

UNIT 32

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THE POWER

AND THE

WISDOM

OF GOD

“By One Spirit, into One Body”

by Andrea Burke

I live in football country. The kind of football country where people swap out their American flags for their team flags come September. Where the grocery stores are half food, half NFL-themed meals. Cereals, cookies, ice cream, you name it. You can't turn a corner around here without the greeting of the regional team, and you'll be sure to stand out if you're not planning your weekends around the fall and winter schedule.

Last season, I wore a team hat to church. It was a big game day, and I donned our team's colors, proudly walking into our church knowing that I was in good company with (most of) the church. What I didn't expect was what happened as I took my seat. An older woman approached me. She was eager, excited, and tucked her gray hair behind her ears before speaking.

“Oh, I'm so glad to see you wearing that hat,” she exclaimed. “I just had to sit and talk with you because now I know I can trust you.”

At first, I thought she was joking, but as it turns out, she was not. The team hat had indeed not only communicated team spirit, but it had apparently communicated a deeper sense of safety that she was searching for.

It struck me as so odd. Here we were in church. The place where we gather each week to worship Christ and lift His name high, proclaiming that we are the sinful wretches He saved. We are the ones who needed rescuing! That's why we're all here! This should be the most unifying thing of all, and yet that wasn't what pulled my sister in Christ toward unity that day. It was, in fact, a sports team.

THE WISE WORLD OF SPORTS?

The thing is, maybe we have something to learn from the world of sports in the church. I attended my first NFL game last year, and it was nothing short of a secular worship service. As soon as I entered the parking lot, it was clear that this team was family. We united under one name.

We never belonged anywhere else truly until we belonged to Christ.

It was the same camaraderie I felt every time I wore my hat or hoodie locally. Once people saw me in the team's colors, complete strangers would light up. I was no longer a stranger but something closer to a friend.

We all believed the same thing—a win was what we needed. Our team could do it. Our team was capable. We sang the songs. We cheered and hugged strangers. We shared the same food and drinks. A communion of sorts. We had one purpose, and at times what felt like one voice as the stadium thundered and roared after the opening kickoff was returned for a touchdown.

There was no politics. No “us” and “them.” No competing for status in the crowd. No one comparing clothes, wallets, checkbooks, what kind of cars we drove. We parked next to luxury vehicles and rusted out farm trucks. We cheered with the rich and the poor. We had no language barriers between us. The stadium was one of unity, entirely.

And to imagine that this is just a mere shadow of what Christ desires to bring to His church. Christ, the power and wisdom of God—the one whom we can trust with

all things, who is in all things, and in whom all things are held together—levels the field entirely.

There's no VIP seating in Christ's church. No political parties for us to rally and take sides on. No status that a bank account can secure, and no low place that removes us from the safety of His hands. Our defining characteristics shouldn't fit into a specific nationality, socio-economic, or even an ethnic box. Christ isn't building a church of people who argue about secondary doctrinal issues as though our salvation depends on who can get in the last snarky word.

Christ is building something that swallows our worldly identities whole. In His power and wisdom, He is saving a people for Himself. A people who will roar in exultation on that final day. A people who do not walk in on a Sunday morning and look for team names and tribes to associate with. We are a people changed, convicted, and welcomed by the gospel of Christ alone. The sigh of relief we should feel and extend toward our brothers and sisters is not because we finally fit in. It's that we never belonged anywhere else truly until we belonged to Christ.

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**ONE KING, ONE FAITH,
ONE LAW**

My husband's family crest, which dates back to AD 1193, has an ancient motto etched across it: Ung Roy, Ung Foy, Ung Loy, which translates now to "One King, One Faith, One Law." After we were first married, I had these words printed and hung on our living room wall. This was meant to serve as a reminder to us and our children—this house is ordered differently. Regardless of how the world spins and how culture tells us to live or what to believe, we know that we're not truly and wholly citizens of this land. We have a different King, one true faith, and a whole different belief system that overrides anything this world writes up. One King, one faith, one law. This is what Paul was pointing to in Ephesians 4:4-6

when he referred to there being only one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and in all.

Christ—the One who is over all and through all and in all—is the ultimate unifier through His power and wisdom. There is no unified church without Him. There is no unifying gospel without Him. There is no change or redemption without Him. Let us be a people who raise our voices in one rallying cry—Christ alone.



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through all and in all—is the ultimate
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CHANGED BY THE GOSPEL



+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

The miracles of Peter were done in the name of Jesus Christ so that people would believe in Jesus for salvation.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Acts 9

+ **SETTING:**

In the book of Acts, the first part primarily focuses on the apostle Peter, and all God did through His ministry to propel the gospel to the ends of the earth. After a quick detour to demonstrate the power of God through the conversion of Paul, Luke turns his attention back to Peter, here in Acts 9, for a few more episodes before he pivots completely toward the telling of the ministry of Paul.

DAY 1

READ:

Acts 9:31

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 9:31

NOTES

Within every human soul is an embedded desire for peace. When our days get chaotic, we crave silence and simplicity. Where there is strife in our relationships, we long for resolution and unity. When tragedy strikes, we cry out for comfort. A state of peace is the ultimate state of rest and rejuvenation, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We all long for peace.

The Greek word for peace used here in Acts 9 denotes a state of being filled with harmony, health, and a quiet hush the soul possesses regardless of circumstances. This is not a mere physical escape from the external chaos of life.¹ It is the permeating serenity that comes only from the presence of God, through the provision of Christ. It is the peace Jesus proclaimed mere moments before Judas betrayed Him (John 14:27).

God provided peace to His church amid persecution and pain. He continues to give peace to His people as we cling to His promises. But we must see Christ as the source of all peace, instead of seeking it elsewhere.

How can I seek to rest in the provision of Christ today instead of attempting to find peace apart from Jesus?

DAY 2

READ:

Acts 1:4-8; 9:31

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 9:31

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #62:

DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, possessing the fullness of deity like the Father and Son. His deity can be seen in the fact that He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-8), the creator and giver of life (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30; John 3:5-7), and directly identified with the Triune God (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Many history buffs love evaluating past military campaigns. With the wisdom of hindsight, historians hail certain strategies as noble and brilliant, others as short-sighted and ill-advised. War is complex. If a general was dead set on one approach—did not closely watch the enemy, listen to his advisors, or change courses as needed—his doom was imminent. But the leader who made critical, confident, well-informed moves was sure to succeed.

Our God is a strategic God. But unlike earthly tacticians, God is not in need of counselors or intel. He knows all. He sees all. And He can execute His perfect purpose, with impeccable timing, just the way He has ordained it.

Part of His plan is to work through His people. Flawed and short-sighted as we are, God has used believers in Christ to propel the gospel to the ends of the earth through the power of the Spirit. Our prayers for and proclamations to the lost are a pivotal part of God's procedure. Let us join Him joyfully in completing His calculated mission to build His church and be His witnesses to the ends of the earth as we fear Him and are encouraged by the Spirit.

How can I better utilize my life to be a part of God's strategy to gather the lost through the local church?

DAY 3

READ:

Acts 9:32-35

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 9:34-35

NOTES

There are some individuals who just seem to love the limelight and seek to draw attention to their direction as much as possible. Though, not everyone loves to be center stage, there are other ways to obtain notability. It could be through negative means—stirring the pot, putting down others to feel superior, or acting out to get any sort of attention possible. Others are more subtle, perhaps through spinning stories, omitting details, or embellishing truths to paint themselves in the best light possible.

It is easy to identify these tendencies in others. However, it is difficult to recognize them in ourselves. Self-centeredness and pride love to dwell in our blind spot. When we receive praise, it is easy to accept and absorb that notoriety and fail to recognize how much we owe to those who have supported, loved, and provided for us along the way. When it comes to kingdom work, the same is true. Without intention, our work for God, and the results that follow, can become a glory-magnet. But we must not steal the show.

Peter understood that it was Jesus who healed, not himself. And as Peter pointed to Jesus, the crowd turned to Jesus as well. All honor belongs to God because the source of all success is His power through us, not our abilities.

What would happen if you gave credit to people for miracles instead of Christ?

DAY 4

READ:

Acts 9:36-43

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 9:36

NOTES

The Bible is clear that works do not save souls. Instead, it is solely through the provision of Christ that we possess salvation. Redemption is an act of mercy, a gift of grace, an undeserved blessing. In His goodness and kindness, God has made us new. We no longer carry the condemnation due to us because of our sin. Instead of death and perpetual punishment, God has granted us life and eternal hope. There is no effort exerted by mortals that can produce our pardon.

However, for those who have received salvation, there is an expectation to respond to the deliverance of God with a devotion to good works. Tabitha was described as one who was always doing good works and charity. When Christians worship God through their godly actions and biblical attitudes, it becomes a mark on our lives. Being known for biblical morals is one way we can reflect the worthy and compassionate character of God.

As we walk in the footsteps of Christ and point people to how He has changed us, we can continually give glory to our Father who is in heaven. Prayerfully, those who see our good works and hear about the sacrifice of Christ will also come to believe in a God who has made a way for their salvation too.

What good works can you do today to display the goodness and glory of God to those around you?

DAY 5

READ:

Acts 9:36-43

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 9:40-42

NOTES

Displays of God's power fill the pages of Scripture. Yet, it is easy to feel far removed from these astonishing stories. We all have a list of unanswered prayers for healing. Whether it be for ourselves or a loved one, disease, decay, and death are all around us. The episodes recorded in Acts are not prescriptions for how God will heal and deliver in every life. There were people Jesus didn't heal. Dead people that He didn't resurrect. Even those who experienced healing eventually died and left this earth. The bedridden Aeneas was eventually laid to rest in a bed of dirt. The resurrected Tabitha would die again, never to return to the widow's circle.

While on this earth, we may not receive the healing we desire. But the same power that rose Tabitha, Lazarus, and Jesus from the dead will raise every citizen of heaven from the dead at the day of Jesus Christ. We will join Jesus in heaven for eternity, where God will conform us to the image of Christ. Every believer will receive an incorruptible, glorious body, and Jesus will wipe away every tear. There will be no more death. (Revelation 21:4).

How does the hope of eternal healing help you persevere through your pain?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"The One who walked out of the tomb now wants to walk into our lives and live in and through us. We are coheirs of a kingdom that is unshakable, irreplaceable, and eternally durable."²

—Derwin Gray

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Assurance grows by repeated conflict, by our repeated experimental proof of the Lord's power and goodness to save; when we have been brought very low and helped, sorely wounded and healed, cast down and raised again, have given up all hope, and been suddenly snatched from danger, and placed in safety; and when these things have been repeated to us and in us a thousand times over, we begin to learn to trust simply to the word and power of God, beyond and against appearances."³

—John Newton (1725–1807)

POINT 1: The Lord provides peace to His church (Acts 9:31).

When the church walks in the fear of the Lord and in the midst of the Holy Spirit, it will have peace and grow.

 **How did the Holy Spirit help build the church?**

KEY DOCTRINE #62: DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, possessing the fullness of deity like the Father and Son. His deity can be seen in the fact that He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-8), the creator and giver of life (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30; John 3:5-7), and directly identified with the Triune God (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

 **Why do you think it's difficult to depict the work and personhood of the Holy Spirit?**

POINT 2: The Lord brings healing through His church (Acts 9:32-35).

When miracles happen, the church gives credit to Jesus as He is the source of the power every time.

 **From Day 3: What would happen if you gave credit to people for miracles instead of Christ?**

All true acts of God will turn people's attention to God.

 **What are ways we can more clearly demonstrate that Christ is the one working through our church, that people may turn to Him?**

POINT 3: The Lord restores life within His church (Acts 9:36-43).

The early church thrived as God, through His apostles, did miracles—even raising people from the dead—to show Jesus’s power and authority.



Why did Jesus need to demonstrate His great power and authority through His apostles?

In response to Jesus restoring life, many believed in Jesus Christ as Lord.



What truths can we learn from these miraculous events?

MY RESPONSE

Because we have experienced the great miracle of our salvation through Jesus, we proclaim Christ to the nations with boldness and joy so that others might come to trust in the Lord.

- **HEAD:** What characteristics of God learned from this session do I need to remind myself of this week?
- **HEART:** What are some physical pain points or earthy situations that tempt me to doubt God’s ability to save?
- **HANDS:** Who in my life still needs this rescue and how can I show them the power of Jesus through my life today?



Scan this QR code to access this session’s Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“Vile and weak as our body may seem, it is a body which the Eternal Son of God was not ashamed to take upon Himself, and to take up to heaven. That simple fact is a pledge that He will raise our bodies at the last day, and glorify them together with His own.”⁴

–J. C. Ryle (1816–1900)