



## A Story For Perspective, A Prayer For Courage

**Date:** Sunday 22nd March

**Speakers:** Andrew McNeil

**Key Verses:** Acts 2:42, 8:1-4, Ephesians Ch 3:14-21

### Talk Summary:

- Rosie and I and all the team want you to know that we're thinking of you, we're praying for you, we love you. More than ever a genuine faith in Jesus can make a real difference in how we handle this situation. God's word is a light to our feet and we can find strength as we recall his character and promises. We see a story to give us perspective (Acts) and a prayer to give us courage (Ephesians).
- In Acts we get a glimpse into his vibrant growing community that was centred on Jesus. What unfolds is a story that shows us God is in control and can repurpose good from pain.
- They met in the temple courts and in the homes. Large and small gatherings. (Acs 2:42). Six chapters later in Acts 8 and this normal pattern was completely disrupted. Not by a virus but by persecution.
- Acts 8:1-4. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- Now the very disruptive thing that looks like it would damage and derail the Church actually had the opposite effect. This disruption became a catalyst for the rapid expansion of the church. Acts 8:4
- God is never wrong-footed by anything that happens in society, in the church and in our own lives.

- Saul started the persecution against the Church and a few years later he's become a follower of Jesus and a leader in his church. He finds himself in a prison in Rome and he writes a prayer (Ephesians 3:14-21)
- He's experiencing captivity and confinement. So many of Paul's letters were written from prison, a place and time of confinement and uncertainty. What emerges is his trust in God.
- For many of us this is a chance to pause and hit reset on what really matters. For some he is drawing you to a genuine faith in God, the kind of faith that actually makes a difference in all of life.
- Paul responded in prayer. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.
- Our Imagination can go many ways. We can think worst-case scenario and get panicked. We can also imagine what God could do through this. Imagine what my best response could look like?
- We have to face some of our instinctive responses. Fear or anxiety. Fear shuts down creativity, connection, contribution, clarity. "The enemy loves to leverage fear in our lives - that moves us further from the centre of what God has for us. Fear masquerades like love. Love is protective and expansive. Fear is protective but defensive."
- Here are four things to navigate this time.
  - Read and listen. Have daily time reading God's word. We don't live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Read, listen pray, then act.
  - Pray your thoughts. We've got a lot on our mind. As your day goes through - keep it simple, keep it honest and keep it going.
  - Guard your hearts. Give Thanks. The single most helpful thing for your mental health is to practice thanksgiving. Each day say sorry to God and others, and then let it go.
  - Be led by God and lean into generosity. Let's be wise and heed all the best health advice, but let's resist fear and live generous lives!

## Questions for discussion

- What perspective do you get from the story in Acts?
- How do you want the Church be remembered after this outbreak has faded, and how can we play our part in that?
- What simple things have we taken for granted that we are now really thankful for?
- What of God's character is to be understood in these days, God as peace, God as provider? What experiences in your past help you navigate this present situation?