

## **EMPOWERED**

Empowered by the Holy Spirit to be BLESSED

January 31, 2021

Pastor Dave Kerr

Acts 5

Annual Congregational Meeting

What a powerful message last week from Pastor Dave!

The Holy Spirit blew life into the livers of Peter and John and the people were amazed at their courage and the way they spoke.

They were at a dead stop until the Holy Spirit blew life into them!

Now, with the Holy Spirit they are Empowered with clarity and courage!

Remember what he asked us to reflect on this last week?

- 1) How is the Spirit blowing life into me?
- 2) Where do I need to be courageous?
- 3) Is there someone I need to speak to with clarity?

We continue this morning on the Holy Spirit Empowerment...

The life blowing force of the Holy Spirit in Chapter 5...

Acts 5:17-21

But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy <sup>18</sup> they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. <sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup> "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." <sup>21</sup> And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Almost no one ever mentions this event... the first imprisonment... when all twelve of the apostles were put in prison and were suddenly released by the intervention of an angel and sent to preach in the temple again.

What is the lesson God is trying to teach us here?

That there is authority in the Spirit!

Catch this...

Nothing we can do will ever eliminate it.

There is power in God to set you FREE when you find yourself imprisoned!

It is no problem to God to get a person out of their prison. God does not even have to go through a bail bondsman, he simply sends an angel.

It will happen again in the book of Acts.

He can send an earthquake, as he did for Paul and Silas at Philippi. It is no problem to God to get his people out of prison.

But it is also clear, from events later on in Acts and in church history, that God does not always intend to get his people out of prison... physically. The point of the story is, as Paul beautifully put it in

2 Timothy 2:9: that "the word of God is not bound."

Humans cannot stop the word of God.

Humans cannot stop the power of God.

The resurrection power of a living God cannot be held by prison walls, gates, bars, and chains.

I love what happened next:

Acts 5:22-26

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. <sup>22</sup> But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, <sup>23</sup> "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." <sup>24</sup> Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. <sup>25</sup> And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." <sup>26</sup> Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

Look at the next section with me...

Acts 5:27-33

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." <sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

That sounds familiar, doesn't?

All that Peter and the other apostles did was simply to tell these men the truth. They stood before them and very quietly said,

"Look. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you killed."  
That is a clear statement of fact.

"God has exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."  
That is another statement of fact.

"And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit."

With that simple statement of clear, plain truth, these rulers became  
violent  
and furious  
and enraged,  
and set about to kill them.

What does that show?

It shows clearly the fallen character of HUMANITY.

Humanity is in the grip of forces beyond its knowledge and understanding.

Evil forces which are relentlessly opposed to the will, purpose and love of God.

Whenever truth is uttered, it enrages people like this. They oppose it with the only weapon they can think of... physical violence.

This explains the fact that wherever the gospel goes it not only invites people,  
attracts people,  
and redeems people,

but it also enrages others.

It is always a disturbing thing. But God wants us to look beyond this immediate opposition of people and understand that the opposition would never occur if it were not for the existence of certain wicked anti-God beings behind humanity.

This is what Paul says in

Ephesians 6:12: We wrestle not against flesh and blood but by principalities and powers, by wicked spirits in high places.
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When all is said and done it is not humanity who are the problem.

There are powers of wickedness and evil who are seated in positions of power behind the scenes and are manipulating humanity, keeping them under control, and using them as puppets.

That is where the opposition and hostility is coming from. If you do not view the opposition to the gospel from that point of view you will never understand life.

You cannot explain what occurs in history unless you understand it from that point of view. There are evil forces at work.

Scripture, these men and women and others, are being manipulated by powers they are not aware of.

What God wants to get across to his people is that they will never do any real good until they attack the spiritual forces.

God has placed at our disposal the spiritual equipment to do so. The next verses of the passage illustrate this.

Acts 5:34-39

But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. <sup>36</sup> For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; <sup>39</sup> but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, <sup>40</sup> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The apostles are confronted with the same group of leaders that murdered Jesus just a few months earlier...

They are being threatened by the same hostility that put to death Jesus... Their lives are at stake.

These rulers are enraged and they want to kill them.

Why didn't they?

The apostles could not have predicted how God would deliver them. They had no way of knowing that there was seated on that very council a man with a calmer frame of mind, who would listen to reason and would lay a quieting hand upon these unrestrained passions.

But God knew...  
and God knew how to use that man,  
and when to have him speak.

It was God who was behind the actions of Gamaliel.

These were men controlled by evil forces,

**BUT** they were also subject to the sovereign overriding of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture doesn't say but I am very confident that the church was praying for the twelve apostles. In answer to that prayer, God restrained those evil forces, using one of the enemy to do it.

What does that do to you?

Doesn't that get your motor running?

I get excited about it.

God uses the very forces opposed to the gospel to fight against themselves and restrain themselves.

Now that is the restraint of God.

When are we going to start believing the Scriptures?

When are we going to act consistently with the spiritual weapons God has given us?

God is moving today exactly as he moved in the days of the EARLY church!

The church today is no different than the church of the first century. The book of Acts is still being written today.

Look at the end of this wonderful chapter

Acts 5:40-42

they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. <sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

I love that.

They did not stop.

They counted themselves worthy of suffering disgrace for His name.

It seems to take Christians so long to face up to the simple declaration of Scripture...

When they were called to be a Christian, they were called to suffer.

Paul said it well in

Philippians 1:29:

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,

Eugene Peterson translates it:

Philippians 1:29 TM

There's far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There's also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting.

We are called to this. Suffering is an integral part of the Christian experience. It is not something that is unusual or reserved for just a few; it is for all.

In a world that is  
run by illusions,  
governed by deceptions,  
and is a victim of lies and cruel evil falsehoods,

what else can we expect if we stand for the truth?

Yes, people will think we are strange, at times.

Yes, people will think we react in funny ways.

Yes, there will be some degree of coolness, even among those who are, in many other ways, friendly toward us.

Yes, people will think we are a little odd.

But that is the suffering to which he is called.

Like these disciples, we ought to thank God for it and rejoice in it.

Jesus said that in

Matthew 5:11-12:

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad”

We are blessed!

Like these early Christians did.

Count it an honor that you have been called to SUFFER for His name's sake.

Stand up and be counted. These are perilous times!

We are not different from the early church!

1. The Holy Spirit is freeing people today!

The word of God is not bound.

Nothing can stop it,  
nothing can hinder it,  
nothing can thwart it or change it.

Our physical circumstances are quite irrelevant. It does not make any difference.

2. Opposition is here,  
terrible,  
deadly

Opposition designed to strike to the heart!

3. There is also suffering... suffering but rejoicing in that suffering.

To this we are called!

To this we are BLESSED to live for Jesus!

Benediction:

Go now in the Love of the Dying Savior

Go now in the Life of the Risen Savior

Go now in the Power of the Reigning Savior

Go now in the Renewal of the Indwelling Savior

Go now in the Glory of the Coming Savior