Here is something to think about in terms of ability. And we've noted this in other contexts, but you think of the healing ministry of Jesus.

When a blind man encounters the Lord Jesus, and Jesus heals him, and he can see, his optic nerve is restored, or his retina is put back in place, or the occlusions and the cloudiness, or the absence of lenses, or whatever it is, a congenital birth defect, or whatever it might be that prevented this man from seeing, is repaired, and he now has a perfectly sound optical sensory system in his head. That does not allow one to see like you and I see. We had to learn as infants how to see, and how to interpret the light that strikes our rods and cones in the back of our eyes, and the nerve impulses that get transmitted to the brain.

It takes us time and practice to understand how to focus, and how to interpret three-dimensional information given us by our two eyes, and how to identify shapes, and objects, and so forth. How to interpret light and dark, and shadow, and perspective, and all of the other things that are a part of seeing that we just take for granted because it happened, and we learned it a long time ago. But someone who has been blind from birth, and has suddenly had all of their eyeball system completely repaired, and can now see, it takes more than that, doesn't it? It takes knowledge.

It takes ability in the brain to process, and interpret, and apply what the eyes are sending to the brain. And when Jesus would heal someone, whether they were deaf or blind, if they were lame and had never walked in their life, not only were their limbs restored, but they instantly had the ability to balance, and to control their feet, and to not immediately fall down when they stood up. Jesus said, rise, take up your bed, and go to your house, and the man did.

One foot in front of another, instantly knew how to balance, and balance has nothing to do with the legs, it's in the inner ear. And the little hairs in the cochlear fluid, and all of the other stuff that goes on in the balance centers, was all wired together instantaneously, supernaturally by God. What's the point? When God gives us a mission, and when God gives us His Spirit, and He says, just wait until the Spirit goes to work, and

enables you, and gives you an ability to do whatever it is you're called to do.

For the disciples, it's this witness to Christ in the nation of Israel, in the capital city of Israel. He says, sit tight, don't jump ahead of the plan, don't jump ahead of the provision, don't jump ahead of the power. Let God pick the time, let God pick the place, and let God's enabling agency in the person of the Holy Spirit initialize, initiate, start up this mission, this function, this purpose.

That's what the disciples are called to do. And if they will wait, God will give them not only the ability, but also all of the associated wisdom, all of the associated skills necessary to be effective in the fulfillment of that function. He doesn't just heal the legs, He enables them to walk.

He's not just going to give the disciples memory of what the Lord said, or the ability to stand up and speak with a loud voice, or to speak in other languages, but He's going to give them the wisdom through the ministry of the Spirit to know when to speak, to know how to speak. This is a consistent pattern in God equipping people for service. You may remember recently we were in Exodus chapter 4. What's going on in Exodus chapter 4? Well, it's the burning bush.

God says, Moses, Moses, put off your shoes, etc. I'm going to send you back, you're going to be the leader for my people as they leave Egypt. Moses says, what if the people won't believe me or listen to my voice? Suppose they say, the Lord has not appeared to you, they don't credential me, they don't think I've got the authority, or the ability, or anything else associated with what you have commissioned me to do.

People will look at me and say, He is not the man to be doing this. How many times have we found ourselves in a situation, and not only do we think other people are doubting us, but we doubt ourselves. We say, I am not the one to be teaching this class of children, or raising this family of children, or ministering to this elderly parent, or speaking up in this situation, or accomplishing this function within a church, or in some other circumstance.

We say, wait a minute, there must be some mistake. Who can I call? Who can I recruit? Who can I hand this off to? It's certainly not me, that's not my calling. It can't be.

I am the least equipped. Well, we're in the Moses mode. Lord, send and find someone else.

You find that at the beginning of the next chapter in Exodus. Moses says, oh Lord, surely you can find someone else for this. And the anger of the Lord winds up being kindled.

You remember in Exodus 4.13. But in the verse previous to that, the Lord said to him, who has made man's mouth? Moses is coming up with all of these objections. And this is the principle that's going on in Acts chapter 1. You look at these professional fishermen, and tax collectors, and tradesmen in Israel, with no religious training, no particular

theological background, other than responding in faith when they heard John the Baptist, when they heard the Lord Jesus, they responded in faith. That's their total theological background.

And they could have said the same thing. Jesus says, you're going to be my witnesses all throughout Israel. And they could have made all these same objections.

What if the people won't listen to us? What if we don't say the right thing? We're fishermen, for crying out loud. We're not orators. I heard that Joseph of Arimathea, he's a good speaker.

Make him be a disciple. What about that Nicodemus? He's got the golden tongue. How come he's not in this group of commissioned witnesses? Matthias might have been a man of flowery words, or sonorous voice, and tones, and presentation.

There are people who just carry themselves and seem to draw the attention of a crowd when they walk into a room. There are people that have a natural personal charisma. And some of them become pastors and become very famous, or become evangelists.

And then there's the rest of us. And we say, surely God has... something has kind of slipped through the cracks of the plan here that I am in this particular position, whatever it may be. This is how Moses felt.

He says in verse 10 of Exodus 4, My Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since you've spoken to me. I wasn't eloquent before. Here I am at the bush.

I've got my shoes off. Things are glowing. And I'm still not eloquent.

I'm trying to express myself right now, and I can't do it. I'm slow of speech. I'm slow of tongue.

The Lord says, look, who made man's mouth? Where do you think this power is going to come from? Do you think I don't know the way you're built? Do you think that I somehow failed to think about this plan before I lit this bush and called your name and had you slip your sandals off? Do you think I was kind of distracted? Oh, it wasn't you. It was the next guy coming down the path I really wanted to talk to. It really impugns... You know, we think that it's sort of a healthy humility to say, aw shucks, not me.

And in reality, it is a form of pride because we think we've got it figured out better than God does. If God positions us in history and positions us in time and positions us in circumstance and positions us in a family or in a relationship situation with other people, we have to start on the assumption that He knows what He's doing and that we are there for a reason and we are there for a purpose. And if the lot has fallen on us to perform a function, to be in a place of encouragement or ministry or speaking the truth or service of some sort, that God didn't mess up in putting us in that position.

At the same time, recognizing that the only reason He would do that, knowing ourselves as we do, is that He obviously plans to use His own power to get it accomplished because He's certainly not depending on ours. This is why God tells Moses, remember who created the whole mouth apparatus? Who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Therefore, go. I will be with your mouth.

Divine presence and divine power makes the function happen. If we remember that, then we can reconcile ourselves and even accommodate ourselves and be at peace and even a little excited about getting the chance to do something and say, well, I'm sure going to be anxious to see how God figures this out. I mean, that's kind of the attitude I had when I went to seminary.

I thought, well, okay. This is going to be an interesting process by which God is going to take somebody who had no ambitions in that direction and had a lot of trepidation and a lot of healthy fear of taking on the responsibility of trying to present the truth of God's Word and be responsible and accountable for its accuracy and its efficacy and doing it some sort of justice. That's a weighty thing, and it's an intimidating thing.

And to get past that requires this very kind of thinking. All of us have to look at where God has put us and what God has called us to and recognize that if we have genuine humility, we recognize, A, God knows what He's doing. B, it will be God's power, it will be God's time, and it will be God's authority that is in view, not ours.

And with that knowledge, we proceed. And then it is incumbent on us to understand how to access and be filled with God's power, how to understand and be guided by God's will, how to not violate the instructions. What if the disciples had not waited in Jerusalem? What if the disciples had not seen fit to look for the power that would come from God? What if they would jump off into some activity in their own strength? Well, it's not just a what if, it's a when.

We've seen that in the latter part of Acts 1 with the election of Matthias. It's Monty Python's complete waste of time. It accomplished nothing.

It set a bad example. It was a human interference in a divine plan. By the way, if you... well, we'll look at that in a minute.

But here you have Moses, and notice, God picked the time. Moses didn't stick his hand up and say, you know, I've been feeding goats on the rear end with a stick for 40 years. I really think I'd like to do something different.

I need a change. Maybe I'll go rescue the Israelites. I mean, he was going on, and God picked the time.

God issued the call. God, unbeknownst to Moses, had been equipping him for better than 40 years, ever since his youth, for this particular mission. And God knew when it was

time to move, and God initiated the change.

God made that happen. And Moses, and we need to learn from Moses, we need to be ready when God fires up the plan and says, now is the time. You've been in a status quo for a while.

God will mark the trail. God will show us where we're now going to make a turn. We're going to take an exit.

We're going to get on a new highway and go in a new direction. God will mark it. It will be clear.

We will have peace. We will be able to see from his word that it makes sense, that it's necessary, as long as we are doing what we're supposed to do, walking in the light, keeping up our two-way communication with the Father, in the ministry of the Spirit, taking in his word and keeping our soul healthy and balanced, being alert, watching and praying, as Jesus said. As long as we're metabolizing and breathing in and out in our spiritual life, God will give us a sense and will give us a guidance from his Spirit and from his word.

And we'll know when it's time. You couldn't get any clearer than the burning bush. You can't get any clearer than Jesus saying, Look, not many days hence, you're going to get the big order to march.

It's going to be D-Day here in a few days, so just stand by. He didn't say throw lots or look at the entrails of a dove or something to figure out when it's supposed to happen. They didn't really have to do a lot of figuring, did they? He said, you just sit tight and wait.

God will mark it out. And that's what we're going to see in Acts chapter 2. So that's the case with Moses. You will also remember that in Luke chapter 12, verses 11 and 12, Jesus was explaining to the disciples that in future days, and he was actually talking about the end times, he said in the time of the end, they will bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities.

Don't worry about how or what you should answer or what you should say. The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. You don't have to come up with something in your own effort.

Let God pick the time. Let God choose the words. You just have to be prepared.

If there's one principle that runs throughout the Scripture, it is God uses prepared people. Hannah was a prepared lady. Moses was a prepared man.

Joseph was a prepared man. David was a prepared man. Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah.

And you find this pattern throughout the Scripture. In fact, the individuals that I have just mentioned are worth noting. Take a look, for example, at Isaiah chapter 6. We don't have time to look at all of them.

We'll just sample a few. In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah says, this is chapter 6, verse 1 of his book, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. The train of His robe filled the temple.

Above it stood seraphim. Each one had six wings and so on. Verse 6, one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

Now, let's ask ourselves this question. Out of all of the men in Israel, why does Isaiah see this vision? Was he just ambling along some dusty street in a village, and suddenly God said, well, let's throw a dart at the dart board. Oh, here's a man named Isaiah.

I'm going to show him a heavenly vision. Isaiah is chosen because Isaiah knows God. You can read the first five chapters and get insight into what Isaiah understood.

But the reason Isaiah saw the Lord is because he wanted to see the Lord, because he was a man of the Scriptures, because he had a heart for the things of God. To those who have, more will be given, God says. And Isaiah wasn't just struck by lightning here.

He wasn't chosen at random. He was a prepared man. And so in verse 6, one of the seraphim flew to him, having in his hand a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

He touched my mouth with it, Isaiah says, and said, Behold, this has touched your lips. Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged. This is a great picture.

It reminds us of the man let down through the ceiling. Son, I've seen your faith. Your sins are forgiven.

It's also a reminder that even after salvation, this could be picturing or suggesting salvation. It is also the time when we wake up and learn about the grace of God and begin to move forward in our spiritual life. Maybe we were saved years before, and we finally kind of wake up and say, I need to get with the program here.

And what's the first thing we do? We find out that to move forward and to have fellowship with God, we have to walk in the light. And to do that, the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, needs to be cleansing our sins. And we learn about 1 John 1.7, and we learn about 1 John 1.9, and we learn about purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than so on. We let God's grace cleanse us and purge out the sin in our lives. That's what happens here.

Your sin is purged. Then after that, notice personal holiness has to be squared away. You are not a prepared person if you have not reached the place of knowing how to be cleansed.

If you have not reached a place where your sin is purged to the point that you can be of service. We don't have to be sinlessly perfect, but we can't be a slave to the old nature either. We have to have reached a place of spiritual self-control where when we do slip and stumble, we know how to be cleansed, how to be sanctified, and how to resume our walk in the light.

And that is a stage of growth. Then God says, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I, here I am, send me. He said go and tell this people.

Go and witness to this people. And Isaiah is going to communicate. He's going to be a witness for God.

But there's a process in the commissioning of Isaiah, isn't there? He is a man who has taken interest in the things of God. He has prepared himself. He avails himself of the grace of God.

He says in verse 5, Why is it that the coal came to his lips and purged out his sins? Look at verse 5. I said, woe is me, I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. This is what you call in the New Testament, homo logeo.

I acknowledge my sin. I am not worthy. I do not have the righteousness.

I do not have the sanctification necessary to serve God. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. He even confessed corporate sin.

Sin of environment, if you will. My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. And he contrasts the righteousness of God with the fallen condition of his nation and his own self.

Then God purges away that sin. He sees his faith, just like the lame man. And then he is commissioned.

And he says, Go to this people and witness to them. And he says, I will cleanse your mouth. I will give you the words to speak.

And the word of the Lord comes to Isaiah ever after, over and over again in these prophetic books. The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, go and preach. Son of man, go and teach.

He didn't have to make up a prophetic book. God didn't say, well, you need to revive the people. So go do that and come back and report to me.

God gave him the words. God gave him the actions. God gave him the time and the place to perform the prophetic ministry.

We have example after example of this. We only have time to look at a few. Jeremiah.

Let's take a quick look at Jeremiah chapter 1. Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priest. He says in verse 4, The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I sanctified you.

I ordained you a prophet to the nations. God knew when and where he was going to put Jeremiah. He said, I need a faithful man at a particular time, in a particular generation in Israel and God chose the time and God chose the place and God chose the circumstance.

God had Jeremiah be born into the family of the priests so that he would have some credibility and have some preparation and have some understanding. What does Jeremiah say? Lord, I cannot speak. I'm a youth.

The Lord said to me, Do not say I'm a youth. You shall go to all whom I send you. To whom I send you.

And whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces. I am with you to deliver you.

He says, Jeremiah, it doesn't matter that you're young. Kind of like Paul telling Timothy, Let no man despise your youth. I will be with you.

I will be with your mouth. I will teach you what you will say. Well, many, many examples.

You can just pick some and look them up. You can probably guess some of them. You can look at Ezekiel.

You can look at many of the Old Testament examples. John the Baptist himself out there crying in the wilderness. He wasn't doing that in his own strength.

But what's the point? We come back to Acts chapter 1. We come back to Jesus talking to the disciples. And He says, I'm giving you command. Wait.

You're going to receive power when the Spirit comes on you. You're going to be witnesses to Me. And if they remember that the power comes from God, the timing comes from God, the commission comes from God to Jesus, or anybody else say anything to the disciples about filling the gap of Judas? It seems legitimate.

Peter quotes Scripture for this. But that is no guarantee that it's the right thing to do. Just because you can find a verse, bring your tithes into the storehouse and the windows of heaven will open and so on.

Where two or three are in agreement, my Father will answer your request. People will go and claim the Scripture and think that they're in the will of God, and they're not. We need to understand the principle that is illustrated here in Acts chapter 1. And the idea here is you will receive ability when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

Not only a ministry function, but the wisdom. You'll have the equipment to use it properly if you'll follow the guidance. Let God pick the time.

Let God pick the place. Don't get ahead of the plan. He says you shall be witnesses to Me in this specific place.

God even picks the limits of their ministry. What I find interesting is that people have often come to Acts 1.8 and said this is an outline of the book. And I mentioned that in the introduction to our study that the first third of the book talks about what goes on in Jerusalem and the second part talks about Judea and Samaria and then in the last part we have the ministry of Paul.

This is the spread of the gospel beyond the borders of Israel. But having translated this accurately and looked at who Jesus is speaking to, He's not talking to the Apostle Paul in Acts 1.8. And if you think about it, there is nothing in the book of Acts about the original eleven disciples doing anything outside of Israel, is there? The book of Acts is all about them fulfilling the commission that Jesus gives them in Acts 1.8 and it's right here in Israel. It's right here in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria.

It doesn't talk about any of these traditional stories that we have of the Thaddeus going off to Ethiopia or any such thing. The first twelve chapters of Acts all take place right there in Israel which is what Jesus said here. And so this is really kind of a faulty assumption to make.

We need to remember that God will determine the scope. And you think, well, there's a whole world that needs evangelizing and Jesus is only talking about this tiny little... If you ever looked at Israel on a map, I was showing the girls on a globe where Israel was and when you get a globe, you can hardly find a thing. It's so small.

And eleven men had a scope of ministry that you can easily cover with your finger on any normal size globe. And you say, well, that's too small. Shouldn't it be bigger? Shouldn't it be more? What kind of impact is that going to have? Well, God decided the impact.

God knew something they did not know that they were going to be writing or providing the material for inspired Scripture that would form the New Testament. Peter's ministry is going to form the basis for the Gospel of Mark. Matthew's going to have his book.

John's going to have his book and his epistles. And a lot of the information that those original eleven had is going to be disseminated into the early church and is going to form

the basis of the New Testament. So, they could not see beyond the specific information that was revealed to them.

You will be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem and in the land. Judea, Samaria. All the land.

And that's enough. We sometimes think, well, my scope doesn't seem very large. I don't seem to really have a lot of interaction or impact in the spiritual world beyond just my little nuclear family or just one or two friends or my church is small or my sphere of influence is small.

I'm not engaged in missions. I'm not engaged in outreach. I'm not a part of a larger, bigger thing.

Look at what Jesus tells these disciples and then look at the impact that God produced in history. All they did was in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. And yet, look at what God has done because it all depends on God.

It's God's authority to set the times and the seasons. God provides the power and God does the work. Well, what does the New Testament tell us about ourselves? Look at Ephesians 4, verse 7. Ephesians 4, verse 7. To each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. Look at verse 11. He gave some to be apostles.

Not all. Some. And we have the apostolic commission here in Acts 1.8 for the first 11.

Some are apostles. Others are prophets. Others are evangelists.

Others are pastors and teachers. These are the ones who provide the ministry of equipping the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, no longer children tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, trickery of men, cunning craftiness, deceitful plotting, speaking the truth in love. We grow up in all things into Him who is the head.

Notice it doesn't say until we all have an outreach, until we all evangelize our neighborhoods, until we all have a world missions organization and reach the lost in every corner of the globe, until we go to the uttermost parts of the earth. What is the mission? Paul says the reason we've got apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. And the purpose of the work of the ministry is the edifying of the body of Christ.

Now part of edification is adding new members, and that's part of evangelism, but you

see the thrust and the emphasis and the point of it is God is building a bride for Christ. And we are to grow up speaking the truth in love into Christ, who is our example, our head. And the whole body joined and knit together by what the joints supplies, the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

This ought to be in the doctrinal statements. This ought to be at the heart of the church constitutions. This ought to be on our refrigerator magnets.

This is why we are getting up in the morning and living our lives hardly as unto the Lord. This is the mission statement for the church. This is why God gave communicators.

This is why God left His inspired word for us who are at the culmination of the ages. All the examples of the Old Testament, all of the teachings of the New Testament point to this. Jesus ascended and gave us these gifts, gave us these graces, gave us these commands and functions.

Power has come to us from on high, and we each have grace given according to the measure of Christ's gift. When you measure something, you get a specific little device. You get a teaspoon or a cup, you get something with graduations, and depending on the recipe and depending on what you're making, you measure a specific ingredient out.

It's planned with malice of forethought, right? That's the idea here. Grace has been given to us according to the measure of Christ. You can think of it as Christ building a church and saying, now, I need someone here who's going to train children.

I need someone here who will just be a faithful wife and mother or a faithful husband and father or will be a dutiful son to aging parents or whatever it might be. And He says, I'm going to measure out a specific grace. This is the place in my plan.

This is the ingredient that I need at this place to glorify the Father and fulfill His purpose and prepare all of the group to go into the millennial kingdom and into the kingdom of the Father beyond. I need this specific thing. I'm measuring out this grace.

I hope that they'll understand it, that they'll wait, that they'll let the Spirit guide them and choose the timing, and that they'll operate in the Spirit's power and follow the guidance of the Word and just fulfill that function. If God came personally, appeared to us like He did to Abraham outside the tent flap and said, Would you be willing to just be a faithful member of a family? Would you be willing to just be a good employee? Nothing splashy, nothing fancy. No trips to far off lands or anything.

Just day-by-day faithfulness. Would you do that for me? I really need this to fulfill the Father's plan. If the Lord came and asked us that, well, He has come and asked us that.

That's exactly what we've been called to do. A measure of grace given to each one of us.

Why is this important? Quickly now look back at Acts 2. Many other passages we could go to in this regard, by the way, if you're taking notes, you can look at Ephesians 1 and verse 6. Maybe we ought to turn to these right quick.

I hate to cite them without reading them. Ephesians 1, 6 says, The praise of the glory of His grace by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. God's grace has been dispensed to us and it makes us acceptable.

We don't have any call for saying, I'm slow of speech and of a slow tongue. I'm not worthy, I'm not ready, I'm not able. I can't fulfill this function.

Who can I call? Who can I hand this off to? We can't do that. Or Ephesians 3 and verse 2. Ephesians 3, 2 says, If indeed you've heard of the dispensation, the dispensing of the grace of God, which was given, Paul says, to me for you. He's made known the mystery.

He says, I'm speaking from faith to faith. God has given me grace that I'm dispensing to you. I'm teaching you how to perform the function and exercise your opportunities in the realm of grace that has been given to each one of us.

You go to Ephesians 3 and verse 8. Just go down the page a little bit there. To me, who am less than the least of all saints, this grace was given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. That's the grace that was given to Paul.

That's not the grace for each one of us. We've been given the grace to do these daily functions. Or perhaps something more.

Perhaps to be an elder or a deacon in a church. Perhaps to exercise a ministry in some fashion. Some people are able to write.

Some people are able to communicate. Some people are able to speak the truth in love or to teach or to do more formal functions. But each of us, every single one of us, has been given grace.

The dispensation of grace from God. And you can put with that 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 4. And that one we do need to look at. 1 Corinthians 1.4 and following, I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus.

Did you hear it? 1 Corinthians 1.4. I thank my God, Paul says, always concerning you, each of you, for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance, in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. Remember God talking to Moses? I will confirm my testimony to you before the people. He did it in that day with signs and wonders.

He does it for us in a slightly different way. But the testimony of Christ is confirmed in you so that you come short in no gift. Eagerly waiting for the revealing of our Lord Jesus

Christ who will confirm you all the way to the end.

To the end of what? Eschatou tes geis. To the end of the world. Until your race has been run.

Until it's time to meet the Lord in the air. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. This passage goes hand in hand with what Jesus is telling the disciples in 1.4-8 of Acts.

And finally, you can put with this 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 10. Peter of all certainly understood this. He says in his epistle, be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Don't get your eyes on circumstances and who shot John and why am I getting trouble from this person. He says, as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another. Does that sound like Paul talking about the body in Ephesians 4? As each one has received a gift.

Each one. If you're listening to the sound of my voice, you have been given a gift. A grace has been dispensed for a purpose.

There will be a circumstance. There is a time and a place. Both a kairos and a kronos.

There will be episodes and there will be long eras in your life where you have this function. You have this opportunity from God. Powered by God's Holy Spirit.

Guided by God's Holy Word. It is all of God. It is all of grace.

But we have to step up to the plate. We can't get off into some sort of pseudo humility and say aw shucks and stick our toe in the dirt. We need to be ready.

If God says I will be with your mouth, I will teach you what you will say. We have a gift. We're called upon to exercise it.

What if you're in combat and you get shot in the arm and you call out medic, medic. Oh, I've never done a bullet wound before. I just don't think I would know what to do.

I don't have time for a medic to develop his self-confidence. If I've been shot, I want the guy to come up with his little bag of gauze and stuff and do his job. God gives us a grace and we can't waste our time saying oh Lord, surely not me.

This is a battle. This is a conflict. We've got to set aside this idea of false humility and step up.

When the pitch comes across the plate, we've got to swing. That's what Peter is talking about here. Each one has received a gift.

Minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Think of it as a

stewardship. It's not us.

We can't take any credit. God has given us a grace and we are stewards of it. The parable of the talents.

You didn't manufacture the gold. You didn't earn it. It's been given to you to do something with.

Don't wrap it in your sweatband and stick it in your pocket. Don't bury it and dig it up when the master returns. Do what you've been called to do.

That's the idea. Well, now back to Acts chapter 2. We have a long introduction to this but it is so important for us to understand how this applies to us. When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire and one sat upon each of them. How emphatic is that that this was not a house engulfed in a fire? This was not the children of Israel passing as a group through the waters? Do you see the difference? Each individual was set upon by this flame. This flame divided itself and individually lit on each one.

Divided tongues as of fire. One sat upon each one of them. That's the difference between this dispensation and the age of Israel.

One of many differences is God deals with us individually. We have an individual grace. We have an individual calling.

We have an individual ministry and function. Yet we are still a body. We are still a fellowship.

We are still one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. We are to be one in spirit. One mind.

But we have an individual responsibility. We can't wait for others to catch up. We can't help it if others fall away.

We have an individual gifting, an individual grace. We don't want to miss the opportunity when it comes. It's a daily opportunity from God.

We have His Spirit. We have His Word. This is the inaugural sign of this age.

Individual tongues of fire splitting up and sitting upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. Notice.

Who gave them utterance? The Spirit. Who sent the tongues of fire? God did. It is of God.

God chose the time. God chose the place. God gave them utterance.

God chose which languages they would speak. All they had to do was be prepared people. Be obedient.

Stay in Jerusalem. Wait for the promise of the Father. And God picked the time and the place.

And this gives them the activating power to accomplish this function. Well, it's a lot to chew on. It's a lot to think about.

And when we resume our study next time, we'll take a closer look. Of course, tongues has been an issue. Very well known controversy over this down through the years.

We'll take a look at the Greek word a little bit and we'll see what the nature of this speaking with other tongues was on the day of Pentecost and what it was in Corinthians when Paul gives guidance on this and uses the same phrase. And that will help us interpret some of our contemporary denominations and activities of people who believe they're functioning in the Holy Spirit. But there's one thing we remember from this.

It is that we cannot hide in the crowd. We are not one of a numberless swarm of Israelites. We have individually to deal with the Father and to be stewards of the grace that has been given to us in the time and place in which we live.

Well, let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank you for the wonderful grace that you have dispensed to us through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We pray that we can live in a way that is pleasing in your sight and glorifying to Him.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.