

Union Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **The Acts of the Holy Spirit, Part 10:
Working Through Obedient Disciples**

August 20th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Acts 9:1-20; John 14:15-24**

1. Recall: Being a Disciple (and Apprentice) of Jesus Listen, Observe, Do.

- **Jesus's Promise**

- "Very truly, I tell you, **the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.** 13I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 14:2-13 NRSV

- **Imitating Christ: Listen, Observe, Do**

- **"Whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked."**
1 John 2:6 NRSV
- **"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. "**
1 Corinthians 11:1 NRSV

2. Relationship Between Love, Obedience, and Manifestation of the Holy Spirit

- **Love is key; Obedience is evidence of love for God**

"If you love me, keep my commands." John 14:15 NIV

"Jesus replied, **"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching....**

24Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.

These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" John 14:23-24 NIV

"Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. 20The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished." John 5:19-20 NRSV

- **Fruit of Love & Obedience: Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**

"If you love me, keep my commands.

16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—17the Spirit of truth.

22Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "**But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"**

23Jesus replied, "**Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.**"

John 14:15-17, 22-23 NIV

- **The Holy Spirit's Gifts & Revelations are Spiritually Discerned**

"The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." John 14:17 NIV

Paul explains these truths in some depth:

"As it is written [Isaiah 64:4],

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

12Now **we have received** not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.**

14Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

16"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?"

But we have the mind of Christ."

1 Corinthians 2:9-10, 12, 14-16 NRSV

3. **Lessons: Saul (Paul)'s Conversion & Ananias, a Disciple**

Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 gives us a detailed explanation of how we receive gifts and revelations from the Holy Spirit. It is a process of spiritual discernment, where those who are spiritual can understand and receive from God's Spirit. However, there was a time when Paul as a Biblical scholar and Pharisee was blind to the deeply spiritual gifts and revelations of the Holy Spirit.

○ **Paul's Spiritual Blindness Made Him a Persecutor of the early Church**

Paul had this to say about being spiritually blind to the gospel of Christ:

"If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

4In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 2 Corinthians 4:4 NRSV

Who is "the god of this world"? The devil.

This blindness exists in both the poor and rich, those with no education and the highly educated, and so on. Spiritual blindness is no respecter of persons.

Paul himself was highly educated and religious but yet spiritually blind. He was a zealous persecutor of the early church. This was before his encounter with Jesus through the Holy Spirit on the road to Damascus. We read about this encounter in Acts 9.

"You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors."

Galatians 1:13-14 NRSV

○ **Paul's Spiritual Blindness Lifted in Spiritual Encounter with Jesus**

After he had supervised the killing of Stephen (Acts 8:1), with the High Priest's written permission, Paul was on his way to Damascus to find and arrest Christians. His persecution had gotten to the point where Jesus directly intervened in very dramatic fashion.

"As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him,

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5**"Who are you, Lord?"** Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

6**"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."** 7The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.

8Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."

Acts9:3-9 NIV

A few things to note:

- **Jesus takes it personally when his disciples are persecuted.**
"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
 - **Paul's spiritual blindness was removed when, with humility, he acknowledged Jesus as Lord**
5**"Who are you, Lord?"** Saul asked.
"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.
6**"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."**
 - **Obedience matters**
His obedience to the instructions from the Lord was the beginning of an amazing journey with Jesus, full of divine revelations and manifest presence of the Holy Spirit and His power.
- **Ananias, A Disciple, and Saul (Paul)'s Healing**
Who was Ananias?
He was a disciple in Damascus.
He was not one of the twelve apostles of Jesus
He does not appear to have been one of the disciples who were in Jerusalem
Though he might have been in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, he was a disciple in Damascus.
He seemed to be an ordinary disciple living in Damascus who had no special role in the life of the early church - until now.

Ananias's Conversation & Argument with the Lord

"In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias.

The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

11The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. **12**In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. **14**And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

Acts 9:10-15 NIV

Ananias was going on Paul's reputation and not on what God was doing in Paul's life. As spiritual people it is important that we discern right with the help of the Holy Spirit. We must not write off people or be scared of them because of their past.

Ananias' Obedience to the Lord

"Then **Ananias went** to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, **"Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."** **18**Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, **19**and after taking some food, he regained his strength." Acts 9:17-19 NIV

Clearly, Ananias had more revelation and instructions about Paul than is recorded here. He added in his conversation with Paul, the Lord **"has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."**

4. Building with Wisdom: Listen, Observe, Do

Let's conclude today with an important question Jesus asks of all his disciples (including us):

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

47As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into

practice, I will show you what they are like. 48They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.49But **the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.** The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

Luke 6:46-49 NIV

Remember what Jesus also gave us an amazing promise:

“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

John 14: 23 NIV