

NT 30: Gospel spreads from Jews to Gentiles

Monte F. Shelley, 21 Aug 2011

Quotes

- If you like to be around cheerful people, give this pleasure to others. Few people enjoy being around complainers.
- The secret to leading a tranquil life is to ignore petty annoyances and save your anger for really serious matters. Like if somebody looks at you funny. (Maxine)
- We can lift ourselves and others as well when we refuse to remain in the realm of negative thought and cultivate within our hearts an attitude of gratitude. (Thomas S. Monson)
- At day's end, I turn all my problems over to God ... He's going to be up anyway.

Codes: { } = JST; <> = NIV translation; [] = alternate translation or paraphrase

1. Gospel to Jews in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1–5)

After Jesus “was taken up, ... he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles” (Acts 1:2). On the day of Pentecost, the Twelve were endowed with power and many spiritual gifts were observed. The Twelve taught in and around Judea, among Jews and Jewish converts. Thousands of Jews joined the church. Therefore, Jewish leaders persecuted the apostles because the Twelve “have filled Jerusalem” with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28).

Types of assertions:

- a. **Disclosure:** I am/feel/think/value (judgments)
- b. **Directive:** (You) Do ____ (commandments)
- c. **Description:** He/she/it is ... (know past, pres, future)
- d. **Declaration:** I pronounce you ... (authority to change)

2. Grecian and Hebrew members (Acts 6)

6¹ There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.² Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.³ ... <Choose seven men from among you.> ...⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:⁶ Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Terms for groups of people:

- a. Hebrews = Jewish lineage, Aramaic language/culture
- b. Grecians = Jewish lineage, Greek language/culture
- c. Proselytes = non-Jews who convert to Jewish religion
- d. Devout men = Greeks favorable to Judaism, not proselytes
- e. Gentiles/Greeks = non-Jews with non-Jewish language, culture, and religion.

Murmuring was about Grecian widows not being treated fairly. All 7 men chosen to serve had Greek names. Nicolas was a proselyte (gentile convert to Judaism). (NIV Study)

⁷ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

3. Stephen (Acts 6–8)

6⁸ Stephen ... did great wonders and miracles among the people.⁹ Then there arose certain of the synagogue ... disputing with Stephen. ...¹² And they stirred up the people ... and brought him to the <Sanhedrin>, ¹³ And set up false witnesses. ...¹⁵ And all that sat in the council ... saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. ...⁷ [Stephen recounted the history of Israel and testified

of apostasy in Israel. Stephen] ⁵⁶ said ... I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

Joseph: Peter and Stephen testify that they saw the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all (TPJS, 312).

Who in the Book of Mormon had a similar experience?

⁵⁷ Then they ... ⁵⁸ cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. ⁸ ¹ And Saul was consenting unto his death. ...² And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

4. Persecution and scattering of the saints (Acts 8, 11)

¹ There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. ...³ Saul <began to destroy> the church, entering into every house, and <dragged> men and women ... to prison.⁴ Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word ... ¹¹ ¹⁹ to none but unto the Jews only.²⁰ And some of them ... [in] Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.²¹ ... and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. ...²⁶ And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Antioch of Syria was considered the third most important city in the Empire after Rome and Alexandria. (Sense 288)

5. Philip teaches in Samaria (Acts 8)

⁵ Philip went down to ... Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.⁶ And the people ... gave heed unto ... Philip ..., hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.⁷ For unclean spirits ... came out of many ... and many <paralytics and cripples> were healed. ...¹² When they believed Philip preaching ... they were baptized, both men and women. ...¹⁴ When the apostles ... at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:¹⁵ Who ...¹⁷ laid ... their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,¹⁹ Saying, Give me also this power. ...²⁰ But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee. ...²⁵ [Peter and John] returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

How are Samaritans and Jews similar and different?

6. Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8)

²⁶ The angel ... [said] unto Philip ... <“Go south to the road ... that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”>²⁷ And he ... went: and ... a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians ... had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

¹ Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married. (Num 12:1)

Many black Ethiopians claim to descend from “Menelik, the son of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, ... [who] brought Judaic customs and civil law to Ethiopia.” (EJ Jr; Rona 29)

²⁸ <and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.>²⁹ Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near ... to this chariot.³⁰ And Philip ran ... and heard him read the prophet <Isaiah>, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

³¹ And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? ...

³⁵ Then Philip ... began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.³⁶ And ... the eunuch said, See, here is water; what

doth hinder me to be baptized?³⁷ And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. ...³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

How did God give Philip commandments? (Angel, Spirit) Why more than one?

7. Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) AD 34–39

¹ Saul ... went unto the high priest, ² And desired ... letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.³ And as ... he came near Damascus: ... suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:⁴ And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying ... Saul, why persecutest thou me? ...⁶ And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. ...

Jewish documents dating from after AD 70 indicate that tradition predominated over revelation. ‘Once the Torah was given on Mount Sinai, we pay no heed to heavenly voices but, as the Torah ordains further, we follow the opinion of the majority.’ (Ogden 50–51)

⁸ Saul ...⁹ was three days without sight. ...¹⁰ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. ...¹¹ go ... enquire in the house of Judas for ... Saul, of Tarsus: for ... he prayeth,¹² And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias ... putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

How did Ananias respond to this commandment?

¹³ Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard ... how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: ...¹⁵ But the Lord said ... Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: ...¹⁷ And Ananias ... entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord ... hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.¹⁸ And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight <immediately>, and arose, and was baptized. ...²² Saul ... confounded the Jews ... at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.²³ And ... the Jews took counsel to kill him: ...²⁵ Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.²⁶ And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, ... the disciples ... were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.²⁷ But Barnabas ... brought *him* to the apostles, and declared ... how he had seen the Lord. ...³⁰ The brethren ... sent him ... to Tarsus.

How was Paul received when he returned to Tarsus?

Paul’s Hebrew name was Saul; the Graeco-Roman equivalent was Paul. Paul said he obeyed all the Jewish requirements, so he was likely married. (Ogden 49)

8. Peter heals sick and dead at Joppa (Acts 9)

³² Peter ... came down also to the saints ... at Lydda.³³ And there he found ... <a paralytic who had been bedridden for> eight years, and was ^a sick of the palsy.³⁴ And Peter said ... arise. ... And he arose immediately. ...³⁶ There was at Joppa a ... disciple named Tabitha, ... [or] Dorcas: this woman was <always doing good and helping the poor>. ...³⁷ She was sick, and died. ...

Joppa (now called Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv) is about 38 miles from Jerusalem. (NIV Study)

³⁸ Lydda was <near> Joppa, and the disciples ... unto [Peter] two men. ...³⁹ Peter ... went with them ...⁴⁰ and prayed; and ... said,

Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.⁴¹ And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up. ...⁴² and many believed in the Lord.⁴³ And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

A tanner treated skins of dead animals thus making the tanner unclean. (NIV Study)

9. Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10) AD 40–44 (Acts 10:1–13:5)

¹ There was a ... man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion, ... Caesarea is the Roman capital of Judea. It had a temple of Zeus and a temple of Augustus. It was about 34 miles north of Jewish Joppa where Peter was staying. (Ogden 55)

Cornelius is the first gentile known to have received the gospel in the meridian of time without first fully converting to Judaism. (Acts 10:47, 48). (I-NT)

² A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Feared God implies one who is not a full convert to Judaism, but who believed in one God and respected the moral teachings of the Jews. (NIV Study)

³ He saw in a vision <distinctly> about the ninth hour [3 pm] ... an angel of God. ...⁴ And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

ninth hour (3 pm) = time when (a) Jesus died, (b) **hour of prayer** when Peter and John went to the temple and healed the lame man, (3) Cornelius saw vision, (4) hour of evening incense at temple..

⁵ And now send men to Joppa ... for ... Peter:⁶ He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. ...

Joseph: Peter could baptize, and angels could not, so long as there were legal officers in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom, or the authority of the priesthood. (TPJS 265; Jackson, *Joseph Smith’s Commentary on the Bible*, 150)

⁹ <About noon the following day as they were ... approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.>¹⁰ And ... he fell into a trance,¹¹ And saw heaven opened, and <something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners:>¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles ... and birds. ...¹³ Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”>

How did Peter respond to this commandment?

sixth hour (12 noon) (a) hour of prayer, (b) darkness covered land when Jesus was on cross,

This sheet probably resembled a large prayer shawl worn by Jewish men during their religious devotions. (Ogden 57)

¹⁴ But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.¹⁵ And the voice ... [said] What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.¹⁶ This was done thrice. ...¹⁷ Now while Peter <was wondering about the meaning of> this vision ... the men ... sent from Cornelius ... stood before the gate, ...¹⁹ The Spirit said unto [Peter], ... three men seek thee.²⁰ ... go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. ...

Jonah was told to go to gentile Assyria, but he got on a boat in Joppa to flee from the Lord. Peter was told to go to gentile Caesarea while he was in Joppa.

²³ On the morrow Peter went away with them, ...²⁵ Cornelius met him. ...²⁸ [Peter] said ... Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath [showed] me that I should not call

any man common or unclean. ...³⁴ I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:³⁵ But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. ...

Respecter of persons → *prosōpolēptēs* [prósōpon {g4383} and lambánō {g2983}] an *acceptor of a face (individual)*, i.e., (specifically) one *exhibiting partiality* (Strong's)

Joseph: The Mussulman [Muslim] condemns the heathen, the Jew, and the Christian, and the whole world of mankind that reject his Koran, as infidels, and consigns the whole of them to perdition. The Jew believes that the whole world that rejects his faith and are not circumcised, are Gentile dogs, and will be damned. The heathen is equally as tenacious about his principles, and the Christian consigns all to perdition who cannot bow to his creed, and submit to his ipse dixit ["say-so"]. But while one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men, causes 'His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil. (TPJS 217–218)

⁴⁴ The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.⁴⁵ And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,⁴⁷ Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. ...

10. Gospel to Gentiles (Acts 11)

¹ The apostles and brethren ... in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.² And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,³ Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.⁴ But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning. ...¹⁷ Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?¹⁸ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

11. Herod persecutes church leaders (Acts 12) AD 44

¹ Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.² And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.³ And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. ...⁴ And ... he put *him* in prison ...⁵ but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. ...⁷ And ... the angel ... raised [Peter] up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands. ...¹⁹ When Herod ... found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. ...²¹ And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.²² And the people ... [said] *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*.²³ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

12. Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13)

¹ There were in the church ... at Antioch ... prophets and teachers. ...² As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.³ And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent *them* away.

AD 45–51 (Acts 13:6–18:23)

Chapter 13: *Saul, now called Paul, curses a sorcerer—Christ is a descendant of David—Paul offers the gospel to Israel, then to the Gentiles.*

Chapter 14: *Persecution attends the spread of the gospel—Paul heals a crippled man; Paul and Barnabas are hailed as gods—Paul is stoned and revived; he preaches—Elders are ordained.*



13. Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 14–15)

²¹ [Paul and Barnabas] returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,²² Confirming ... exhorting [the disciples] to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.²³ And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. ...

²⁷ And when they were come [to Antioch], and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.²⁸ And there they abode long time with the disciples.

¹⁵ And certain men which came down from Judæa ... said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.² When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

14. Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) AD 49

⁴ When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.⁵ But there rose up certain ... Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

Requirements for a non-Jew to become a proselyte: circumcision for males and ritual immersion (like baptism) and living the law of Moses. (Ogden 74)

⁶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.⁷ And when there had been much disputing, Peter ... said

... Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God ... [said] the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.⁸ And God ... <showed that he accepted them by> giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; ...¹⁰ Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

“There is no heavier yoke than the demand for perfection—the curse of the law. And many of the Saints still struggle under its load. But the good news is that in Christ we are set free of that crushing burden. He bore that particular burden for us, and his perfect performance extended and applied to us frees us from a similar requirement at this time. In the gospel covenant, we exchange the burden of sin for the obligation to love him and each other and to do the very best we can.” (Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ*, 45)

...¹² Then all the multitude ... gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.¹³ And after they had held their peace, James ... [said] <¹⁹“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.>

“The goal of all, including James, was not to ‘trouble’ the converted Gentiles with Jewish requirements (Acts 15:19) ... Few Christians today see the implications of this powerful ruling of the Twelve. Conservatives today search the Bible for answers, but had the apostles done this, they would have required circumcision for the Gentiles, since it is commanded in the Bible. The apostles were inspired to go beyond the Bible, to reverse the lesser law given earlier and to extend the higher law through Christ. In other words, not past scripture but new revelation was the foundation of the Church of Christ. What guided the apostles was not the New Testament, for their acts created it. The Bible does not make the true church, but the true church makes the Bible. Past scriptures are a guide to truth, but living prophets give new scripture.” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 53.)

15. Official Declaration (Acts 15)

²² Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men ... to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. ...²³ And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:*²⁵ It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ...²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;²⁹ That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:³¹ <The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message.>

Quotes

Howard W. Hunter: It is in understanding and accepting [the] universal fatherhood of God that all human beings can best

appreciate God’s concern for them and their relationship to each other. This is a message of life and love that strikes squarely against all stifling traditions based on race, language, economic or political standing, educational rank, or cultural background, for we are all of the same spiritual descent. We have a divine pedigree; every person is a spiritual child of God. (*Ensign*, Nov 1991, 18)

Neal A. Maxwell: We allow ourselves to get diverted not only from eternal objectives, but also into tasks that are not actually ours to do. (*We Will Prove Them Herewith*, 111.)

Ezra Taft Benson: A man can ask no more important question in his life than that which Paul asked: “... Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” A man can take no greater action than to pursue a course that will bring to him the answer to that question and then to carry out that answer. ... It is significant that when Paul asked the question, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Christ directed Paul to one of the Lord’s authorized servants. So it was with Cornelius, who after prayer was instructed to send men to contact Peter. (See Acts 10.) It has always been so—that whenever God has had his prophets upon the earth, men could go to them to learn of Christ and his commandments. (*Ensign*, Jan. 1973)

Russell M. Nelson: [God’s] children can be so intolerant with one another. Neighboring factions, whether they be identified as groups or gangs, schools or states, counties or countries, often develop animosity. Such tendencies make me wonder: Cannot boundary lines exist without becoming battle lines? Could not people unite in waging war against the evils that beset mankind instead of waging war on each other? Sadly, answers to these questions are often no. Through the years, discrimination based on ethnic or religious identity has led to senseless slaughter, vicious pogroms, and countless acts of cruelty. The face of history is pocked by the ugly scars of intolerance. (*Perfection Pending, and Other Favorite Discourses*, 67.)

Wilford Woodruff: One of the Apostles said to me years ago, ‘... I have prayed for a long time for the Lord to send me the administration of an angel. I have had a great desire for this, but I have never had my prayers answered.’ I said to him that if he were to pray a thousand years to the God of Israel for that gift, it would not be granted, unless the Lord had a motive in sending an angel to him. I told him that the Lord never did nor never will send an angel to anybody merely to gratify the desire of the individual to see an angel. ... Now, I have always said, and I want to say it to you, that the Holy Ghost is what every Saint of God needs. It is far more important that a man should have that gift than he should have the ministration of an angel.” (Brian H. Stuy, ed., *Collected Discourses*, vol. 5, Oct. 19, 1986.)

LeGrand Richards: We assume that there are many in the world today who would consider themselves fully called and ordained had they seen and heard what Paul saw and heard on the way to Damascus. But not so with Paul, and neither with Joseph Smith! They had to be ordained by one having authority, and so must all men who would authoritatively engage in the ministry. (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 88)

Gordon B. Hinckley: With the ever increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ (Moro 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things. (*Ensign*, May 1997)