

“I AM GOING TO PROCLAIM TO *YOU*”: LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR “FOR-YOU”
PREACHING FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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MEQUON, WI

DECEMBER 9, 2020

ABSTRACT

Christian preaching hinges on the specificity of both law and gospel. “This is for you.” This is not only a dogmatic conclusion, but an exegetical one. Both law and gospel, as they are proclaimed in Scripture, necessitate the use of specific, “for-you” language in our own preaching. “For-you” language is language which uses the grammatical second person and which may be reinforced by the use of familiar cues.

Christian preachers must not be content to speak *about* law or gospel from the pulpit. By closely reading the preaching recorded for us in Scripture, we learn how to proclaim these truths in a way that clearly shows their relevance for and application to our hearers. This paper focuses on the preaching recorded for us in the book of Acts, which demonstrates how Christocentric, “for-you” proclamation can be done in varied contexts before diverse audiences.

INTRODUCTION

As the vicar at Grace in Falls Church, Virginia, I regularly preached in both English and Spanish. Each vicar is given the same promise during his orientation to his duties: “You won’t have to preach in both English and Spanish on the same Sunday.” This promise, however, is always followed up with a qualification. “Such is our intention... but it will happen.”

So in preparation for any Sunday on which I happened to preach for both services, my sermon would be given to both of the pastors for their feedback. Invariably, when I had written the sermon in English and then translated it into Spanish, I was advised to make some changes to the Spanish version regarding applications, illustrations, or phrasing, which (while understandable) wouldn’t necessarily resonate with my hearers. The same held true if my sermon was first prepared in Spanish and translated into English.

My experience there led me to this conclusion: Laying out for the audience the truths of any text is only part of the sermon’s preparation. The preacher must also communicate those truths to his particular audience. Well have we been warned by past generations that “too many new pastors were preaching about the gospel rather than preaching the gospel.”¹ My caution is this: We must ever remember to preach the gospel *to the audience in front of us*. “This message is *for you*.” Using illustrations or cues that are familiar to the audience is only half of the

¹ Jeske, John C., editor. “Preaching that Deserves the Name Lutheran, ” in *Preach the Word*, Volume I, Number 3. December 1997.

preacher's work. By the very syntax the preacher uses, the listeners ought also to be assured that this message is for them.

As this paper will show, this is neither a simply logical nor simply dogmatic conclusion. This is the preaching paradigm taught in and by Scripture. Indeed, the title of this paper is derived from Paul's message to the Areopagites in Acts 17.² I have placed emphasis on the two key words *for you* to underscore their importance. Gospel proclamation necessarily includes a clear statement that the historical facts which form the basis of the message were done for the hearer. This conclusion will be borne out as we examine the first New Testament Christian sermons, recorded for us in Acts.

To prepare for that examination, we will first explore (on the basis of exegesis and systematics) the definition of "law and gospel" and the "for you" nature of law-gospel proclamation. With that foundation established, a close reading of selected discourses from Acts will bear out the conclusion that Christian preaching, as exemplified in Acts, is proclaimed "for you."

² The wording used is that of the NIV.

THE SCRIPTURAL (AND LUTHERAN) DEFINITION OF LAW AND GOSPEL

The word *gospel* is derived from the Greek εὐαγγέλιον, “good news.” Exegetically, we can establish more than one meaning for the vocable. Mark 1:1 uses it to mean “the record of the life of Jesus Christ.” It is from this that we derive the title “gospel” for the first four books of the New Testament. There is also a “wide” meaning of “gospel,” which refers to the whole content of Christian preaching.³

In Lutheran theology,⁴ however, “gospel” is used as a *terminus technicus* meaning “the word of God by which he, out of free grace for Christ's sake, promises forgiveness and pronounces the transgressor of the law righteous.”⁵ The Lutheran Confessions state it this way: “The gospel freely offers, for Christ’s sake, to us, who have been vanquished by sin and death, reconciliation which is received not by works, but by faith alone.”⁶ August Pieper, confessional Lutheran theologian, has this to say: “What is the gospel? It is the joyful message, revealed from heaven, of the gracious forgiveness of sins for eternal life through faith in Christ. . . . This is the substance of the gospel.”⁷

³ Mark 1:14-15, 16:15. See also the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Article V.

⁴ Lutherans are certainly not alone in making use of the distinction. Tim Keller, a Presbyterian pastor, writes about the distinction and the respective uses of each in his book on preaching. “The law can show us our need for the gospel . . . Usually the text you are preaching on majors in [either] law or gospel.” Keller, Timothy. *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York City: Viking, 2015), 51-52.

⁵ *WLS Dogmatic Notes* (Volume 2, A. Faith, p 131).

⁶ Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, at bookofconcord.org. Accessed 24 November 2020.

⁷ *WLS Dogmatic Notes* (Volume 2, A. Faith, p 132).

This Lutheran technical understanding of “gospel” is not an invention of Luther or his followers. It is based on exegesis. The following verses⁸ demonstrate this. While the word εὐαγγέλιον is not always used in these verses, it is on the basis of their teaching that this conclusion rests.

For in the **gospel** the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:17

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Ro 3:28

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jn 3:16

The law, on the other hand, “in the strict sense may be defined as the word of God by which he demands that man, both in conduct and nature, conform to his requirement of moral conduct.”⁹

Again, these definitions from the Lutheran Confessions support that description.

We believe, teach, and confess that the law is properly a divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God, and reproves everything that is sin and contrary to God’s will.¹⁰

[T]he Decalog requires not only outward civil works, which reason can in some way produce, but it also requires other things placed far above reason, namely, truly to fear God, truly to love God, truly to call upon God, truly to be convinced that God hears us, and to expect the aid of God in death and in all afflictions; finally, it requires obedience to God, in death and all afflictions.¹¹

⁸ These verses are only a representative sample of the many passages which undergird the Lutheran doctrine of the gospel. The interested reader is directed to the WLS Dogmatics Notes, Volume II, pages 133-148 and following, for further passages to consider. This note and direction applies also to the following discussion of law.

⁹ *WLS Dogmatic Notes* (Volume 2, A. Faith, p 126).

¹⁰ The Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Article V, at bookofconcord.org. Accessed 24 November 2020.

¹¹ The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, at bookofconcord.org. Accessed 24 November 2020.

This is, as noted above, a “strict sense” of the word *law*. The words תּוֹרָה and νόμος themselves are used in Scripture in a variety of ways. νόμος in the New Testament may simply mean the Old Testament Scriptures, as in John 10:34. “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your **Law**, ‘I have said you are ‘gods’?”¹² (NIV)¹³ No rule, demand, or threat is involved here in either the citation or the immediate context, so we cannot understand this use of νόμος in the strict way.

“Law” may also refer to the Pentateuch¹⁴, or the Sinaitic law given through Moses (either portions or as a whole)¹⁵. Again, when Lutherans speak of “law,” we are using it as a *terminus technicus* with the strict definition given above, and not with any of these other definitions.

Following are some passages which form the basis of this technical understanding.

The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.” Galatians 3:12

It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.
Romans 4:13-15

Through him [Christ] everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. Acts 13:39

Note also that these verses bring out another truth about the law; it cannot save. “the law cannot make any person righteous because it has not a word to say about justifying and saving faith...

¹² I hereby set the WLS senior thesis record for most nested quotation marks.

¹³ Jesus is here referencing Psalm 82:6. “I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’” (NIV)

¹⁴ Luke 24:44. “He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (NIV)

¹⁵ Acts 15:5. “Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the **law** of Moses.’” Also Acts 23:3, in reference to Dt 25:1-3. “Then Paul said to him, ‘God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the **law**, yet you yourself violate the **law** by commanding that I be struck!’” (NIV)

When preaching the law, you must ever bear in mind that the law makes no concessions. That is utterly beside the character of the law; it only makes demands.”¹⁶ For this reason, Scriptural preaching (and, taking its cue from the Scriptures, Lutheran preaching) always features a proclamation of both law and gospel.

THE SCRIPTURAL (AND LUTHERAN) PREACHING PARADIGM IS “FOR YOU”

The core of my thesis, as laid out in this paper, is that law and gospel must be proclaimed *for you*. That is to say, **law and gospel must be proclaimed using second-person syntax, which may be reinforced by employing illustrations, images, concepts, or ideas which the hearer can latch onto**. This is the definition of “for-you preaching” with which this thesis is concerned.

The First Component of “For You” Preaching - Second-Person Syntax

“There’s a party in the breakroom at three today.” “There’s a party in the breakroom at three today *for you*.” Surely these two sentences elicit different responses from the hearer! A party alone is good and well, but a party *for me* is an unexpected joy.

¹⁶ Walther, C. F. W. *Law and Gospel*, Thesis VI, at http://lutherantheology.com/uploads/works/walther/LG/lecture-10.html#thesis_six. Accessed 27 November 2020.

“A student failed the English exam.” “*You* failed the English exam.” Likewise, what a difference the use of that word *you* makes! The first sentence elicits sympathy, perhaps, and most likely a sigh of relief. But the specific news to *you* about *your* failure — that is a painful blow.

All of the truths regarding law and gospel in their strict senses, noted above, can be proclaimed in the same way that the news is first broken in those examples. Pieper’s definition of the gospel as the “the joyful message, revealed from heaven, of the gracious forgiveness of sins for eternal life through faith in Christ,” is still general. Likewise, the law’s definition in the Formula of Concord as “a divine doctrine, which teaches what is right and pleasing to God, and reproves everything that is sin and contrary to God’s will,” is general. The law and the gospel are the Word of God, which is powerful *in se*.¹⁷ Yet even while recognizing the power of the divine Word given to him, the preacher’s work is not simply to assume that generalities will suffice. His task is to proclaim the Word *to you* and *for you*.

Consider as a case study Nathan’s rebuke of David, related in 2 Samuel 12. Nathan seeks to open David’s eyes to his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah by telling him a parable about a greedy rich man and a defenseless poor man. Yet David, after hearing the story, is incensed at the rich man and still blind to his own sin! How does Nathan finally open David’s eyes? “Then Nathan said to David, “*You are the man!*” (2 Sa 12:7 NIV; emphasis mine). Nathan’s law preaching uses second person syntax to finally make David aware of his standing before God’s law.

How is the gospel proclaimed with second-person syntax? David immediately confesses his guilt to Nathan, admitting that he has sinned against God. Nathan does not tell David that

¹⁷ “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jer 23:29 NIV)

“the gospel is the joyful message, revealed from heaven, of the gracious forgiveness of sins for eternal life through faith.”¹⁸ No! This would not do! Instead, he proclaims to David, “The LORD has taken away *your* sin. *You* are not going to die” (2 Sa 12:13 NIV; emphasis mine).

The Second Component of “For You” Preaching - Audience-Appropriate Illustrations, Images, Concepts, or Ideas

Preaching law and gospel to people (individuals and groups, using second person syntax), rather than as abstracts, is fundamental to “for-you” preaching. The second part of “for-you” preaching serves to reinforce that second-person proclamation. A message proclaimed *for you* will use illustrations, images, concepts, or ideas which will connect with *your* “worldview or ‘world story’ or ‘cultural narrative.’”¹⁹ “In the course of expounding a Biblical text the Christian preacher should compare and contrast the Scripture’s message with the foundational beliefs of the culture.”²⁰ “Everyday happenings, current events, popular sayings, familiar songs and stories”²¹ are a sampling of the options available to a preacher as he seeks to connect with his audience on a cultural, social, or personal level.

¹⁸ Obviously, nor would Pieper in that situation. Please don’t read me as attempting to cast aspersions on Pieper’s homiletical or pastoral abilities.

¹⁹ Keller, 18.

²⁰ Ibid, 19-20.

²¹ Gerlach, Joel, and Balge, Richard. *Preach the Gospel: A Textbook for Homiletics* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 201), 72.

A “FOR YOU” ANALYSIS OF THE SERMONS²² IN ACTS

In this section of the paper, each sermon will be analyzed in terms of its “for-you” content.

Following each analysis, practical remarks on “for-you” preaching gleaned from that pericope will be offered.

Appendix B, at the end of this paper, includes the entire NIV English text of each sermon. This appendix has been provided as a resource for the reader who either wishes to reference the English translation alongside the Greek text analyzed, or who simply wants to take a fuller look at each sermon while going through the close readings.

Peter on Pentecost - Acts 2

Analysis of the Acts 2 Sermon

It is entirely possible (and perhaps likely) that some of the believers spoke to those yet outside the church in the ten days between the Ascension and Pentecost. Yet this sermon is the first recorded message shared publicly by the New Testament church. It is not unreasonable to call this “the first Christian sermon”.

²² There is debate over how to classify some of what I am here calling “sermons” found in Acts. Are these sermons, as we would think of them, or is that an anachronistic label? Are they speeches? Discourses? For my purposes, I am defining an “Acts sermon” as one of the messages recorded in Acts, shared publicly by believers post-Pentecost, proclaiming eternal salvation in Jesus and his fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. There is also some subjectivity to the selection I have made; some of the “public discourses” found in the book are short because they are interrupted, or because we seem to have a “digest” version, or because the circumstances did not warrant a longer message. I will be reading and commenting on messages that have enough content to serve as illustrations of my thesis.

As we look at Peter’s message from a “for-you” perspective, we see that immediately he makes clear that what he will say is not an abstract message untethered to the world and to his hearers. Peter’s first words are grammatically second person (vocative case), and with his specific word choice he intends to show his audience that he understands them and who they are. Ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλὴμ πάντες (Ac 2:14 UBS5), “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem” (ESV)²³, is a deliberate way to begin which sets apart this message as “for-you”; aimed particularly at this audience. Peter speaks to a crowd made up of Jews, ἀνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι, and also Gentile converts, οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλὴμ. Both groups hear themselves addressed in Peter’s first seven words.

The message continues with a quotation from the prophet Joel. As our survey moves ahead through the book, we will see again and again that the apostles use sources with which the audience is familiar in order to connect with their hearers. Peter’s use of Old Testament texts in his message, of course, serves another, primary purpose. Peter means to demonstrate that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah, and that the Christians are now the body tasked with sharing his gospel.

After his citation of Joel, Peter again specifically addresses his audience with another vocative; this time, ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται (Ac 2:22 UBS5). The *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* calls this “an inclusive form of address ... which he parallels with the synonymous vocative “Brothers” (v.29).”²⁴ Yet that is not all we can say. Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται is a transitional term as Peter moves from, in verse 14, addressing two distinct groups (Jews and Gentiles) at once in, to

²³ As I note below in my comments on the move from 14 to 29, hinging on 212, Peter is not yet expressing “kinship” with his audience in 14. ESV is chosen here because it avoids the error in the NIV of translating this first vocative with a note of kinship; NIV’s rendering is “Fellow Jews.”

²⁴ Gaebelein, Frank E., editor. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 278.

eventually addressing the whole assembly with a term which will denote kinship (ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, verse 29). In verse 14, Peter is speaking to both groups; yet he is distinguishing between them, and at the same time rhetorically distancing himself from them. By verse 29, he will no longer distinguish between them, but labels his whole audience as “brothers.” Between these two poles As he draws closer to his proclamation of the Messiah, however, he rhetorically unites the two groups, and then unites himself to them, based on their shared hope in the Messiah whom God promised to Israel.²⁵

Steven Runge, in his *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, sees repetitive vocatives such as these as instances of a phenomenon called “overspecification,” defined as language which serves “to reiterate thematic information about the entity that constrains readers to think about it in a particular way.”²⁶ “There are times when overspecified information changes the anchoring relation of the participant. In other words, you had been relating the participant to the discourse as X, and the new information compels you to relate that same participant in a new

²⁵ Provided here are Joseph Fitzmyer’s comments on the NT undertones of “Israelites,” which reflect well the meaning I read in Peter’s words here.

They are Israelites. Instead of the common ethnic or political title Ioudaioi, “Jews” (see 3:28–29; cf. Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 26), Paul readily makes use of the honorific title “Israelites” bestowed of old by Yahweh himself on a patriarch of his people. The name of Jacob was changed to “Israel,” interpreted as “striven with God” (Gen 32:29). Paul does not say that “they were Israelites,” but “who are Israelites.” The tense is significant. Jews still have, then, the right to boast of such an ancestral heritage associated with a God-given name. From earliest times “Israel” was regarded as a sacred name, at first for the confederacy (Judg 5:2, 7), the community united in the cult of Yahweh. Later it became the designation of the Northern Kingdom. After the deportation of Israelites in the Assyrian Captivity (722 B.C.), it was applied to Judah, the Southern Kingdom (Mic 3:1; Isa 5:7), in the hope that a restored Israel might be realized. In the postexilic period it became the self-designation of the Jewish people aware of its status as the holy and chosen people of God. See Isa 65:9, 15, 22; Sir 17:17; Jub. 33:20. Cf. 2 Cor 11:22. See further Kugelman, “Hebrew, Israelite”; H. Kuhli, EDNT 2.204–5. But it is questionable whether Paul understands “Israelites” to designate merely “a particular category within the people” of Israel, as Refoulé would have it (“... et ainsi,” 170).⁷

Fitzmyer SJ, Joseph A. *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 33, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 545.

²⁶ Runge, Steven E. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 388.

way Y.”²⁷ Runge is speaking here of the New Testament epistles (thus he mentions *readers*); yet the same observation holds forth for the speeches in Acts. Overspecification in speech also invites the hearers to understand their relation to the speaker in a particular way; and Peter’s shifts in the vocatives used invites them to understand their changing relationship to the subject of the discourse and to Peter himself.

Peter next begins to explain the gospel in specifically “for-you” terms. Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς δυνάμεσιν καὶ τέρασιν καὶ σημείοις οἷς ἐποίησεν δι’ αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν καθὼς αὐτοὶ οἶδατε (Ac 2:22 UBS5). None of the highlighted sections are grammatically necessary. Peter uses these second-person subordinate clauses to make his proclamation personal.

“Vers. 22-36. **Ye men of Israel, hear these words.**—*Personal preaching*:—One of the old English worthies said that a great many sermons were like carefully written letters dropped into the post-office without any address written upon them. they were not intended for any one in particular, and they never reached anybody.”²⁸

This “personal preaching” drives toward a clear proclamation of law in second-person language in verse 23. “**You**, with the help of wicked men, **put him to death** by nailing him to the cross.” (Ac 2:23 NIV) This accusation, still in the second person, is repeated in verse 36.

Peter follows this proclamation of law with another Old Testament citation, and then with a third vocative address to the audience. Peter will shortly proclaim the gospel clearly “for-you,” and this third vocative foreshadows that. This time, the audience is Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί (Ac 2:29).

²⁷ Ibid, 324.

²⁸ Exell, Joseph S. *The Biblical Illustrator (Acts): Or Anecdotes, Similes, Emblems, Illustrations; Expository, Scientific, Geographical, Historical, and Homiletic, Gathered from a Wide Range of Home and Foreign Literature, on the Verses of the Bible* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 177. Emphasis found in the Logos original. Note that, to what I am calling “for-you” preaching, Exell puts the more general title *personal preaching*.

Despite the fact that Peter has just accused his hearers of murdering the Messiah, he addresses them as “*brothers!*” This vocative sets up his “for-you” proclamation of the gospel, which follows on an anguished cry from his audience. They have heard Peter’s specifically “for-you” law preaching, and yet they have also heard in his address to them, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, a gospel invitation. They cling to those words and repeat them back to the apostles: Τί ποιήσωμεν, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί? (Ac 2:37).

Peter’s reply is specific and clearly addressed to them. Note how clear every clause of his reply is in explaining that what he is saying is “for-you;” it is meant for the very people that stand before him.

Μετανοήσατε, καὶ βαπτισθήτω **ἕκαστος ὑμῶν** ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς **ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν** καὶ **λήμψεσθε τὴν δωρεὰν** τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. **ὑμῖν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία** καὶ **τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν** καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακράν, ὅσους ἂν προσκαλέσεται κύριος ὁ θεὸς **ἡμῶν**. (Ac 2:38-39 UBS5)

We find in this reply a distinctly “for-you” preaching of the gospel. “**You will receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit ... **for you**, indeed, is the promise.”²⁹ Notice the emphatic position of the dative pronoun. Both Peter’s law and gospel proclamation throughout this sermon has made clear the “for-you” nature of his message.

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 2 Sermon

Peter’s three separate vocative addresses for the audience serve not only a rhetorical but also a theological purpose. His progression from ἄνδρες Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλὴμ πάντες to ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται to ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί moves his message along and underscores the

²⁹ The translation is my own.

content which he is delivering. Is it practical to frame a sermon today in a similar way? It certainly could be. “Overspecification” of the type Runge describes is often a feature of the epistle texts in our pericopes. Bringing out those features is an excellent way to illustrate and apply the text.

One also does not have to devise a full progression of theologically-motivated vocatives, as Peter did, to make use of this insight. Another way to learn from Peter here might be a reconsideration of “stock greetings” which have long been used from your pulpit. If your people are used to being addressed multiple times each Sunday as “fellow redeemed” or “brothers and sisters,”³⁰ try something new.

Finally, a point will be noted here which will be noted in each study ahead as well. Preachers must use the second person as they preach both law and gospel. Our message must never be a distant and nonspecific hypothetical.

Peter in the Temple - Acts 3

Analysis of the Acts 3 Sermon

This sermon is similar to the one which precedes it. We see a number of similarities in the immediate context; both sermons are preached to crowds who witness a miracle; both sermons are delivered before any great persecution of the Christians has broken out; and both are

³⁰ This conclusion is based also on a personal anecdote. When I served as a summer vicar, my supervising pastor counted the number of times I addressed the congregation as “brothers and sisters” during my first sermon. It was more than ten. When he reported this total to me afterward, the implication was clearly that I should consider some variety - or cut back on my vocatives altogether.

delivered by Peter to Jews and/or converts to Judaism in Jerusalem. The content of the sermons, including Peter’s “for-you” content, are also similar.

As at Pentecost, this sermon opens with a vocative address to the crowd; ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται (Ac 3:12). As noted above, this title identifies the crowd as those who have been awaiting the Messiah promised from David’s line. This sermon cuts to the chase more quickly; perhaps we have a condensed version of this message (since a longer version of a similar one is found in the Pentecost sermon)³¹. Peter’s vocative address is followed by some rhetorical questions specifically directed at the audience, serving to make clear that he is speaking to them and knows what the questions are which they want to ask. τί **θαυμάζετε** ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἢ ἡμῖν τί **ὀπενίζετε**? (Ac 3:12)

The law content of this sermon is similar in both “for-you” and general terms. “**You handed him [Jesus] over** to be killed, and **you disowned** him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **You disowned** the Holy and Righteous One and **asked** that a murderer be released **to you**. **You killed** the author of life” (Ac 3:13–15 NIV). Over and over, Peter’s language drills home the accusation; not in general terms, but “for-you.” Peter wants his audience to understand that for their own sins they stand condemned.

³¹ The idea that the sermons of Acts are mostly (if not entirely) condensed versions of the original discourses is not an uncommon idea. While there is some variation in how this is expressed, and differing opinions regarding the level of editing in them, the theory is broadly accepted. We may even find some evidence for it in the statement found in Acts 2:40, at the conclusion of Peter’s message: “With many other words he warned them” (NIV).

The *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, in its introductory remarks, states a fairly middle-ground version of the theory. “To an extent, of course, all the speeches in Acts are paraphrastic, for certainly the original delivery contained more detail of argument and more illustrative material than Luke included . . . Stenographic reports they are not, and probably few ever so considered them. They have been reworked, as is required in any précis, and reworked, moreover, in accord with the style of the narrative. But recognition of the kind of writing that produces speeches compatible with the narrative in which they are found should not be interpreted as inaccurate reporting.” Gaebelein, 230.

In the second half of Peter’s message, he repeats his address to the crowd, Ἴσραηλῖται (Ac 3:17), and goes on to proclaim the gospel in language that is just as “for-you” as was his law proclamation.

μετανοήσατε οὖν καὶ **ἐπιστρέψατε** εἰς **τὸ ἐξάλειφθῆναι ὑμῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας**, ὅπως ἂν ἔλθωσιν καιροὶ ἀναψύξεως ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀποστείλῃ τὸν **προκεχειρισμένον ὑμῖν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν**. . . **ὁμεῖς ἐστε οἱ υἱοὶ** τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῆς διαθήκης ἧς διέθετο ὁ θεὸς **πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν**. . . **ὑμῖν** πρῶτον ἀναστήσας ὁ θεὸς τὸν παῖδα αὐτοῦ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν **εὐλογοῦντα ὑμᾶς** ἐν τῷ ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον **ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ὑμῶν** (Ac 3:19–20, 25, 26).

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 3 Sermon

As already noted, this sermon is very similar to the Pentecost sermon. Those remarks largely apply here as well.

It is worth noting in verses 25-26 (printed above) that Peter relates the audience to the truth being expounded by addressing them as the objects of verbal action. “**To you** first God sent his Son, having raised him, blessing **you** in turning **each [of you]** from your sins.”³² As explained above, the Lutheran definition of gospel makes humans the objects of divine saving action. Verses such as these both confirm that teaching and anchor it in a “for-you” framework. God sent his Son to us; we did not ask, but he was given for us. In God’s raising him, we were blessed; we were the passive recipients of benefits. The resurrected Christ lives to turn us from our sins; again, the very grammar emphasizes our status as objects of divine action.

³² The translation is my own.

Stephen before the Sanhedrin - Acts 7

Analysis of the Acts 7 Sermon

Stephen's powerful message, delivered before and to the Sanhedrin, is the longest of all the sermons delivered in Acts. It begins in much the same way that Peter began his addresses on Pentecost and at the temple. Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες, Stephen calls the members of the Sanhedrin (Ac 7:2). This title ἀνδρες ἀδελφοὶ is what Peter used as he drew to the gospel conclusion of his Pentecost sermon. Πατέρες implies a respectful and also familial relationship between Stephen and his hearers,³³ which is reinforced as he continues with a recitation of Israelite history. Note that as he does so, Stephen will continue to speak in first-person plural language; he identifies himself and his hearers as a group sharing common history. Ὁ θεὸς τῆς δόξης ὧφθη τῷ πατρὶ ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ (Ac 7:2). Both aspects of “for-you” preaching are in play here.

The bulk of Stephen's sermon is made up of his recitation of Israel's history. There is much to dig out here regarding the way that Stephen selects and chooses to recount his material, and there are also observations to be made regarding his use of “for-you” language.

In verse 4, Stephen places his hearers within the very narrative he is unfolding by explaining that the circumstances of their lives are the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. “After his [Abram's] father died, God removed him from there into this land in which **you are now living.**” (NIV)

Verses 11 to 16, wherein the story of Joseph's leadership during the famine is retold, feature three instances in which Stephen uses forms of οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν, “**our** fathers,” to

³³ Gaebelein, 340, characterizes this manner of address as “somewhat formal yet fraternal.”

identify both himself and his hearers as members of one group. Οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν is used again in verses 19, 39, 44, and 45. Verse 19 also calls the ancient Israelites τὸ γένος ἡμῶν.

It is at verse 51 where the tone of this message changes drastically. Looking at the grammar, we see immediately that something has changed. Where Stephen has through the rest of this message emphasized the shared history and group identity he has with these Jewish leaders, he now uses second person language to preach a sharp law message to them. In verses 51 and 52, rather than οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν, Stephen now speaks of οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν. Drawing on their shared Jewish history, he accuses them of breaking with the covenant-God who drew the Jewish people into relationship with him. “**Your** hearts and ears are still **uncircumcised**. You are just like **your ancestors**... **you** who have received the law that was given through angels but **have not obeyed** it” (Ac 7:51,53). His reference to their uncircumcised state and the law given through angels ties this section back to Abraham and the covenant of circumcision (verse 8) and to Moses and the Exodus (verses 38 and 44). The effect of this latter portion is to snatch the rug out from under Stephen’s hearers. He has made them think, with his talk of “our fathers” and covenants made to “our people,” that he is on their side. But now he flips that dynamic on its head, accusing them of having broken the very covenant which they thought united them, and emphasizing repeatedly the distance and difference between them and himself.

Stephen’s use of “for-you” language is key to his law preaching in this section. Verses 51 to 53 rely on the foundation of “we” language found in verses 2 to 50. Stephen emphasized over and over their shared Jewish identity and common history; then with a switch from the first-person to second-person he preaches a blazing law message. “We share a common identity and history; but you have rejected it. You and I are not the same.”

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 7 Sermon

Lutheran law-gospel preaching is always “for-you.” This is also true of the preaching found in Scripture, as we have seen. Yet there is not much “for-you” gospel in this pericope. It might be fair to assume that Stephen would have said more, had he been afforded the opportunity; but we can only react to the text we have.

That is not to say, of course, that there is no gospel in this reading. While “for-you” language is not necessarily present, we do find quite a lot of “for-us” gospel. Stephen traces the history of the promise through the lives of “our ancestors” as he speaks to the Sanhedrin. We, too, can speak in “for-us” language as we exposit the Old Testament. We Gentiles are branches grafted into Israel (Ro 11:17ff); the way that Stephen speaks here can be our way of speaking about the Old Testament as well.

Yet this application should be tempered by this thought: Stephen is using material with which his audience is familiar in order to connect with them. It is a great and glorious thing to be reminded that we through faith are Abraham’s seed; yet if our people are unfamiliar with the Old Testament, they may be confused or indifferent, rather than edified. As we will see later, in Paul’s Acts 17 message, the use of extra-biblical sources familiar to one’s hearers is a valid option for the preacher seeking to illustrate and connect his people to the truth being proclaimed. Stephen used Old Testament history; Paul used pagan poets; a preacher’s toolkit here is only limited by his desire to be sure that his audience is familiar with the source.

Peter in Cornelius' House - Acts 10

Analysis of the Acts 10 Sermon

Peter's visit to Cornelius the centurion is a turning point in the book of Acts, and an important stage in the development of the early church and its theology.^{34,35} However, as far as “for-you” language is concerned, it stands out in Acts for its relative paucity. There is only one instance of the second person being used. In verse 37, Peter tells the assembled group, ὑμεῖς οἴδατε τὸ γενόμενον ῥῆμα καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας (Ac 10:37). With this phrase he intends to evoke the whole ministry of Jesus, which he also goes on to summarize for them.

Even this short phrase, however, has a few “for-you” aspects which we can examine. It is not strictly necessary to the message. Peter could simply summarize the ministry of Jesus for the group without saying, “You know.” “Choice implies meaning.”³⁶ By saying this, Peter makes his message more than a bare recitation of history. He involves his audience in his retelling.

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 10 Sermon

³⁴ “Peter’s greeting to the assembled crowd is an odd way to begin a sermon, but it reiterates the issue with which he and the church must grapple. How can one preach the gospel to those with whom one is unwilling to associate?” Garland, David E. *Acts: Teach the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 108.

³⁵ As I speak about the “development” of the early church’s theology, I do not intend to imply that theology and doctrine are produced by human processes. The book of Acts (and Scripture as a whole) makes clear that theology and doctrine are drawn from Scripture, which is itself the revealed and inspired Word of God. The Holy Spirit, illuminating our reason, reveals the truth found in the Word to us.

³⁶ Runge, 5.

There is certainly a place for using rhetorical techniques in preaching. This is what Peter is doing in verse 37. (“You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached...” [NIV]) A sermon manuscript which cuts every phrase to the bone and says only precisely what “needs” to be said (grammatically speaking) could be hard for the audience to apply to themselves, or to follow as a hearer

Paul in Pisidian Antioch - Acts 13

Analysis of the Acts 13 Sermon

Paul’s message in Pisidian Antioch begins with a vocative greeting. As before, this greeting is tailored to the specific audience to whom he preaches. Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν (Ac 13:16 UBS5), Paul calls his audience. Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται; as noted above (at Ac 2:22, in the section on the Pentecost sermon), this title connects the congregation in Pisidian Antioch with all Jewish believers who have been waiting for the Messiah. His title for the Gentile members of the congregation, καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, identifies them as “Proselytes of the Gate”.³⁷ Gentiles received into fellowship with Israel due to their recognition of, worship of, and faith in the same God.

Paul’s sermon is similar to the message preached by Stephen in Acts 7. In its first part, verses 16 to 26, it is largely a selective retelling of Israelite history³⁸, using first-person plural

³⁷ Gaebelin, 427.

³⁸ It is interesting to note that Paul includes John the Baptist’s ministry as he concludes the history of the promise to Abraham. How did those Jews in Pisidian Antioch view John? Paul seems to imply with his quotation here that John was an accepted authority.

language throughout to unite both Paul to his hearers and the whole assembled crowd to the Israelites whose history is being traced. ὁ θεὸς τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου Ἰσραὴλ ἐξελέξατο **τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν** (Ac 13:17); **ὑμῖν**³⁹ ὁ λόγος τῆς σωτηρίας ταύτης ἐξαπεστάλη (Ac 13:26); and a repeated vocative address, Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραάμ καὶ οἱ ἐν ὑμῖν φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν; all these serve to frame the content Paul is retelling as events which have meaning for this audience. More than that, these are events which took place specifically *for their benefit* (again, verse 26, **ὑμῖν** ὁ λόγος **τῆς σωτηρίας ταύτης** ἐξαπεστάλη).

Verses 27 to 31 are also similar to the latter part of Stephen’s message, in that he turns from Israelite history to the life of Jesus. This section lacks any “for-you” language; rather than working that into the part recounting Christ’s work, Paul will preach a third part that explicitly portrays the life of Jesus in “for-you” terms.

This third section begins in verse 32. Like Stephen, Paul here separates himself from his audience as he draws to the end of his message. Paul does so by using both first-person and second-person language in the same sentences. Yet he also speaks so as to further develop his relationship with his audience. Verses 32 and 33 offer an excellent example of this. “**We** tell **you** the good news: What God promised **our ancestors** he has fulfilled for **us, their children**, by raising up Jesus.” (NIV) This section also ties together both the Old Testament history given earlier and the ministry of Jesus for Paul’s hearers. What they recognize as authoritative and as a marker of their identity, the history of Israel, Paul uses to explain to them Jesus’ identity and work. This is that second aspect of “for-you” language; familiar cues and illustrations that bring out the truth of your words in a way that resonates with your audience.

³⁹ See Appendix A for a discussion of the variant reading present here. UBS5 and NIV take the reading ἡμῖν; I argue for reading ὑμῖν here instead.

In verse 34. Paul cites a verse from Isaiah that is very “*for-you*.” “As God has said, ‘I will give **you** the holy and sure blessings promised to David’” (Ac 13:34 NIV, citing Is 55:3). English obscures the fact that *you* in this verse is not singular; it is ὑμῖν. It would be easy to misread this verse as a promise from God to his Son, since the other two OT quotations which frame it speak of them and their relationship. But the plural *you* in this verse, and Paul’s quotation, mean this instead: Everything which was promised to David, God intends to give also to you all, David’s people, through great David’s greater son, Jesus.

Paul’s sermon concludes by again speaking directly to his audience, this time with a note of both invitation and warning. γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω **ὑμῖν, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί**, ὅτι διὰ τούτου **ὑμῖν** ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται, [καὶ] ἀπὸ πάντων ὧν οὐκ **ἠδυνήθητε** ἐν νόμῳ Μωϋσέως δικαιωθῆναι (Ac 13:38⁴⁰). We note here that the pronouns are dative indirect objects, and the second person verb is passive. Once again, such constructions and vocabulary serve to validate the Lutheran understanding of the gospel message. Forgiveness is announced to sinners, not earned by them or worked in them.

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 13 Sermon

Exposition of the text should not be artificially separated from application of its truths. We are never taught to do so, of course. But preachers who find themselves explaining the text (“The prophet lived here ... this king fought there ... that early church was dealing with this issue ...”) without ever making reference to their audience in that portion of their message should consider how “for-you” language colors Paul’s exposition. Verses 17 and 32 offer examples of this.

⁴⁰ A number of English translations (including NIV, ESV, and KJV) scramble the Greek word order here and place a large chunk of verse 38 in verse 39.

Simply by referring to the Israelites as “our fathers” in 17, for instance, Paul involves his hearers in his recounting of history.

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra - Acts 14

Analysis of the Acts 14 Sermon

Even a short address, such as the one recounted in Acts 14:14-18, showcases the “for-you” language that Christian preaching necessitates. We also see the apostles thinking about their audience and how they will address them. With the very first word of this message, ἄνδρες, we see Paul and Barnabas making a specific choice about the way they will speak to their audience. ἄνδρες as an address has a different connotation than ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, one of the apostles’ favorite vocatives in Acts. ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί expresses shared identity and a kind of unity around that identity. It is not the term of address to use with pagans who are actively seeking to worship you as a God. ἄνδρες is respectful, but does not falsely claim some kind of unity.

The Lystrans intend to offer sacrifices to the apostles. Exell and others explain this reaction by referencing a legendary visit from Jupiter and Mercury to this region. They were not welcomed; instead, hospitality was refused. In their anger, they took destructive revenge against the inhabitants.⁴¹ The Lystrans are not eager to repeat their mistake, and having seen the apostles perform a miracle, they waste no time in preparing sacrifices.

⁴¹ Exell, 391.

If Paul and Barnabas are aware of this legend, their first appeal to the people may be intended to ease their fears. “We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news” (Ac 14:15 NIV). Whether this message is crafted specifically as a response to that legend or not, the “for-you” content is clear. Indeed, in Greek Paul specifically says, “ἔσμεν ὑμῖν ἄνθρωποι εὐαγγελιζόμενοι ὑμᾶς” (Ac 14:15 UBS5).

This “gospelizing” continues by assuring the Lystrans that not only are Paul and Barnabas not angry gods come to exact revenge for long-ago slights; the only real God has no intention of doing so either! Paul addresses these specific fears of the people with the gospel content of his message. “[T]he living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them ... has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving **you** rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides **you** with plenty of food and fills **your** hearts with joy” (Ac 14:15, 17 NIV). God is not angry with you, Paul wants the Lystrans to know: He loves you! “Think of a Being, all–perfect, all–powerful, all–wise, employing His mighty energies in perpetually doing good. What an immense amount of happiness He must be continually diffusing.”⁴²

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 14 Sermon

The “for-you” content of our sermons can and should specifically address the fears our people hold. The Lystrans were afraid that the gods had returned to smite them; Paul preached to them a message of God’s almighty beneficence. This is certainly easier to put into practice in personal, one-on-one situations than in the pulpit; yet there will be times when the whole flock fears one

⁴² Exell, 397.

threat. We may think of occasions such as 9/11, or mass shootings. Approaching hurricanes or blizzards can be sources of distress. Even regular, expected events (elections, for one) can bring about fearful reactions. Let's preach a message of comfort that is "for-you" in every circumstance or situation of life.

Paul in Athens - Acts 17

Analysis of the Acts 17 Sermon

"No text in Acts has received more scholarly attention than the ten verses of Paul's speech before the Areopagus."⁴³ This sermon deserves such attention. Most of that attention, however, is not looking at the "for-you" content of this speech. Instead, "debate has particularly raged over whether the core thought of the speech is that of the Old Testament or of Greek philosophy."⁴⁴ Most of that subject is outside the scope of this paper; however, his use of Greek philosophy does involve the second aspect of "for-you" preaching as Paul attempts to build connection with his audience.

Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ (Ac 17:22 UBS5), Paul begins his speech. We have, to begin, a vocative address, as in most of the other Acts sermons. As he did in Lystra (Acts 14; previous section in this paper), Paul uses ἄνδρες to connote a respectful address, but without implying fellowship (as he does when he evangelizes to other Jews, calling them ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί). Ἀθηναῖοι further specifies his audience and can be

⁴³ Polhill, John B. *Acts: The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 369.

⁴⁴ Polhill, 369.

compared to using someone's name in conversation as you speak with them. It is almost never grammatically necessary to use the name of someone you are directly addressing; but doing so fosters the connection you are trying to create.

Paul also reveals in this verse that he wants to understand and connect with the people of Athens on a socio-cultural level. He has been walking around their city, trying to figure out what makes Athenians tick. By telling them that he has seen “that in every way **you** are very religious” (Ac 17:22 NIV), he's telling them that he is interested in them and their thoughts and customs. Yet he doesn't say, “I walked around to try and peek inside your heads so that I could see what makes you tick.” No; he simply tells them something he observed about them while doing exactly that. Part of “for-you” preaching is having good interpersonal communication skills. The preacher ought to show that he has observed and listened to the person to whom he is speaking. In communication, this is called “establishing rapport.”⁴⁵ Paul demonstrates here that this can be done not only in one-on-one interactions, but in speaking to groups.

The section which follows is the one that has inspired the aforementioned scholarly attention. From verse 24 to the end, Paul “set forth theses and made arguments in their favor.”⁴⁶ The debate is over the *source* of Paul's material here. Taking a position in that debate is not the goal of this paper; instead, this remark from Keller will serve to set up our “for-you” analysis.

[Paul's] points were all truths taken from the Bible, but the method of presentation was more like classical oratory in which he set forth theses and made arguments in their favor. In Paul's judgment, it was not appropriate to offer a careful Bible exposition to an

⁴⁵ “Rapport is established through reflective listening, pacing and using the other's representational system in communication. Rapport is necessary to achieve your outcome.” lawyer, John W., and Katz, Neil H. *Communication Skills for Ministry, Second Edition* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1985), 23.

⁴⁶ Keller, 30.

audience who not only disbelieved in the Bible but also was profoundly ignorant of even its most basic assumptions.⁴⁷

How, then, does Paul present Biblical truths to his audience *without* directly quoting the Bible? “He approaches them as one who stands with them on common ground - created by God for fellowship with God. He uses language that his audience understands.”⁴⁸ A great part of that connection is created by his use of quotations (both found in verse 28) from two Greek poet-philosophers, Epimenides of Crete and the Stoic Aratus of Cilicia.

If we look at the grammar of this section, we see a progression in Paul’s message. He moves from speaking of the whole world (verse 24) to mankind in particular (verse 26). As he speaks of mankind in verse 26, he uses third person pronouns. Yet note the shift which then occurs in the grammar of verse 27. “God did this so that **they** would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of **us**.” (NIV) Paul moves from third person to first person plural in this verse. Now see what he does in verse 28: ““For in him **we** live and move and have **our** being.’ As some of **your** own poets have said, ‘**We** are his offspring.’” (NIV) Paul subtly shifts from first to second person⁴⁹ in his proclamation here. The message concludes with a remark that warns of the coming judgment.

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 17 Sermon

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Garland, 181.

⁴⁹ A poorly attested variant continues to use the first person with the form ἡμᾶς. The reading adopted by NIV uses ὑμᾶς and is best attested. A third variant also uses ὑμᾶς, with other variations in the surrounding phrase. The best option is that which the NIV and UBS5 have adopted.

Not everyone to whom we preach will know the Bible. Preachers are aware of that. What Paul here suggests we may want to do, in order to connect with them, is become familiar with their “poets.” In our day, it may be objected that there’s too much to keep up with. Not everyone watches the same TV shows. Kids are watching YouTubers, while parents are watching HBO Go. Is a pastor expected to keep up on the latest TikTok trends? These difficulties are real; yet understanding what our people hear, see, and produce for 111⁵⁰ hours of each week is vital to communicating with them.

Paul with the Ephesian Elders in Miletus - Acts 20

Analysis of the Acts 20 Sermon

The Acts 20 speech is unique in this book. It is the only time a Christian preaches specifically and exclusively to other Christians. Every other address in this book is something of a “mission sermon,” which is appropriate for the purpose of Acts; a book chronicling the spread of the church at Jesus’ command to spread the gospel to all nations. But Paul’s message in Acts 20 is preached solely to Christians, and more specifically, to Christian leaders. We could compare it today to the message preached at a pastors’ conference, or another meeting of church leaders.

⁵⁰ There are 168 hours in a week. One is spent in church. Assuming eight hours a day for sleeping, there are one hundred and eleven hours remaining in the week for our members to hear many voices besides ours.

Paul begins by reminding these men of their shared personal history and his conduct.

While the opening verses focus on Paul's own living and deeds, he consistently involves them in the retelling.

“You know how I lived the whole time I was **with you**, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. **You know** that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful **to you** but have taught **you** publicly and from house to house.” (Ac 20:18–20 NIV)

The last sentence quoted above, in particular, uses “for-you” language quite effectively. None of the highlighted material is grammatically necessary. Its purpose is to emphasize that Paul did not do these things to fulfil an impersonal checklist. Paul's preaching and living (jointly) was done to the benefit of his listeners. “For-you” language implicitly sets forth this truth which preachers will want their hearers to believe. We aren't in this for ourselves. Stating this truth explicitly over and over (paradoxically, but unsurprisingly) will make it come off as self-serving. But the Holy Spirit, working through the gospel as it is framed in the “for-you” language which is necessarily⁵¹ part of its preaching, will teach that truth week after week.

Paul next speaks of his upcoming voyage to Jerusalem and the warning that he has received about the troubles that await him, and then returns to addressing the assembled elders. In every single sentence from verse 25 to 31, he uses either a second person verb form, a second person pronoun, or both.

“Now I know that none **of you** among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom **will ever see** me again. Therefore, I declare **to you** today that I am innocent of the blood of any **of you**⁵². For I have not hesitated to proclaim **to you** the whole will of God. **Keep**

⁵¹ I leaned toward saying “definitionally,” but it would be fair to say that a definition of “gospel” would not necessarily include second-person grammar or “familiar cues.” Yet I want to stress my conclusion that the gospel must be preached “for-you.”

⁵² While the NIV translates this with a second person pronoun, the word is actually πάντων.

watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made **you** overseers. **Be**⁵³ shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in **among you** and will not spare the flock. Even **from your own number** men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So **be on your guard! Remember**⁵⁴ that for three years I never stopped warning **each of you**⁵⁵ night and day with tears.” (Ac 20:25-31 NIV)

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 20 Sermon

A simple observation based on this message is that *your message should be different based on your audience*. When preaching to mature Christians, we can speak differently than we do to non-believers, or even to less mature Christians.

Paul’s Speech to the Temple Mob - Acts 22

Analysis of the Acts 22 Sermon

In Acts 21, Agabus the prophet passed on to the church a message given by the Holy Spirit, telling them that Paul would be taken prisoner in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles. Unsurprisingly, this is exactly what came to pass. Paul is accused by a crowd of having brought Gentiles into the temple courtyard, and they begin beating him. Paul is rescued by a squad of Roman soldiers, whose commander intends to find out how Paul has caused such a disturbance

⁵³ This second person imperative in English is actually an infinitive in Greek, and is a subordinate clause of the preceding sentence.

⁵⁴ This second person imperative in English is, in Greek, actually a participle connected to the preceding imperative.

⁵⁵ The Greek says not “each of you,” but “each one.”

in the city. Paul asks him for the chance to explain himself in an address to the mob, and it is this speech with which Acts 22 begins.

Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες, ἀκούσατέ μου τῆς πρὸς ὑμᾶς νυνὶ ἀπολογίας (Ac 22:1 UBS5), Paul begins. We have seen ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί a number of times before when the apostles are evangelizing Jews. Paul adds to it καὶ πατέρες, communicating an attitude of respect and humility before this crowd (who only minutes before was baying for his blood). He continues by promising to offer them a defense that will be specifically geared toward their concerns; indeed, specifically geared toward them as members of a particular group. He intends to give an ἀπολογία πρὸς ὑμᾶς; a defense which is meant specifically for them and will address their particular concerns.

“Speaking here as a Jew to other Jews, Paul delivers the first of five apologies in this and the following chapters, for himself and for the Christian cause.”⁵⁶ Paul’s defense begins with a recounting of his own past and credentials as an ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος (Ac 22:3). This is a stock argument which Paul uses in many of his speeches and writings; in Philippians 3:5, for example, he calls himself a “Hebrew of Hebrews” and recounts his background as a zealous Jew. He does so also in Galatians 1.

The particulars differ in each of these instances, however. In those epistles, Paul’s Jewish *bona fides* are established on the basis of his observance of the law. That is not the focus here. In this speech, Paul emphasizes his Jewishness based on his connection to the city of Jerusalem. He was raised there, studying under Gamaliel (Ac 22:3). He served the high priest and the

⁵⁶ Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Acts: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 234.

Sanhedrin⁵⁷ as he was dispatched from Jerusalem to persecute Christians in other cities (Ac 22:5). Paul even claims that the officials of the Sanhedrin could substantiate everything he is here saying! Paul intends to subvert the charge that he is a rabble-rouser from outside; his message in verses 1-5 is, “I’m a hometown boy! I’m one of you!”

Paul’s establishing of his Jewish pedigree moves him on to a retelling of his conversion experience on the road to Damascus. Here, too, he will use familiar cues and motifs from Jewish (Old Testament) history to connect with his audience.

The biblical precedent for this unique light is found in the account of Moses speaking face to face with the Lord on Mount Sinai, so that when he descended from the mountain his face shone with a brilliance that was beyond human endurance to behold and he had to veil it when he spoke with the people of Israel (Exod. 34:29–35). For Saint Paul, the immediate significance of “such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses’ face because of its brightness, fading as this was,” was to serve as an allegory for the relation between the law and the gospel (2 Cor. 3:7–8); but this divine light on Mount Sinai stood in close connection with the divine light on Mount Tabor at the transfiguration of Christ—and with the divine light that overwhelmed Paul on the Damascus road.⁵⁸

Paul intends for the light which he saw on the road to be seen as connected to Old Testament theophanies (and certainly it was). Yet in case this is a bridge too far for his hearers, he makes sure to reestablish his Jewish roots as he speaks of Ananias, the Christian who took him in in Damascus. Ananias was, according to Paul, “a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there” (Ac 22:12 NIV). Paul is still at pains to emphasize that while he (along with Ananias) is a Christian, he has not surrendered, renounced, or profaned his Jewishness.

⁵⁷ Paul uses the word *πρεσβυτέριον* rather than *συνέδριον* here, but this seems to be a reference to that particular “council of elders.” See *πρεσβυτέριον* in William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 861.

⁵⁸ Pelikan, 235. See also the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, which asserts that such a supernatural light would and could only be viewed by the Jews as a theophanic event. Gaebelein, 370-371.

We are now afforded, in Paul's speech, the opportunity to hear some words from Ananias that had not been earlier recorded for us. Ananias speaks to Paul of the will of the θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν (Ac 22:14 UBS5). Again, their Jewish identity and bloodline, which Paul and Ananias share with the crowd, is at the heart of Paul's message.

Having received knowledge of God's mandate for him (a witness of the Righteous One to all [Ac 22:14-15]), Paul returns to Jerusalem. Again, he wants to establish for his hearers that he is connected to them and to this sacred city. It is in the very temple in Jerusalem, according to Paul, where God himself speaks directly to Paul.

Yet now the direction of Paul's speech changes. What are God's words to the newly commissioned Paul? "'Quick!' he said. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me'" (Ac 22:18 NIV). This turn calls to mind Stephen's message. Where the preacher has for some time intended to express connection between himself and his audience, now a breach between them will be explored. In fact, Paul makes an explicit connection between what is happening to him and what happened to Stephen in verse 20. It is at this point in Stephen's speech that he preaches a stern law message in very pointed second-person language (Acts 7:51-53). Paul, however, is interrupted by the crowd before he can do so. If we are able to extrapolate the intended direction of Paul's speech here from Stephen's Acts 7 speech (which Paul seems to imply), we find both elements of "for-you" preaching in the Acts 22 discourse.

In verse 12, as noted above, Paul follows up on remarks that may be hard for his hearers to swallow (regarding the appearance of the glorified Christ to him) by assuring his audience that Ananias, the Christian who received him in Damascus, was a devout Jew. Paul is showing that he understands what might make his audience uncomfortable, and he is ready to offer them something familiar and “safe” to hold on to. We can do the same thing in our preaching. Paul is able to do this because he is, of course, also a Jew. He understands what will cause his Jewish audience to recoil. We will at times say things from the pulpit that make Americans recoil. Without compromising the truth being proclaimed, we can still offer our hearers something familiar to grasp even as we critique other convictions they hold. Timothy Keller expresses this thought in some remarks on Paul’s Areopagus sermon: “Paul takes some of his listener’s right beliefs and uses them to criticize their wrong beliefs... Paul accommodates in order to love and to confront at the same time... [he] is seeking not merely to refute them, but also to respect them.”⁵⁹ In doing so, Paul shows how to use ideas or concepts familiar to his hearers to illustrate the truths he is preaching (both positively and negatively). This is the second aspect of “for-you” preaching.

Paul before Agrippa - Acts 26

Analysis of the Acts 26 Sermon

This is the last of the Acts sermons to be surveyed in this paper. As a defense delivered by Paul before a group, similarities to the Acts 22 speech are expected and will be noted. One aspect of

⁵⁹ Keller, 101.

this speech, however, makes it stand out. There are really two separate audiences being addressed at once. Paul will have to preach not just a “for-you” message, but a “for-**both-of-you**” message.

The first audience is made clear in 26:2-3. “**King Agrippa**, I consider myself fortunate to stand **before you** today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, and especially so because **you are well acquainted** with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg **you**⁶⁰ to listen to me patiently” (NIV). Agrippa is the leader of the first audience to whom Paul speaks here; the Roman-backed authorities, who are both non-proselyte Gentiles such as Festus and thoroughly Hellenized, Roman-leaning Jews such as Bernice and King Agrippa himself. Yet we should note that Paul is not only addressing Agrippa as a representative of this group, but individually. “Paul’s words are addressed particularly to Agrippa, one of Paul’s “own kindred after the flesh.”⁶¹

Yet while Paul continues technically addressing Agrippa in verses 4-8, it is clear that the second audience in the room is really the intended target of this section. 26:4-8 features Paul once again establishing his Jewish credentials on the basis of his observance of the law (26:5) and his connection to Jerusalem (26:4). While Agrippa is a Jew, this isn’t necessarily something that will particularly interest him. Paul shows his hand with a slight outburst in verse 8, where he finally shows to whom he has really been speaking. “Why should any **of you** consider it incredible that God raises the dead?” (Ac 26:8 NIV). He speaks here specifically to the Jews

⁶⁰ The final *you* in verse 3 (to which this footnote is attached) is not explicit in Greek, but implied by the syntax.

⁶¹ Exell, 332.

(Pharisees)⁶² whose accusations in Acts 24 and 25 have led to Paul's imprisonment and the current trial.

Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is covered next. The Old Testament significance of the light which appeared has already been discussed in the section on the Acts 22 sermon. We note that in the middle of this retelling, Paul interjects a simple vocative, βασιλεῦ (Ac 26:13), as he continues to preach this apologetic⁶³ sermon first to Agrippa, and by extension, to all others in attendance.

Paul next traces his commissioning by Jesus and his earlier work in carrying out that mission. Interestingly, he leaves out a number of events surrounding his conversion which were mentioned in the Acts 22 temple speech. Ananias is not mentioned, nor is Paul's blindness and subsequent healing. The Expositor's Bible Commentary suggests that these references "might have been confusing to a pagan audience;"⁶⁴ that is, to the Roman officials in attendance. If so, we see again Paul's concern for both audiences to whom he preaches. Not only does he use familiar cues and motifs to connect with his audience when he preaches, but he may avoid some references or topics which might hinder his message.

Just as it happened in Acts 22, Paul's sermon here is interrupted as he is speaking about his ministry to the Gentiles. Yet it is not the Jews who interrupt him this time, as might be expected. Festus, a Gentile, breaks in, telling Paul, "You are out of your mind" (Ac 26:24 NIV). There is no strong consensus around the particular cause of Festus' interjection here. As the

⁶² Bruce, F. F. *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 489-90. See also the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, which directs the reader's particular attention to "the pl. *hymen*, 'you'." Gaebelein, 552.

⁶³ "Apologetic" not in the technical, "defense of the faith" sense, but simply a sermon that presents a defense.

⁶⁴ Gaebelein, 553.

governor in Judea, he is no doubt eager to avoid inflaming Paul's Jewish opponents, and knows that what Paul has just said is exactly what provoked the temple crowd to new anger on the day Paul was arrested. It is also possible that he finds this talk of resurrection quite insane, and can no longer restrain himself.⁶⁵

Paul will not let this interruption end his speech, however, as was the case in Jerusalem. Yet he also cannot simply ignore the outburst from Festus. However Paul had intended to continue, he recognizes that his testimony has been challenged. "Two wholly irreconcilable views of life confronted each other in Festus and Paul. Paul was sincere. Festus was also sincere. And yet between the two there is a yawning and impassable gulf. If Festus is right, Paul is mad. If Paul is right, Festus is blind."⁶⁶ Paul has to respond to the challenge, and does so. He does not ignore Festus, but replies directly to him. Yet he doesn't engage in a lengthy debate with Festus. He refocuses his attention on his audience, and does so in a way that also rhetorically puts a wedge between Festus, the challenger, and Agrippa. "The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. **King Agrippa, do you believe** the prophets? I know **you do**" (Ac 26:26–27 NIV).

Practical Remarks Drawn from the Acts 26 Sermon

⁶⁵ Gaebelein, 554, offers both suggestions. Exell, 367, mentions Festus' skepticism but not any concern Festus may have had for the effect Paul's words would have on his subjects. Bruce, 495, mentions both considerations, while implying that Festus' patience wearing thin with what he considered Paul's "insubstantial philosophizing" was the primary factor in the interruption.

⁶⁶ Exell, 369.

Apologetics can be a helpful tool in doing “for-you” preaching. Although he would likely not have used this label, Paul integrates apologetics into his address before Agrippa.⁶⁷ This is done intentionally; he is answering the specific challenges and questions Agrippa will have. Whether Agrippa had some of these questions before, or whether they newly arose with Festus’ attack, Paul is determined to answer these questions for Agrippa. Apologetics are a powerful tool when used “for-you”; not to show off your own knowledge and ability to head off any questions, but to show that you are thoughtfully listening to your audience and have real answers to offer them.

CONCLUSION: NOTES ON FURTHER PRACTICAL USE OF THIS THESIS⁶⁸

What I have attempted to do in this paper was not ground-breaking original research. I wrote this paper with a specific, practical question in mind: “What can I learn about preaching from the apostles?” I found many answers to that question in my research and reading, and have summarized those findings in the practical sections following each text study. I pray that those notes have been helpful “for-you.”

⁶⁷ “Paul’s word to Agrippa, ‘this was not done in a corner,’ continued to be a part both of apologetics and of church history.” Pelikan, 277.

⁶⁸ I’ll be honest; this is what I’m always interested in when reading anything. I control-f “*practical*” when I read papers.

As a practical paper, other uses are obvious. The text case studies (if I have done my work well) will serve well as parts of a preacher's sermon text study. A Bible class on the Acts sermons would be another way to make use of the case studies. I also hope that the "for-you" lens I have described and used in these studies lends itself readily to the study of other books. The approach taken in this paper can be applied to epistles, prophetic books, and other texts featuring discourse. Lastly, the smattering of linguistics which I encountered during my reading and writing has convinced me that a study of discourse grammar, and some training in its basics, would be invaluable to our homiletical training and preparation.

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APPENDIX A - ANALYSIS OF VARIANT READING IN ACTS 13:26

UBS5's critical apparatus gives a B grade to their choice regarding the variant present in this verse. This "indicates that the text is almost certain."⁶⁹ While there is good evidence for reading ἡμῖν, I find the manuscript evidence for reading ὑμῖν more compelling. I also find, looking at the context, that the ὑμῖν reading fits better into the argument Paul is making,

Manuscript Evidence

As shown in the following chart, both readings circulated roughly in the same regions at the same times. ὑμῖν appears in translations in North Africa in the sixth century, whereas there is no record (before or up to the sixth century) of ἡμῖν in that region. ὑμῖν is also solely credited with attestation in Asia Minor; however, being credited with *Lect* does not necessarily mean that this reading is present in all lectionaries; rather, it means the *majority*.

⁶⁹ The phrase in quotations is the precise wording of the tooltip that pops up when hovering over the B grade in the UBS5 Logos edition textual apparatus.

First reading: ημν

Century	No. Africa	Gaul-Italy	Asia Minor	Syria	Palestine	Egypt
1 st						
2 nd						
3 rd						
4 th						<i>Alef B cop</i> ^{sa,meg}
5 th		D it ^d				A
6 th				<u>syr^h</u> _{mg}		

Second reading: υμν

Century	No. Africa	Gaul-Italy	Asia Minor	Syria	Palestine	Egypt
1 st						
2 nd						
3 rd						p ⁴⁵
4 th						
5 th		vg		syr ^p arm geo		C
6 th	it ^e	E	<i>Lect</i>	Byz syr ^h		eth

When we consider only Greek sources, ημν has four and υμν has five. υμν has the earliest reading (P45), yet ημν has a number of important manuscripts backing it (κ, A, B). My reaction to this analysis would still be to adopt υμν.

Internal Support

Neither of these readings would yield heresy if adopted. No doctrine of Scripture is imperiled or introduced by either reading. Doctrinally, then, neither can be ruled out.

As to the impact on this speech in adopting υμν here, my argument for its internal coherence is laid out in the body of this paper.

APPENDIX B - ENGLISH TEXT OF THE ACTS SERMONS, AS TRANSLATED IN THE
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

The intent in providing this appendix is to give the reader easy access to each of the sermons discussed in this paper. I recommend detaching these final pages so that they can be simultaneously read and cross referenced with the discussion above.

Acts 2:14-40

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

22 “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

25" David said about him: " 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, 27 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' "

29 "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, " 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand 35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' "

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the

name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

Acts 3:12–26

12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

17 “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must

listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’

24 “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days.

25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

Acts 7:1–53

1 Then the high priest asked Stephen, “Are these charges true?”

2 To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. 3 ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’

4 “So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. 5 He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. 6 God spoke to him in this way: ‘For four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated. 7 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,’ God said, ‘and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.’ 8 Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac

and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

9 “Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him 10 and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

11 “Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. 12 When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit. 13 On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph’s family. 14 After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. 15 Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died. 16 Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

17 “As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. 18 Then ‘a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.’ 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

20 “At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. 21 When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

23 “When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. 24 He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. 25 Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. 26 The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?’

27 “But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? 28 Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ 29 When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

30 “After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. 31 When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to get a closer look, he heard the Lord say: 32 ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

33 “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34 I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.’

35 “This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness. 37 This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’ 38 He was in the assembly in the

wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us.

39 “But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. 40 They told Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!’ 41 That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and reveled in what their own hands had made. 42 But God turned away from them and gave them over to the worship of the sun, moon and stars. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets: “ ‘Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel? 43 You have taken up the tabernacle of Molek and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile’ beyond Babylon.

44 “Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. 45 After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, 46 who enjoyed God’s favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who built a house for him.

48 “However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

49 “ ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? 50 Has not my hand made all these things?’

51 “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

Acts 10:34–43

34 Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. 36 You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

39 “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Acts 13:16–41

16 Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! 17 The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; 18 for about forty years he endured their conduct in the wilderness; 19 and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. 20 All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. 21 Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. 22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’

23 “From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. 24 Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. 25 As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

26 “Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. 27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. 28 Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead, 31 and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. 32 We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors 33 he

has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “ ‘You are my son; today I have become your father.’

34 “God raised him from the dead so that he will never be subject to decay. As God has said, “ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ 35 So it is also stated elsewhere: “ ‘You will not let your holy one see decay.’

36 “Now when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. 37 But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

38 “Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses. 40 Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: 41 ‘Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.’”

Acts 14:15–18

15 “Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. 16 In the past, he let all nations go their own way. 17 Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”

Acts 17:22–31

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

29 “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Acts 20:17–35

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

22 “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

25 “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

32 “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Acts 22:1–21

1 “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” 2 When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said:

3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. 4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, 5 as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

6 “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.

7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

8 “ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. “ ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. 9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

10 “ ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. “ ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ 11 My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

12 “A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. 13 He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him. 14 Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

17 “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’

19 “ ‘Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. 20 And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’

21 “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

Acts 26:1–29

1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense:

2 “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 “The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. 6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. 7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

9 “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

12 “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

15 “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. 16 ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

19 “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. 21 That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. 22 But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—23 that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” 29 Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

“I AM GOING TO PROCLAIM TO YOU”: LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR “FOR-YOU” PREACHING

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