

**The Early Church Pattern for Evangelism, Part 1**

Scripture: Acts 5:12-16

Code: 1717

1972

Let's bow in prayer as we come to our study. Father, thank you for this time that awaits us, as we look in the Book. Oh, how we re-joyce in just the privilege of the study of Your precious Word. God, enrich our hearts and thrill us as we learn. May we bring ourselves to the Word of God with pure hearts, to be taught by Thee, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

Continuing in our series this morning in the Book of Acts, we come to chapter 5, and we are going to really consider verses 12 through 42 as one unit. However we'll not be able to cover all of those verses in one message, so we'll break it down and just see how the Lord directs. But we've entitled this particular portion, "The Early Church Pattern For Evangelism," and it's exciting to me I think, to be at this place, because for about a year, we have been emphasizing, well maybe more than that, a year and a half maybe but, we have been emphasizing the unity and the fellowship of believers. And I think this by the Spirit of God's design. And now I think we've come to the place where we have grown as a congregation, where God has blessed and enriched us, where we understand basic principles of fellowship and unity, and now the Spirit of God has brought us to this whole area of evangelism. Now that we have begun to see who we are, and begun to orient ourselves around our position in Christ, and begun to see ourselves functioning as the body of Christ is supposed to function, it's now time for us to reach the world. And I'm praying God, that what we're doing here in the Book of Acts may be kind of the stepping stone or the initial thrust, phase one of a real blast off in evangelism for our church. And as we come this morning to the fifth chapter of Acts, we begin to discover some principles in the early church's pattern of evangelism, now we've already seen some, but we're going to try to put it together a little more directly in regard to the subject of evangelism, as we go from verse 12 to 42. Now we do know that from past study, the church has grown very rapidly. In 2:41 for example it says, there were added 3,000 souls, in Acts 2:47 it says, the Lord added to their number daily such as should be saved. In Acts 4:4 it says, the number of men came to be about 5,000, and in addition to the men would be the women and children. In chapter 5 verse 14 it says, and more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women. In chapter 6 verse 7 it says, the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. Chapter 8 verse 6, multitudes gave heed to what was said, and Philip there was speaking. Chapter 9 verse 31 it says, so the church throughout Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied. In chapter 11 verses 21 and 24 it says, a great number that believed turned to the Lord. A large company was added to the Lord. So the

church is growing at a fantastic rate, in a matter of days and weeks it's in the multiplied thousands. And so it went, and all of this because of a fantastic kind of vital evangelism. It was the church reaching the world. And it wasn't easy being a Christian either, it wasn't just a jump on the bandwagon thing, the price was tremendously high, and the demands were extreme and commitment was essential on a total basis. But many people were counting the cost and believing and coming to Christ, even at a high price. It's interesting that modern churches today are often accused of over-emphasizing statistical growth, and I think that's a valid criticism, if in fact they are satisfied with statistics, or if they are in the statistical game, where all they care about is more numbers on the record book. And they're not really committed to true believers and they're not really committed to making disciples, but on the other hand, there's nothing wrong with great growth if it's great growth due to result of evangelism. Then it's real. The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts never apologized for the growth of the church, because it was real growth. Those people wanted to win others to Jesus Christ and they did it, in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the victories that they won and the lives of those they won were for God's glory. And thus they are magnified here, for anything that gives God glory is magnified. When Paul and Barnabas, you'll remember later went out they reported the conversion of the Gentiles and the Bible says, it gave great joy to the brethren. There's something exciting and there's something thrilling about being involved in what God is doing in reproducing, bringing people into the experience of the new birth and thus to the church. And there are some people who would suggest to us today that when your church reaches 600 you should stop reaching out, or when it reaches 1,400 or when it reaches 2,000 you should stop. The early church had 3,000 the very first day and they'd only just begun. The early church didn't stop, and I don't believe we can either. You see, it would be the ultimate tragedy of tragedies to be satisfied with our growth. The Christian who becomes satisfied with a status quo is in great serious danger. Evangelism is always our mission, doesn't matter how many there are, there need to be more. Legitimately so, those who really know Christ. We cannot be content, and I think there's a built in danger here, in our church, we cannot be content just to come and sit and feast on the Word of God and get kind of, ah, excited about the truths we're learning and we look around, and we say, man, there's so many people there already and so-forth and so-on and I'm just kinda goin' sit and wallow a little bit in all this, this rich food that we're getting out of the Word of God, that's a very dangerous thing. All that you're learning is only to make you more effective in winning others. Evangelism is our mission, and I pray that through our study here in the Book of Acts, God may rekindle in us, the fire of evangelism.

Now so far in our study, by way of review, we have learned that our Lord in chapter one equipped to the church as it still remained in the womb of God's promise. He gave all the necessary ingredients by promise to the church. Then in chapter 2 we saw the infant church born, and it had all the parts that God had promised it would have, it was a beautifully formed body, and in every way it was one. And immediately as that baby was born it began to grow, and it was nurtured on the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and prayer and the breaking of bread. And naturally as it began to grow, opposition came and its infant muscles were tested, but having been tested it came out stronger and when it was persecuted it was blessed and grew faster. And we saw this all the way through chapter 4, it's task

was simple, keep growing, keep growing, keep growing, reach the world, and they were really totally committed to that very thing, of reaching the world. In chapter 4 verse 29 it gives us a little hint, they prayed and they said, "Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." They're opposing us, they're threat-ening us, give us more boldness. "And stretch forth your hand to heal; that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child, Jesus. And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." And so they were committed to evangelism, to growth, and you notice it says in verse 31, they all spoke, they all spoke. Carlisle from England said, "I have tackled the biggest job I ever tackled in my life, I am trying to open the mouths of the people in the pews." That's a job sometimes. Not there, they all spoke, because they were all filled with the Spirit and it was a natural response to that. But not only were they committed to that, they were committed to each other. Verses 32 to 37 as we studied a couple of weeks ago says, that there was a unity there. A collective kind of oneness, so that their, watch this, so that their evangelism was based on the two things that evangelism must be based on. It was based on individuals speaking the Word and it was based on a collective unity that Jesus talked about in John 17 when He said, if they are one, the world will know that you sent me. Or in John 13 when He said, if they love each other the world will know they're My disciples. So real evangelism is based on individuals communicating, and on collective unity, as a testimony to the world, the unity of love, and they had it. And evangelism was a natural. It was just a natural thing that sprung out of those two things. Personal communication and total collective unity.

But it was just at that point that Satan struck, and tragedy hit, and that we saw as we opened chapter 5 and the great sin that threaten-ed to be a blight on the church, the sin of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit, in an effort to gain religious prestige and to be thought of as spiritual. They did things that were extremely carnal, and God had to discipline them in the face of the whole church, and He did it by just executing them right there, they dropped dead on the spot. And God pointed out the severity of sin, in the fellowship of the church. God did the disciplining there, because they needed to learn a graphic lesson. And so the cancer that had swept into the church so briefly was immediately operated on by God and put out. And by the time you come to verse 12 the church is pure again. And now that the church is pure evangelism really begins to move.

Now as we look at our message, let's figure on seeing five progressive features that are the key to effective evangelism. Five keys to effective evangelism, that we see in this text, and they are not necessarily universals although some of them are, all of them are not, in this order anyway. But the first key was purity. Now we get a little bit of this idea going back to chapter 5 verses 1 to 11, that before the church could really make an impression on the world, it had to be pure, and so God moved right in and just cut the cancer right out. As Murray McShane said, "It is not great minds or great plans or great ideas that God uses. It is great likeness to Jesus Christ." A holy instrument is a powerful weapon in the hand of God, you see. God really only works in a positive way through holy instruments. And the church that is to reach the world must be pure. It must be a church that deals

with sin. A church that is pure in the world fits the first qualification for effective evangelism. Now God did the purifying in the case of chapter 5 there, and I think God still does some purifying in the church. We read in the Book of Hebrews that everyone whom He loves He chastens. He scourges every son. So God is still doing some chastening, and it may just be that God is still killing some Christians too.

If we read correctly First Corinthians 11, we know that in Corinth God had to execute some of them there, by a divine means because they had abused the Lord's table. If we read carefully at the end of the book of First John, we find that there were certain ones who had committed apparently a sin unto death. If we read in James, we also find that if a Christian lingers around and languishes in carnality he may lose his life. And so God's maybe still doing some of that. But basically today the discipline of the church is committed to the church. And we who are Christ's undershepherds and you believers are responsible for the discipline in the church that keeps it pure. Not only the discipline of your own life but the discipline of others around you. We are to be on the lookout for sin in the church. First of all examining our own hearts. In Ephesians 5:11 the scripture says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but, rather reprove them." In First Timothy 5:20 the Bible says, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." In First Timothy 1:20 he gives an illustration of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who were turned over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. In Titus 1:13 the text says, "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." In Luke 17 and verse 3 the Bible says, "If a brother trespass against thee, rebuke him." The church must be careful to examine sin within itself, because purity is basic to evangelism. In First Corinthians chapter five, for sake of illustration, it says in verse 1, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication (or sexual sin) among you, and such sexual sin as is not so much as named among the heathen, (and this is in the church) that one should have his father's wife. (relationships with his mother or stepmother) And you are puffed up, ( in other words you're bragging about such sick kind of perversion) and you haven't mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. (you tolerate this stuff in your midsts) For I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed. (I know what's goin' on) In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan (get rid of him, put him out) for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Don't ya know that a little leaven, does what? Leaven's the whole lump. Get it out, the church must deal with sin. And in Matthew chapter 18, we even have a very clear process, by which we are to deal with it. In Matthew 18:15 we read this, "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; (it's amazing how many people won't actually go to the person who really has the problem, but they'll circumvent it and thus create a circle of talk and gossip. And so they must go to the person himself, that's Biblical if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (that's good, isn't it? The second thing,) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. (you're not done with him if he doesn't hear you, you don't just say, well I tried to straighten so and so out but they wouldn't listen, you take two or three and you go back and you do it again) if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but

if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as the heathen and a tax collector." Put him out. Doesn't mean he loses his salvation, it means he needs to be put outside the fellowship because he will harm it by the sin that he's bringing into it. Now don't worry about his soul, God will take care of that. You're turning him over to God's discipline. This is a responsibility that we have folks, and I'll tell ya one thing, if there is a sin that I have committed against a brother, when he comes to me the first time, I'm goin' be sure to admit it. Because I don't want to get to step two, let alone step three. When he has the opportunity to announce to the church what my problem is. You say, well boy, that's you know, foolin' around with some sticky issues. Well the early church didn't sidestep a sticky issue. They knew they must preserve their unity, and that at stake was not the feelings of some sinning brother, but at stake was the communication of the gospel to the world from a pure church, you see? It's a question of your priorities.

Now God had to be the first teacher in this disciplinary action and show how critical purity was, and I think they well learned the lesson. Old Doctor Ironsides used to say, "If God was still working the same way in the church there would be an awful lot of work for the undertakers." And he's right. But the iniquity that appeared in chapter 5, in Ananias and Sapphira's life was a gash in the lovely body of the baby church. It was a splash of filth on the white raiment of God's chosen. It was a tear in the seamless robe of the unity of the saints, and God dealt with it, and we must deal with it. Purity is basic to evangelism. In First Peter 4:17 Peter says this, judgement must begin, where? at the house of God. It must begin there.

But there's another great thought under the same idea of purity that comes right in our text. And now we'll get to the real text in verse 12, that's going to be our text for this message, or part of it.

Now I want you to notice that if you read from 12 through 14 you will notice that there's a parenthesis that begins about two thirds of the way through verse 12 and extends to the end of verse 14. Now that is a parenthesis, actually you can read, ah, verse 12 and jump to 15 and maintain the same ah, sentence. And so let's just pull that parenthesis out and then we'll go back and pick up the first part of the verse but let's pull the parenthesis out because it deals with purity. The middle of verse 12 or toward the end says this, "And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Now here's the church, all of a sudden the sin has been rooted out and they are all with what? One accord again. This is the idea, they're back to being a pure church. Doesn't mean they're sinlessly perfect, it means that they're confessing and dealing with sin, in their lives and they're being honest before God and pure before God, and not living in deceit as were Ananias and Sapphira. And so here they are, one again, and now we can say man, something's goin' happen, because when the church is one something' happens, true When you get the impurity out and the church is pure and it is one and they're together in one accord, look oat world, something's about to explode, and it does. They're in Solomon's porch, apparently since Peter and John had first ah, visited Solomon's porch with the man whom they had healed at the gate called, "Beautiful", and preached that wonderful sermon there, Peter preaching it, ah, that had become kind of a popular spot for them to assemble, and so up on

Solomon's portico, one of the elevated sides of the great court of the temple, they had gathered again, it apparently was a customary place, and they would go there for the times of worship, and the times of prayer each day in the temple, and all of the Christians would kind of crush into this place called Solomon's portico, or at least a good portion of them. And it was a perfect spot, because at the times of prayer the masses of people would crowd into the courtyard and they would kind of have the, they would kind of be the congregation of those Christians elevated just a bit on Solomon's portico, would be in the position of catching the eye and the interest of everyone there. And in verse 13, jump down, just from 12 to 13, it says this, and watch this statement, "And the rest dared no man join himself to them." Now look at that, all those Christians up there in Solomon's porch, and nobody else went up there. Nobody dared get up there and get mingled around with those Christians. You say, well what's so strange about that? Well, just the fact that usually when something is new, and exciting and miraculous and fast growing and goin' like this deal was goin', people are just jumpin' on the bandwagon like mad. I mean witness the recent quote, unquote, Jesus revival. I mean it was a collection of everything. And as soon as Jesus became the fad, everybody piled on. And I told you about Jesus Christ light bulbs and Jesus Christ sweatshirts and Jesus Christ underwear, some store in Fresno. And all of this kind of stuff. Everybody jumped on, you know? Not there. Nobody joined, nobody dared to join himself to them. This is exciting. You say, why? Why didn't they? Go to verse 5, back-up. "Ananias, hearing these words fell down and died; and great fear came on all them that heard these things." Look at verse 10, "Then, (this is Sapphira) she fell down immediately at his feet and died." Verse 11, "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." You know why people didn't line up with that movement? That was dangerous! I mean you could drop dead in that deal. You know who they got into their movement? They got only the people who were really committed, true? You better believe it. Nobody but nobody is going to swing into that movement in a hypocritical attitude. Nobody is going to get into that deal unless they are really sold out to Jesus Christ, totally, it's too risky. I mean they can spot sin, and what happens to sinners? They drop dead. Can you imagine how the rumors flew? Boy, don't go near those guys, there are really..... that's strong stuff. You get in there and mess around and it's over. You see, the pure church that deals with sin, keeps itself pure because it keeps the tares out. Do ya get it? You see, people don't flock to join that kind of a movement. When they know that if they get in that thing and there's sin in their lives, it's going to be dealt with sometimes so strongly that they may die. People will avoid that, like they'll avoid the plague. Unless they're totally committed. So you know who was added to this church? Only the true, only the ones that God was adding. People say, is discipline in the church important? It's important my friend, it's important because it makes our evangelism pure, you see? And it protects us from the infiltration of the world. Churches today are just jammed with sinning saints, and it's all glossed over, you know? And consequently there's no price to belonging and so people just infiltrate the church like crazy. And there's no particular reason they shouldn't, there's nothing to fear, and it's nice to belong. One guy told me in his church, he he's said, well see, so and so over here, been here twenty years lookin' for a wife, that's all the reason he's here, he said. Well if I was in one place for twenty years lookin' for a wife and hadn't found one, I think I'd re-examine my

qualifications. But most churches you see, make no church membership commitments. They don't make 'em strong, there's no there's no real deep commitment involved, it's kind of a cheap thing. No demands, no threat, no discipline, that's wrong, that's dead wrong. And that's why the church gets infiltrated with unbelievers, and with hypocrites and with shallow commitments. And it just prevents the pur-ity that should be there and it just adds to it, it just doubles it and increases it. Now I believe that membership in the church of Jesus Christ demands a total kind of life commitment. That's the only kind God wants. You say, that's a pretty heavy responsibility. Listen I couldn't in any way if I, if I tried, put the standard as high as God wants it. Because He demands perfection, even beyond what I can exper-ience or understand. God's standard is always perfection, never any-thing less than that. And because that church, that early church app-roximated a kind of visible purity and perfection, it not only was pure itself but it was added to on a pure basis. When the church throws open its arms and anybody can come and belong and get involved that wants to, then all of a sudden you are just bringing impurity in and confusing the issue. Now I am not saying in any way that we are not welcoming those who don't know Jesus Christ, we welcome you in the love of Jesus Christ, with our arms wide open. We're glad you're here, we love you, we want you to be here, but we want you to come to Christ, and when you come to unite yourself with His church, we want it to be a total commitment. We're not trying to keep you out by this, we're trying to just tell you what it is that God demands to get you in. To His body, total commitment to Jesus Christ. So, nobody dared join that group, why? Because they dealt with sin in that group. Praise God. Look at verse 13, second part, "But the people magnified them." Isn't that interesting? The people magnified them. Verse 14, "And believers were the more added." Guess who was added to that church? Only what? Believers. The pure church will continue to be pure. Now let me say again, please. I'm not trying to lay legalism on you, I hate legalism. I'm only trying to show you the commitment that our Lord desires to keep His church pure. And it's a commitment that should spring out of love, not legalism, do you see? If you really love Him, legalism isn't even the issue. And the sad problem that today plagues Christianity is the multitude of unsaved church people and carnal saints who can both hide in the church, because the church never deals with sin. But seeks to make the price so cheap, that anybody gets in. And the excuse is always, well, we might offend. Which is like saying I certainly don't want to tell my lungs that they have cancer, they might be offended. In-stead of taking care of it. And when I talk about the responsibility of the church to discipline and be pure, I'm not talking about the church on the corner and I'm not talking about the denomination and I'm not talking about this building, and I'm not talking about me and the elders, of Grace Church, I'm talking about every Christian. You are the church, I'm not the church, we're not the church, this isn't the church, you are the church, true? Of course. So I'm saying to your believers, you and I personally have the responsibility to look at fellow believers and to maintain a purity of our lives and a purity in their lives by our example and our rebuking of sin if we see it. If you know there's something in your life that isn't right, get it right. And I'll tell ya, if the church really understood its responsibility and we were all careful to examine each other in love, I think we would be much more careful to keep ourselves pure, because we wouldn't want always to be being approached by other Christians, telling us we weren't right. It's a check system. If you know in your

own life something is wrong, make it right. If you know in the life of somebody else something is wrong go to them personally and pray with them, in love, re-buke them, and then admonish them as a brother. That we might be pure, because if we're pure, our evangelism is goin' be pure, you see?

Some of you are saying, boy MacArthur's really flipped his cookie now. I mean we're not going get anybody else in this place. I wouldn't be surprised if everybody who's here that's not a Christian would leave in a panic. No, no you say, well what that really..... well, he's gone too far, if we do that nobody will come, which really interpreted means, boy, I'm liable to get discovered. If the church strives to be pure the Lord does the adding and that keeps it pure, see? If you want real evangelism, then you start with a pure church and God does the adding. And if the price is high and commitment is what it oughta be then what you're going get is legitimacy. The Lord only wants those who forsake all and lose their life for Him. Well, as I said, our love is extended to everybody, Jesus died for everybody. But I just want people to count the cost, and I want 'em to be real, I just don't want unbelievers to slide into the church and be able to hide. And it's only because I love them that we don't want 'em to do that. We want them to be truly knowing Jesus Christ. Jesus set the standard, and I'm going to share it with you, just briefly, Luke 9:57 says this, 9:57, "And it came to pass that, as they went on the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. (Oh, that's terrific isn't it? You say, oh, commitment, terrific) Jesus said unto him, (well) Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And you never hear of that guy again. He is somewhere in the white space between verse 58 and 59, leaving. Verse 59 says, "And He said unto another, Follow me. But he said, oh, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." Of course his father hasn't died yet. What he's saying is, I'm the firstborn, the primogenitor, I'm goin' get the inheritance, I gotta wait till he dies and I get the thing, and then I'll be on the way. And the Lord says to him, "Let the dead bury their dead." Let the spiritually dead take care of their own physical dead. You go and preach the kingdom of God. And apparently he left somewhere in the white space between 60 and 61. "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, who are at home at my house." (I've got to go and get all my things in order and say good bye) "Jesus said,"No man, having put his hand to the plough, looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Now He wants total commitment, He doesn't want ya to hang around for your inheritance, He doesn't want you to go and take care of your business, when it's time to come to Him, it's now. Now Matthew in the same frame of reference, 10:32, maybe adds some light to that same concept, listen to this, "Whosoever, therefore, (Matthew 10:32) shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father, who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, who is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I am come not to send peace, but a sword. (whata ya mean by that?) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law (of course that variance is already set, in any case, verse 36,) And a man's foes shall be they of his own house-hold. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loses his life for



My sake (what?) shall find it." He wants people who will lose everything and just follow Him. Total commitment, absolute and full. Chapter 11 of Matthew, verse 28, you say boy, that's a heavy thing, I mean give up everything and walk away from it and just go, you say, this just sounds like a drag! What a terrible kind of life, this brutality and just commitment and get in there and if you mess up somebody's goin' expose your sin, and, what a horrible existence, why would anybody wanta be a Christian? And then Jesus gives the balance in 11:28, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will (what?) give you rest. (it may sound tough, but it's easy) Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is (what?) easy." You see, all He asks is that you be willing to make that total commitment and from then on He picks up all the burden of the rest of it, see? And knowing Jesus Christ is joy. You say, well, will a church grow if we do that? Oh, will it grow? Verse 14, "Believers were the more added to the Lord, (Acts 5) multitudes of men and women." It grew so fast, they couldn't count it anymore, they stopped counting. A pure, saved, holy living, fully committed membership is the key to real growth. So it was a pure church and as a result of being a pure church, it grew. Now when we start talking about evangelism, people, we do not start talking about evangelism when we leave this place with a little tract in our hand, we start talking about evangelism right here. As we work within our own lives, and amidst our own congregation on the principles of purity. That's where evangelism begins.

Alright, so it was a church that experienced purity. The second of those five progressive keys to effective evangelism is power. A pure church is goin' have power, no question, and this church had it. Now we've studied the parenthesis lets go back to verse 12 and pick up outside the parenthesis, the text. Now you'll remember that they had been told they couldn't preach, publicly. They were threatened, no public ministry at all. Nobody can say anything about resurrection and so forth and so on, but there's no way that you're ever goin' stop power from flowing through a pure church. When the church is pure, it just, you can't stop it, you see? And so it flowed, and they were bold and the power burst was astounding. Look at verse 12, "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people." Stop right there. Miracles were goin' on everywhere. God's tools were the apostles and we've taught many times about the fact that the gifts of miracles, healings, tongues, and interpretations of tongues were sign gifts which belonged to the apostles and the prop-hets for a certain era of church history to confirm the Word. And so here again they begin to express these miracles, and these were tempor-ary signs to confirm the actuality and the verity and the truth of their message. The people would see these miracles, and then they would talk about Jesus, and they would say we do it in the name of Jesus, and the people would be thinking this Jesus must be who He claimed to be. Look at the things that are happening in His name. You see, these were attendant miracles to verify their message. In fact Paul in First Corinthians 12:12, even calls them the signs of an apostle. And Heb-rews chapter 2, talks about the apostles' having certain gifts of the Holy Spirit and these gifts, they used to corroborate their testimony, to verify its validity, miraculously, Jesus did the same thing. He came into a town, He did miracles, and then he said, now that you've seen that, I'll tell you who I am. And the miracle was the confirmation. And so here it is again, and they began to do miracles, miracles. And this is what they had prayed for back in verse 30

of chapter 4. Oh, they said, stretch forth your hand to heal that signs and wonders may be done. But it couldn't be done until the church was pure. Now the word signs and wonders we've talked about, those are two of the triad of miracle signs and wonders. Signs pointing to something, these miracles always pointed to the deity of Jesus Christ. They always pointed to His Messiahship, and they always had the purpose of trying to create wonder in the minds of the people. Now the result of these miracles, look at verse 15, expanding it, "Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, (can you just imagine the scene going on in Jerusalem, here came all the sick people into the streets) and they laid them on beds and couches, (two different words, one having to do with rich people and the other poor people, just by the technicality of the word, fancy beds and simple ones, and they brought them all into the street) that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." They believed in their minds that Peter was so powerful that if his shadow just crossed them, they'd be healed. And verse 16, "And there came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them who were vexed with unclean spirits; (notice Luke, the physician differentiates between physical illness and mental or demonic illness) and they were healed every one." I mean this is unbelievable, the sick were healed, unclean spirits were cast out, people were coming from everywhere bringing the

sick, and they were all being healed. The streets must have been an unbelievable picture. Everywhere beds and couches of the rich and the poor alike, and waiting for the time when the apostles would move through town, and they actually believed that his shadow, the shadow of Peter would heal. It's an interesting thing, the Orientals you know, believed that a man's shadow carried his influence, and parents would run and take their little children into the shadow of great men. And just as much, parents would grab their little children and snatch them and pull them away from the shadow of someone they disliked, in Oriental fantasy. But none the less expressed here, it doesn't say Peter's shadow healed anybody. It just says they believed that if Peter's shadow passed by, this was a part of their Oriental belief. But boy, they sure thought something of Peter, they really did. I studied this, and I asked my-self the question, I don't see anybody runnin' to get into my shadow. And I thought well, that's sure a principle that we oughta apply in all of our lives. Is there something about us that causes people to run to us? Is there something so attractive and dynamic about the power of God expressed in our lives that people want to run to be with us? Pray to God it would be so. And so great miracles took place. You say well,

if the church is pure today will all of these miracles continue to take place? No, there will be miracles, the great miracle of the new birth, and God does healing miracles today, but not through these same gifts, since these have passed away. These were only for the beginning of this age and incidentally if you study your Bible correctly you'll find that at the beginning of all the major ages of the Bible, miracles were a part of the initiation. There is no promise that miracles would continue in this age, they are not even promised for the end of the age. People say well, it's the end of the church age, so miracles are happen-ing. You won't find that in the Bible anywhere. Nowhere does it say that the church age is going to end in a burst of miracles. The testimony of the Holy Spirit says at the end of

the church age, watch this, there will be apostasy, lawlessness, departure from the faith, false religions, delusions, doctrines of devils and all the way down, every-thing but miracles. It says there will be signs and wonders however, divine miracles, it says there will be signs and wonders, Second Thess-alonians 2. They will be lying wonders, propagated by whom? Satan. So if you're looking for miracles today, expect the source to be Satan. And we're seeing them. Now of course this full thing isn't until the tribulation, but we've already begun to see the mystery of iniquity working right now, haven't we? Some of these lying wonders that are happening under demonic influence.

And so this was a powerful church. And I believe beloved, that this church can be just that powerful today. Oh, not in the expression of individual miracles, but in the, in the free flow of power to the spiritual healing of multitudes. I believe that. I believe we can do a work of evangelism in the world that can be astounding, if we're pure.

And I believe that goes for every individual believer. I believe that through your individual life God can reproduce others, if you're pure. Paul in reminding Timothy of the priorities for his ministry said this, I love this simple statement, First Timothy 5:22 he says, Timothy, keep yourself pure. God only uses holy instruments.

We'll close our discussion this morning and pick up next time, in Second Timothy 2:19, with the reading of this, "Nevertheless, the found-ation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." If you're a Christian you have no place in your life for sin, you see? Everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. And listen to the next verse, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but there are vessels of wood and earth; (you know, made out of clay) some honor and some to dishonor." In other words, when you have the company over and you wanta put your best out there you don't put your clay pots and your wooden bowls; you put the gold and the silver stuff. Verse 21, "If a man, therefore, purge him-self from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Listen, God only uses holy instruments, did ya get it? Sure, clay, wood, silver, and gold. They're all pots in the Father's house, but who wants to be a clay pot when you can be a gold one? Ivho wants to be stuck on a shelf, when you can be fit for the Master's use? But God only uses what kind of instruments? Pure ones. Keep yourself pure. And as we each keep ourselves pure and each other pure by examining each other, in love, and dealing with sin, there's going to be apowerf low in this church that'll go to the ends of the earth, and to the healing of multitudes,

\_ GCI717 - p. 23

spiritually, to the glory of God.

Well you can't have that kind of power and not expect come perse-cution, and it began in verse 17. But this is a serial, and you'll have to come back next week, to find out what happens.

Let's pray, Father we thank you this morning that by the Spirit of God our hearts have been enriched in the Word of God. How we re-joice, in knowing that You have given us simple principles to begin evangelism, that God, evangelism begins with us and the power is there, but it only flows when we're pure, oh, God, may it be so. And Father there may be some among us this morning who've never met You as person-al, God, who've never met Jesus Christ, as Savior, never had their sins forgiven, who have never come in that total kind of commitment. God we pray this morning, that they might come into the, into the fellowship, oh, how we long to share their life with ours, God bring them to Jesus Christ. May they count the cost, and be willing to pay the price and to realize that once they've come, oh, Your yoke is easy, and Your bur-den is light, and to live for You is glorious. Because once they've made that total commitment You give them a new capacity, to live to Your glory. Do Your perfect work in all our hearts, we pray in the name of Christ, Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).