

PP Acts: To the End of the Earth

Part 11-Acts 5:17-42 *The Externally-Focused Church*

1/16-17/2020

As you open your bibles to **Acts 5**, let's recall that twice now, Luke has given us a glimpse of what it would have been like if we had been part of the early church

They had all things in common, strong in unity, generous, spirit-filled, bible and Christ-centered But the strengths of the early church weren't just internally focused

The church was meant to live with an external focus as well, and today we will see their impact in the community as the good news of Jesus Christ begins to go to the end of the earth

Remember that in the first part of Acts 5 we saw that God is deadly serious about holiness in His People, ending the lives of a hypocritical couple who had conspired with Satan

Hypocrisy can spread and corrupt an entire church so God rooted it out, and ***'great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard'*** 5:11

Today we are going to see the power of a pure church as it witnesses of Jesus in their community

PP 1-They were a public church

"Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico." Acts 5:12

Do you wear your faith on your sleeves?

You have likely heard the phrase *'He wears his heart on his sleeve'*, believed to have come from medieval knights who would joust with the scarf of their ladies tied around the part of armor that protected their arm called the sleeve

It was a public symbol of their love, not one tucked under their breastplate

The church was and is to be public about their faith as well as they gathered along the eastern side of the great Temple in Jerusalem, about 5 football fields large

The section they would meet in was called Solomon's Portico, or Solomon's porch, a large section with a roof, supported by rows of massive pillars

Experts say that the church at this time had grown to be over 10,000 people, ***'And they were all together'*** in that place, listening to the Apostles teaching, even Gentiles allowed to hear

Anyone could listen to their teaching for it served as a public square in the temple

But that wasn't the only thing the Apostles were doing...they were doing ***'many signs and wonders'***

Luke will explain what some of those were but let's learn something about them

PP ***'Signs'*** were miracles that pointed to something greater than itself, while ***'Wonders'*** were unusual events that brought about amazement

We are told that the ones performing these signs and wonders were the ***'Apostles'***, a title for the men that Jesus trained and sent to carry out His mission

These men were performing these signs and wonders ***'regularly...among the people'***

The church, led by the Apostles, were out in public, preaching, learning, helping, serving

What a great reminder for us today to get out from behind our walls, into our community, serving

those in need and witnessing to them of Jesus Christ

But not out in the public as an organization only, personally, each one of us

Friends, your public mission field is the hospital where you work, the school where you teach or

attend, the sports teams you play on, the neighborhoods you live in
 The good news of Jesus is meant to go public through each and every Christ-follower
 Do not wait for the rare occasion that an unsaved person comes to you to hear the gospel
 We are to go out, and go to, to ***‘Go and make disciples of all nations’*** as Jesus said
 Look what happens when the church goes public with the good news of Jesus Christ
“None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,” 5:13-14

PP 2-They were an evangelistic church

It seems in these two verses that Luke contradicts himself...people didn't dare join the church,
 but the church was growing...
 The people of Jerusalem respected the church, but didn't really want anything to do with them
 Maybe they heard of the divine punishment of the Ananias and Sapphira, or perhaps they could
 sense the growing anger of the Jewish rulers
 Whatever it was, no one joined this church carelessly, they were afraid to
 Pretenders were not welcome, and it was dangerous to flippantly join the church
 They had a respect for these believers but only those called by God dared join them
 And He was calling many to get saved, and ***‘more than ever believers were added to the Lord’***
 Luke doesn't care to brag about how many people were attended the services
 The early church wasn't trying to make the list of the top 10 growing churches
 They were single-minded...it isn't about numbers in the pew, it is about numbers in the Lamb's
 book of life
 Multitudes were getting saved, men and women
 The early church was evangelistic, meaning they declared the good news that Jesus Christ had
 risen from the dead and will save all who submit to Him in faith
 This is our desire at Cornerstone, that God will bless us with growth, not to fill our pews with
 unhappy Christians from other churches, but with new Christians from our communities
 For that to happen, we must go public and tell people the good news of salvation in Christ alone

PP 3-They were a miraculous church

The early church had no formula, no clear strategy, no large building, no worship teams, no
 no Christian podcasts and not even a Christian T-Shirts among them, yet they grew
 It would get organized, but by this point, it wasn't and it proves once again that while worldly
 strategies can fill a church's pews, only the Spirit can add people ***‘to the Lord’***
 It was a miraculous work of God and we see the effects of it as people ***“carried out the sick into
 the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow
 might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around
 Jerusalem, bringing the sick...” 5:15-16***
 Friends, signs and wonders confirmed the messenger, confirmed the message and confirmed that
 the kingdom of God has come
 The final verse in Mark's gospel tells us that the disciples ***PP “went out and preached
 everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by
 accompanying signs.” Mark 16:20***
 The Holy Spirit did not save through signs and wonders, He used signs and wonders to open the

hearts of people to the truth of the gospel in order to give them salvation
 So the early church prayed for God to help them ***“continue to speak Your word with all boldness, while You stretch out Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”*** 4:29-30

Look once again at verse 16, as people from all around Jerusalem brought ***“those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.”*** 5:16

The Jewish people believed there were 7,500,000 demons working destruction in the world
 Jesus Himself said, ***PP “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”*** Luke 11:20

He also ***PP “called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.”*** Matthew 10:1

In July 2019, The Chaplain of the House of Representatives, Father Patrick Conroy, commented of the sharp division between democrat and republican, *“This has been a difficult and contentious week in which darker spirits seem to have been at play in the people’s house, in your most Holy Name, I now cast out all spirits of darkness in this chamber — spirits not from you,”*

Like Father Conroy, I believe what is going on in our country right now is, at its root, demonic
 Yet the power of these spiritual enemies is as nothing before the sovereign might of our God

Let me caution you however

Signs and wonders can, and will be imitated by Satan: ***PP “The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders”*** 2 Thessalonians 2:9

Jesus warned us, ***PP “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”*** Matthew 24:24

Discern carefully and see if these signs and wonders open eyes and ears to the gospel of Jesus Christ and result in many people added to the Lord

Friends, what a time for the Spirit-filled church to rise up in power and authority

I told you last week that when God begins a new work in His people, His response to sin in His people is severe and heightened

In the same way, it seems to me that in His new works, the display of His power and authority through His people is unusually heightened

The result is always a great number of people are added to the Lord, and all of the sick are healed and demonized are freed

Should we expect Acts 5:12-16 to be normative for the church today, in America,? No

Should we ask God for fresh power of the Spirit so the unsaved would believe the gospel? Yes

Let us be a public church, out in our community, together and individually, serving people

Let us be an evangelistic church, sharing the good news that salvation is available through Jesus

Let us be a miraculous church, asking God for fresh power that will open eyes and ears to the gospel, confirming the messenger, the message, and the kingdom of God

Amen?

Pray