

The Trellis and the Vine
Pastor Chris Brauns, Acts 6:1-7, 11/22/20

“The basic work of any Christian ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God’s Spirit, and to see people converted, changed and grow to maturity in that gospel. That’s the work of planting, watering, fertilizing and tending the vine.” *The Trellis and the Vine*¹

“However, just as some sort of framework is needed to help a vine grow, so Christian ministries also need some structure and support. It may not be much, but at the very least we need somewhere to meet, some Bibles to read from, and some basic structures of leadership within our group. All Christian churches, fellowships or ministries have some kind of trellis that gives shape and support to the work. As the ministry grows, the trellis also needs attention. Management, finances, infrastructure, organization, governance – these all become more important more complex as the vine grows. In this sense, good trellis works are invaluable, and all growing ministries need them.” *The Trellis and the Vine*²

“The devil’s next attack was the cleverest of the three. Having failed to overcome the church by either **persecution** or **corruption**, he now tried **distraction**. If he could preoccupy the apostles with social administration, which though essential was not their calling, they would neglect their God-given responsibilities to pray and to preach, and so leave the church without any defence against false doctrine.” John R.W. Stott, emphasis added³

²⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ²⁷ “How long shall this wicked congregation **grumble** against me? I have heard the **grumbings** of the people of Israel, which they **grumble** against me. ²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: ²⁹ your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, who have **grumbled** against me, ³⁰ not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. ³¹ But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. ³² But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. ³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’ ³⁵ I, the Lord, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.” Numbers 14:26-35, emphasis added

¹⁰ nor **grumble**, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:10-13

¹ Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 8.

² Marshall and Payne, 8.

³ Stott, *The Spirit, The Church, and the World*, 120.

Gospel Progress in Acts
Pastor Chris Brauns

The thesis of Acts could be stated in this way: *Christ is building His Church through the Spirit empowered proclamation of the Word amid, and even through, the many conflicts of a fallen world."*

Acts begins with Jesus' charge to the disciples that after the Spirit has been poured out at Pentecost, they are to go into all the world and make disciples (Acts 1:6-8). The book of Acts, then, tracks the disciples' obedience to that mandate and the productivity of the Spirit empowered Word.

Table. Summary of Gospel Progress Despite Conflict in Acts with Emphasis on Summary Statements

Location	Called Leaders, Conflict, and Risk	Summary Verses
Jerusalem	In Acts 4, conflict begins. By Acts 5:17 ff. Peter arrested by the Sadducees. Christ-followers face tremendous opposition yet the disciples persist in proclaiming Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42).	<i>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)</i>
Samaria	By chapter 8 of Acts the Gospel has already spread to Samaria and Chapter 9 begins with Saul breathing out murderous threats. What happens? Saul is dramatically converted.	<i>So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied (Acts 9:31).</i>
Palestine - Syria	Chapter 12 records that Herod lays violent hands on Christians. James is murdered. Peter is arrested. Then Peter is dramatically released from prison and chapter 12 concludes.	<i>But the word of God increased and multiplied. (Acts 12:24).</i>
Antioch, then Cyprus, then Asia Minor, back to Antioch and then Jerusalem	Paul is stoned at Lystra (chapter 14); a major theological debate about circumcision erupts in chapter 15. John Mark deserts. Paul and Barnabas, the first missionaries, disagree so sharply that they part company. Yet, in spite of the conflict, we have chapter 16 summary statement and the beginning of the church at Philippi.	<i>So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. (Acts 16:5).</i>
From Athens to Corinth	Paul partners with Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth and battles to share the gospel amid much opposition.	<i>And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them (Acts 18:10).</i>
Wide outreach & missionary journeys	Paul encounters a man with an evil spirit in Ephesus – Ephesus is terribly difficult (1 Cor 16:9), yet God does a great work in converting those who had practiced magic arts so that by the time we get to 19:20 we read this summary statement.	<i>So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily (Acts 19:20).</i>
From Jerusalem to Rome!	God shows Paul that through the vehicle of the Jewish opposition, he will appeal his case to Rome and travel there (Acts 19:21-22).	<i>He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance (Acts 28:30-31).</i>