

Boldly Proclaiming the Message (Acts 5:12-42)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Acts

I. What has happened in Acts so far?

- a. Jesus appears to His apostles for forty days, teaching about the Kingdom of God. He then ascends to heaven, in **Acts 1**.
- b. Devout Jews “from every nation under heaven” begin gathering in Jerusalem for the harvest feast (Pentecost), in **Acts 2**.
- c. Holy Spirit descends on the Christians quite dramatically in fulfillment of the prophecy in **Joel 2**, in **Acts 2**.
- d. Peter preaches to the Jews, explaining the prophecies of the promised (and now resurrected) Christ/Son of God, who the Jews had murdered, offering them forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit through repentance and baptism. 3,000 are baptized, in **Acts 2**.
- e. Peter heals a well-known man, lame since birth, in the temple area. This creates quite a stir and big crowds. Opportunity for a second sermon, with the same message and more prophecies fulfilled by the Christ, including **Deuteronomy 18**, the prophecy of a prophet like Moses who will come in the future and anyone who does not hear and obey Him will be destroyed, in **Acts 3**.
- f. This healing and message are not received well by the Jewish religious leaders, who arrest Peter and John and bring them in for questioning, in **Acts 4**.
 - i. Peter speaks boldly, applying the prophecy of **Psalm 118** to his opponents: “the *stone you builders rejected* has become the chief cornerstone.”
 - ii. The religious leaders have no comeback, with the healed lame man before them. They command the apostles to stop teaching about Jesus, warning and threatening them.
 - iii. The church gathers, recites part of **Psalm 2** regarding the rulers gathering together against the Lord and against His Christ, and prays for boldness.
- g. A married couple holds back a portion of a gift made to the apostles and then lies about it. Peter confronts each with his/her sin, and each dies immediately. Great fear comes over the entire church.

II. Signs, Wonders, and Healings

a. Read **Acts 5:12-16**

- i. “Many signs and wonders were done among the people.”
- ii. Even Peter’s shadow was accomplishing miracles!
- iii. “a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities... sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed!”

b. In just the first few chapters of Acts, healing seems to be an important part of their ministry, similar to Jesus’.

- i. “I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath.” (**Joel 2:18-19**, quoted in **Acts 2** in Peter’s first sermon.)
- ii. Healing of the lame man (**Acts 3**), revealing the power of Jesus’ name. Provides an opportunity to proclaim the promised Christ, His death, resurrection, repentance and forgiveness, and blessings of God on the nations.
- iii. After being threatened by the Jewish leaders, the Christians pray for three things:
 1. For boldness to proclaim God’s word
 2. That God would stretch out His hand to heal, and
 3. Perform signs and wonders in Jesus’ name.

c. Questions I have:

i. **Did these healings and signs really happen?**

1. If not, the apostles were lying.
 - a. These things either happened, or they did not. I do not think the apostles would have risked their lives and ultimately given their lives for a lie!
2. The Jewish leaders do not deny the lame man’s healing.
 - a. “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now

on they speak to no man in this name.” (Acts 4:14-17)

3. Jesus, the Son of God, healed. (This is reasonable.) He sent the Holy Spirit (also God) to his followers to do the same.
 - a. God has the ability to change/overtake His “natural laws.”
 - b. Jesus said it was good that He went away so He could send the Holy Spirit to His followers. (John 16)
- ii. **Should I be concerned if healings and miracles like these are not happening in our house church?**
1. “Go into all the world the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.” (Mark 16:15-18)
 - a. I was taught the first part of this, but not the second!
 2. I appreciate brother Chuck, but I have not seen his shadow heal anyone around here of late. If so, word would be out, and people would be lining up outside of Susan and Adam’s house, waiting to be healed!
 3. I personally have not seen these types of miracles happen in the churches I have been part of.
 4. This would be pretty awesome, a visible sign that God was with us, getting people’s attention! Should we be experiencing these blessings from God?
- iii. A few thoughts:
1. At different times in Scripture, we see God performing miraculous signs through people:
 - a. Moses, Elijah/Elisha, Jesus, Acts (early church)
 - b. It seems like God worked such miracles at different times for his purposes, but not always.

2. There are many other ways God displays His power to help bring people to faith:
 - a. “For since the creation of the world, [God’s] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse....”
(Romans 1)
 - b. Prophecies fulfilled
 - c. Eye-witness accounts
 - d. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13)**
 - e. “... that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” **(John 17)**
 - f. The gift of prophecy has the power to cause an unbeliever to be convicted of sin, fall down on his face, worship God, and report that God is among the church! **(1 Corinthians 14)**
3. Consider also that signs are not proof of God’s favor.
 - a. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you...’”
(Matthew 7)
4. Early Christian comments on miraculous healings:
 - a. “Disease, accident, and ... death come on the spiritual man, too.” (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195, ANF book 2, page. 540.)
 - b. “It disturbs some that the power of this disease attacks our people equally with the pagans – as if the Christian believed for the purpose that he could have the enjoyment of the world and of this life, free from the contact of ills.” (Cyprian, c. 250, ANF book 5, page 471.)
 - c. “Not a few cures are brought about in the name of Jesus, and certain other manifestations of no small

significance have taken place.” (Origin, c. 248, ANF book 4, page 475.)

- d. “The name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, expel demons, and also take away diseases. Furthermore, it produces a marvelous meekness of spirit and a complete change of character.” (Origin, c. 248, ANF book 4, page 433.)
 - e. “The Holy Spirit gave signs of His presence at the beginning of Christ’s ministry. And after His ascension, He gave still more. But since that time, these signs have diminished, although there are still traces of His presence in a few who have had their souls purified by the gospel, and their actions regulated by its influence.” (Origin, c. 248, ANF book 4, page 614.)
5. “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand in His side, I will not believe.”
- a. Jesus’ response: “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”
 - b. A blessing for us, who believe but have not seen Jesus and not seen the miracles? (same principle)
 - c. But, perhaps in the future, the church will experience these types of miracles again to a greater degree!

III. The boldness of Jesus’ followers

- a. This is a really convicting part of the lesson for me!
- b. Read **Acts 5:17-42**. Summary:
 - i. All twelve apostles are arrested and thrown into prison.
 - ii. The same high priest who ordered Jesus’ death is “filled with indignation”.
 - iii. At night, an angel opens the prison doors and leads the apostles out. Tells them to go back the next day to the temple court.
 - iv. They go “very early” the next morning. No hesitation!

- v. The religious leaders find the empty prison cell, which is locked and guarded. They are completely bewildered.
 - vi. Quickly find out where they are: preaching again in the temple court!
 - vii. Apostles arrested again and taken before a council and commanded not to teach about Jesus.
 - viii. Peter's famous line: "We must obey God, rather than men." Preaches Jesus as the resurrected Savior.
 - ix. The religious leaders are furious and want to kill the apostles.
 - x. Gamaliel, a wise, respected leader, reminds the religious leaders that there have been others claiming "to be somebody" with the goal of luring people away from the Jewish faith. But, these things came to nothing. If this Jesus movement is of men, it too will come to nothing. If this is of God, you do not want to be fighting God! So, let them go.
 - xi. The apostles are beaten and released. They rejoice that they have been counted worthy of suffering shame for His name! They continue to teach in the temple and from house to house.
- c. The boldness of their message (hope, mercy, and call for repentance)
- i. The message is not "God loves you and wants a personal relationship with you." Instead, this is a much stronger/richer message:
 1. God promised to send his Christ, His Son, to reign over His eternal kingdom.
 2. Jesus was this Christ ... and you murdered Him.
 3. God raised Him from the dead, just as He promised.
 4. The Christ/Son of God now sits at the Father's right hand, waiting to put His enemies under His feet.
 5. Repent of your sins.
 6. Your sins can be forgiven, which only comes through Jesus.
 7. You can receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit living in you.
 8. You may receive times of refreshing.
- d. Peter does not back down/change the message as things heat up:
- i. in **Acts 2 and 3** with Jewish leaders present. Peter knows how offensive this is going to be to them.

- ii. In **Acts 4**, when Peter and John were arrested and before the high priest who had ordered Jesus to be murdered.
- iii. In **Acts 5** when all 12 have been jailed, rescued, back in the temple, arrested again, and before the same religious leaders.
- iv. After being beaten and released, they then go back daily into the temple (and from house to house), teaching “Jesus as the Christ”!
- e. The message is separating good and bad hearts
 - i. My nature is to be a bit naïve; I think everyone has a good heart.
 - 1. Alison Pike: “You know if someone has a good heart based on how they respond to God’s truth.”
 - 2. “A good heart” does not mean someone is a nice person!
 - ii. Peter was proclaiming God’s truth to devout Jews from many nations. He was also proclaiming God’s truth to the Jewish religious leaders.
 - 1. 3,000 (and more later) repented and turned to God.
 - 2. Others, after hearing the same message, became furious and wanted to murder the Apostles.
 - 3. You can’t tell who has a good heart (as Alison shared) until you see how they respond to God’s Word.
- f. We live in a very apologetic generation/society. Most do not want to offend anyone, instead affirm everyone’s views, appreciate everyone’s perspective.
 - i. This was not the attitude of the apostles! Their message was offensive to many, with backlash, and consequences.
 - ii. But the message also led many to repentance, forgiveness, and to Christ!
 - iii. For us, who need to deliver the message, this comes down to a fear of God versus a fear of man.
 - 1. “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (**Acts 4:19**)
 - 2. “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” (**Acts 5:29**)

3. Gamaliel's wisdom: "for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God." (**Acts 5:38-39**)

g. Some thoughts on boldness

- i. Building on victories, sometimes a few steps forward and a step back.
 1. David going to battle with Goliath. "God delivered me from the lion and the bear." But, then so cowardly: commits adultery with Bathsheba, then murders her husband, making it look like he was killed in battle.
 2. Peter: the demoniac healing, walks on water, goes to Jerusalem to die with Jesus, these sermons in Acts, but then the cowardice of denying Jesus 3X in between.
 3. I think we each have a "boldness journey". We need to build on our victories and learn from our defeats. Keep our focus on God – His reality. We should be growing bolder, more courageous.
 4. Take a boldness inventory of your life. When were we most bold? What were your "courage victories"? Me:
 - a. Raising bees
 - b. Quitting AP English
 - c. Homeschooling kids
 - i. the example of others going before us
 - ii. Also, never a place where our children were going to hide from a challenge, over-protected.
 - iii. Accused of overprotection, then of under protection (Elizabeth's Uganda gap year)!
 - d. Evangelism during college and as a young single
 - i. in dorms: "the cult guys"
 - ii. meeting Marcel in Central Square
 - e. Dealing with chronic fatigue
 - f. Addressing sinful practices in a church I attended for 30 years, confronting an elder's sin one-on-one.

- i. “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” (**Matthew 18:15**)
 - ii. For many, this is a very scary and difficult command to put into practice. A great opportunity to grow in courage.
 - g. I need to take it way, way higher. Share recent victories in courage.
 - h. Let’s all build on our victories and follow the example of Jesus and the apostles.
- ii. Esther’s example of courage
 1. Going to God for courage; don’t worry about how it will all work out! (That’s God’s job.)
 2. Background of Esther’s prayer and courageous act.
 - a. Wicked, scheming Haman has deceived the king and tricked him into signing an edict to murder all the Jews on a specific day, including the beautiful Queen Esther.
 - b. Esther realizes she must go before the king and reveal this plot to him before the day approaches.
 - c. But, if she goes before the king without being summoned, she could be killed.
 - d. She is terrified. Goes to God, asking for success and deliverance from her fear.
 3. Read **Esther 4:17-5:10**
 4. Key points
 - a. She humbles herself in prayer, appeals to God’s honor, and asks for deliverance from her fear!
 - b. She goes before the king – does the scary thing!
 - c. She faints, but God uses this to soften the king’s heart. God works in ways we do not expect. We simply need to do our part!
- iii. We need to be bold for the sake of others.

1. Read **Ezekiel 2:1-8**

- a. Do not be dismayed by people's looks and words.
- b. Speak my words!

2. Read **Ezekiel 3:16-21**

- a. A call to shepherds, elders, watchmen for the church.
- b. A call to each of us to watch over one another's souls.

iv. Honoring Jesus' Name

1. After being beaten, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

- a. Their obedience, to share the gospel in all its directness, beauty, controversy, and implications, resulted in their flogging.
- b. In this, they rejoiced, suffering shame for His name, and bringing glory to His name!

2. Our disobedience brings dishonor to His name.

- a. "For the Lord also said, 'Continually My name is blasphemed among all the Gentiles,' and again, 'Woe to him on account of whom My name is blasphemed.' (**Isaiah 52:5, Romans 2:24**) Wherein is it blasphemed? In your not doing what I desire.
- b. For the Gentiles, when they hear from our mouth the oracles of God, marvel at them as beautiful and great; afterwards, when they have learned that our works are not worthy of the words we speak, they then turn themselves to blasphemy, saying that it is some fable and delusion.
- c. For when they hear from us that God said, "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you; but there is a reward if you love your enemies and those who hate you;" (**Matthew 5**) when they hear these things, they marvel at the excellency of the goodness; but when they see that we not only do not love them that hate us, but not even them that love us, they laugh us to scorn, and the Name is blasphemed."

- i. Pseudo-Clement of Rome, ANF book 7, p. 520–521.
- ii. It takes great courage to live out Jesus’ teachings. May we bring honor to His name by how we live our lives.
- iii. May we look to God and the great examples of faithful men and women who have gone before us for the courage to do so!