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In the Den
Page 2

ADVENTURES IN ACTS
Communication Channels
Page 4

Walking With God
Page 6

What Can I Do For God?
Page 8



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Editor's Introduction

Thanks again for reading YPS. I find it encouraging when I hear that people of all ages read the YPS insert. After all, the word of God is for all of us! The aim of YPS is to help those who are younger in the faith in their walk with God. The challenge is to cover a wide range of Bible truths and to teach in terms that everyone can understand. Hopefully you have noticed that we have started a new series – 'Adventures in Acts'. If Jeremy continues dealing with one chapter at a time this one could go on for a very long time! We have decided to break it down into the main divisions of the book of Acts so that we get it finished before most of you are old-age pensioners!

I for one have found the articles that we have included in YPS particularly helpful! What about you? Have you found any one in particular helped you? If you have, why not tell us how they have helped you, and why you thought they were of value?

As always we are trying to introduce some new contributors to the magazine. Paul Maclean of Manchester is the 'new kid on the block' in this issue. Paul works for a major bank (no brand names to be given; admitting you work in a bank is dangerous these days!). His article on Enoch will hopefully encourage you to do your own study of characters in scripture, and most importantly to seek God's help to learn and practise the lessons identified from such research. I always find that I learn most from my own study of scripture. Why not use the articles in YPS as the springboard from which to start your own study on a specific passage or topic?

In this issue Paul McCauley completes the studies that he has been doing for us on the first half of the prophecy of Daniel. We appreciate the help that he has given us, and look forward to more articles from him in the future (we will give him a rest for a while).

Another series is also coming to completion in this issue – 'The What Can I Do for God Series?'. I hope that you have found these reminders have prompted you to think more seriously about your life of service for God. Thanks again to Steven Buckeridge for all the hard work that he has put into writing these pieces for us.

So on with your reading! Only three months until the next issue. I trust that you will enjoy the Lord and His word until then.

In the Saviour's name,

Stephen Baker

YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed*, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is available separately from the main magazine.



In the Den

BY **PAUL McCaULEY** BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

This chapter is the last of the narrative chapters in the book of Daniel. From chapter 7 onwards we are into the prophetic section, and so, given the purposes of these articles, this will be our last stop.

It is a chapter in which we are really coming full circle. Daniel faces a tremendous test of his courage and convictions, just as he did in chapter 1. Daniel takes a similar stand here and God intervenes for Daniel's protection as the first chapter also highlights.

There are some clear contrasts between chapter 1 and chapter 6:

1. In chapter 1 the problem is the prayers of the Babylonians. The food the Jews were offered had been dedicated to the Babylonian god Nebo, and so Daniel could not partake;
2. But in chapter 6 the problem is the prayers of Daniel. The Government was not prepared to tolerate him praying to his God;
3. In chapter 1 Daniel said there is only one to whom I pray – God;
4. But in chapter 6 the authorities said there is only one to whom you'll pray – Darius, the king;
5. In chapter 1 there was a subtle temptation to simply accommodate another god;
6. But in chapter 6 there was a blatant challenge to eliminate the worship of the true God altogether.

Let's gather up a couple of lessons from these general remarks before we get into a few of the details of the chapter.

The first thing to learn is this – we will never reach a stage in life at which we will have no

tests and face no challenges. In chapter 1, early on in his course of devotion to God, he had a big hurdle to clear, and he cleared it beautifully. Now in chapter 6, as an old man he faces another hurdle. It was great that he cleared the one in his teens. We likely would never have heard of him had he stumbled there. But before he crosses the finishing line, there's another obstacle for him to deal with.

Many people have been alert in early days and have jumped the stumbling blocks the devil and this world have put in their path, but then they thought they could coast home, they dropped their guard, didn't maintain their vigilance, and came crashing down within sight of the finishing line. Think of Noah: here was a man who stood out from the world and stood up for God in the midst of unspeakable corruption. God swept the sinful world away in the flood, and Noah and his family stepped out of the ark onto a purged earth. He's home and dry we might say (pardon the pun), but in a world with only seven other people, and none of the pressures he would have faced in the old world, Noah fails badly, and falls sadly. David, Solomon, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and tragically many others, illustrate the same point – we can't afford to relax. This world is a minefield, and continual watchfulness is needed. It may be that you have come through a big test already in your Christian life. You might have thought that if you got through school or university with your testimony intact you could breathe a sigh of relief, but beware, and be sure more tests lie ahead.

The second lesson is that the first test gave Daniel confidence in God for future tests. As new challenges came into his life he could look back to the time when he stood for God, and God had stood with him. The problems and pressures

you face today will, if handled aright, equip you with experience for future problems and pressures. We have looked at the similarities between chapter 1 and chapter 6, but another difference is this, in chapter 1 Daniel didn't know what would happen to him if he was faithful, however, in chapter 6 he knew exactly what would happen. He had proved God in early days and his experience of God never left him and was a source of strength for him in this trial. In your early days of Christian experience God will give you opportunities to demonstrate your faithfulness to Him, and in those circumstances He will demonstrate His faithfulness to you.

In the early part of the chapter we read about how Daniel was promoted to a place of power and prominence in the kingdom. This was due to the fact that 'an excellent spirit was in him', v. 3. It is interesting to notice that this same expression is used of him in 5.12 when the queen of Babylon was telling Belshazzar about what Daniel did in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. Isn't it great that although decades had passed it was still true that 'an excellent spirit' was found in Daniel? He hadn't developed a bitter spirit as he thought of the fact he had been wrenched from home, family and friends. He hadn't developed a critical spirit as he thought of Jews who had assimilated and absorbed Babylonian or Persian culture. He hadn't developed a pessimistic spirit as he thought about another empire in power, and him still away from home. He hadn't developed a proud spirit as he considered the tests he had come through, the promotion he had earned, the influence he had over kings, or the revelations he had received from God. No, he didn't have a bitter, critical, pessimistic, or proud spirit. He had an excellent spirit, and this marked him out in the work place. What about your spirit i.e. your attitude? Do the people in your school, university or workplace notice you for having an excellent spirit? Make it a matter of definite and daily prayer that an excellent spirit will be found in you.

Although this excellent spirit was noticed by everyone, it was not appreciated by everyone. Someone who lives righteously and works diligently is a rebuke to, and condemnation of,

those who don't. So the presidents and princes set their sights on Daniel and determined to shoot him down, and they realized the only way they could get him was if it was to do with his God. What a challenge for us. If the people you go to school with or work alongside determined to find fault with you, would they have much trouble? Would they be able to point to laziness, gossip, disrespect, unrighteousness, and incompetence? What a thing it would be if the only criticism they could level was faithfulness to God!

So they got the king to agree to a scheme in which he tried to be God for a month. No one was allowed to pray to anyone else for 30 days. What did Daniel do when he heard about this? Did he say, 'Well, they aren't saying we can never pray again - it's only 30 days.' Or, 'I'll just make sure to pray secretly for the next month.' No, when he knew the writing was signed, he went into his house, opened his windows, kneeled down, and prayed just like he always did, v. 10.

It's important to see that this was Daniel's habit three times a day. It wasn't the case that when he heard of the law he started doing this to make a point, no, he continued doing it because he realized this was a test of his fidelity to God. Do you have a disciplined prayer life like Daniel had? Do you have set times each day for talking to God? Make it a part of your daily routine, and let nothing push out time with God.

We know the story. Much to the king's consternation Daniel was cast into the den of lions, but he didn't go in there alone, God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths, and while the king had a very fretful night, Daniel had a very restful night!

Once again, Daniel's faithfulness became a means of impressing a pagan king and impacting a Gentile empire with the greatness of the living God. Daniel wrote, 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever', 12. 3. Daniel certainly fulfilled that description, and may God help us to fulfil it too.



ADVENTURES IN ACTS: CHAPTER 1

Communication Channels

BY JEREMY SINGER BRIDGE OF WEIR, SCOTLAND

At the beginning of any great expedition or military campaign, it is important to set up the lines of communication. The people on the front line need to keep in touch with those back at base. Napoleon is reputed to have said, 'The secret of war lies in the communications'.

In our chapter, we discover four methods of communication between the Lord and the disciples:

1. A conversation with Christ, vv. 1-9
2. An announcement from the angels, vv. 10-11
3. Prayer, vv. 12-14, 24-26
4. Scripture, vv. 15-23

Recall the principle we discussed in the introductory article: when studying Acts we need to distinguish between one-off events (which happened there and then, but would not happen here and now) and regular occurrences (which we should continue to experience today). In the list of communication channels above, I consider (1) the disciples' conversation with Christ and (2) the message from the angels as special cases for particular occasions. I consider (3) prayer and (4) scripture to be the regular channels that we should use today. In this article, we will look at each of these items and learn how we can improve our lines of communication with heaven.

Conversation with Christ, vv. 1-9

Here we see the relationship between the Lord and His disciples. In this conversation He commands, vv. 2, 4, He promises, vv. 4, 5, 8, and He gives them an answer, v. 7. For their part, the disciples only ask a single question. Since we have become His disciples, we must also show this same kind of reverence to Him. 'One is your master, even Christ.' Matt. 23. 8, 10.

Another important lesson is that the disciples were not all-knowing. Some divine truth was not revealed to them, v. 7. Once empowered by the Holy Spirit, they served God effectively without understanding all the details of God's programme. This encourages us to serve Him faithfully and intelligently.

Announcement from the Angels, vv. 10-11

In several of the Lord's most poignant moments on earth (which Campbell Morgan calls His 'crises'¹) angels are in attendance. As He is 'received up into glory', 1 Tim. 3. 16, the disciples glimpse two angels in the guard of honour for Christ. He ascends triumphantly to the place that is reserved for the one who is 'so much better than the angels' Heb. 1. 4.

The Greek word *angelos* means messenger. These two angels bring a message of hope to the disciples, with the promise of the Lord's return. 'This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go'. This is the guarantee of Jesus' personal, visible and physical return to earth. When Paul explains more about the Lord's return, he concludes with comfort, 1 Thess. 4. 18, and encouragement to labour, 1 Cor. 15. 58. I imagine the disciples felt similar sentiments as they returned to the upper room, Acts 1. 13, in Jerusalem.



ADVENTURES IN ACTS

Prayer, vv. 12-14, 24-26

The first recorded prayer meeting in Acts provides a good pattern for church prayer gatherings today. The believers are united, praying with 'one accord', v. 14. This harmony is a condition for God's blessing, Ps. 133. 1. There is no inequality. Men and women, apostles and non-apostles, the Lord's earthly family, and anonymous others all make up the group of 120. Peter calls them all 'brethren' v. 16.

The prayer is clear and definite. This is the force of the word 'supplication' v. 14. There is no unfocused prayer; the disciples have an obvious, immediate need for God's guidance, v. 24. Notice also their determination, as they 'continued', v. 14. This attitude is in sharp contrast to the tired, prayerless disciples in Gethsemane. Now they appreciate the real power of prayer. May we do the same!

Scripture, vv. 15-23

Peter quotes the OT scriptures accurately, extensively, and appropriately. This sets a good example for contemporary preachers. The lesson is that Peter takes the scripture passage and applies it to the immediate circumstances. He uses the word of God to determine the course of action. Further, it is challenging to see that Peter's sermon is both preceded and succeeded by public prayer - another excellent precedent. Prayer and Bible study are closely associated. Both are essential for us today!

Challenge

The twin themes of this first chapter are the anticipated activities of the disciples:

- witnessing for the risen Christ, v. 22
- waiting for the returning Christ, v. 11

These responsibilities have not changed. Let us keep on witnessing and waiting, as the adventure continues!

Footnotes

¹ G. Campbell Morgan. *The Crises of the Christ*. 1903.
Available online at gcampbellmorgan.com/crises.html



THE ACTS OF GOD

ENOCH -

Walking With God

BY PAUL MACLEAN MANCHESTER, ENGLAND



I am glad that the Bible records examples of men and women who lived and served God in their generation. We can learn lessons from them, which when applied to our lives, enable us to live and witness for God in today's society.

In this article I want to think of the example of Enoch. When I read of Enoch I find that he, Walked with God, Gen. 5. 22, 24; Pleased God, Heb. 11. 5 and Prophesied (Witnessed) for God, Jude 14.

The questions we need to ask at the beginning of our article is this – Do I walk with God? Do I please God? Do I Witness for God? What a challenge as we consider our relationship with our God! Enoch's name means 'Dedicated'. He gave himself completely to walking, pleasing, and witnessing for God. Have we given our lives completely to Him?

What does it mean to 'walk with God'? The idea of walking is commonly used in the Bible to describe the habitual behaviour of a person. Walking with God includes being aware of our responsibility to God and of our communion with God. It has been said that a walk is made up of steps. We walk one step at a time, and the character of our steps will determine the character of our walk. Just as a little child takes its first step when learning to walk so as a Christian I need to do the same – take one step at a time. This started with salvation, then baptism, next meeting with other Christians in a local church for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers, Acts 2. 41-42.

As we think of these things am I like Enoch and dedicated to making progress. In Amos chapter 3 verse 3 a question is asked – 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' So to be able to walk with God we must be in agreement with God.

According to Micah chapter 6 verse 8 the Lord has told us 'what is good and what He requires of us'. This is described as doing what is just (right) to love mercy (lovingkindness) and to walk humbly with God. We must realize we need to humble ourselves so that we can walk with God. If we agree with God and humble ourselves He will draw near and go with us, Luke 24. 15. In the New Testament we are given instructions as how a Christian should walk – 'in newness of life', Rom. 6. 4; 'after the Spirit', Rom. 8. 4; 'in honesty', Rom. 13. 13; 'by faith', 2 Cor. 5. 7; 'in the Spirit', Gal. 5. 16; 'in good works', Col. 4. 5; 'in the light', 1 John 1. 7; 'after the commandments of the Lord', 2 John 6; 'in truth', 3 John 4. Are these the things that would characterize my walk with God?

Enoch not only walked with God but according to Hebrews chapter 11 verse 5 'he pleased God'. Do I please God? The Lord Jesus said, 'I do always those things that please the Father', and God says concerning His Son 'This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased', Matt. 3. 17.

How can I please God?

1. By being obedient to His word;
2. By daily taking up Christ's cross and following Him;
3. By adding to my faith characteristics such as Peter mentions in 2 Peter chapter 1 verses 5-7;
4. By serving Him by using the spiritual gift which He has given me.

Paul encourages the Colossian believers in chapter 1 verse 10 to 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God'.

Jude says that Enoch prophesied (witnessed) of things to come, Jude 14, 15. While we don't have those who prophesy today, we have those who, from the word of God, witness and warn people of coming judgement. We are here on earth to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus, to show His love, care and compassion for those who are lost in their sins. Are we displaying the features which marked the Lord Jesus so that others can see Christ in us?

I trust that as a result of this short study of the life of Enoch we all may walk, please, and witness for God in our generation, and shine as lights in the world.

59. He said to another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "I must first let me go and bury my father."

60. Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead."

WHAT CAN I DO FOR GOD?

Be Fruitful, John 15. 4

BY STEVEN BUCKERIDGE DATCHET, ENGLAND

It is an amazing fact that the Bible teaches that every Christian can be like Christ! So a key aim for every Christian must be to abide in Christ, John 15. 4. When we are in tune with our Saviour, we will be like Him and the result will be that we produce the 'fruit of the Spirit', Gal. 5. 22. Every Christian will be like Christ in eternity, but we should regularly ask the question 'how could I be more like Him now?'

What is it?

- Fruitfulness is Christ-likeness.
- It happens when the Holy Spirit is allowed to control us, Gal. 5. 16 and we 'Abide in Him', John 15. 2.
- Some of this may be seen only by God.

Why should we be fruitful?

- The Lord Jesus perfectly displayed the fruit of the Spirit, and Christlikeness is God's key purpose for us in salvation, Rom. 8. 29.
- It is the inevitable result of allowing the Spirit of God to work in our lives.
- Others will see an obvious divine power at work in our lives.

How can we be fruitful?

by living out the truth of Galatians chapter 5 verses 22-23

Love: giving sacrificially to others (even those we think are undeserving) irrespective of the response.

Joy: heavenly rejoicing and 'holy hope that perseveres.

Peace: a tranquil serenity coming from contentment in the will of God.

Longsuffering: endurance under provoking circumstances. The word is literally 'long tempered' - no Christian should be known for having a 'short fuse'.

Kindness: tender compassion in our actions.

Goodness: acting for the good of others, even when difficult action is required.

Faithfulness: personal reliability, and also not doubting God.

Gentleness (meekness): the ability to be powerful without arrogance; lowly while inwardly strong (see the example of Moses in Numbers chapter 12 verse 3 and the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 11 verse 29).

Self control: disciplined lives – just as athletes exercise self control in their relationships, food intake, and other desires so that they don't interfere with their training, 1 Cor. 9. 25.

We may find some of these things harder to practise than others. However, showing just part of the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is like being an orange with segments missing. God working in someone's life will produce a balanced character!

Practical advice

- A garden neglected produces weeds. Fruitfulness in our lives will take deliberate, hard work.
- What we 'sow' and 'feed' will grow: our minds must be filled with the word of God and prayer, Gal. 6. 7-8.
- What we fail to 'weed' will grow: removing sin, spiritual hindrances, and time/energy wasters is an endless, but essential task, 2 Tim. 2. 3-4; Heb. 12. 1.

The promise of the Lord Jesus is for every Christian: 'He that abides in Me and I in Him, bears much fruit' John 15. 5.

