

## Acts 5:12-16 – Power and Persuasion – Sermon Outline

**Intro:** The Apostles continue performing miracles near the Temple at Solomon's Portico by the power of Christ's Spirit, leading many to bring their sick to be healed from Jerusalem and the surrounding towns.

**Need:** The Church overcomes adversity and grows only by Christ's Word and Spirit, and the response to the Church in its power and fidelity is seen in many repenting, many fearing but not joining, and the powers of darkness being filled with anger and seeking to destroy the Church and her righteous words and works.

**Theme:** Christ's power in His Church is publicly displayed and persuasive to many.

1. The Apostles by Christ's Spirit do many signs and wonders, so that many believe and are healed.
  2. The Spirit's power causes others to stay away from the Church and enrages the wicked.
- I. The Apostles by Christ's Spirit do many signs and wonders, so that many believe and are healed.
- A. 12, The H.S. shows His power over Satan, revealing Ananias/Sapphira's plot, killing them, and then empowering the Apostles to do many signs and wonders among the people, who are of one accord.
    1. They continue this ministry near the Temple in the large area of Solomon's portico built next to it, in defiance of the religious leaders and others who said to stop preaching in Christ's name.
    2. They did not live there of course, but gathered regularly for worship, prayer, study, evangelism, etc.
    3. From this we see again we must prioritize the fellowship of the saints. The Lord calls us to give at least 1/7 of our time on the Lord's Day to worship and rest, to refresh our souls and bodies, but we squander that with work or worldly recreations that do not edify or promote worship and true rest.
    4. The Lord calls for 1/10 of our prosperity, for He has given us all our time and all our funds for the sake of Him and His kingdom. If we would budget to tithe and structure time around His law, our lives and bodies would be blessed, we would worry less, be more generous and in God's Word, etc.
    5. Calvin notes how they continued in worship for so long, often taking half of their work day off to gather for worship, and Calvin laments how even in his day worship for an hour was a chore!
    6. **Calvin:** *"If the Christians Luke talks about in this passage assembled amid persecutions to pray to God and hear the teaching of the gospel, we ought all the more in our day and time to come together with one accord and one heart for the same purpose."*
  - B. 13, No other dared join "them". We will discuss this interpretive difficulty in the second point, but let us focus on the latter part of the verse, "the people esteemed them highly".
    1. Who is "**them**"? It is at minimum the Apostles performing the miracles and who are in "**one accord**".
    2. Given the preceding text, how great fear fell upon all the church and upon those outside the Church, it is possible that the Apostles alone gathered, and the rest of the Church was too afraid to draw near to them, given the death of Ananias and Sapphira.
    3. But this would mitigate against the unity of the Church greatly, and v. 14 where more believers were increasingly joining the church, men and women, and the fact the people esteemed them highly, 13.
    4. It may be that no one dared feign miracles as if they were among the Apostles. Only the Apostles were able to work such miracles and healings like Peter, whose shadow healed those it fell upon.
    5. It may be the Apostles and the other believers gathered together and "**none of the rest**" refers to those who had feared the Church and God's power, rightly, but were unwilling to join the Church.
    6. In Acts 2:47 and 4:21 we see the Apostles and Church having favor with all the people. That continues here, as the mass of people being healed highly esteem the Apostles in particular.
  - C. The miraculous signs and wonders serve to confirm the Apostolic authority and message:

1. The miracles were evidences of the truth of Christ's resurrection. When we think of what will convince/assure us of our salvation in Christ, let these words of Scripture do so.
  2. But note also, that Scripture points outside of its own claims, in a sense, to the realities of the evidences and logical conclusions one must draw from the resurrection of Christ the God-Man.
  3. There is a logical argument based on evidence, and this is why Peter and Paul, like Christ before them, is said to be reasoning in the synagogues and houses and streets with the people, testifying of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection.
  4. Crucifixions were commonplace, dying was normal, even for Jewish folks and Rabbis evidently.
  5. But for Christ, who claimed to be God, to be crucified, and then rise again -- the resurrection of course was the disputed point -- that it happened, and if it did, what it meant (new life in Him).
  6. Jesus in John 10 and again in John 14 says to believe that He does the works of the Father and He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. He says believe me for My Words, but if not for My words, for my miraculous works which confirm my message of salvation in Myself, Christ the God-Man.
  7. *"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."* The Word and its reality/reason is sufficient, but the miracles confirmed that message.
  8. **Calvin:** *"The Gospel had to be ratified by miracles, which functioned as seals to verify its contents."*
- D. 14-16, the Church grows exponentially -- "multitudes" of men and women are converted to Christ.
1. In **4:32** the Church was called a multitude, now multitudes more are joining it!
  2. The sick are brought to the Apostles, even from neighboring communities, and these coming are of the multitudes of sincere believers, not mainly those who are superstitious or wanting healing without repenting and following Christ.
  3. The Spirit's power in both those who have such great faith, and through the Apostle Peter, leads to even his shadow falling upon a sick person to heal them. The Spirit works faith and miracles.
  4. See the **"one heart"** of the newly born again Christians, who are showing their love for their brethren and Christ's body, by bringing their sick and needy on beds and couches to the Church for healing.
- E. Our greatest need is Spiritual healing, which will some day lead to bodily healing/resurrection.
1. But just as body and soul healing could not be found apart from the Apostles and gathering of God's people, so it remains true that salvation cannot be found outside of the Church and its Ministry.
  2. Calvin and other Reformers were emphatic on this, as is our confessions. Salvation cannot be found outside of Christ, and if you are outside of the Church, you are outside of Christ. It's that simple.
  3. While Christ is not on Earth to physically follow today, He is still here in power by His Spirit, and His Spirit is operative in His Church, His people, His officers, His Word and sacraments, etc.
  4. We are commanded to be disciples through faith/repentance and baptism into the visible Church.
  5. Refusing to submit to this, forsaking the assembling of the brethren, is a forsaking and neglecting of Christ and His salvation and calling upon us. It is serious sin and those who do not return perish.
  6. Those who claim to be "couch Christians" & have virtual Church are deceived. Can you truly be part of your earthly family if you are never with them in the flesh, but only see them on a screen or phone?
  7. Those from neighboring cities couldn't be healed by Peter's shadow if they simply saw it, they had to have that shadow fall upon them. God's Word is most effective to us when we are present for it in the flesh, with our hearts and minds and bodies really there and engaged, not just listening online.
  8. Sometimes due to sickness or travel this may be necessary, but it is a lesser blessing.
- F. **APPLICATION:** Christ is Lord of life and death, freedom and slavery, forgiveness and punishment, heaven and hell, and He exercises His Lordship through His Spirit.

1. Ananias and Sapphira, tempted by Satan, could not deceive Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Church is continuing to grow with power, the sick and demon possessed are driven out by Christ's power.
2. That same Spirit is upon each one of us. We all have different giftings, but we should not think that God works less powerfully in His Church today, because He doesn't work miraculously.
3. Throughout history & Scripture, the miraculous works of God are few & far between.
4. The great blessing of the new covenant is the law written on our hearts in a deep and profound way, so that forgiven in Christ's blood, we love God's law from the heart, and keep His commandments.
5. That is the greatest miracle, new life in Christ such that we love His law from our hearts, restored to bear His image and take dominion over all creation.
6. And may God strike down all so-called churches and pastors who reverse this order, and say that healings and the fanatical and visions are superior to regular faithfulness and steadfastness.
7. Would you rather be holy and faithful, or work miracles? That's really the fundamental question.
8. We will be judged by our good works, flowing from a true faith, and not by how many supposed miraculous healings we saw or performed. Some who cast out demons perished in their sin!

## II. The Spirit's power causes others to stay away from the Church and enrages the wicked.

- A. John 9:22, Jesus had healed a man blind from birth, and the Pharisees ask the blind man's parents how their son came to have sight. The parents out of fear say to ask their son, for he is of age.
  1. We're told they did this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to put out of the synagogue anyone who confessed that Jesus was the Christ. **Something similar may be happening now.**
  2. **John 12:37ff.** is similar: *"But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."*
- B. While it is true that personally, the only thing that matters for salvation is saving faith, nevertheless, we see there are all sorts of responses to the Gospel, both by the unbeliever and the believer.
  1. We see this throughout Scripture, and will see it throughout Acts. These differences are not useless details. They do matter. And they do get into questions of civic Christianity, or cultural Christianity.
  2. When Christianity and its power from Christ and His Spirit are seen, even the unbelievers have a fear of God and admiration, at some level, for Him, His power, and His people. Not all of course.
  3. Our nation largely does not fear God today, especially in its leadership, showing the church is weak, impotent, and full of false teachers and false converts in our nation today. This is undeniable.
  4. We see the Sanhedrin court coming to arrest the Apostles again very soon, vv. 17-18.
  5. But the common person, the masses, if they are not themselves personally converted, are at least softened and used by God to protect and preserve His Church in some way quite often, and here.
  6. For remember, the Sanhedrin did not kill the Apostles or beat them in prison because they feared the masses of the people. Some of these masses are being converted, others are not.
- C. God has always preserved and built up His Church, His people, through such persons and rulers.
  1. We can think of examples of the Pharaoh that promoted Joseph to power, King Darius who issued a decree that all in the earth in his dominion must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

2. Also King Nebuchadnezzar, or King Cyrus of Persia whom God put it in his heart to let Israel go free and rebuild, or the Queen of Sheba coming to Solomon's Temple and to hear of his wisdom, etc.
  3. The Queen of Sheba could not deny the surpassing wisdom of Solomon and gives great wealth and more spices than ever were given to Solomon/God's people.
  4. Hiram King of Tyre, who loved King David, also entered into a treaty with King Solomon, and Solomon hired him to have their servants work together and bring cedars from Lebanon to build the Temple for the Lord. **Yet none of these rulers were necessarily converted truly to the Lord!**
  5. Solomon acknowledged that there is none among them, the Israelites, to cut timber like the Sidonians, **1 Kings 5:6**. Solomon gave much food and oil year by year to Hiram for his services.
  6. And in all this, we are told that Solomon did this because the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, and caused Hiram and Solomon to have peace.
  7. All of this occurred in Solomon's reign, for David was a man of war, and Solomon explains this to Hiram King of Tyre in **1 Kings 5:3-4**, "You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the Lord put his foes under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence."
- D. **Talk about a postmillennial reality for King Solomon, whose name literally means peace!**
1. Through David, the Warrior King, the era of battle and strife had ended, with the church underage, Israel of old, growing and gaining momentum and driving out all the pagan nations.
  2. Now an era of peace has come, where all the enemies are under the feet of David/Solomon, and the kings of the nations, and queens like the Queen of Sheba, are bringing their glory into Jerusalem.
  3. Christ, now, must reign until He puts all enemies under His feet, and then He will return.
  4. We will not have perfect peace and rest this side of glory, and Solomon really represents something of the Church in its state of glory, or at least far down the road when the Kingdom of God has leavened the nations around Israel.
  5. But that truth and reality is now transported to the whole world, where some day all the nations of the earth will be won to Christ and serve Him, as the Church herself increases in holiness.
  6. The full realization of that will not occur until Christ returns, as **Hebrews 2:8-9** tells us, "**You have put all things in subjection under His feet.** *For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.*"
  7. **Matthew Poole's** commentary on that passage in Hebrews 2:8 is spot on: "*it is evident to our sense and experience, that though he hath obtained this sovereign dominion over all on his ascension, yet he hath not exerted his power in utterly subjecting and triumphing over his enemies at present, nor in reducing all his own people to subjection to him; yet this shall be gradually done in every age, and completely when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, to punish his enemies with everlasting destruction.*"
  8. Here we have the gradual growth of the kingdom in every age affirmed, and its completion and perfection when Christ comes again to make all things new and usher in the state of glory.
  9. The new Israel, the early new covenant Church here in Acts, has great growth early on, yet mixed with strife and tribulations, and heresies within itself, all which will increase throughout Acts.
  10. But the Church goes to the ends of the Earth in the 1<sup>st</sup> century just the same, finding great success, and continues to do so today for all true churches built upon the foundation of the Apostle's doctrine.

11. We do not pray the Lord's prayer in vain. His kingdom is coming and His will is being done increasingly on earth, even as it is done perfectly in heaven. And God on Earth still often uses imperfect persons and rulers, even unregenerate ones, who at least fear/reverence God's power.
- E. 5:11, 13, those who did not join the Church nevertheless admired it from a distance, or at minimum were unable to confound her growth and her power in Christ's Word and Spirit.
1. Famous Atheist Richard Dawkins has recently said something to the effect that he is in favor of cultural Christianity, perhaps is one himself, even though he doesn't believe a word of it is true.
  2. This isn't an ally, but quite the admission, that cultural Christianity has a restraining force on evil, so that even those who in their hearts hate and deny God, cannot deny His power and good fruit!
  3. Donald Trump has said both that he's never had to ask God for forgiveness, but also that Christ is the Lord and Savior. He's a cultural Christian, and has ruled to favor cultural Christianity before.
  4. He's far from perfect, not the ideal, and almost certainly not a true Christian, but the Lord still uses such men in positions of power to favor His true Church, and His true people, over against pagans.
  5. But our ultimate desire must be like Paul's when King Agrippa told him, "You almost persuaded me to become a Christian," and Paul says, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."
  6. Earlier in that chapter Paul acquits himself while on trial and says he will answer for himself to King Agrippa "**concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews**" Acts 26:2-3.
  7. He recounts his life, his conversion out of Pharisee-ism and persecuting the true Christians, and ultimately proclaims the Gospel to Agrippa, of Christ suffering, rising from death, and proclaiming light to the Jewish people and Gentiles through the Apostles filled with Christ's Spirit.
  8. When he mentions the resurrection, Governor Festus shouts out that Paul's learning has driven him mad, but Paul knows that Agrippa by his birth and upbringing was familiar with the laws and customs of the Jews, and perhaps was a Jew himself.
  9. While Festus doesn't understand, Agrippa does, and the result is that when they confer, they ultimately agree that the Apostle Paul has done nothing wrong.
  10. Again, that's a great gain and victory for the Church at large, not just the Apostle Paul, for Paul's ministry to continue, even though Agrippa evidently remained an "**almost Christian**".
- F. The Church today, even among many so-called Calvinists and Reformed folk, have no real sense of the Gospel and Church as the Kingdom of God, and that God has promised to build up, protect, and preserve His Kingdom and His Kingdom people, the Church.
1. The Church certainly wins and grows when it is holy and faithful, and when many more are converted as we are seeing in the book of Acts.
  2. But we are also told that fear fell upon all the people, even those outside of the Church, and that the people esteemed those in the Church highly, even if not all were brought into the Church/Kingdom.
  3. This, too, is a great blessing and victory, just as it is when the Queen of Sheba glorified the true God at Solomon's God-given wisdom, when Hiram agreed to build the Temple with his skilled laborers and mighty cedars of Lebanon, etc. *Christ is King of Kings, so His kingdom will clash with the world's!*
  4. Even supposedly respected Reformed Theologians and Church Historians like Darryl Hart today might whine about men like Constantine because he may not have been a true convert. In one sense, who cares? Christ used Constantine to advance His Church and Kingdom on Earth.

5. Was Darius in Scripture, for example, a true convert? It is debatable, and commentators will differ, but it is undeniable these rulers were used by God to protect and preserve His Church, so that the Church could then advance His Kingdom through Gospel proclaiming and holy living, etc.
- G. **APPLIC:** Today, we want to see our towns and communities won for Christ, and yet we know that God's purposes are to build His Church and Kingdom in all the earth bit by bit, over many generations.
  1. God will use even unbelievers at times to promote and protect His true Church, and when the culture is tolerant of and even supportive of the values of Christianity, even if they do not yet all have a heart for Christ, that is a blessing itself for the Church and opportunity for more converts.
  2. Provided we do not confuse that with the ultimate blessing of true life in Christ the risen Lord.
  3. When that happens, cultural Christianity decays into nominal Christianity, and dies in apostate Christianity, or what we are seeing with things like woke-ism today, where you can be any made up name or gender that you please, etc., abuse your bodies, live for yourself rather than God.
  4. The Roman Empire was vast, and Caesar was powerful. Acts culminates with Paul appealing to Caesar, traveling to Rome, and preaching the Gospel to Jews there, and ultimately to Gentiles as the Jews dispute among themselves concerning Christ and the Gospel. We read Paul, under house arrest, preaches freely the Gospel there for 2 years, never told if/when Caesar spoke to him.
  5. The Gospel begins in Jerusalem, but ends in Rome, it spreads to the ends of the earth and empire/world power at that time. We must begin local, at Heritage, and pray for growth and revival outward. We should pursue faithfulness in our families, churches, and local government.
  6. May the Church be faithful and fruitful, in Christ's power, so that all are persuaded. And may we do what we are called to here in Sanford and the surrounding areas, in our hearts, homes, churches, and community. **Let's pray.**