



MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2017

SERIES: ACTS – TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Read: Acts 4:32-35 & Isaiah 65:17-25

Plug In...

The Apostles preached *with* power. Jesus promised to give them power from on high in order to witness His resurrection to the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#) cf. [Luke 24:45-49](#)).

Upon the community was great grace. The emphasis is that this new community and its dynamics has been formed by a power outside of them.

Chew It Over...

Some have said that when reading Acts there is a socialist ethic evident – *no one owned private property; everything was in common*.

Other passages from the Old Testament show that within God's community there was to be no one in dire need. For example, [Deuteronomy 15:4](#). The promise of God was that in the "last days" He would establish His mountain and a new community and existence would occur based on the teaching flowing from Mount Zion (see: [Isaiah 2:1-5](#)); a further picture of this mountain location for God's people displays no lack – [Isaiah 65:17-25](#)).

Peter states this is the time of the "last days" ([Acts 2:17](#)). The community displays a new ethic for life together – an ethos that resonates with the community at the end time mountain of the Lord.

So, is the passage in Acts promoting something of a socialist view of community politics, or are there further clues in the passage that make you want to say it differently?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for His Spirit that makes our hearts respond differently to God and respond differently to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.



TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2017

SERIES: ACTS – TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Read: Acts 4:32 – 5:11 & 1 Kings 14:1-20

Plug In...

Luke describes the new community dynamic. Luke zooms in on an example of this in action: Joseph the Levite and Cypriot liquidates his property and gives it to the apostles to use for the needy.

It is the heart disposition that prompts these actions. “The multitude were of one heart and soul.” Grace comes upon the community and we see that changes their hearts; they respond to need; they help the poor, vulnerable, and weak.

Peter pins Ananias’ lie to what is going on in his heart (v. 3).

Chew It Over...

The story shocks and is in your face! The way Peter responds shows that there is no socialist law that has been laid down to be followed. Instead, the emphasis is that the Spirit is working in people’s hearts that makes them respond creatively to alleviate need. Rather than greed, or self-preservation, there is a heart that loves like Jesus. In the dog-eat-dog world of life, this community will bear loss and cost in order to protect and lift up those who are desperate.

Clearly one can be a Christian and still own private property. Peter reminds Ananias of this (v. 4). Peter tells Ananias that he even had Christian freedom to do with his property as he wished. It implies a context that he would not be judged, should he decide to keep a portion of the property income for himself.

What's the problem? Ananias and his wife lied. They tried to deceive the Apostles, the church community. What does Peter diagnose is really going on?

We can't fake it till we make it with God (Scripture shows this is always the case: [1 Kings 14:1-20](#)). He sees everything. This is an intense event and it is not saying that on the one time you're caught lying to others (really to God) that a bolt of lightning will strike then and there. But it does show that you can't "play" being Christian. Whatever things look like on the outside, it doesn't impress God. Rather, repentance and trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins is what then makes way for God to send His Spirit into our hearts, which makes us do crazy-creative things to love God and love others.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to reveal where you are faking before people and Him. Repent and trust in Jesus. Thank God for complete wiping out of sins. Ask for His Spirit to generate genuine love for neighbour followed by concrete actions for His glory.



WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2017

SERIES: ACTS – TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Read: Acts 5:12-16

Plug In...

Wonderful things are happening. First, the Apostles, against threats and persecutions, are boldly proclaiming Jesus as Lord – very publicly! As a result, people are hearing the message of salvation and being saved! Second, the sick, the lame, the possessed are being healed.

Chew It Over...

Are we to expect signs and wonders today? Maybe the question should be rephrased: should we *necessarily expect* signs and wonders today? Here's a few things to think over:

It can't be said that signs and wonders were only done by the Apostles – the Bible records personalities beyond the Apostles doing amazing things in the name of the Lord.

Someone may tell us today of an amazing healing. With miracles, if we are honest, it is beyond our ability in many cases to prove whether someone did or didn't have this amazing experience. Not to mention, the clear cases where someone has been radically healed!

Scripture never says that God won't intervene miraculously anymore. But, it does record that at the great turning points in God's plan of salvation there are intense and spectacular signs and wonders clustered around this moment. God announces and enacts a transition from one state of affairs to another and the transition is accompanied by signs and wonders. The purpose is to get people's attention. To attest

that what God has announced has come. Examples: Moses and the Israelites redemption from Egypt ([Exodus 4:1-17](#)); Jesus and the bringing in of the Kingdom (all through the gospels, e.g. [John 2:1-12](#)).

The signs and wonders are never recorded as the end in themselves. What would you want to see is the result of such events?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for those in your life who know Jesus. Praise Him for the miracle it is that you and they actually have bended the knee to Jesus.



THURSDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2017

SERIES: ACTS – TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Read: Acts 5:17-42 & Ezekiel 43:1-12

Plug In...

The high priest tried to shut down the beginning of Christianity. But not even physical restraint, nor barriers erected outsmart God. The jail opens, an angel leads the Apostles out, to the podium and they proclaim the message of life.

Notice how the Jewish leaders are *filled* with jealousy (v. 17). They are worried about Jerusalem being *filled* with the teaching of Jesus. Yet, their power, their tactics, their evil is being drained while the apostles are *filled* with the Spirit and keep preaching (see: v. 32. Cf. [Acts 4:8](#) and [Acts 2:14-21](#)).

Chew It Over...

It is worth pulling out to see how the story of Acts has been moving along and what it shows.

After the Holy Spirit *fills* the new Christians we see them daily meeting on the boundaries of the temple complex and going from there to house-to-house ([Acts 2:46](#)). Note, the expectation was that one day God would return His Spirit to the temple ([Ezekiel 43:1-12](#)). When God's Spirit does turn up, it is outside the literal holy of holies and filling people in homes and effecting those that could never be allowed inside the temple courts (e.g. the lame).

From this point on a showdown flares between the Apostles and the temple authorities. Questions are being raised: Where is the presence of the Holy Spirit evident? Who are the leaders of God's people? Where is the location of salvation, where is atonement found? Where is the rebuilt temple?

Reflect on this for yourself: consider [Acts 5:42](#) and [Hebrews 13:11-18](#).

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God that His Spirit resides with us, with our church, even as we face opposition. Rejoice in and with God that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Pray that we will live our lives in a way that is fitting with being before God, close to God, in His temple.



FRIDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2017

SERIES: ACTS – TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Read: Acts 6:1-7

Plug In...

The Apostles have a priority that cannot be forfeited. Yet, there are needs that cannot be relegated.

Chew It Over...

Collectively as a church, the love and character of God means people cannot fall through the cracks. The church is a community that exemplifies the restoration of the world; it is a living example of what will take place at the end, experienced for real in the midst of a broken world. The message of Jesus is about salvation and restoration.

When you reflect on how the growth and the progression of the church so far in Acts has come about, why is it important to have people set aside to pray and preach?

As we think about the ministry needs of our church, while every Christian is called to serve (even if they have great needs themselves), what from this passage (and others, e.g. [Acts 4:32-35](#)) motivates them? While we might recoil a little at 'systems-thinking' and leadership pipelines and team building with rosters, this passage suggest they can be done for godly ends. What does the passage show is the end result of getting this all set up and running?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to fill you with faith in Jesus, and equip you with the Spirit to be involved in the church's mission to love each other and reach even more for Jesus. Ask that God will not drop this priority off our radars.



WEEKEND 25-26 NOVEMBER 2017

SERIES: ACTS – TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Read: Acts chapters 6 & 7

Plug In...

Feel the impact of what Stephen is saying by absorbing it as the one speech that it is. Imagine being in the crowd watching and listening.

Chew It Over...

The big question that has loomed over the last few chapters is where does God dwell? And where has God turned up if His Spirit has returned as promised? The Jewish religious leadership have had enough and box this newly minted Christian, Stephen, into a corner. They charge Stephen with rejecting Moses, and therefore the one true God, and snubbing where God Himself had said He dwelt. Stephen responds with a deep speech where he says he's not against Moses, God, the temple, but explains all that had been previously said about those things promised in the Bible are happening now.

Before looking at sections more tightly next week, absorb this as the one big speech it was delivered as.

Prayer Suggestion

May we know the God of history like Stephen. May we be keyed to God's plan and live trusting in it – even upon the pain of death.