

# The Power of Christianity

Grace Bible Chapel

Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 5:12-16  
September 24th, 2017

**Context:** The last time we met on Acts we saw the deaths of Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) when they lied about their giving. We concluded that God would set the standard of the importance of a pure church. What we also saw in this account is the power of God being displayed.

Our text today is on the heels of this event. God is moving to establish His church and all of these events have a significant role. Remember the words of Christ “I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). For a season of time, working through the apostles, Christ continued a similar ministry of which He had while on the earth – that is He healed & worked miracles showing that He was the Messiah (John 10:25; 37-38). In John 14:12 Christ gives His disciples last instructions and encouragement to continue the ministry. In 2 Cor. 12:12 Paul makes manifest that part of God’s plan to validate the church founding apostles was the work of miracles.

Today overt miracles are not being performed through men – the apostles have long ago gone to be with the Lord. The church was founded on supernatural indisputable events – God used these, and today we fall back on them, but we do not expect them from any man. What do we expect? The primary miracle of our day is seen in changed lives, built on the foundation of the “apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). The Word of God transforms lives – makes people well from sin by the power of God (2 Cor. 5:17). The message of this paragraph for today is *the power of the church is found in a church that is pure in its teaching and practice.*

## **Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).**

- VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)
  - F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:22)
  - G. Sovereign forming (Acts 4:23-6:7)
    - 7. Selfless by their actions (Acts 4:34-35)
    - 8. Standard of purity (Acts 4:36-5:11)
    - 9. Supernatural display (Acts 5:12-16)

### Key Words

- people (3)
- one (2)
- sick (2)
- apostles
- signs

**Pre-Introduction:** Jesus told his disciples He would build His church (Mat. 16:18). Now we are studying the history of that initial founding.

- Acts 2:46-47 – all these new believers – no structure, functioning from joy.
  - These were saved Jews – still expecting Messiah to return & rule.
  - Acts is a transition book – from theocracy – priests, temple, sacrifices, laws, ceremonies – to local assembly meeting because of a risen Savior.
  - Acts 3 miraculous healing, w/uncompromising preaching – resulting in many conversions.
  - Acts 4 – the first of persecutions; Acts 5 striking dead of A & S for hypocrisy.
  - Acts 6:1 – need for organization – first remnants of settling into a structure.
  - Acts 7 – a persecution – that drove the Jewish Christians out.
  - Acts 8-9 – the peculiar conversion of Saul of Tarsus.
  - Acts 10 – Gentiles begin to hear the Word of God – Peter’s uniting vision.
  - Acts 13 – a complete turning to Gentiles, then mission journey’s – founding of assemblies (churches). God moving in history! Immediate context purity!

**Introduction:** Last time purity w/power – these go hand & hand. Ps. 51:10-13. True spiritual power is sourced from God, & is always associated with righteousness, truth, honesty, never hypocrisy; & holiness, not sin. God saw to it that at the founding of His church, His standard of church operation in purity w/power was set – His way!

- They did not have the NT – wasn’t written – we are early in this transition..
- The purity w/power over life & death with A & S – followed by the power of healing by the same apostles affected the people & their attitude on Christianity.

**Point:** Many people try to take this account of the apostolic healings 1900 yrs later drumming up modern healers w/ distorted views of faith – they don’t try to drum up the death of A & S, but they do

healings. But, make no mistake this activity of the apostles was real, purposeful, of God – not something drummed up!

- It served to establish the continuation of Christ's earthly ministry – it jump started the new organism, the church – showing it to have the power of God.
- **Vs. 12 Signs and wonders** – “Solomon's Portico” they are meeting openly in the Temple – note also “with one accord” – they were unified in their faith in Christ.
  - God was directing moment by moment these bold exacting developments.
  - Witnessing “many signs and wonders” – miracles only God could do!
- Why did God began the church with signs & are they active today & if not why not?
- **First** - The true church is supernatural (founded on resurrection) & therefore it is appropriate its start is on indisputable supernatural events – God used these, & today we fall back on them to strengthen our faith in the same way people did then, but today we have something even better (2 Pet. 1:19) “more sure” – the Word of God that transforms lives.
  - 2ndly - John 10:25; 37-38 – Jesus worked powerful, glorious miracles for the purpose of validating Himself as Messiah – (2 Cor. 12:11) it was therefore necessary for the apostles to show their unique authority under Christ through the same kind of miracles administered by Christ.
  - What do we expect today? The primary miracle of our day is seen in changed lives, built on the foundation of the “apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (Eph. 2:20).
  - The Word of God transforms lives – makes people well from sin by the power of God (2 Cor. 5:17). That was the goal then & it continues to this day!

**Point:** This issue of healing thru modern day apostles using gimmicks has polluted the Christian name & made suckers of a lot of people – for this reason lets take a little time from this passage to reinforce our understanding.

- 1 Cor. 12:8-10 Starter gifts for the church are listed. These gifts are different than other lists later given as the church matures (Rms 12:7-8; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Eph 4:11-13) – the consistent issue is – 1 Cor 12:7 “for the common good” of that time.
  - In the earliest church development – apostles were present. As someone said “*the church was not miracle working – but with miracle working apostles.*”
    - And there is no apostolic succession – how do I know? (1 Cor. 9:1 “seen Christ; “2 Cor. 12:11) – no credentials today!
  - But, every true child of God is gifted with something, has a purpose in the church (local assembly) – God in sovereignty equipping – working – didn't stop with the early church – true today – this assembly – all have a purpose.
  - “for the common good” – Eph 4:13 purpose “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” – sanctification – growth! In Col 1:18 “that He Himself might come to have first place in everything.”
    - Our mission statement: “*to glorify God by knowing, proclaiming, and applying the gospel of Jesus Christ.*” – we are a part of this glorious work.

**Point:** to bridge the gap, organize, jump start Christ's precious church – God gave supernatural gifts for a time to the earliest church. We continue the same work in a more seasoned state – and, there is more to understand from this brief narrative.

- **Significant fear** (Vs. 5:13)
- **Vs. 13** – “none of the rest dared to associate with them” – the “rest” (in the context) are onlookers who wanted no part of the message of Christ, & would otherwise be outwardly displaying their disdain, but because of what was known in the death of A & S they fear to say a word but keep their distance.

- Do you see how God worked here? God brought a fear of sin, & hypocrisy so that it kept out those not really serious about following Christ.

**Point:** Many churches today purposely do not make sin an issue so as to attract people with no true conviction or seriousness concerning God – fosters superficiality.

**Point:** There was a time in our nation, surely it was so when I was a boy, that society had a type of fear / reverence for things related to God & His church - sacred.

- Churches were sacred, preachers & missionaries were considered honorable occupations. There was a sense of fear associated with speaking & acting against those who had a title or testimony of walking with God – not so today!

**Point:** It is not that the person is anything, but the God behind the person is no longer revered. Rom. 3:18 speaking of the height of depravity - “no fear of God.” Such is our society—why? Because the power & fear of God has been neutered in the church!

- What is the power of the church today? Programs, entertainment, comfort –not the Gospel – doesn’t Paul say that: “I am not ashamed...power” (Rom. 1:16). It is Hebrews 4:12 – “the Word of God” which has largely been rejected, watered down, twisted, conformed to fit our PC society – it has been neutered in modern Christianity – no wonder appropriate fear has all but disappeared.
- It is always been true that for Christianity to prosper – a right fear of God must be present “the fear of the Lord...” There can be no conversion, no repenting without the highest appreciation for God that comes thru appropriate fear.
- Notice “however, the people held them in high esteem” – this tells us there is more than one type of fear. The first group fears but hates – they are restrained by a type of fear (personal harm) that does not give them appreciation or attachment.
  - But - “the people” – associated with those in Vs. 14 (“added to their number”) had a different kind of fear – it was a fear leading to “high esteem.” They didn’t despise them, but wanted to be like them! They were attracted to them!
  - Is. 66:2; “to this one..humble, contrite of spirit, trembles at My Word.”
- **Spontaneous growth** (5:14)
- **Vs. 14** – Based on this appropriate fear, the true preaching of the Gospel, & the work of the Holy Spirit – “And all the more believers...added to their number.”
  - Now – does this mean that all the most attended churches have these things going for them? No, unfortunately, those who market Christianity, know how to tickle man’s self-centeredness, make sweet words to draw large crowds (2 Tim. 4:1-3 “context of last times”) What is the command “preach the Word!”
  - Massive crowds is not the goal – a true inward work of devotion to God & His Word is the goal. What is needed is implied here by the contrast from Vs. 13 of those “who dared to associate “ with those “believers in the Lord” (Vs. 14).

**Point:** When God works in people by His HS – the elements seen here will always be present – the Word accurately proclaimed, God honored & feared, the production of faith – a faith not influenced by what the PC people are doing, or what anyone else is doing – but a devotion to God regardless of opposition or outside influence!

- We are to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, not strong in humanism & the power of manipulating man’s efforts!

**Point:** We must never size things in our own minds & say – *well teaching God’s Word is not working any more, we need a new plan* – no! That is never an option, regardless – why? any so-called success not built on God’s power/Word is worthless.

**Point:** If the church is filled with uncommitted, unsaved people that are meeting for the wrong reasons – what good is it?

- **Supernatural basis** (5:15-16)

- **Vs. 15** – “to such an extent...them” – this is again the continuation & validation of the extended work of Christ (Luke 6:19) “power was coming from Him.” Again this was a supernatural startup means God used thru Christ & His apostles.
  - The “they” is a reference to those back in Vs. 14 who had come to faith.
  - God is the source of the power – all power! Christ states in John 15 “without Me you can do nothing” – what is missing in churches is the power of God actively working. Sadly so much is done lifelessly & therefore valueless.
  - I hope you see the correlation with today – not by the lack of miracles, but by powerless, lifeless, man-centered little messages coming out of pulpits – they are unfitting the powerful glorious God of the Bible.
- **Vs. 16** – Now this going on – the power of God, & changed lives had a huge impact. It could not be ignored. So what happens? The word spreads & the people are coming from all around.
  - What are they doing – bringing the sick to come to Christ thru these apostles.

**Point:** We can say, well back then they had the healing we don’t have today – that is true, but the real power was in the message . That message has not changed.

**Point:** As a child I remember the Billy Graham crusades – those were powerful, & had a tremendous impact – thousands came, & God was truly working. History records great awakenings – in the mid 1700’s God used Whitfield, Samuel Davies, Daniel Marshal, Jonathon Edwards, David Brainard, etc.- just in our country!

**Closing:**

- Quote by G Campbell Morgan (bulletin) – *“The church pure is the church powerful but if the church by her complicity with the world dams the flow of the river (the Spirit of God), she loses her power, because she loses her purity.”* Not enough happening – change plan.
- God must build - chose Gideon to lead an army to defeat – 32K (Midianites) w/300 – issue is doing things God’s way – relying on His power, honoring His Word.