

Acts 5:12-16

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[0 : 00] Thank you, and we'll be spending some more time later on worshipping our amazing, wonderful God.

! You are blessed this morning by God, and that you will be drawn closer to Him as well through what we've been singing, praying, and as we look at God's Word.

Okay. Thank you, Sandy. So, if you're regularly here, you'll know we're working our way very slowly through the fantastic Book of Acts.

This book that was written by a guy called Dr. Luke, and it's sometimes entitled The Acts of the Apostles, but more rightly should be really called The Acts of the Holy Spirit.

And it's about what was going on in the early church. So, it starts just after Jesus has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven.

[1 : 23] We have the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and then we see the church growing through the Book of Acts. But before we...

So, I've given this morning the title, Peter's Shadow, which will become a little bit more obvious later on. And in a little while, we will be looking at our passage in Acts chapter 5.

But we're going to start off somewhere else in the New Testament. We're going to start off in the first letter, which is written by the Apostle Paul, written to the Corinthian church.

And as you work your way through the Book of Acts, you realise that, as I said, this is all about what the Holy Spirit is doing through his people. Primarily through Peter and through Paul, but also through various other people.

You know, this is God at work. God building his church. God supplying the needs and empowering and encouraging and raising up folk to share the gospel.

[2 : 33] To reveal his love to others. So, we've talked a lot over these last few weeks about miracles and fearing God and everything. But actually, I wanted to look primarily this morning about what the Holy Spirit is doing in our passage.

But as I said, we're going to look first into 1 Corinthians. And this is 1 Corinthians 12, verses 4 to 11. It's quite a familiar passage for most of us, I suspect.

But this is talking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is talking about the Holy Spirit pouring out into people's lives.

And so, let's kick off then. Verse 4. There are different... So, I've underlined the word different here. It's three times just in this short passage.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

[3 : 40] And there are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone, it is the same God at work. So, Paul is making a very clear point here. Different gifts, different service, different workings, but the same God.

All are given by God. All involve His input. So, moving on.

From verse 7. Now, to each one of them, one, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. So, again, I've underlined and made that bold. This is for the common good.

This is for the building of the church. It's not just for individuals, but for all. To one... Now, I've shortened these verses, obviously. But to one, wisdom.

Another, knowledge. Another, faith. Healing. Miraculous powers. Prophecy. Distinguishing between spirits. Different tongues. It's just the list that Paul gives in this passage.

[4 : 42] There are other things spread through the New Testament. So, Paul is listing a number of supernatural gifts here. But also, there are...

We need to consider there are also natural gifts given by God. So, for instance, hospitality. You might think, well, hospitality is just a natural gift.

Yes, it is. But sometimes the Holy Spirit can come and encourage and empower. And so, people can be particularly hospitable or gift of administration.

And there are numerous others through the New Testament that are all attributed to being empowered by the Holy Spirit. So, we move on then to verse 11.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit. And He distributes them to each one just as He determines. So, this is the... Not only are they gifts from the Holy Spirit, but He decides who gets them and when.

[5 : 45] So, Paul is clear. The Holy Spirit provides what the church needs. Why? To grow and to mature. The Holy Spirit chooses how, when, and to whom gifts, ministries, serving roles are distributed.

And He supplies all that is needed to accomplish all that He wants to be done. He gives and He takes away.

It's His church. We are His people. And it's all for His glory. Okay. Okay.

Why? Equipped for service by the Holy Spirit. Let's look a little more closely at this. As I mentioned a few weeks back, in fact, I spent a good proportion of my preach time on God is sovereign.

He sees the whole picture. He knows what is needed in every church and in every individual life. His position is unique.

[7 : 04] And He doesn't get it wrong. Sometimes we feel that He does, but He doesn't ever get it wrong. He doesn't provide a second-rate service at times.

You know, well, God could have done this instead. That would have been better. No, it's always the best from God. And He can be fully trusted. He provides all we need.

And this, I feel, is kind of a two-fold thing. So, firstly, He provides for the needs of the church. It may be financially. In fact, as a church, we can attribute to God's provision over these several decades, numbers of decades, how God has provided financially for us when the mortgage for this place was in the millions, and yet God provided.

He provides ministries amongst us. He provides the correct gift mix. All of this is so that the church can achieve His purposes.

It can bring Him glory, and it can grow in sharing the gospel and seeing the kingdom of darkness driven back. And then He provides for us as individuals.

[8 : 31] It could be health, finance, relationships. We might argue, well, sometimes the finance isn't very good. But God knows. God is perfect.

And God provides all that we need. It could be in our ministries. He provides what we need to achieve what He's calling us to do. Our gifts for service, so that we can glorify Him in the task that He's given us.

Okay. The provision is for His purposes. So all He provides is for His glory.

It's to achieve His plans. It's to see His kingdom come. It's to see the kingdom of darkness driven back. He provides so the church will grow in maturity and in numbers.

So God is sovereign. He provides all we need. And He provides for His purposes. And then the final one in this bit.

[9 : 51] We are called to serve. See, all of this is to equip us to serve Him. Our finances are for His glory.

We are called into different ministries. Whether they're in the church, in the home, in the workplace. And we are to fully utilise everything we have for Him.

If we don't, our gifts are wasted. Someone else will have to add it to their load. Or maybe it just won't happen.

When we receive Jesus as our saviour, we also receive Him as our Lord.

And we are called to be a servant as well as a child of God. So, okay then. Let's move on to our passage in Acts.

[11 : 02] Acts 5, verses 12 to 16. So this is just on the back of the Ananias and Sapphira scandal issue.

Where they've both died because they have lied to the Holy Spirit. And then it goes on to say this. And the apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people.

And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's colonnade. If you're not aware, Solomon's colonnade was within the temple courts in Jerusalem.

No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. So the apostles have been equipped by the Holy Spirit.

And the church is growing. Now, verse 13 is a little bit of a contentious one. It's saying, no one else dared join them.

[12:09] And the meaning is very argued back and forth. But, in verse 14, it says, Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

So clearly it wasn't saying the church wasn't growing. Potentially it could have been added to the apostles' number or something else. But we're not going to go there this morning. Because I had a look at it.

And kind of, yeah, there's so many different views on it. So moving on then. More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

And as a result, so, kind of verses 13 and 14 are kind of aside. So we're going from 12. The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people.

And then moving on to verse 15. And as a result, people brought their sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats. So that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

[13:10] Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits. And all of them were healed. I mentioned last time about the fact that I considered with Jesus walking around everywhere, everyone would have been healed.

But clearly they weren't because there was a whole bunch of people that were being brought in from the towns and villages that hadn't been healed when Jesus had had his ministry. But now they are being healed and the church is growing.

So this is a glorious time for the early church. The Holy Spirit is moving mightily. The kingdom of darkness, that is, you know, sickness and demonic spirits, they're being driven back.

This is an unprecedented time in the church. Holy Spirit, right in the midst. Okay, so if you picked up on the start, I've entitled this Peter's shadow.

And so we're going to look a little bit more closely at verse 15, which has this whole thing of Peter's shadow in it. So we can only assume, because it doesn't state, that at some point or other, Peter is walking around in the sunshine and his shadow falls on someone who's sick and they are healed.

[14:30] Because otherwise, why would people be placed for his shadow to go across them unless this had already happened? So his shadow falls on someone and they are healed.

So what do we get from this, you know, this verse? Okay.

Firstly, shadows are not miraculous. Okay, there was nothing particularly special about Peter's shadow.

Here, shadows are defined by the object that is in the way of the light. But they're not particularly exciting. You know, so my shadow vaguely represents me.

And your shadow will be you. The shadow of the chair will look roughly like a chair, potentially. But there's nothing particularly exciting about them. We know clearly they don't do things of their own accord.

[15:31] So my shadow will be fairly similar to many of yours and Peter's. So the shadow itself obviously didn't heal anyone.

We all get that, don't we? This is God's work. He is the one who heals. Now, for some reason, Peter's shadow was chosen by the Holy Spirit as a focus of healing.

So here we have the Holy Spirit providing a ministry for Peter. Not one Peter was probably expecting. But this was God in his sovereignty doing things his way.

And this is how he was going to heal people. So this, therefore, leads to the sick being laid in the street. Maybe on Peter's route to the temple, since he would be going up there regularly to the temple, as we know, to pray.

So they were being laid out on the street. Okay, so question then. Does this look like an easy ministry to you? Well, let's consider.

[16:41] I've titled this out in the sun, because obviously he had to be in the sun for him to get his shadow. So obviously he's out in the sun. Otherwise there'd be no shadow.

But clearly it isn't an isolated ministry. When the cripple was healed, Peter and John got to share the gospel. And the church was growing.

So what do I mean by that? So, you know, a few chapters earlier, we read the story of how Peter and John were going to the temple. And there was a crippled man, a lame man, who Peter spoke to, and he's miraculously healed.

And then crowds are drawn. The gospel is preached. And the church grows. So, we have to conclude that actually healing is not about just caring for the individual.

But it's about building the church. It's about opportunity for the gospel. It's about glorifying God. So, is this an easy ministry?

[17 : 43] Well, actually, if you look at Peter's life at this time, he's already done jail time for preaching the gospel. And he will do it again. In fact, he's put on death row in only a few chapters' time.

Spoiler, sorry. But, you know, he will be on death row in a few chapters' time. Miraculously released. So, you know, this is times when to be preaching the gospel, to be standing up and proclaiming Jesus, could even result in his death.

And it will eventually one day in the future. He had stood in front of political leaders, been interrogated in front of the religious and political leaders. And he had already been threatened.

And this is only in a short space of time. Now, he's being followed by the sick and those with unclean spirits. And he can't walk to a prayer meeting without having to step over people.

Okay, again, I'm being flippant. But actually, it may look like a simple ministry. But actually, there was so much more because he took it so much further. We know that Peter was preaching the gospel.

[18 : 51] He was proclaiming that Jesus was the way. And so, you know, Peter could have taken different routes. He could have refused to share the gospel.

He could have not gone out in the sun. So, what was the result of Peter's shadow ministry?

Why is the Holy Spirit doing this? Building the church. So, obviously, people are getting healed.

But they could have disappeared off and not heard the gospel. But we know that that's not the case.

Because people were being added. The gospel was being preached.

And so, therefore, the healing ministry was a means to an end. It leads to gospel opportunities. It leads to the church growth. It leads to God being glorified.

[19 : 49] And it leads to Satan's kingdom being driven back. So, what's our response then? I mentioned it earlier.

We are called to serve. The Bible refers to Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The Apostle Paul, who wrote the letter to the Corinthians and much of the New Testament, He calls himself a servant of Christ.

So, the challenge is here, really. We are each called to serve God. Both individually. So, in our own lives, whether it's home, work. But also, within the church, corporately as well.

And our gifts and ministries might be simple. They might be unobserved. Or they might be complicated and right up there on display.

But as we read that passage from Corinthians earlier, we need to remind ourselves that all these ministries, all these gifts, all these works, are from the Holy Spirit. This is what God gives us to serve Him, to serve the church, and to glorify Him.

[21 : 05] And if we are willing, the Holy Spirit will guide us into what He's calling us to do. We need to remember that God will provide.

There are gifts from the Holy Spirit. There are ministries from the Holy Spirit. There are works. And they go to different people and at different times. What He asks us to do, He will provide the means to do it.

Within the church, He will provide. I mentioned earlier, financially, God has provided all that we needed. But He also provides gifts as well to the church. Through us, to achieve what He's calling us to do.

That could be prophecy. Could be words of wisdom. Could be a healing ministry. It could be hospitality or administration. Or any number of other gifts that God gives us to serve Him.

He will provide what we need. And then this leads on to the church being built. People being saved.

[22 : 16] And God getting the glory. Glory. God getting the glory.

So, that's it. We are called to serve. We are called to share the gospel. We are called to see God glorified.

And so, I just want to pause there. And to ask the band if they'd come back up. And I just want to spend a little bit of time considering our own lives and praying this through.

And I'll ask you some questions before we pray. Am I using the gifts He has given me?

Am I serving Him well? Are there ministries He's calling me to? Am I honouring God with my life?

[23 : 31] Is He getting the glory? Are you offering a gift for you?

Lord, you are a good, good father.

Not only have you lavished your grace, your mercy upon us and allowed your son to die on the cross that we might be saved.

You've poured out your Holy Spirit upon us and you've called us to be part of your family, children of the living God. But Lord, I pray that we would also acknowledge that we are called to serve you, whether that's in our homes, in our workplace, in our neighbourhoods and in our church.

Lord, you give what we need to achieve all that you're asking us to. I pray that we would be good stewards of what you give to us, that we would be good listeners guided by your Holy Spirit and that we would desire to step up for you, to see you glorified, to see this universal church, your kingdom growing and to see the kingdom of darkness driven back.

[25 : 30] I pray where we have maybe not taken on what you've called us to.

I pray for forgiveness, Lord. I pray that you would help us to step up once again, to go again for you and to give it all because you gave it all, Lord. Amen.

Amen.