

Norman C. Schwab
Yacolt EV Free
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It Wasn't an Oops...
Acts 1:15-26

It was in ninth grade where boys are wanting desperately to begin the transformation to manhood that I found a kindred spirit. We opened up our hearts and shared our dreams, our loves, our struggles. Every afternoon we could we spent together, played sports together...we talked. We told each other things we would never dream about telling anyone before. Blood brothers. Committed for life. We were best of friends...until something happened in the middle of my tenth grade. It all went bad. He decided I wasn't what he wanted in a friend. Other guys were who he wanted to spend time with. It wasn't just his ignoring me and refusal to talk and spend time with me. It was the turning anger. Instead of a ready smile, friendly punch the arm, a "how's it going" I got a straight ahead no emotion stare and a shove into the lockers. I got an egged car. Worse, he thought nothing of casually throwing out the feelings that I shared with him, my dreams, my loves. Out for the rest of the school to mock and ridicule. I felt like a jilted lover betrayed by his closest of friends and the pain cut deeper then I had ever experienced. I felt confused and foolish and angry all rolled into one. At the time I wondered why? At night I wouldn't tell anyone this but I would come home and bury my head in my pillow and cry out beating my fist yelling why God? Why are you allowing this? It hurts.

Ever been betrayed by someone close? Girlfriend. Boyfriend? Ex-spouse? Brother? Children? Parent? Pastor? Mentor? Betrayal can release some pretty powerful emotions in us can't it? Anger, hurt, fear, confusion. We often feel very disoriented and anxious, foolish, overwhelmed, in a panic. All of these come as a result of having a close relationship now broken. The closer you are to the betrayer, the more deeply you will feel the pain of the betrayal. No one goes into a

relationship anticipating betrayal so we are at a loss when trying to deal with one. There is a feeling of abandonment, loss...an empty place. We spend hours mentally pulling back up the video tape in our minds of interactions with this person. We retrace the steps, recall the conversations. All those memories we once thought were sweet now sicken into overripe rottenness when you look back at them under the light of betrayal. You start to see the hints and clues that you missed because of the trust you once had... the trust that is now been shattered. We start to ask ourselves, "If only I had...", "Why didn't I see that...", "I should have" Then we start asking the questions, "Why is God doing this?" Why is God being like this?", "He must have known this would happen...why did he allow this tragedy to happen? Why my husband? Why my child? Why my close friend....would do this to me?" Why?

Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts the first chapter. I think those 120 people who were huddled together in the upper room after Jesus ascended back to heaven were working through some of those same feelings of betrayal by a close and trusted friend. A guy we know as a villain who betrayed Jesus named Judas. But, until the recent events of the arrest of Jesus. Judas, leading the soldiers to Jesus by the traitor, marked by a kiss of friendship. He took advantage of his close relationship to try and bring down Jesus, and use it to his advantage.

Before all that Judas was there chief financial officer. He was counted among them, and respected as one of the inner circle twelve. He received his portion in the ministry right along with the other guys. He may well have been perceived as being in the upper part of the 12. Certainly trusted with all the money. He probably didn't make a lot of waves, didn't rock the boat, challenge authority or say things that were loaded with conflict. He didn't let his mouth get him into trouble like some of the rest of the guys. His position showed he was well trusted by the disciples. Even when Jesus not so subtly exposed him as the traitor at the last supper...the rest of the disciples still didn't put the

pieces together. They couldn't believe that Judas, having been with them from the very beginning, from the very first when Jesus was baptized by John. Judas having seen all those miracles and listened to hours and hours of incredible teaching. Couldn't believe that he could betray Jesus...and really betray their friendship as well.

Mixed in with feeling the foolish pain, hurt and confusion of betrayal, I think it would be very tempting for me to start to wonder about Jesus. Wouldn't you start wondering if Jesus kind of missed one here? Wasn't Judas kind of a divine oops? Why would Jesus let this happen. If I knew who Judas was and what he would eventually do...I wouldn't let it go on. I mean, shouldn't someone have done their homework and run a background check on this guy and weeded him out long before it came to this? Judas sure messed up the plans....didn't he? The pain of betrayal sure feels like God's plans are messed up aren't they? In fact, in the face of any crisis, danger, threat, betrayal, loss, the questions start to swirl around in our mind. God why? Why did you allow this to happen? Ever been betrayed? What do you need to know from God? The 120 believers probably still smarting from the sting of betrayal needed to know something about God too.

Lets read in Acts 1:15-26 (READ) The 120 believers are doing exactly what Jesus instructed them to do. He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait and He would send the Holy Spirit down from heaven in power. That's what they did. They went directly to the upper room in immediate obedience. They constantly devoted themselves to prayer. There was an attitude of expectant unity that was fostered there as that group was getting ready for the breath of the spirits power to fill their spiritual sails in power. I'm sure there was prayers of confession to God and conversations of forgiveness to each other. I'm sure there were probably people processing the hurt and pain and shock of Judas betrayal.

During this waiting period we know that Peter was studying God's Word to find direction and strength. God continues to prepare them for the mission He has called them to do. Certainly we will see godly leadership come to the surface in Peter. Certainly we see how this early group of believers begin to seek God to make decisions. But I think God also wanted to prepare their hearts for something far deeper than leadership and administration. They needed to know something about God when they get betrayed by others, when it became dangerous and difficult and threatening. When life wasn't at all comfortable or what others would say as easy. When they didn't understand why God would allow certain things to happen to them in their family. They needed to be assured of something true about God and so do we.

Something about leaders. They tend to rise up to the surface when the crisis hit. Peter believed that God's word is inspired by the Holy Spirit v.16 and believed that God wanted to instruct them and guide them. So...Peter stand up stands up and says. Guys, I've been reading the Bible and God has made it very clear our next direction.

As I was studying through this passage I kept wondering why this section was included here. Why did God want us to have this story about the betrayal of Judas and the choosing of his replacement. These verses are sandwiched right in between the promised coming of the Holy Spirit, the believers personal preparation of the holy spirits coming and the actual fulfillment of the spirits coming in chapter 2.

I think the key to these verses is in Peter's address to the people after he stood up. V.16 "Brothers, the Scripture has to be fulfilled... concerning Judas." Then he adds a parenthetical aside to the readers to explain what had happened to Judas. Then Peter quotes from two Psalms. Then speaks again in v.21 saying again, "It is therefore necessary...". He uses the *Dei oun* Greek clause that states Divine destiny in regards to what the Bible says they need to do about the Judas problem. So I see that in the midst of facing the painful reality of

this betrayal, Peter is reminding the people about invincibility of God's purpose. God will confidently accomplish His purposes whether or not it makes logical sense to us or not. Whether or not it steps on our toes or others...God will confidently complete His plan predicted by scriptures even if it takes 1000 years to do it. If God said it...it will be done.

When I have been betrayed by someone close, when danger threatens to shake my world...I need to be able to look up into my fathers face and see confidence and strength that He knows what He is doing even when it may not seem that way from my perspective. I need to know that God will accomplish His purpose, His plan and neither Judas, nor Satan, or a neighbor, or a child or a boss at work or a relative can do anything that makes God pace back in forth in heaven wringing His hands in wonder at what to do next. God will confidently accomplish His purposes. I need to know that in the midst of betrayal. I need to know and see that confident strength and trust of God and that He will accomplish His purpose even when it may be painful or confusing to me. Do you think this is a lesson the disciples needed to know as they were being prepared by God to go out to all the world and be His witnesses. Yes. Do you think it's a lesson we need to learn?

Back to Peter. He stands up and says, "Brothers scripture had to be fulfilled." About how Judas died...purchased a field by his blood money and became a desolate field of blood. Then in v.18-19 Peter takes the reader on a side note to explain what happened to Judas. We know from other accounts in scripture that it was Judas's money that was used to by this field in proxy, the money he through back at the feet of the priests who had bribed Judas to lead them to arrest of Jesus. The leaders in their hypocrisy refused to take money as it was blood money, so they used Judas's money to by a field that potters used to gather clay, a potters field. Judas actions of throwing the 30 pieces of silver back on the temple floor, doesn't mean that he was repentant, just remorseful. That same remorse led him to commit suicide. Matthews account tells us

he hanged himself. This passage in Acts doesn't contradict that but adds some more to the account. Either the rope or branch broke at some point either before or after Judas's death and he was split open on the rocks below. A gruesome picture of the death. That is what happened to Judas.

Then Peter in v.20 goes back to the scripture passage that he sees is the foretelling of what happened, "which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David. Even though the Holy Spirit had not yet come down to indwell every believer yet...that was still a couple days away. That doesn't mean the Holy Spirit was inactive. He was speaking to this group through the Bible, the Holy word of God and He still does today.

Peter quotes from Psalm 69:25. This Psalm is applied to Jesus five times in the NT. It describes Jesus as an innocent sufferer and how his enemies hate him without cause. How Jesus the Messiah is consumed with zeal for His father house. Later in the Psalm, a prayer is mentioned that God's judgment would fall on those who are wicked and don't repent. It is in this prayer v.25 that Peter takes this text and applies it directly to Judas on whom Judgment certainly has fallen.

While Psalm 69 passage explains what happened to Judas, the next quote from Psalm 109:8 explains what they are to do about it. Psalm 109 is similar to Psalm 69 in that it talks of wicked men who hate and attack without justification. But then as you read the Psalm it describes a ringleader who is singled out and God's judgment is requested. "May another take his place of leadership" Peter then applies this passage to Judas.

The word of God is fulfilled in both passages. Psalm 69 predicts Judas death in a field of desolation, the field of blood. And Psalm 109 as what they did next when they choose another apostle, the word of God was fulfilled. Peter says these things happened...in fact "it had to happen..." Judas betrayal was part of God's plan. The replacement of the office. "It was therefore necessary.." Why? To fulfill God's will and purpose. God did not force Judas to choose the evil way. James is very

clear that God is not the author of evil and He does not tempt anyone but each one is carried away by his own lust and when lust is conceived it gives birth to sin. No. v.25 is clear that Judas “turned aside to go to his own place”. But God knew he would. God let it happen. In fact, it was part of his plan preplanned 1000 years beforehand.

For most of us that is the sticking point. That’s the tough one. That’s why we start asking the why God questions when our best friend betrays us, when our child goes rebel, when our finances hit the tube, when life gets dangerous and threatening. Its not hard for most of us to believe and trust that God will confidently accomplish His purposes when things are all going well and God has provided for us. We have even kind of grown to expect that if we are following God with a reasonable amount of obedience that we will have most of our financial things all taken care of, our health will be reasonably good with maybe just a few colds, maybe a scare or two or the x-rays, a lump or two that eventually turns out benign. We at least expect that for God’s own chosen people he would at minimum round off the edges a little bit. Isn’t that what we hope and expect? And when all goes well its pretty easy for us to believe that God will confidently accomplish His purposes. Even if we a couple of hits on us someone will come alongside and say, “I’m sure this will all work out for the better...some good will come of this.” But what if God chooses to allow Satan to strip all the comforts and successes away? Just like he did with Job? What if God decides to wait until heaven to finally even the score and work the good out. What if it is in his divine plan that life should be hard and difficult for us? When things go bad. When we have been lied to, betrayed, cheated, hurt, ignored and rejected...we need all the help to believe that God’s purpose will be confidently completed.

That’s why I think this story of Judas was inserted right here in the Acts story. I think that we need to be reminded that no matter the betrayal..God will accomplish His purpose. No matter what Satan tries to

destroy and pull down on you or your family, God will accomplish His purpose. No matter how baffling and impossible it is to understand what God is doing. No matter how badly the odds may be against it. God will move in confidence and strength and will fulfill his purpose and each of the parts he has us to play in it. When I am getting attacked and threatened and danger looms large in my life. When there are painful, hurtful events that I simply do not understand, I need to be able to look up into my fathers face and know that I will not see a frantic, puzzled worry...but look into his eyes and see a strength and confidence that knows and will do his purpose no matter what it thrown at us.

Judas was not a mistake and oops. Judas was not a wild canon that was out of control that sent Jesus scrambling for a way to figure out just how to work him into his invincible purposes. John 6:64 “Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe and who it was that would betray him.”. As Jesus prays for His disciples language of sending them out into the world. Prays for the fullness of joy to come into their lives in the face of suffering and baffling reaction from the rest of the world. Jesus says, John 17:12 “..and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Judas was no glitch, no oops, no missed signal. It was part of the plan. God knew it would happen. That’s why I think the story of Judas was inserted here into the Acts account. When things go from bad to worse we all need help to believe that God’s purposes will be confidently completed.

They group in that upper room prayed about two men who met the qualifications of Apostle. Guys who had been there from the very start of Jesus ministry, when John baptized Jesus. Guys who had heard all the teaching and seen the miracles. There were two and so they prayed to God who literally they call the “Kardiagnosta” the heart knower. They affirmed their inability to see inside the heart. They knew Judas well and didn’t guess what was going on inside his heart so the prayed and asked God to show them which one of these two men, options that looked

pretty equal in their eyes would be the one that would complete the 12 apostle that would go out as a witness to the nation of Israel and to the rest of the world. A guy who could tell others, “this isn’t some made up story. I saw it all with my own eyeballs.” So they prayed asking God to show them direction and the 12th was chosen. They were a complete group in their leadership ready to receive the power for the mission they were called to do...but also knowing that God will fully accomplish his purposes, regardless of the opposition and disappointments and even when we don’t understand what God is doing. He will get it done.

Do you think the disciples needed to know that strength and confidence? Do you think their trust in God needed that for what they were called to do? They sure did. Think about the times in their life after this moment where they would be tempted to doubt God’s plan because of the danger that they faced even to the point of death for what they believed.

Here’s how some of early church leaders ended their lives. And this too was God’s perfect plan for them. Think about what God is calling you to walk through as I relate to you the death of Matthew who was martyred by being slain with a sword while ministering down in Ethiopia. John was put in a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner then banished to the island of Patmos. Peter was crucified at Rome upside down. James was beheaded at Jerusalem. James the son of Alphaeus was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple and then clubbed to death. Judas the son of James was likely beaten and stoned to death by magicians. Bartholomew was whipped to death. Andrew was bound to a cross where he preached to his persecutors until he died. Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies. Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded. Luke, the writer of Acts was hanged upon an olive tree in Greece. Jude was shot to death with arrows. Mark died a Alexandria after being cruelly dragged through the streets of that city. Paul, after

various tortures and persecutions was beheaded at Rome by Emperor Nero.

Thinking in light of my own sufferings and personal betrayal in high school and others later, they pale in comparison with what the apostles went through. But asking the same question...why God. I can look back and see how he has used those painful events in my life to shape me and further his purposes in me so that I will be better able to further his purposes in this world. I can look with confidence in a Father who is not baffled or puzzled at the painful events in my life. I see in His face no oops, or glitch...but a strength and confidence that knows and will accomplish his purposes. Are you ready to follow a God you will never be able to fully understand?

Notes on Acts 1:15-26

Leadership;v.15. Peter rises to the top of the 11. He has been reading the Bible he knew and was searching for direction answers. He sees how the Spirit has put some information in there they needed to know "foretold" by the mouth of

David. Believes that God wants to instruct them and does so through the word of God. Frankly reading those passages I would have a hard time determining that was what I was supposed to do. Maybe the spirit was working at that time more than we realize. They were far more familiar with the scriptures than we were. They respond to instruction from the scripture..."let another man take his place." even in waiting they are not inactive but do what God has revealed for them to do. We have to wait on that but this is what I know we are supposed to be doing. Peter must have been studying the scriptures during this time. Peter's first sermon in Acts 2 was based on Joel 2 that spoke of the HS in the OT. He was probably studying everything in the OT that dealt with the HS. Peter probably thought, If God is going to pour out the Holy Spirit on us then I had best study every thing I can in Bible about it.

Leaders will search the Bible for wisdom

Believes God will instruct them and the Bible had answers to practical questions of life.

His first sermon based on Joel 2. studied the Holy Spirit in OT

Believe that God will guide them

Describes the inspiration of scripture, the HS through the mouth of David.

Prayer and Bible study certainly are two things that go together. Bible study where God talks to us and prayer where we talked to God and also listen to Him.

When Peter was referring to Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 he wasn't doing this on his own, but was being led by the spirit of God. They believed that the Scriptures had a practical application to their lives. The OT was the Bible that the early church had to discover God's will and they often quoted from the OT to make a point. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable. Certainly we want to interpret the OT in light of the New, but Wisdom seeks out the whole Bible in balance.

(Stott p. 57) Peter quotes two Psalms the first explains what happened Ps. 69 and the second what they should do about it Ps. 109. Psalm 69 is applied to Jesus five times in the NT. It describes Jesus as an innocent sufferer and how his enemies hate him and insult without cause. How he is consumed with zeal for His father's house. John quotes these verses and Paul twice refers to this Psalm. Later in the Psalm a prayer is mentioned that God's judgment would fall on those who are wicked and don't repent. Peter takes this text and applies it to Judas on whom judgment had certainly fallen.

Psalm 109 is similar as it talks of wicked men who hate and attack without justification. Then the ringleader is singled out and God's judgment is requested. "May another take his place of leadership. Peter applies this to Judas.

Pre Holy spirit decision making: Replacing the missing one from the 12 as a witness to the 12 tribes. "...Judas demise became known to all." Why all the graphic description? guts? Warning to the traitor? Reality of what happened? Is

this mentioned to highlight that in the rest of the book they don't have to rely on casting lots like they did at times in the OT. After this time they listen to the HS directly for direction. Give examples.

Judas represents the greatest wasted opportunity in history. He had the rare privilege given to only 23 other men to live and receive the ministry of Jesus direct..yet his motives were selfish. When it became obvious that kicking out the Romans and becoming a rising political star was not on Jesus' plans, he decided to cash in on what he could have had, having wasted three years chasing around his dreams for power. Cut his losses and get out of it what he could salvage. "...from which Judas turned aside to go his own place. V25

They call God literally the "heart-knower" the Kardiagnosta

Didn't they get the wrong one? Wasn't God's choice Paul? (Wiersbe p.20)

Jesus was no longer physically there to give them personal direction and guidance but they had the word of God and prayer and those two things formed the ministry of the church. Not a bad place to found a ministry on.

Apostleship: Been from the beginning of John's baptism (reference to v.5) WHY? to become a special witness to His RESURRECTION. Eyewitness. Wants them to be able to say. I saw it with my own eyeballs. It looks like at least two guys qualified. How did they decide. PRAYED about it. Lord you know the hearts a whole lot better than we do. They knew this very well as the failure of Judas revealed. God we can only see the outside...you see the hearts. Help us out. If we rely only on what we see we or even that which make sense or even the most gifted then we are going to miss something. We need you Lord here.

Why the requirements? They underscore what the NT is telling us, that our faith is not based on legend or myth but based on facts, events which men have seen and heard and touched and been involved with. This not just some holy history that developed from the minds and ideas of men throughout the ages. This is real eyeball to eyeball stuff that actually happened and it was important for this 12th man to give a witness that these things were actually true.

Should lots be used now to decide? Drawing lots was used to determine God's will in OT Israel. Prov. 16:33 "The lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord" The apostles were casting themselves completely on God for the outcome. They were dependent on Him.

The lots were cast probably by the method used by OT Jews. The names Matthias and Justus were probably written on stone, put into a jar and then the jar was shaken until one of the stones fell out. The name that fell out would be the one God had chosen. The lots were determined not by chance but by God's sovereignty.

Life Change on Application of specifics. Acts is a narrative, a true story that teaches us mainly by example. The First 30 years of the church were unique in the way God dealt with men. So not everything in Acts sets an example that we should imitate. Acts records what did happen, not necessarily what should happen. I.e. Praying to God for guidance and casting lots is not meant to be a model for choosing a leader in general. So how do we know this? We need to determine when Luke is describing an example we should follow; when he is describing an example we may follow and when he is giving details to portray the overall message..but not to be an exact model for us. One clue for us is that the primary patterns that we are to follow will reoccur whereas specific details may vary. For example we know that people repeatedly pray for God's guidance in Acts, but casting lots occurs only once, and that is before the HS is poured out at Pentecost. So also when people become believers in Acts, water baptism and the Holy Spirit normally occur, but it may be with the laying on of hands, it may be without, with speaking in tongues or without. Keep this question in mind as we study: When is a practice in Acts a norm? When is it an option we should consider? When is the practice a unique to that particular time?

We pray for revival in our churches yet...what if it came? Would we be ready. Revivals are exciting but read the history they can be physically and emotionally draining. People are knocking on the doors of the churches wanting to be saved. They want to know how to turn their life around. They are hungry for teaching and help. Who will pastor and teach all these people? If you and I are serious about revival then we must prepare for it right now. What if God chose to save and send 1000 more people to our church next month would we be ready?

Hughes: p24 Our situation is a lot like that of the little boy who asked his grandfather, "Grandpa, what is the wind? I cannot explain it to you, the old fisherman replied, but I can teach you to raise the sails. Acts shows us how to have the wind of the Holy S in our sails. The attitude that makes way for the fullness of the Holy Spirit is the same attitude seen in the followers just before the HS was given on the Day of Pentacost

Illust. At a restaurant the waitress will often ask to fill up your coffee cup by saying, "Can I warm your coffee.?" Most people will say, "Yes because no matter how hot the coffee started when initially poured, given time and neglect it grows cold. Some of us need a spiritual warm up. Some of us are almost empty. We need a refreshing, refilling of the HS in our lives. Do you need it? Engage in expectancy. Believe this can happen for you. Ask Him to fill up your cup to overflowing. Forgive us for being content with our own meager resources. Help us to persistently call on you for resource. Fill our sails.