

Acts, Sermon #12

Acts 5

The over arching theme of the Book of Acts is the extension of Jesus Christ through the church – from local to regional to international.

So far in the Book of Acts the extension of the gospel has only gone to Jerusalem. That holds true to the end of chapter 7.

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

Acts 5:11-16

Let us pray

You may be seated

I have entitled tonight's message "**The Power of Purity**"

The Bible – Vs. 12 -- tells us that the church had gathered again on the temple grounds in a place called Solomon's Porch.

- Solomon's Porch was the very place of their 1st persecution, 3:11.
- This is where Peter and John were arrested for preaching and yet they gather there again at the same site to continue the ministry.

The Bible says in Vs. 12 that the church was unified -- They were all with one heart, out in the open, public, doing the work of the Lord.

Vs. 13 –Who are these people who dare not associate themselves? Who avoided the believers? – Jewish unbelievers.

- As unbelievers they admired and respected the Christians (vs. 13), however, they did not dare to become affiliated with the church because they had learned to fear what could happen to halfhearted, insincere, disingenuous faith as evidenced in Ananias and Sapphira.

When God dealt with that hypocrisy – people were very slow and cautious to jump on the bandwagon of Christianity. Great fear came on the church, vs.11, and the lost people, vs. 13 and they counted the cost of Christianity.

Churches today are filled with sinning saints and sin is allowed as a welcome guest or at least tolerated among the ranks. The church cannot be a powerful church apart from being a pure church and a unified church.

While some people stayed away, others came.

Vs. 14 says that multitudes were added to the Lord, those who were being saved.

- The Lord was annexing more into His kingdom. Satan's family was decreasing and God's family was increasing.
- Continued conversions in Jerusalem characterized these days.

Many people today are added to the church but are not added to the Lord; in other words, the church has a crowd but no Christians.

- Being on a church roll or membership in a church does not equal being added to the Lord.
- Being added to the Lord only takes place when an individual comes to Christ for salvation from his/her sins.

Vs. 14 – is what Jesus predicted in Matthew 16:18 when He said, “I will build my church.”

The Lord builds the church.

God is doing the work. One plants and one sows, but who gives the increase? – God does.

- Yet often times we want to help the increase of the church.
- This is where many churches get off track in helping the church increase and using means of human effort and marketing practices to do it.
- Numerical church growth is a by-product of people getting saved. We should never focus on numerical growth but we should always focus on getting souls to Christ.

No doubt, there is a matter of human responsibility and we need to work hard. We must do our part. No one will be saved if no one gives the Gospel.

Some will say, “Whoever the Lord wants saved will get saved.” That just isn’t so. How will they hear without a preacher? (Proclaimer – Romans 10:14). You and I both know that the Lord wants everyone saved, does that mean everyone is saved?

So in the midst of our human responsibility is the fact that God is doing the work, the adding.

The Bible says – Vs. 14 -- that multitudes of people, bundles of people, throngs of people became believers.

Many ask why we don't see that today in America. See it in China, India . . .

Let me give you at least one reason – Acts 17:32 – The Apostle Paul wrapped up his sermon but only a few believed. Peter had thousands saved after his sermons, but Paul, only handfuls.

What was different? – The people were.

- **Peter** preached to Jews – they already knew God, sin, death, blood sacrifice; they had biblical foundations in their society.
- But **Paul** preached to the Greeks – they had no foundations. They didn't even know who God was. They had many gods and just in case they missed one, they had an altar to the Unknown God.
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In America in 2009, are we more like the Jews or more like the Greeks? We need to understand the times we live in. The U. S. A. is less Christian than before.

The Bible says, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

True Christianity is being lost in the American culture. The Word of God has been undermined and compromised. America's foundation has been changed out. For example – instead of Creation – Evolution has replaced it.

- The ground that used to be easy/fertile in America years ago, is now full of thorns and thistles and rocks. The North East in America is almost totally gone. Evangelizing America today is quite different from evangelizing America 100 years ago.
- This helps us to more fully understand I Corinthians 1:23 “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

Early in the Book of Acts, multitudes were coming to Christ.

So when we analyze the early churches growth, we see three things:

1. The church grew rapidly – Acts 2:47 (daily); Acts 4:4 (thousands). Believers were actively evangelizing – the church was witnessing.

2. The church saw real growth. What I am saying is, today some of the church's growth is not real. People may be in the church but many are not saved and most are not living for Christ at home. It was not easy to be a Christian. The price was high, the demands were extreme; and they called for total commitment.

These multitudes of new believers were not the product of a mere membership drive, easy believism, entertainment, marketing ploys; no half-baked Christians.

3. The church had regular growth – we are never to stop growing – 120, hundreds and then thousands – the church should never stop reaching out. These believers were totally committed to reaching their world for Christ.

God had cut out the religious hypocrisy in Acts 5:1-11, and the church was pure again and evangelism was ready to flourish.

Acts 5 is a mandate for purity of heart and purity of soul in God's Church.

The church was with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

- God disciplined that couple and now the church is pure again.

Today, God has placed that discipline in the hands of the spiritual leaders of the church.

The church must examine sin within itself because purity is basic to evangelism and spiritual growth.

Our Lord has given us a clear directive for effectively dealing with sin in others.

Matthew 18:15 – I am dumbfounded by the lack of response and the excuses given by God's people and God's leaders regarding this. So instead of fixing the problem between two individuals, all kinds of gossip and sin grow from this, and usually the problem is never resolved.

If he refuses, doesn't have the right spirit – then you are to go back to him. If he still refuses – tell it to the church and if he will not listen, he then is put outside the fellowship.

The church must practice Biblical methods—for the sake of purity and singleness of heart—or we will come to a stand still, stagnate, and stinky because sin is allowed to linger and grow.

The power of the church is in the purity of the church and the single focus of missions. It is evident in vs. 15-16 and this is the direct answer to prayer, 4:29-30.

The news of the apostles miracles spread to many cities around Jerusalem. The end result was a record of performance that should cause distrust of modern day healing campaigns. “They were healed, everyone.”

These healings and miracles are taking place through the Apostles – Vs. 12.

- Some were healed by Paul's handkerchief – Acts 19:12
- Some are healed by Peter's shadow – (we did not even see that when Jesus was in town. Remember Jesus said, “greater things”)

John 1:50, “Jesus answered, and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.”

Have we seen anything like it? Or even heard of anything like this? NO – Why? because there has never been anything like this in the history of the church.

This is why this period of time is called the Apostolic Age.

Verse 12 says, “signs and wonders.” II Cor. 12:12 tells us these were to confirm the apostles and their message.

This helps us to understand **Ephesians 2:19-21**, “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners [sojourners], but fellow citizens with the saints, and of

the household of God' And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner stone, In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

These tremendous demonstrations of signs and wonders were once again used to show the authenticity of God's apostles and the validation of their message.

Let us stand for closing invitation – Every eye closed.

Examine ourselves

- Are we pure before the Lord today? Are we holy?
- Are we right with the brothers and sister in Christ?
- Are we allowing and tolerating sin, therefore relegating our church to be weak and sickly?
- Do we handle things according to Matthew 18 or have we become a channel of gossip, purveyor of mistrust, an ear for criticism, a reservoir of poison?
- Are we witnessing – sharing our faith?
- Are we excited when someone is saved, baptized, and discipled?
- Is this what thrills our heart?
- Are we a church of one accord? Do we have a singleness of heart and purpose?
- Have we been added to the Lord?
- Have you come to Christ?
- Are you a believer?

Only believers are added to the Lord.

Believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, was buried and rose again.