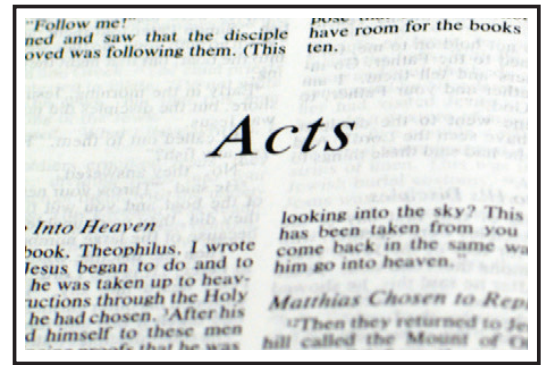


The Gospel of Acts



FRIDAY December 23

PAUL'S DEFENSE

“Then Paul made his defense: ‘I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar’” (Acts 25:8).

Paul makes his defense by stating that he has not broken any of God’s laws or man’s laws. He is innocent yet he stands accused. Paul finds himself in the same situation that Jesus found Himself. All believers will find themselves in the same place. If a man’s king was put on trial, doesn’t it make sense that the man will be put on trial.

As our King rose from the dead, doesn’t it make sense that we will rise? If we do not forget our King, doesn’t it make sense that our King will not forget us? As you find yourself in the midst of trials, know that through Jesus Christ you will prevail. Not because of who you are, but because of who He is.

SAT./SUN. December 24/ December 25

THE ROUTE TO ROME

“After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: ‘You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!’” (Acts 25:12).

Paul takes a curious route to Rome—curious because God had revealed to him earlier that he would be going to Rome to spread His word, but it appears that he only goes because Festus sent him. Isn’t that the way we tend to do it? We forget the providence of God. We forget that God knows all, sees all and does all. We worry about our current situation instead of seeing it as part of God’s plan. Sometimes we miss what that plan is because we forget to look to the One who made the plan.

Many situations and people will direct our lives and tell us where we need to go, but sometimes it is God using them and the situation to move us to where He wants us to be.

MONDAY December 26

DAMASCUS ROAD

“About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions” (Acts 26:13).

This verse is Paul’s witness to the day Jesus came into his heart on the road to Damascus. It is the day of his new birth.

If you are a believer, then you have a witness of your own. December is when we celebrate the coming of Jesus. I encourage you to take some time to write down where you first met Jesus. Describe your “road to Damascus,” so all who follow behind you will be able to read your witness. We don’t get to write about our birth, but we get to proclaim to the entire world the day of our rebirth.

TUESDAY December 27

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

“First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds” (Acts 26:20).

Paul says we should repent, which means change. He says that change should turn us to God, and God should prompt us to do things that show the change that godly repentance has brought. It is so beautiful and simple.

We don’t work to get love. We work because we are loved.

Look around yourself and find the proof of your repentance. Is it there? Do you look, talk and think differently? What are you doing and why are you doing it? The end of the year is a great time for reflection. What is your life proving?

WEDNESDAY December 28

CRAZY TALK?

“At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. ‘You are out of your mind, Paul!’ he shouted. ‘Your great learning is driving you insane!’” (Acts 26:24).

This is not the first time Paul was accused of being crazy. We read in 2 Corinthians 5:13, “If we are ‘out of our mind,’ as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.” It is common for a non-believer to hear the Word of God as crazy talk. When you came to believe in Jesus Christ, truth replaced the insanity. This month greet everyone with a big smile and shout, “Merry Christmas!” Let your joy make it seem that you are crazy and maybe they will stop you and ask, “Why are you so happy?” Then you can tell them the real reason for the season.

THURSDAY December 29

AN ETERNAL PRAYER

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’ Paul replied, ‘Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains’” (Acts 26:28-29).

What beautiful words from Paul. He says, “I don’t care how you get here, just get here.” Paul was praying for each of us 2,000 years ago. When he says “listening,” we can infer reading. While on trial defending himself, Paul stopped and prayed for you. It is the model laid down by our King as He hung on the cross. He stopped in the middle of His pain and prayed to God for each of us. Paul didn’t pray for chains, and Jesus didn’t pray for a cross. They prayed for our souls.

If only I can be that brave and that strong when the time comes to face my death—strong enough to lay myself down and pray to God not for myself, but for you. It is possible.

I pray for each of you who read these words today. I pray that God strengthens you in your time of need throughout this season and throughout your life.

Roy Jackson is a Southeast member and founder of The Simon Tradition, a Louisville-based crisis-management ministry. He is a graduate of the Thoroughly Equipped program.

