

*In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, **16** “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. **17** For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” **18** (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. **19** And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) **20** “For it is written in the Book of Psalms,*

*“May his camp become desolate,  
and let there be no one to dwell in it’;*

*and*

*“Let another take his office.’*

***21** So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **22** beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” **23** And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. **24** And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen **25** to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” **26** And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

When the depression is more than you can stand or the rejection crushes more than your spirit, it feels like it crushes your soul. When you look into the mirror and you don't like what you see, or you're told you're no good or you're a failure, or it's not going to work out. Betrayal...maybe you were just flat out betrayed and it hurts. Pain + Anger + Shame all add up to bitterness, and bitterness is the Devil's brew.

It's not hard to believe that God loves you and has a plan for your life when everything is going so well, but when the marriage crumbles or the money runs out or the doctor calls or the child rebels, it's hard to see clearly and live securely. And so often what we end up doing is just avoiding the issue. We don't take the phone call, you never bring up the pain, you just learn to live with the painful awkwardness and it's crippling you.

What was once a pebble in your shoe is going to be a rock in your soul if you don't deal with it. It's what Gospel people do, we deal with issues.

It's what they are doing in the text. Get the context: the resurrected Jesus has ascended; Pentecost hasn't happened yet. The Spirit had not come yet. They were waiting. They were in a paralysis, a holding pattern. The joy of those gathered together was tempered by one sad reflection, the tragic betrayal then suicide of their friend Judas. And before they could move forward, they were simply going to have to deal with the issue.

I don't know what's causing your awkwardness or pain or what is making you bitter, but whatever it is, by God's grace, you're going to have to deal with the issue. It's what Christian people do: we make the phone call, we schedule an appointment, we swallow pride, we extend forgiveness, we reconcile, we resolve.

## **A Christian Does What it Takes to Move Forward in Life**

How are you going to get unstuck? Move forward? I think this narrative tells us how to move forward.

### **To Move Forward, You Need to Put Your Life Under the Bible**

The situation that the believers were facing at this time is that there were supposed to be 12 Apostles. One is gone and, for the apostles to move forward, they've got to replace Judas. Listen to the first thing that comes out of Peter's mouth (v. 15-16). Peter said, "Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus." When Peter said what he did in v. 16 and the quote from the Psalms (69 & 109) in v. 20, he was giving us three things about the Bible that will inform how we approach it:

1. Authoritative – v. 16, Scripture had to be fulfilled. There is a prevailing authority to God's word that calls us to stand under it, not over it. There is one grand story that runs through the Bible that gives meaning to our lives, direction to our hearts and purpose to our struggle.
2. Divinely inspired – v. 16, when Peter describes the Psalms, he says, "The Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit, spoke through David. (God's word is infallible).
3. Reveals God's Plan – Peter is rightly using God's word to support his argument.

It's what Christians do. It's what Jesus did and it's what we are to do. The Bible tells us who God is, who we are, how to know him, how to make sense of the life we have been given. In the Bible reading plan I got to Matthew 5. It's about going to church to place your offering or gift on the altar, but while you are there you remember your brother has something against you. You are suppose to leave the offering and go find the brother and try to work it out. So I remembered someone that has something against me so I felt convicted to call him. Nothing really happened but I am not responsible for that. I'm responsible for doing what the Bible tells me to do. And in Matthew 18 it says if you have anything against a brother, you are to try to work it out. To move forward, you've got to put your life under the Bible. What does the Bible say?

### **To Move Forward, You've Got to Hold to Your Standards**

Here's the problem in the text: Judas didn't just die, he defected.

Peter said in v. 17: he was numbered among us and was allotted his shame in the ministry. It was an apostolic ministry; they needed to replace him but not just with any good guy that fit the bill. There were parameters. We read them in v. 21-22. *So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken*

*up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”*

They had to have been with Jesus from baptism until ascension – a witness of the resurrection. They couldn't compromise on this even though they might have been tempted to do so. And the truth is that you and I are tempted with 1,000 compromises every day and we must discern which of those compromises are threatening to your Gospel witness and which are part of normal living.

Part of the weakening of the church is that we have so compromised our Gospel faithfulness that we are no longer distinguishable from our unbelieving neighbors. I'm not talking about a rigid and petty legalism that blushes at every word. I'm talking about Christians who claim Christ yet live like the world, live at ease with the culture and value most those things that are perishing. Life is easy for the shallow. You can ride on the river of materialism and sexuality. It's when you swim against the current refusing to compromise what you have always known to be God-honoring and the new sexual revolution is the rubicon of our orthodoxy. It's why it is vital to know what those standards are according to sexuality, about Sundays, about marriage, money, dating, dress, mission, discipleship, tithing. A Christian does what it takes to move forward in life. Stand under the Bible. Hold to your standards.

### **To Move Forward, Center on the Gospel**

Notice in v. 21-22, the deciding factor choosing candidates was interaction with Jesus. Specifically in v. 22, beginning with the baptism of John until the day he was taken up, a candidate would have been a witness to the resurrection. In other words, this new guy had to get the Gospel right. If Christianity were to become the force that it did become, the Gospel had to be right. And the truth is, the church in America is weak in part. We don't get the Gospel right, or at least what it means to be a Christian. We have so watered down the Gospel that it's been reduced to being wise, happy and successful, and that is a three-pronged hollow religion.

The Gospel of the Bible, the Gospel that the Apostles preached, was radically different. Theirs was a Gospel that marveled at the holiness of God and wept at a depth of your sin. When is the last time you looked at your sin as treason against God and a hammer strike into the nails of Christ? When is the last time you understood just what went on to save you? In reading Exodus & Leviticus, we find that when the Israelites would make their offering, they put their hand on the head of the sacrifice as it was killed as their substitute. They did this to feel the brutality that sin brings. When was the last time you sensed the forgiveness of God *wash* and *wash over* you, when your chains dropped off and your burden was lifted, when you turned to Christ?

It's the Gospel. To move forward and center your life on the Gospel.

### **Get Serious About Prayer**

Praying, that's what they were doing in v. 14-15. In v. 24 when they had to decide between Matthias and Joseph, they prayed. And if we would see God move, we must

call on him morning and night. It has to be a continued and *continual* conversation, so that every act and thought and intention is covered in prayer.

One thing we didn't mention was the casting of lots which we never see again in the New Testament. It was a legitimate Old Testament method of decision making. So they first prayed, and then trusted the providence of God, that he would give the answer.

1. You Stand Under the Bible
2. Hold To Your Standards
3. Center on the Gospel
4. Get Serious About Prayer
5. And Let's Move Forward

A Christian does what it takes to move forward in life. Forward movement starts with a backward look at the Cross of Christ. Christianity Begins.

*(Pastor prays)*