

35b ACTS

We pick up our study now right in the interval between chapter 14 and chapter 15, which as I have said from verse 28, it says a long time, and this is something on the order of five years. To give you some idea of the point that we left off with in our first session tonight, there is a lot in our lives that seems to go unnoticed by others, and we sometimes wonder, well, what was that for? Did that do any good? If you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, we have nothing mentioned in Acts. Luke passes over this five year period in total, utter silence.

We have just an inkling, if you go to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 23, the apostle tells us in this passage that five different times he was scourged by the Jews, and when you see either a description or the actual playing of the film, *The Passion of the Christ*, and they show the scourging, well, people got the scourging when they weren't being crucified, and it's the same thing. A lot of people didn't live over scourging, because as I said, getting your skin cut in the ancient world was often tantamount to a death sentence because of infection and no antibiotics, and very crude and imperfect understandings of how life and death work when you've broken that barrier. The apostle Paul, this is no small thing, five times scourged.

The Lord Jesus went through a scourging, and I take nothing away from that, but he went through it once. The apostle Paul went through it five times. And you can imagine about the fifth time you get strapped to that post and get that lashing, how much is left of your back? You're just one big piece of scar tissue anyway.

Five times. Three times beaten by the Romans, and this is the Roman scourging. Now the Jewish scourging may have been with a slightly different implement, different kinds of whips, you have the cat-and-nine-tails, you have the little barbell-shaped things on the ends of the thongs, if you've seen the Shroud of Turin.

By the way, and I don't mean to keep digressing, but you know that everybody has been excited about the Shroud of Turin for a thousand, umpteen-odd years, and it's kind of come and gone. They had the big Sturm project or whatever it was where they took the Shroud of Turin, analyzed it, came back and said, ah, carbon dating, it's medieval. Well, they've revisited that.

A lot of people said, oh, boo on you scientists, we don't believe you, it's the real thing. But, basically, the scientific conclusion, the evidence that they came out with was fairly convincing that it wasn't as early as they thought. Well, believe it or not, that was quite a while ago now, I think fifteen years ago, since they did that analysis on the Shroud, and I don't generally try to give you things that are in the realm of the sensational, but I do think it's interesting just from the point of view that the thing exists, and you have to form some kind of an opinion about it if you're interested in that kind of thing.

They've gone back because science advances by leaps and bounds. One of the things that was a little bit unsettling about that initial conclusion is the piece of the Shroud that they cut off to do the carbon dating, now they do spectrography and infrared photography and one thing and another, and there are medieval drawings of people exhibiting the Shroud and displaying it in this and the other, and in this medieval drawing they show a guy with a corner of it wadded up in his hand, and the part of the Shroud that has been the most touched over the centuries, even in this medieval drawing, that's where they cut the piece to do the carbon testing. And the spectral photography that they did shows this part to be a completely different color because of the contamination of the hand oils and all of the handling that it's had over the centuries, and no carbon dating guy worth his salt would even consider testing a sample that had that much contamination.

So basically the carbon dating results are out. Not only that, but they commissioned a lady who is the world's leading expert on textiles, ancient textiles, archaeological dig textiles that have come out of burials and tombs and pyramids and one thing and another. She did the work on the textiles that were found at Masada in Israel.

She has worked on textiles from all of the different periods, from ancient times all the way up virtually to the present. She knows every different kind of linen weaving method there is. She's just the expert.

And so they wanted to get this thing patched. They took the old crummy patches off. There was a fire in 1532.

The thing was in a silver casket. The fire melted the silver. The silver dripped onto the cloth, burnt holes in it.

There was some crude patching that was done. You can see these scars on the cloth. Well, they've taken these old crummy patches off and sent it to this lady to do an expert repair.

And as she worked on it, and as she examined it under magnification and took note of the weave and of the fact that it is more than one piece of cloth, but it appears to be a single piece because it has been so expertly, the strips have been so expertly sewn together with tiny hand stitching. And she said, I can tell you unequivocally, with no shadow of a doubt, this is not medieval linen. I've only seen this kind of linen with this weave and this kind of hand stitching of the pieces one other place, and that is Masada in the first century.

She is unhesitatingly, unequivocally sure that this is first century A.D. linen. She said, I'm not telling you anything about the image or anything else. I'm telling you this cloth could only have come from Israel in the first century.

I've never seen another piece like it. It's also interesting to note that the water stains on that cloth have always been attributed to the 1532 fire when they put the thing out. However, you can reproduce how the cloth was folded by lining up those burn marks, and you can tell how it was folded.

And the water stains are all out of place when you fold the cloth in the way it was folded when it got burned. They don't match. So, some guys made a replica of the cloth and put the stains, you know, reproduced all of the stains and markings on the cloth, and then figured out how must it have been folded when it got these water marks.

And where they showed how it was kind of folded in three, and then folded in half, and folded in half, and folded in half in the 1532 fire when it was in the silver casket. But that makes no sense of the water stains. To get the water stains, they folded it lengthwise, folded it lengthwise again, and then pulled it in squares in an accordion fashion starting at one end, laying each square on another one.

And that gives you a kind of a tall square stack that is nowhere near the dimensions of the silver casket. But if you then take the cloth and sort of roll it, it will fit in a clay jar of the type and configuration that the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in. When you do that, and then you allow for some moisture inside the jar due to condensation, and they took a replica cloth, they took a perfectly clean cloth, same dimensions, folded it this way, put some water in the bottom of one of these jars, rolled it, stuck it in the jar, pulled it back out, and unrolled it and laid it out on a flat surface, the water stains are identical to what is on the Shroud of Turin.

And the only way you can get that is to roll it up and stick it in a tall jar and let it get wet on the bottom. And those jars were only used, they weren't used much after the first century A.D. in Israel. So I tell you this not so much that we should think one thing or another about the Shroud of Turin or give it any unusual regard, but the other fascinating thing about this program, which by the way I T-vote on my computer because something else was playing at the time, I think the Peter Jennings thing was playing, I couldn't watch them both.

But the other thing is the provenance of that shroud only picks up like in 1300 and something is when they start having records of where it's been and where it came from. But there is another piece of cloth whose provenance and location and so on is very well documented all the way back practically to the time of Christ. And it is a napkin, smaller piece of cloth, doesn't have an image on it, it is a blood stained cloth.

And so they got this piece of cloth out and actually a replica of it with the stains reproduced and showed how this cloth when pinned around the head of a man who had the wounds that are described for the Lord Jesus, there is a large and with the head on an arm on the right arm if the body was stiff from being on the cross and the head was laying over on the right shoulder, the normal way that they would wrap this around the

head could not be done because the arm was in the way due to rigor mortis. And so they had to fold it back and pin it and there are pinholes in the cloth right where the pin would normally be. And the folding of the cloth, the blood that emerged from the nose has soaked through the first layer and partly through the second layer.

And you line these up and you get this exact image. The stains and the places where the blood leaked correspond exactly to the marks on the shroud of turn. These cloths have never met.

And the tests on the blood, the blood is a rare type, it's AB something, and the blood on this piece of cloth and on the shroud match exactly. So for whatever that is worth. But the point I'm in a very roundabout way of getting to here is that there are a lot of things in our lives that are not documented, that are not known.

There may be an effect, there may be an evidence. Somebody was blessed, someone was benefited, someone didn't wind up receiving the painful end of a sin on our part because we won a spiritual battle. But nobody knows it but us and God and perhaps the angels.

It goes undocumented, unnoticed, unrecognized, unappreciated. It just seems to blow away in the wind. The Apostle Paul and Barnabas spent five solid years in one of the most active times in the growth of the Christian church doing things every day, ministering, winning battles.

And these things that you see in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, the scourging, the beating with all of the attendant suffering that goes with that happened in this five year period. These things that you see in 2 Corinthians 11, 23-27 happened in this five year period when Paul was based in Antioch. It tells us in Romans chapter 15 verse 19 that he had preached the gospel as far as Illyria which is over on the other side of the Adriatic Gulf.

No mention of that trip, how he got there, what other adventures he may have had. How did he come to be arrested and scourged by the Jews five times? How did he come to be arrested and whipped by the Romans three times? No record anywhere in Acts and only a reference here in 2 Corinthians to the sufferings. He makes a general reference to the sufferings but the story is gone.

We don't have it. We don't know how this came about. But you can only guess at the magnitude of it.

Shipwrecked three times. He says he spent a whole night and a day in the deep. How do you spend a whole night and a day? You hear these survivor stories of ships that went down in World War II or got torpedoed or whatever and people clinging to a piece of wreckage for a 24 hour period, a night and a day with all of the hypothermia and various vagaries of was it a storm? Was he on the verge of drowning? We don't know.

A night and a day in the deep. Shipwrecked three different times. He did a lot of traveling of which we know nothing.

People were witnessed to. Countless sermons were preached. Countless debates and arguments and putting forth and setting before people the word of truth.

Scripture is silent about the details of those events. It's all in verse 28 of chapter 14 of Acts. He stayed there a long time.

We should reflect a little bit when we begin to feel like, well, does anybody notice? Does anybody care? Is this really making a difference? I'm trying to walk this Christian path. I'm trying to go down that narrow road through the straight gate. But is there any benefit? Is there any effect? Is anything useful coming of all of this? I think that things are changing in my soul.

I feel like I'm making progress. Does anybody know? Does anybody care? The great thing is you know that every single detail, every faithful decision, every triumph, every failure of the Apostle Paul and Barnabas and his team during this five-year period is written in the books of heaven. God knows.

God cares. There was a detailed day-by-day plan, all of the circumstances. Christianity would not be here if it wasn't for what Paul did in these five years.

But we don't know exactly what it was. We just know that he went through a lot of abuse in that time. But these events in 2 Corinthians 11 are detailed nowhere in the Scripture.

Acts is the only narrative we have of Paul's journeys and travels. And he gives us little summaries and little, well, three times this happened, five times that happened, spent a night and a day in the water. Besides frequent journeyings, perils from countrymen, perils from the heathen, perils from robbers, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brethren.

I mean, read 2 Corinthians 11, 23 and following. The man suffered all kinds of outrageous circumstantial abuse during this five-year period, not to mention the rest of his life, but this period in particular. We do not have a single circumstantial account of any of these events.

And if it wasn't for 2 Corinthians and one or two other little oblique references, we wouldn't even know that Paul suffered at all. We should not find ourselves discouraged. As it says over in Hebrews, God is not unrighteous, that he would forget our work of faith, our labor of love.

It is recorded in the books. The judgment seat of Christ is all about the books. It's all about the day-to-day battles.

There is not a word whispered in secret that will not be shouted from the housetops. There is not a faithful moment that the Lord God does not keep track of. Why? It reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And every shiny surface, every facet of our life that reflects God's glory is eternal and permanent. It's written down. And who would want to be written down in this life? You look at the efforts made to try to preserve history, and we have some bare skeletal facts.

If you go through the wives of Henry VIII or the succession and the throne of England, just that little segment of history, and try to figure out, well, here's Charles Martel, or here's this guy or that guy or the other guy in history. What exactly happened? People have to make a historical novel to tell the story. They have to fill in motivations.

They have to fill in personalities. They have to fill in appearances. They have to construct situations that would explain the outcomes that are just scratched in the shallow surface of history, because we just don't know.

And every reconstruction that you see, whether it's Shakespeare with Richard III, or whether it's the BBC doing their historical recreations, or A&E, or the History Channel, or any of the rest of it, it's 85% to 90% made up. People can't even figure out what Judas was thinking when he betrayed the Lord. You just have to try to fill in that gap.

Nobody knows. God knows every thought, every intent, every motive of the heart, and this is why it is for God that we live our lives. We cannot look to each other for our final sense of value, for our final sense of appreciation or understanding, and it's great when we do, and those close to us, hopefully we have enough rapport and enough communication that there is understanding and there is appreciation and there is fellowship and encouragement and so on, but you can't look there for what people have called in our modern day validation.

What do you mean when you validate? I think of my parking. You go work for a client, and can you validate my parking? Validating means I don't have to pay. You guys are going to pay my \$16 parking ticket out there in your parking garage, but validation means to assign worth, to assign value.

When they validate your parking ticket, they put a value that says this is paid. He doesn't have to dig the value out of his wallet. We're digging it out of our accounting budget later on, and when people say, well, I feel validated or I don't feel validated, it means someone either does or does not assign me worth and assign me value and have an estimate of my meaning in this life.

We have to look to the Lord God for that because the only meaning we have, the only value we have is in and through Christ. That's the only thing that makes our life matter. Everything else is wood, hay, and stubble.

So I find this short verse at the end of chapter 14 very fascinating because movie makers would love to have this story. Novelists and writers and tellers of tales would love to have this five years out of the life of Paul. They could make just a mini-series that would go on for ten years telling these stories.

God passes over it in silence. He says, I've got that written down. I'll tell you about that later.

Here's the important thing, chapter 15. And so he jumps five years of the most interesting stuff that happens to the Apostle Paul, jumps right over it. I would love to have an extra five chapters here, one per year, and tell the story of how Paul got shipwrecked three times, how he got beaten by the Jews five times, lashed by the Romans three times, etc., etc., etc.

How many times did he get waylaid and robbed in the road? How many different ways did God preserve him? How many different ways was he protected and defended even in and through these sufferings? How many people in prisons were one to Christ and one to the faith and brought to a renewed relationship with God because of the sufferings of Paul? There's a story there that will take a thousand years and more to tell. We don't get it now because there's enough in the Word of God for our needs now. But there is a lot more to this story.

I think there will be third, fourth, fifth, sixth testaments that we'll get to study out of human history showing the grace and the faithfulness of God in the life of Paul and the life of lots of other people that we can't even scratch the surface of what we've got, much less have that. But it just reminds me that we should not be discouraged. We should not faint and grow weary and start thinking, Oh, Phoebe, what's the use? There is a great use.

These five years are critically important. God just didn't see fit to include them for our purposes. But they're certainly important to His.

So, on to chapter 15. They spent a long time with the disciples. What an understatement.

Now, chapter 15. Just when you survived your lashings and your shipwrecks and your highwaymen and all the rest of it, men came down from Judea and began undermining everything that Paul had accomplished and built up and worked for in five years of labor in the Lord. Began teaching the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

What is the analog to this today? What do you and I encounter as believers and those who are attempting to follow the Lord in faith? What do we run into from our religious establishment? Have you been baptized? When's the last time you led someone to the Lord? Have you shared the gospel with anyone lately? Are you just a sit, soak, and sour

Christian? You just sit, soak up the teaching, and sour. You're all intake and no outtake. You're a one-way reservoir.

You're a stagnant pool. All in, nothing out. Yes.

Unless you fit our notion of what it means to be spiritual, you're just not even saved. You are not delivered. Your life doesn't have meaning and purpose and definition.

You are hopeless, helpless, and useless. You are outside the faith. You're probably not even going to heaven when you die.

Unless you are circumcised. Now, this is the establishment speaking. This is what they have grown comfortable with.

This is the tradition. This is the understanding. This is the way that it was in Israel.

Well, many of the modern denominations talk about, well, we've got our Baptist Zion, or we've got our Methodist Zion. It always makes me smile when they say that. We've got our Presbyterian Zion, or we've got our, whatever it is, our Episcopalian.

They talk about their Zion, meaning their structure, their form, their set of traditions that have been handed down ever since the days of the apostles. And it is ironic that they put it that way, just like it was ironic that on the cover of Experiencing God you have Moses standing there with the tables of the law, because to me, it's just emblematic of what you goofed on. Experiencing God is all about jumping into works with both feet.

It's works-based spirituality. Find out where God is at work and join Him. What does that mean? Get busy and do some works.

What does that mean? Spirituality by works. What did Paul spend 16 chapters in Romans writing about? Spirituality by faith. Our salvation, Ephesians 2, 8 and 9, is by grace, through faith, not of ourselves, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

It's not of two things. It's not of ourselves, and it's not of works. And he says, the same way you were saved, that's how you should live.

It's not of ourselves, it's not of works. The only things that count are things that are done in God's power, God's Spirit, God's Word, and so on. Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses.

We're citing the Bible here. We're quoting Scripture, you. Moses said, circumcise your babies on the eighth day.

It goes all the way back to Genesis. Moses wrote the five books. Genesis 17, the covenant of Abraham, cut off from the people.

Well, this is not Judaism. This is Christianity. It's a new and better system founded on new and better promises.

But they're having a hard time making the adjustment. In the same way that if your tradition has drifted, what did God accuse the old... I mean, this has ever happened. God told the Old Testament people in Israel, teaching as truth the traditions of men.

You've substituted for God's truth your traditions. So, these are the traditions. So, when Paul and Barnabas had a great dissension and debate with them, they had no small dispute.

They determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. You know, Peter and John walked with the Lord. Do you think you're smarter than Peter? Do you think you know more than John, the one who actually leaned his head on the bosom of the Lord? How can you come in and change the rules? John would never allow this.

If Thaddeus were here, he would call you down for saying we don't have to be circumcised. You just go talk. Notice who it is that says they need to go talk to the apostles.

The they here is not Paul and Barnabas. It is the disputers and the dissenters from what Paul and Barnabas are teaching. They say, you all need to go down and talk to the apostles.

You don't have any authority to be preaching this. They're the authorities we recognize. We're not real sure about your apostleship.

We know Peter and James and John are apostles. You go down and talk to them. Go to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.

So, being sent on their way by the church, the same church that sent them to the Gentiles, says, well, these guys from Jerusalem have a point. Maybe you ought to go down there and get this thing settled. Then they're five years teaching the gospel of grace.

But you get the people from Jerusalem, and they shove this lever into the chink in the armor here. Well, you don't really have the blessing of the old, original apostles. So, they were sent on their way by the church.

They passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles. And they caused great joy to all the brethren. Isn't this a wonderful thing? Who is it that's getting all wrapped around the axle and uptight, saying you need to go have a meeting? It's the leadership.

It's the ones who are in charge or wanting to be in charge. Your common brethren, who are just happy to hear the word, they hear that the Gentiles are coming in, and they say, Great! Isn't that great? More are being added to the church. It's an amazing thing, but you see this around you all the time.

I had a thing happen in my periphery, employment-wise, just in recent days, where something happens, and it's a cause for celebration. You're hoping for some funding, and funding comes in. And you think, praise God, that when this was needed, God found a way to provide it.

You would think, how could you possibly argue with that? How could somebody get wrapped up about that? And yet, somebody says, Well, who's getting the credit for that funding? I did the groundwork for that. How come this person over here is saying that they're the ones that brought in this funding? I labored on that. I talked to those people.

I'm the one that got them all primed up to sign on the dotted line. And just cast a pall of gloom and doom, and cause dissension and heartburn and grief when it's an occasion for rejoicing. This is what's great.

Be the brethren that are joyful when God does something good. Doubtful disputations, the Bible says, stay away. Paul says, you know, there's lots of different ways that the Gospel is preached.

This is why we were really careful when the Passion movie came out. I have reservations about any attempt to depict the Lord Jesus. I think God's depiction of Him with four Gospels and so on is probably adequate with the pictures of the Old Testament.

And the prophets and the writings is probably more than sufficient to give us a multidimensional view of the Lord Jesus. But a human attempt, inevitably, as I said about history, is going to try to fill in gaps and use imagination. And that always makes you a little cautious.

But, what does the Apostle Paul say? He says, you know, people preach Christ out of all different motives, for all different reasons. But he says, you know what I'm glad about? Christ is being preached. They're talking about Christ.

They're not talking about Zeus or Jupiter. They're not talking about Ashtar. They're not talking about some other bozo god or goddess that came out of Greece or Rome or someplace.

Christ is being preached. And he says, I'm happy about that. Some preach Him out of selfish motives.

Some preach Him out of this and that and the other. Some MeTooism and bandwagonism. And some people don't get it all quite right.

But he says, you know what? Christ is being preached. What a great thing. And we need more of this positive attitude, don't we? All of us do.

To look at something and say, you know, God can work something here. I think I really suffered in my younger days. I think I was part of a group that maybe I wasn't the only one that had this problem in our particular strand of Christianity where we were really thrilled with knowledge that came from the Word of God and tended to measure things by that knowledge and to find fault with things that didn't reflect as much familiarity with the Word of God.

And you sort of unconsciously begin to assume that, well, God's not going to really work with anybody unless they have this level of knowledge. And unless they've come to understand and straighten some things out from the Word of God and get some things lined up, well, God just isn't going to really be present in that group. And failing to rejoice and failing to remember that we all come from somewhere.

You know, most of the people that formed that group came out of denominational churches or came out of the weeds, came out of strange, bizarre places. And we don't remember that God was working with us when we were in a strange and bizarre place. We look at someone else that's in a strange and bizarre place and say, well, you need to take about five years of Bible class and then come back and then you'll be ready to join our group.

That type of a thing. And the thing you see here is, look, they're passing through Phoenicia and Samaria. These are sort of the despised areas.

I mean, it's not that long since the days of Christ. You know what they think of Samaritans. And most of the Jews would skirt Samaria and not even go through it.

Remember the Tyro-Phoenician woman that came and talked to the Lord Jesus? Remember the Samaritan woman at the well? It's no small thing. They passed through Phoenicia. They passed through Samaria.

I wonder if they were thinking about those stories of the Lord Jesus dealing with people from those regions. These are the rejected. These are the off-scourings and the outcasts, the ones the Pharisees wouldn't even look at or speak to.

And you know the thing about those people is they have great objectivity. They don't get up on a high horse. They don't ride the Pharisaic look-down-your-nose hobby horse.

They just say, you mean the Gentiles are coming to Christ too? Isn't that great? Praise God. And they don't say, well now, are they getting circumcised? Are they eating pork up there? You know, I've heard that they have meat that's offered. You know, they don't ask those questions.

They just say, praise God. And this would be a good attitude for us to cultivate, wouldn't it? And I, including myself, to look at what God is doing and not worry about what God hasn't done yet or what someone hasn't come to understand yet, but be grateful when there is a glimmer of what's good and what's growing and what's positive. They describe the conversion of the Gentiles, the brethren there, great joy.

What a great thing. But when they come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders. And they reported all the things that God had done with them.

But some of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, who are Christians, rose up saying it is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Samaritans don't have a problem. Phoenicians don't have a problem.

But the Pharisees are frowning. You didn't do it quite right. You need to go back there, take this flint knife, and get after all those men up there and circumcise them.

And give them a copy of Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy so they'll do the right thing. Well, verse 6, the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. When there had been much dispute.

All I want you to do, and we're going to stop here in verse 7 for tonight. If you don't mind marking your Bible, draw a circle around much dispute and then draw a line back up to verse 3. There's great joy in Samaria and Phoenicia. There is much dispute in Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, the center of the religion of the true one God.

That's our choice. We can be people who occasion and who appreciate great joy, or we can be people who get involved in much dispute. There is a danger in knowledge.

There is a danger even your non-traditionalism can become a tradition. You can be legalistic about your non-legalism. You can become entrenched in almost any view and begin to think, well, there are those who are in and those who are out.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. Those are the first three elements of the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, and peace.

You get the idea that in Phoenicia and Samaria they've got a lot more figured out than the Pharisees do, than the people up at headquarters in Jerusalem. People are learning. People are excited about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't that great? Let's pray for them. Good job, Paul and Barnabas. Well done.

We're proud of you. That's just great. We've got some Gentiles around here.

Would you mind talking to them? That's great. You get to Jerusalem, and everybody's clenching. Everybody is finding something wrong.

And that is an attitude that we want to try to purge out of our hearts and purge out of our souls, because this is what the Bible means when it says, quench not the Spirit. We're out of time tonight to look at it, but when you look at that passage, look at its context. It's in the context of public worship.

It doesn't say, there's a Spirit in you, don't quench Him. He says there's a Spirit in the group. There's a Spirit working amongst people.

Don't put out the Spirit's fire. Somebody's got a little candle flame starting to burn there. They're not totally on fire.

They haven't got the whole thing figured out, but there's a flame that's starting to flicker and grow there. Don't say, you don't have the right kind of fire, and douse it and put it out. It's very easy for us to do that.

It's very easy for us to frown. So just look at that contrast. Is it much dispute, or is it great joy? People find great joy attractive.

Dr. Crystal has a sermon, and the title of the sermon is one you'd never imagine. It's called, The Magnetic Christ. And I'm thinking, is this one that goes on your dashboard? Stick him on there and he won't fall off? But his whole point in that sermon is, Christ is attractive.

People ought to see Christ and be attracted. It doesn't mean that we violate our standards or compromise our ethics, or that we don't hold to the true course and separate from what is evil and what is wrong. But we have to discern where there is potential, where there is work of the Spirit, where there is opportunity, where there is an open door.

And when you look through that open door that God opened for the Gentiles, and you see that there are people approaching it, don't run up and slam it shut and say, you're not walking quite right. You're not dressed quite right. We have a dress code in here, and you're not worthy.

We want to be those who reflect and who foster great joy. Well, we'll pick up next time here in Acts chapter 15 and look at this Jerusalem council that begins in verse 6. Father, thank You for revealing to us the truth as it's found in Your Word, Your plan and Your purpose, Your guidance for us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts so that we can live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.