

February 6, 2022 by Steve Brandon



Help for the Mission

Acts 16:1-5

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Over the course of time, the pace of missionary work has sped up. In the days of the early church, travel was slow and laborious. Even a hundred years ago, travel across the ocean took weeks if not months to make the journey. But with the onset of air travel, missionaries today are able to travel the globe and back again many times each year. But such was not always the case.

I have told you about William Carey, one of the founding members of the Baptist Missionary Society in England in 1792. William Carey was their first missionary ever to be sent out. He left in 1793, and never came home. He faithfully ministered in India for over 40 years! But never made the journey back home!

The slowness of travel and the commitment to the work kept him in India. It took 7 months for them to arrive in India the first time (leaving London in April and landing in Calcutta in November). Any trip home would cost them a year on the mission field. So, William Carey just never came home!

Adoniram Judson has almost the same story. He was the first missionary sent overseas from America. He was sent out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1812. He ministered in Burma for more than 30 years. Life was hard in Burma. It took seven years before a single person in Burma believed in Christ. After twelve years in Burma, he counted only 18 converts.

Then, in 1824, war broke out between Britain and Burma. He was identified as a spy and imprisoned for 17 months in a cell overrun by rats. The only reason he survived was his wife, Nancy, who made sure that Adoniram received enough food and medicine to survive in prison. Soon after his release, Ann died, followed six months later by one of her children. Many missionaries today would have returned home. Yet, Adoniram stayed in Burma.

It was only when his second wife, Sarah fell sick, that they sailed back to the United States (April 1845). The thought of the day was that a voyage to the sea was helpful in curing sickness. But she died on the trip. And Adoniram had the heart-wrenching task of throwing her body overboard. It was his first trip home in more than 30 years. Judson then married his third wife, Emily, and returned to the mission field, where he died a few years later.

Missions in those days were different than today. Because travel took so long, missionaries were often gone for decades without returning home. In our day, missionaries come home often, because they can!

Now, none of this is wrong! It's simply the reality of the travel capabilities that we have in our world today. No longer do you have to board a ship and travel for months on end to reach your destination. Usually within a day or two, you can get anywhere you want in this world.

It has been interesting that during COVID, we have seen the missionary travel decrease. Only now is it beginning to increase. I have a bunch of missionary friends, who travel all over the world training pastors. During COVID, many of them have been at home, longer than ever before. But now, with the world opening up, they are picking up their travel.

For instance, I have a good friend of mine, names Tim. He has been serving with The Masters International Academy for about 8 years. Just last week for the first time in two years. In a missionary update, he wrote, ...

After two long years, I am finally headed off on my first international trip... to Pakistan! I am looking forward to preaching at several churches, teaching an Expository Preaching Conference, and doing the first face-to-face preaching lab with the pastors in our training group. I'm greatly looking forward to meeting these men, in person, and ministering to them in the two weeks that I am there.

Well, this is exactly what we see in the book of Acts. We see some missionaries picking up their travel after a time at home.

Missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, have been abroad on their first missionary journey. They have been home for a while. But this morning, in our exposition of Acts this morning, we will see Paul launch on a new journey: his second missionary journey. We will see him begin his journey at the beginning of Acts 16, which we will open up this morning.

Paul's first missionary journey is recorded for us in Acts 13 and 14. If you remember is all started when some leaders of the church in Antioch gathered together worshipping the Lord and fasting, seeking God's vision for the next steps in the life of the church. Then, the Holy Spirit spoke. He said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). So, off they went, Barnabas and

Paul to the world with the gospel.

It makes sense that the Holy Spirit would guide them so. Jesus, himself had told the disciples, Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Here they were, beginning their witness "to the end of the earth."

We have covered their travels often, but it bears repeating. Paul and Barnabas got into a ship, and sailed to Cyprus, where Barnabas was from. They preached in the synagogues all throughout the island. Then, they headed north across the sea, into Pamphylia.

They continued north across the land until they arrived in Antioch. They entered the synagogue, were asked to preach. And (like surely happened in other places) Paul laid out the gospel. and many were saved, including a bunch of Gentiles! Now, the Jews were jealous and "stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district" (Acts 13:50).

So, they landed in Iconium, where again, they preached the gospel, and saw "a great number of both Jews and Greeks believe [the gospel]" (Acts 14:1). Yet again, however, they were persecuted. "An attempt was made ... to mistreat them and to stone them" (Acts 14:5). And so, they fled to Lystra, where they continued on preaching the gospel (Acts 14:7).

In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). But, he "rose up" and continued on his way, preaching the gospel to those in Derbe. After making many disciples there (Acts 14:21), they retraced their steps.

Returning by way of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, eventually they arrive back in Antioch, from where they were sent out. And they spent a good deal of time in Antioch. Missionaries today call this "being on furlough." a rest and regrouping at home before going out again.

All of Acts 15 records their "furlough." Because of a doctrinal dispute, they spent some time in Jerusalem, arguing for the purity of the gospel. That all are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. That you don't need to subject yourself to circumcision and the law of Moses.

At some point, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are" (Acts 15:36). It was a great idea. Barnabas agreed. Now, sadly, Paul and Barnabas couldn't agree on how to carry this out. Barnabas wanted to take Mark along. But Paul didn't think such a thing was wise, as he had "withdrawn from them in Pamphylia" (Acts 15:38). And they couldn't agree. So, they went their separate ways. The book of Acts will follow the journey of Paul.

Acts 16 begins what is known as Paul's Second Missionary Journey. Like the first missionary journey, it begins (and ends) in Antioch. First, we see Barnabas and Mark sail off to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). But Paul and Silas head north on land. First, they travel through Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41).

Chapter 16 opens up with Paul and Silas arriving at Derbe and Lystra, cities where they "we proclaimed the word of the Lord" (Acts 15:36). And now, we begin our text: Acts 16:1-5. First off, we are introduced to a man who will play a crucial role throughout much of the book of Acts and much of the New Testament. His name is Timothy. Let's read our text:

Acts 16:1-5

A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

These verses describe Paul picking up a traveling companion, Timothy. Timothy will prove to be a great help to Paul in his mission of spreading the gospel throughout the world. Thus, the title of my message this morning is: "Help for the Mission." This was what Timothy was to Paul. He was help.

What Timothy was to Paul is what we all are called to be. We all are called to be help for the mission. Now, this help may be traveling along the way, like Timothy did going off to some far and exotic place. In fact, most likely, this is not going to be the case with you.

It may well be staying home and "holding the ropes." This is what William Carey called those at home who were supporting the mission from the home front. Carey told his good friend, Andrew Fuller, as he was about to leave for India, "I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the ropes." William Carey saw his mission to India as a bucket doing down into a well. And the only way that would ever make it is if there were people at the top of the well holding on, supporting him in the work.

So, this morning as I preach through this text, and as we look at how Timothy was a help for the mission, the application comes to you, "Are you such a helper and a support in the mission?" Our mission at Rock Valley Bible Church may not be to spread the gospel throughout the ancient world where Christ had not been known before. But our mission is similar: to be lights in this dark time. You may not be called to go to India with the gospel. But you are called to be witnesses for Jesus, wherever you go. This is the theme of Acts! "Be My Witnesses."

I was playing pool at my league this past Monday. As things were winding down, there were only a few of us left. One of them was a retired guy there, who brought up the question to the handful of guys who were there, "Where is a good place to live for the rest of your life." This man recently turned 65 and began receiving a handsome pension from his company. He has plenty in the bank and now he is on Medicare. He really has very little care in the world. So, he's just thinking about how to spend the rest of his days upon the earth.

I first mentioned California as a very nice place to live. My wife grew up there and we have often visited there over the years. Another man mentioned San Diego as a nice place to live. I fully agreed. Yet another man mentioned the Virgin Islands, as they have some American influence, although they are expensive.

Then (having recently memorized Psalm 16:11), I said, "I have heard of a place where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!" He

looked at me with a blank stare. I then told him that I was talking about heaven. He smiled, "Oh yeah?" I said, "Yep. This is what the Psalms tell us. Pleasures forevermore!" He said with a smirk, "What kind of pleasures?" "Exactly!" I said, "The pleasures in heaven will be greater than any pleasure we experience on earth and will never end!" He resisted, "The Catholics say that you can pay your way to go there." I said, "That's a lie. You can't pay to go to heaven. It's free! It comes through trusting in Jesus, who died on the cross for sinners." At that point the conversation topic stalled out, as he looked at me incredulously. I will see him again next week during our pool league.

Such conversations like this is our mission: to take the gospel to those who are living in darkness. This morning, we will look at Timothy and his role in helping in the mission. My first point this morning comes from verse 1, ...

1. A Helper Identified (verse 1)

Acts 16:1

A disciple was there, named Timothy

This helper here is identified as "Timothy." He is identified as "a disciple." That is, a believer. At some point in his life, he had come to trust in Jesus and follow him.

From the rest of the Bible, we know quite a bit about Timothy. Paul wrote two books to him. They bear his name: 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. These books are called, "Pastoral Epistles" because they give pastoral advice. And Timothy was a pastor, leading the church in Ephesus

Timothy was a pastor of the church in Ephesus. (We will see the beginning of the church in Ephesus when we come to Acts 19, when Paul is on his third missionary journey). Timothy as a lifelong support to the apostle Paul.

A decade after these events, Timothy would be with Paul, ministering to him in jail. And he would write to the church in Philippi, ...

Philippians 2:19-22

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

Such was the admiration that Paul had for Timothy. But that was all in the future, regarding our progress in the book of Acts.

Here we find Timothy introduced to us for the very first time. At this point in time, Timothy was a young man. Even after the multitudes of travel that he did with Paul. Paul still referred to him as a "youth" In his pastoral ministry Paul tells him, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Paul wrote this several years after the events of Acts 16. And if Timothy was young then, he was certainly young at this moment. We would only be speculating on his age. But my guess is sixteen? twenty? maybe a little older?

Timothy is also identified here as ...

Acts 16:1

the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer.

Later in 2 Timothy, we will read about Timothy's mother. Her name was Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). She was not just Jewish, but she was a godly woman as well. Paul described her as having "a faith," that is, a trust in Jesus. Further, Eunice (and Timothy's grandmother, Lois), taught Timothy the Scriptures. Paul writes to him, "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise until salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

With this, all of us parents have reason to rejoice. Timothy was a godly young man, even though he grew up in the midst of a wicked, pagan society.

Do you remember what Lystra was like? Paul and Barnabas had visited this city on their first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-18). Upon doing a miracle in that city, healing a crippled man, Paul and Barnabas were worshiped as "gods come down to us in the likeness of men!" (Acts 14:11).

Yet, here was Timothy, not following after the pagan practices of the people, but following in the ways of the Lord, following in the ways that his mother taught. This was certainly against the grain. For in Lystra, apparently, there was no synagogue. Because, Paul's habit was to come into a city and first speak in the synagogue. But we have no record of this in Lystra. He first spoke in the town square. So here was Timothy, without a large synagogue and scores of other teenagers to urge him along, without any synagogue, living for the Lord.

Parents, our society is not much better than Lystra. But our Lord is the same, he can preserve your children. your children can walk in righteousness. if the Lord but be their strength and shield.

Children, you can live godly in this age! You don't have to go the ways of the world! You don't have to wait until you are older to serve the Lord! Be a Timothy!

Timothy here is further identified as having a Greek father.

Acts 16:1

but his father was a Greek.

This comment is in contrast to his mother who was a “believer.” Our only assumption here is that Timothy’s father was not a believer. He followed the pagan practices of the Lystra. Who knows, perhaps he was in the crowd, wanting to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas when they first entered the town.

This comes as an encouragement to single mothers. The Lord can preserve your children, in the midst of a pagan society, and in the midst of a spouse who doesn’t believe in Jesus. A mother’s godly example and teaching is able to overcome a faithless spouse.

Next, we see in verse 2, ...

2. A Helper’s Reputation (verse 2)

Acts 16:2

He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

In other words, Timothy had a good reputation among those who knew him. This was a blessing for Timothy. Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.” Certainly, this is one of the reasons why Paul was wanting to bring him along on his journey. because of his reputation. He had a good name.

Whenever you apply for a job, future employers often ask for some personal references. that they might call them and get a feel for what sort of person you are, whether or not you will be a trustworthy hire. And when it came to Timothy’s references, they were stellar.

Those who knew him in Iconium, those who knew him in Lystra, They all had good things to say. Perhaps Paul heard comments like: “Timothy is a quality man.” “Timothy is a dependable man.” “Timothy is an honest man.”

But beyond these moral qualities, I’m sure that Paul heard many of this spiritual qualities as well. After all, we read in verse 2 that Timothy was well spoken of “by the brothers” at Lystra and Iconium. That is, Timothy’s good reputation was among the believers at Lystra and Iconium. These were certainly those who heard Paul as he came through and preached to Lystra and Iconium some years prior on his first missionary journey, and came to trust in Jesus.

Futher, these were tested believers, who surely began to taste some of the hardships that Paul had warned them about. “Continue in the faith,” Paul said, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

These were the ones who spoke highly of Timothy. Perhaps Paul heard comments like: “His faith is true.” “His faith has been tested and has proven to be genuine.” Perhaps these brothers had some stories of the ridicule that this young man was willing to endure. Perhaps they told of some sacrifices that he had made for the sake of Christ, while remaining true to his Savior.

Such was his reputation. Such made Paul want to bring him on the journey. This is what we read in verse 3, ...

Acts 16:3

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him.

And Timothy was willing to come. This is my third point.

3. A Helper’s Willingness (verse 3)

Timothy full well knew the sacrifice it would be to join Paul on his journeys.

First of all, it meant leaving his parents, to face a difficult journey with Paul. Timothy had seen the way that Paul had been mistreated in Lystra. He had been stoned and left for dead. and Paul had warned those in Lystra that this is par for the course. But Timothy was willing to go. He was willing to face the hardships and the dangers that would come with the gospel of Christ.

I’m reminded of the story of Adoniram Judson, when he was soon to be sent to India, eventually landing in Burma. He was 25 years old, and looking for a wife to join him in the work. He found Ann Hasseltine (who was called, “Nancy”). They had met two years earlier. Nancy’s father was a deacon the church where they met.

Adoniram wrote a letter to Nancy father, asking his permission to marry her and to take her along on his missionary journey. Judson wrote the following letter:

I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home, and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?^[1]

Paul could easily have written a similar letter to Timothy’s parents. Paul knew full well the dangers that Timothy would experience along the way. They would not be so different than what Adoniram Judson would experience, a pagan culture, hard hearts, difficult living situations. false accusations, imprisonment, deprivations.

Well, Nancy Haseltine's father left the decision up to her. After a bit of wrestling, she wrote the following to her friend:

I feel willing, and expect, if nothing in providence prevents, to spend my days in this world in heathen lands. Yes, Lydia, I have about come to the determination to give up all my comforts and enjoyments here, sacrifice my affection to relatives and friends, and go where God, in his providence, shall see fit to place me.^[2]

Nancy counted the cost and she was willing to go. And life was hard for them. Adoniram and Nancy were married in 1812, and two weeks later, they embarked on their mission trip. and she never returned home, because she died 14 years later in Burma. Nancy had three pregnancies. The first ended in miscarriage. The second, Roger, died at 8 months of age. Their third child lived for only six months after Nancy had died. Nancy died because she was so spent trying to keep Adoniram alive in the vermin-infested jail during the war. But such was the life that Nancy Hasseltine signed up for. Such was the life that she was willing to live.

And so also with Timothy. He was willing as well. He was willing to face such dangers. Only, there was a problem. Timothy had not been circumcised. Timothy's father was a Greek (verse 1). Therefore, Timothy had not been circumcised according to Jewish custom. So, as we read in verse 3, ...

Acts 16:3

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Timothy was willing. He was willing to suffer physical pain to go on his journey. Are you willing to face a little suffering for the glory of his name? Or is your pleasure the most important thing you are seeking in your life? Following Jesus means sacrifice. For Timothy, it meant circumcision. For you, it may mean other things. It may mean deprivation of some cherished practices. It may mean a move or a pay cut. It may mean seeing little of your grown children or facing ridicule from others. Such are the sacrifices that we may be called to to reach others for Christ.

Now, if you have been following along in the book of Acts, you know how strange these words are. Because, chapter 16 comes on the heels of chapter 15. In chapter 15, the Jerusalem council had determined that the Gentiles were not under any obligation to be circumcised according to the custom of Moses. In fact, this is the very mission in which Timothy will be engaged in: delivering the letter from Jerusalem, that Gentiles are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, apart from the law of Moses. The letter said that the burden of circumcision was not placed upon the Gentiles! Yet, here was Paul, who circumcised Timothy. Why? Why did he do this?

The simple explanation is given in verse 3, "because of the Jews who were in those places." In other words, in the context of the day, the mere fact that Timothy was not circumcised would have been a stumbling block for the Jews. So Paul took his liberty to have Timothy circumcised to remove the stumbling block from the Jews.

This was not for Timothy's salvation. The decree from Jerusalem made clear that circumcision (and law keeping) have no bearing upon one's salvation. In fact, Titus (according to Galatians 2:3) was at the Jerusalem council. He was Greek. Neither Paul, nor the council ordered him to be circumcised. But the Jerusalem council didn't forbid circumcision. So, in order to remove the stumbling block, for the Jews, Timothy was circumcised. Paul would later write, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). Timothy's circumcision was an act of love.

Maybe there are ways in your life that you might stretch yourself to show your love to your neighbors, especially your unsaved neighbors. I have a Christian friend who spoke with me about the experience of having a lesbian couple live next door to them. They have even adopted several children into their home. These women need Jesus. My friend and his wife have been stretched in love for them, not letting religiosity build a wall between them, but to work to tear down any wall that exists. Rosaria Butterfield said it very well. You need to accept others as made in the image of God, loving them with a genuine heart. But you also make clear that you do not affirm their lifestyle. It's tricky. But love demands it.

Anyway, they have become friends with their neighbors, helping them however they can. They have such a relationship that they have shared their garage codes to their doors, so that they can watch each other's homes. They have offered to babysit their children. This is faith working through love. What does it matter for us here at church we do, if we aren't faith working through love.

Finally, we see, ...

4. A Helper's Mission (verses 4-5)

Acts 16:4-5

As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

So the first mission that Timothy joined them with was delivering letters. This, of course, is the letter written by the apostles as recorded in chapter 15.

Acts 15:23-29

The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has

seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

The mission of Paul and Timothy and Silas was to bring this letter to the churches there in southern Galatia to explain to them how the Gentiles don't need to be circumcised to be saved. But they should abstain from these things abhorrent to the Jews: sexual immorality, things sacrificed to idols, from blood, and from things strangled. They should abstain from those sorts of things for the sake of unity, but this church should be a great unified Church of Jews and Gentiles, whose racial divergence is far greater than black and white in our country today. They should live together and they should figure out how they can live in harmony together. The whole idea of this letter was one of church unity.

This letter contained the decisions reached by "the apostles and elders who are Jerusalem." The apostles and elders didn't merely send the letter. They sent it with Paul and Silas and Timothy, in person to clarify the message. The vision for the church wasn't Christianity with a Jewish church following Moses and the Messiah and a Gentile church, following the Messiah. No, the vision was Jews and Gentile together in one church. That was the mission, a mission of love to bring these people together.

Their second mission was to strengthen the churches (see verse 5). The Greek word for "strengthened" is a word from which we derive the word, "steroids." The idea is of being built up. In fact, we saw that at the end of chapter 15, "And he went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:41).

So I might ask you, right, how did they strengthen churches? How would Paul and Timothy and Silas strengthen churches? Have you thought about that? Give them memberships Peak Fitness? Maybe that would strengthen them? I don't think so. How are you strengthened in the faith? You are strengthened in the faith by gathering, by hearing God's word taught, and by being reminded of the gospel.

On my way to church this morning, I was thinking to myself, "Why in the world do we do this? Why do we all come here every Sunday?" Just think about Joe Sixpack in the world. He has been out late Saturday night. Sunday morning is his opportunity to sleep in. In fact, he's still asleep right now. Why not be like that? Why do we come here? Why do we make a sacrifice? Why are we herein church? Because we find our spiritual life here. In our prayer meeting this morning, we went over some of Psalm 103, which calls us to bless the God who has blessed us. God has forgiven us all our iniquity, he heals our diseases, he redeems our life from the pit. How many people do you know, who are living life in the pit? How many of you have been in the pit before but God has brought you out of that.

That's why we come here. Because we know that here is where spiritual strength is, where people are, where God's word is, and where the gospel is. So here the gospel fresh:

The Gospel is that we were dead in our transgressions and sin and were living life in the pit. We were far from God. We were estranged from him. We were under his wrath, as children of wrath. We without God and without hope in this world. But God in his mercy brought to us Jesus. Not because we deserved it at all. Not because we are good righteous people. But he brought Jesus who came upon this earth, and he lived the perfect life so that he might die the perfect death, dying for all who would believe in Him. So that the wrath of God that was upon us for our sin, fell on Jesus instead. And we simply believe in Christ, and we are made right and whole and pure. God looks at our faith and counts it to us as righteousness. Because Christ who knew no sin then became sin for us the cross, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We simply need to believe and trust in him. In Jesus is forgiveness of sins. You don't have to give money, like my friend said the Catholics try. You can't buy your way to heaven. Isaiah 55 invites us to come and drink by without cost. It's free. It's there. It's Christ. Now it demands a lot. There's a cost to following Jesus for sure. But but God gives the power to transform. It's not that you need to transform in order to get salvation. It's that you believe in trust. And he gives you salvation and empowers you to live victoriously!

That's what we celebrate with the Lord's Supper. We celebrate the fact that Christ Jesus came and died upon the cross for our sins, that was buried and that he was raised from the dead, according the scriptures to give us life. His resurrection was true and real. We might think it's impossible for dead people to rise again. It is impossible. But with God, all things are possible. The bread represents his body as he said, "This is my body, which is broken for you." The cup represents his blood, the the shed blood of a New Covenant has been poured out through Christ Jesus.

Let us rejoice in the Gospel. This is a way to be strengthened: through the message of grace.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 6, 2022 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1987), 83.

[2] *Ibid.*, 84.