

# Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

## **R<sub>2</sub>L – Resolved to Live: Committed to Changing the World**

Acts 20:1-16

*1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. 3 And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5 But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. 6 We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days. 7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. 9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. 10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." 11 When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. 12 They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted. Troas to Miletus 13 But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land. 14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15 Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.*

If you know Christ as Savior and Lord and are seeking to live your life in a manner pleasing to Him, then you desire to have God use you to make a difference for Him in your piece of the world. Those of you familiar with the resolves of Johnathan Edwards know that he made this determination for his life:

*On the supposition, that there never was to be but one individual in the world, at any one time, who was properly a complete Christian, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true luster, and appearing excellent and lovely, from whatever part and under whatever character viewed: Resolved, to act just as I would do, if I strove with all my might to be that one, who should live in my time. Jan. 14 and July 3, 1723.*

If you or I would resolve to live as if we were the only witness for Christ on this earth; would that make a difference? To ask the question another way, “will Northwest Arkansas be any different because you have lived and labored for Christ here in your time?” How do you answer that question? I must admit that I am not personally satisfied with my own answer to that question yet! But this is my prayer, that God would use me; and that God would use you; and this church to effect change in our world.

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As we work through the book of Acts, we run into a man that changed the world in which he lived. After Jesus Himself, the apostle Paul affected this world in ways that few others could claim. And remarkably, Paul did this without the use of the internet, email, smart phones, instant messaging, face time and air travel. Most everywhere Paul went was on foot; or sometimes on old wooden sailing vessels. Truly not the most rapid means of travel.

If Paul wanted to see someone, he had to walk across town and hope to find him at home. Additionally, Paul spent a number of years of his ministry in jail or under house arrest. Paul's ministry was not well received by the masses as he had constant opposition from both outside and even inside the church. Even with all this, some 30 years of ministry, Paul made an indelible impact on the world, both in his time, but also for all times.

And the question this leaves me with is this, “How did Paul accomplish this?” What were his patterns and habits that enabled him to accomplish so much for Christ? Is anything he did something we can do today? Now, it must first be acknowledged that the key reason for Paul's success in reaching people for Christ is explained by God's sovereign working through him. God worked through Paul; just as God has promised to work through us. The point is that God has not called us all to have the ministry of Paul; but each of us has been called to exercise the faith of Paul. To be sure, each of our own service to the Lord will be different. Our impact or success in serving the Lord may not ever rise to the level of Paul's or Jonathan Edwards; but this I know; if we would learn and put into practice the biblical principles that moved Paul, we would be used by God to see remarkable things take place in Northwest Arkansas.

As we have seen thus far in the life of Paul, he possesses a number of resolves that affected everything he did. After his commitment to Christ, there is one resolve that seems to be the starting point for Paul; the key that affected everything else he did. Maybe it will surprise you to know what this starting point is, although you have heard it and seen it many times already. What was this resolve of Paul through which God used him to literally change the world? And is this a resolve that you and I are able to incorporate into our lives in such a way that God might use us to literally change the world? Paul's resolve was his unwavering commitment to see the local church established and strengthened. Established – that is given a firm and solid spiritual foundation upon which to build; and strengthened – that is growing in faith; a faith that is exercised and accomplishing the Lord's work of making disciples. As we come to the close of 2013 and look ahead to 2014, I must ask you, if you are a Christian, to join me in making this your unwavering commitment to the local church.

But, perhaps I have gotten ahead of myself. You ask, “Pastor, is what you say about Paul's key commitment being to the local church true? And, if so, does that mean that my commitment is to be to the local church?” Beloved, how central is the church to Paul? No, a better question, how central is the church to Jesus?

Let me remind you that Jesus promised to build His church on the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and further promised that the gates of Hades would not overpower it (Matthew 16:16-18). Here in the book of Acts, we have found Paul traveling from town to town, preaching the gospel, showing people Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; and the helping the new converts begin to meet together as local congregations. These local churches were to do two things; to educate one another in the things of the Lord; and to evangelize the community around them with the gospel. Eventually, these congregations could send out some from their congregation to reach other people with the gospel. This is what we saw Paul having

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done in Ephesus, so that after two years of teaching and preaching, all of Asia, that is western Turkey, heard the word of the Lord (19:10).

But Jesus did not just promise to build the church; He also gave His very life for the church. Did Paul imitate that passion of Christ for the church? Indeed, Paul did give his life for the church. By the way, Paul instructs Christians to imitate him even as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). How are you doing at this imitation?

Jesus was committed enough to die for the church and we see that Paul was relentless in his own commitment to the church. He poured out his life to see healthy churches established. He referred to the Philippian church his joy and his crown (Philippians 4:1). He reminded the Colossians that his great labor on both their spiritual well-being and for those in Laodicea was so that they would be knit together in love and attain to all that wealth that comes from a full knowledge of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:1-2). He encouraged the Thessalonians by telling them that they were his joy and crown, and that he really lived only as they stood firm in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:8). I could go on, but you get the point.

As we come to our Acts 20 text, we first see a bit of the travel itinerary of Paul here in his third missionary journey. It was during these travels in Acts 20:1-6 that Paul wrote 1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans. It is easy to read these verses and say, “That’s nice, Paul is traveling to all these places, but how does that affect my life? What does that mean for me, today? It’s easy to miss the forest for all the trees, but let me ask you, “What is Paul doing in all these travels? Visiting churches, establishing churches, strengthening churches. Here is Paul’s unwavering commitment to the church. It was this very passion of Paul that God used to change the world for Jesus Christ. But, some of you say, “I do not have the gift of Paul to preach or evangelize.” Beloved, it does not what your particular spiritual gifts or callings are, yours may be service, yours administration, yours hospitality, yours teaching; whatever it is; they all start with and within the church. In 1 Corinthians 12:7, a passage written sometime here in Acts 20:1-6, Paul wrote, **“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good [of the body].”** Beloved, like Paul, if we would see God use us to affect Northwest Arkansas, we must develop an unwavering resolve of commitment to the church of Jesus Christ. But what does this resolve look like? What am I asking you to commit to? Better put, what is the Holy Spirit of God expecting for you for His placing you in the body of Christ? From our text we find four elements of Paul’s resolve to the church that we must prayerfully see developed in our own lives. I present them to you in the acronym ACTS, like the book we are studying. If we would be resolved to live committed to seeing our world changed for Christ, we must see the local church assembled for worship and instruction; cultivating godly leadership; thriving with a heart for her mission; and, finally, showing practical Christian unity. Let us take these one by one.

## I. The resolve to see the local church assembling together (20:7)

*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.*

You might notice in verses 5 and 6 that Luke, the author of the book of Acts, uses the first person plural pronouns “us” and “we”. The “we” sections of Acts ended about six years before, when Paul was previously in Philippi (16:16). It is believed that Paul left Luke in Philippi to pastor the church there. But now he is once again reunited with Paul, leaving Philippi to travel to Troas on the northwest coast of Asia Minor and eventually on to Jerusalem. In verses 7-12 we find a

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description of Paul's meeting with the church in Troas. I would like you to see three features of this church meeting that capture our attention.

### **A. The church met on “the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7a)**

*On the first day of the week...*

The first day of the week was “Sunday” and this is the earliest reference to the custom of the church meeting on first day of the week, which is on Sunday, rather than on the Jewish Sabbath, that is Saturday. As is clear in the context, this was a Sunday evening service that included the preaching of Paul up until midnight! Talk about a long day of ministry.

Why is this bit of information that the church met on Sunday, so significant? Does it matter when the church meets? It certainly made a difference for the Jewish Christians who made the switch from Saturday to Sunday worship. Why did they do it? Well, for one reason, we know that the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb took place early on a Sunday morning. Why else would these churches, made up largely of Jews who had come to Christ, forsake the God-given command and centuries-long tradition of seventh-day worship, change to worshiping on the first day of the week? The only reasonable explanation is that the Lord Jesus, whom they worshiped, arose from the dead on that day. Thus the Sunday worship of the church is an evidence and a testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

Let me quickly address a question that comes up when discussing this move from Saturday worship to Sunday worship. Does this mean that Sunday is now the Christian Sabbath, and that Christians are, or must follow the Jewish law regarding Sabbath observance? I must say that I disagree with some of my heroes, men like Charles Spurgeon, Hudson Taylor, and J. C. Ryle who refer to Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. Scripture is clear that the Sabbath was the shadow that has now been fulfilled in Christ, who is the substance (Colossians 2:16-17). In Hebrews 4, Jesus is referred to as our “Sabbath rest.” Also, of the Ten Commandments, all are repeated in the New Testament except for the command to keep the Sabbath. Additionally, we find Paul constantly warning the Gentile churches regarding a number of issues, but never did he address with them the breaking of the Sabbath. One might also note that the Jerusalem Council, back in Acts 15, made no mention of the Gentiles needing to keep any kind of Sabbath.

So you get the point, we are not under the Old Testament law and obligation to keep a Sabbath, be it on Saturday, or some Christian Sabbath on Sunday. Does that mean Christians are under no obligation to meet together for worship on a regular basis? I believe the Scriptures do present us with that obligation and that the day the New Testament calls believers to set aside for corporate worship and instruction is “the first day of the week” – that is Sunday, also called “the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10; see also 1 Cor. 16:1). Remember that Sunday was not a day off in the Roman Empire and nearly 7/8ths of the population were slaves; thus it was not uncommon for the Christians to gather in the evening, as we see in our text

But here is the point, for a people who did not have a day off, they still made it a priority to set aside a regular meeting time with the saints on Sunday. For by doing so, they were testifying to one another and the unbelieving world that Jesus, the Savior, was raised from the dead on a Sunday. In other words, while we celebrate the birth of Christ but once a year, the resurrection of Christ is technically celebrated every single week on the day upon which He rose from the dead. When a Christian does not make Sunday corporate worship a priority, they are, in effect, trampling underfoot the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. These early Christians, who by and large

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had little rights, made it their priority to gather on Sunday. And by making Sunday worship a priority, I think it safe to include the fact that they prepared themselves for worship.

### **B. The church met to worship the crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ (20:7b)**

*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread,*

I have obviously been alluding to this next point, that the church is to gather to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ; but where do we see this in our text? It is summed up in the worship that the church had **“gathered together to break bread.”** This is a reference to the Lord’s Table. While celebrating the Lord’s Table weekly is not commanded, it does appear to have been the practice of the early church. It would appear from earlier chapters of Acts that every time the church met, they broke bread together, from house to house, from day to day. As the routine settled into a more formal weekly gathering, this time included the breaking of bread. Apart from the concern of time and the danger of making the Lord’s Table something we become too familiar and comfortable with, it would be a blessing to partake of communion every Sunday. Why? Because the communion table graphically points us to our Savior’s supreme sacrifice for our sins on the cross. It causes us to pause and take inventory, examining ourselves, our actions and attitudes, confessing our sins against the Lord and against one another. It reminds us of our great need to spiritually feed on Christ and to rely on His grace. It should cause our hearts to be drawn to Him in love and adoration. This is what the early church experienced as they broke bread together. I charge every believer who hears my voice, be warned against neglecting of the gathering of the saints in general and of when they partake of the Lord’s Table specifically. If you think you are not missing anything, then you are sinning against Christ and His body, something which the Lord does not take lightly.

### **C. The church met to receive instruction from God’s Word (20:7c)**

*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.*

We do not know how long Paul preached, but it is safe to assume that he do so for at least four hours; most likely longer, all the way up until midnight! And the only reason Paul stopped was because of what happened to Eutychus. But even after this, according to verse 11, **“When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak...”** The word “talked” speaks more of interactive discussion. And what did they speak about? The things of God all the way until daybreak!

This long message and lengthy discussion was nothing new for Paul. Back up in verse one, after the riot in Ephesus, Paul is said to have *exhorted* – that is came along side and instructed the believers (20:1). Notice in verse 2 that Luke says Paul had given the believers in Macedonia *“much exhortation”* (20:2). As far back as Acts 2:42, we learned that the early church had devoted herself to the apostles’ teaching. Now, this does not mean that every sermon must be four hours long, something for which I know you all are grateful. I have heard it said that if a preacher believes he must preach that long, he must also have the ability to raise the dead, even as Paul did, for it may well be needed. But, I promise not to preach for four hours, at least regularly! Our text seems to indicate this was a special occasion. This would be the only time that this church could hear the apostle Paul and so they were willing to stay up all night to do it!

But something happened to interrupt Paul’s sermon. A young man named Eutychus fell asleep (that’s not what did it); and then he fell out of the third story window to his death. He is

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called a young man in verse 9, and a “boy” in verse 12. The Greek word for “boy” in verse 12 generally was used for young man in his early teens. Eutychus, whose name means “Fortunate” or, “Lucky” (imagine that), was most likely a teen as well as a slave who had worked all day. He was sitting in the window, listening to Paul and trying to fight off his drowsiness. I find verse 8 interesting as Luke mentions here were “many lamps” in the room. Why is this important. I think it tells us the room was stuffy. Burning lamps use up oxygen which would make an already tired person even more sleepy. Thus, the boy fell asleep and soon fell out of the window and was picked up dead (20:9).

This was enough to get Paul to stop preaching, at least for the moment. Verse 10 tells us that Paul **“went down and fell upon him,”** embracing him much as the prophets Elijah and Elisha had done when raising dead young men to life (1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34-35). Then he announced, **“Do not be troubled, for his life is in him”** (20:10). The almost casual way that Luke describes this astounding miracle has caused some to suggest that Eutychus did not actually die, but was only needing to be resuscitated. Let us not forget that Luke, a physician (Colossians 4:14), one who was there, unequivocally says that Eutychus was “dead” (v. 9). As an eye-witness, he was in a better position to judge the matter than a modern commentator. When Paul had gone down to Eutychus, he said, “his life is in him.” Some have suggested this to mean that Eutychus was not really dead. But notice that Paul did not say: “...his life is **still** in him,” or “His life is **yet** in him.” The words “still” and “yet” are added by some modern commentators to suggest Eutychus had not really died. But this is to tamper with the word of God. Notice that in verse 12, Luke makes the comment that Eutychus was “took away...alive.” One usage of this term is to describe “dead persons who return to life, **become alive again**” (Arndt, p. 336; cf. Mt. 9:18; Mk. 16:11; Acts 9:41, etc.). If the boy had merely been injured, why stress that he was “took away...alive”? To merely mention that the youth was brought again to the assembly would have been entirely sufficient. Technically they were **all** alive who returned to the upper room? What was special about this youth? **He had been dead!** Finally, when Paul was stoned at Lystra on his first missionary journey, Luke records that the apostle was dragged out of the city. He adds that the Jews were “supposing him to be dead” (Acts 14:19). The point is this. Had Luke wanted to present the idea that the saints in Troas merely “supposed” that Eutychus was dead, when in fact he was only injured, he certainly was capable of expressing that concept, as he did in chapter 14. But that is not what he wrote in chapter 20. Eutychus was dead and brought back to life by Paul. But why is this extraordinary event seemingly downplayed by Luke? Remember the context. Luke sandwiched this miracle between Paul’s sermon and Paul’s talking with the church on through the night afterwards. It seems that Luke is stressing the point that it is the teaching of God’s Word, not amazing miracles, that will sustain and strengthen the church.

According to Scripture, the main task of a pastor/shepherd is feeding the flock the truth of God (Ezekiel 34:2). I am amazed by the trend found in so many churches today of 15-25 minute sermons, full of sound bytes and media, since the younger generations have not been trained to process longer discourses. Rather than expect more out of Christians, pastors and church leaders give the sheep what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. And so, as J. Vernon McGee so aptly used to say, “Sermonettes produce Christianettes.” The church needs solid food from the Word to be healthy. Paul gave the believers meat, even if they choked on it at times.

So, the church regularly gathered on Sunday to remember the cross and resurrection of Christ and to receive instruction in God’s Word. This was Paul’s resolve to so see the church

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gathered for this purpose. Would you imitate the faith of Paul. Paul was resolved to see the church assembled; but there is a second resolve of Paul.

## II. The resolve to see the local church cultivating godly men for leadership (20:3-4)

*3 And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.*

According to verse 3, Paul had planned to travel by ship from Greece back to Jerusalem, but came to learn of a plot by the Jews to kill him. Because of this plot, Paul planned another route, traveling north by land back up to Macedonia, where he then took a ship that put in at various ports along the coast of Asia Minor.

Then, in verse 4, Luke mentions the names of the men who traveled with Paul. It would seem that they represent their various churches and were entrusted with carrying their collection (which Paul had raised) to Jerusalem to help the poor believers there. We come across a number of these men elsewhere in Scripture. Paul refers to Tychicus, for example, as **“the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord”** (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). Many of these men were Gentiles whom Paul had seen come to Christ through his preaching. Paul, a Jew, spent time with these Gentiles, teaching them and grounding them in the Scriptures. Why did Paul do this? He explained his actions to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 saying that wanted to entrust the things of God to faithful men who would be able to teach others also.

Beloved, if you have been walking with the Lord any length of time and growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, then you should be asking God to bring into your life some men, if you are a man, some women, if you are a women, those who are younger than you in the Lord, so that you may entrust, hand off, hand over, the things God has taught you. How do you choose a person to work with? I have told you before. Look for “FAT” Christians; those who are Faithful, Available, and Teachable. If the person you are considering to disciple is lacking any one of those qualities, you will be wasting your time. Pray for them to become FAT and look for another FAT Christian. Beloved, many of you ought to be FAT by now, but you are not. Let me ask you, are you faithful in your walk with God? Are you making yourself available to other, more mature believers? Do you have a teachable heart? If you are younger in the Lord, pray that God would link you with an older brother or sister in the Lord who could do with you as Paul did with these men, to equip you for service. This was Paul's resolve for the church, that godly leadership be trained. So, we see the church assembled and the church cultivating leadership; there is a third resolve.

## III. The resolve to see the local church thriving with a heart for her mission (Acts 20:2)

*When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.*

This point is more implied than inferred from our text and is actually based upon the entire book of Acts. For Paul, seeing the gospel reach the ends of the earth was a passion for himself as well as for the church. We know that Paul took the gospel to Illyricum modern Albania and most likely did so during his stay in Macedonia (20:2). In verse 2, where we read that Paul gave “much exhortation,” we have the blessing of the letters that were written at this time, including his theological work, the epistle to the Romans.

As you read through the letter of Paul, it is evident that he was not strengthening the church so that she could be warm and cozy in her holy huddle, isolated from the lost world. He

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goal was to empower and exhort the church to fulfill her Christ-given mission of preaching the gospel to their own regions, and sending out workers to take the gospel where Christ had not yet been preached (Romans 15:20). Even Paul had his sights set on visiting Rome to preach the gospel and from there to continue on to Spain (Romans 15:24, 28).

Beloved, there are two deadly diseases for a church. One is simply turning in on itself, thus losing its outward focus on reaching people for Jesus. But equally as deadly is a church that does not begin by ministering to one another; helping one another; serving one another and loving one another; so that the unbelieving world may see the difference Christ makes in a person's life.

How did Paul change the world? He did so through a resolve to see the church assembled regularly; cultivating leadership, thriving with a heart for her mission and finally...

### IV. The resolve to see the local church showing practical Christian unity

What we see in Acts 20:1-16 is this extraordinarily committed and resolved former Jew; now Christian, desiring to see both Jew and Gentiles living in godly harmony with one another. As you read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9; Romans 15:25-28, it is obvious that the driving force behind this trip to Jerusalem was his desire to deliver the collection that he had raised from the Gentile churches for the poor saints in Jerusalem. And the driving force behind his urging the Gentile churches to take up this collection was his desire to see the natural wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles broken down in the church (Ephesians 2:13-22).

In addition to all this, Paul was burdened for his fellow-Jews who did not yet know Christ, so much so that he wrote in Romans 9:1-3 that he would be willing to be cut off from Christ if it meant their salvation. For Paul, the practical demonstration of Christian love, of serving one another, as a means of unifying the Jewish and Gentile believers, would be a witness to Israel of the power of the gospel to transform both Jews and Gentiles. One of the themes that Paul loved to use in his writings was the unity of the body of Christ, a body made up of members with diverse backgrounds, nationalities, and spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13-22; 4:1-16; Colossians 3:11). Do you remember what Jesus prayed for in the Upper Room? In John 17:20-21, Jesus prayed that His followers, including those who would believe through the witness of the apostles, would be one, **“so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”**

While we are to affirm and love other churches and believers, we would sin to affirm our “unity” with those who name Christ as Savior, but who deny doctrines that are essential to the gospel. Our unity is based on the truth as given by Jesus Christ (John 17:17). The desire for churches to come together for unity, when it includes affirming churches that teach that salvation requires our works added to faith in what Christ did for us on the cross, is a denial of the faith. It is another gospel, which is not a gospel at all, and on such false teachers, Paul pronounces anathema, not love (Galatians 1:6-9). So we must be discerning, we must be careful to maintain unity with those who hold to the essentials, but separating ourselves from those who deny the gospel of God's grace.

Let me close by asking you this question. Please write it down and prayerfully consider it: **“How does God want to use me to affect my world for Jesus Christ?”** The answer will differ a bit from person to person. It will depend in part on your unique spiritual gifts and circumstances. But this I know, God will not accidentally use you to change the world. You must be resolved on setting your mind on things above where Christ is seated, at the right hand of God.

I know this, however God intends to use His people to change the world for Christ, He will not do it apart from your resolve and commitment to the local church. The local church is God's



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appointed means for fulfilling the Great Commission. You must be committed, involved and engaged in a local body of Christ where you can grow in Him and use your gifts to serve Him. If you are attending Hope, then this is where you need to be engaged.

Now, before you say, “Pastor, I have tried before and been hurt; neglected, misunderstood,” or whatever description you want, let me remind you that every local church is made up of just one kind of people—sinners! You *will* get hurt if you commit yourself to work closely with sinners, even with redeemed sinners. But God has ordained the church as His means of teaching us how to love one another. The truth is, if you are not learning to practice humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance (Eph. 4:2) then you are a recluse and are disobedient to the Lord! As sinners redeemed by God’s grace, we need to both practice and receive such characteristics. As we do, we bring glory to the name of Jesus Christ among the peoples and slowly but surely, lives will be changed. Will you resolve with me to be an ACTS church; resolved to meet regularly together for worship and instruction, to cultivate godly leadership, to thrive in our mission to reach northwest Arkansas for Christ and to show practical unity, demonstrating the love of Christ by serving one another. This is how we can change our world in 2014. Be resolved.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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