

The Church – Part 1 The Book of Acts

There's much discussion these days about the condition of the church. Many people are wringing their hands. They don't know where to turn. They think the church is just going down the tubes, but I remember in the book of Acts how that the Lord talked to us about the church and about the power, and I also remember reading in Chapter 16... and we're going to look at that in just a few moments... how that God had told us that things were going to come about but that nothing was going to stop the Lord's church. We need to keep reminding ourselves as God's people that the gates of Hell will not prevail against God's church. As we look around us today, we certainly get the impression that the gates of Hell are closing in on God's church, but I believe with all of my heart that, as long as there's a Heaven and an Earth, the gates of Hell will not prevail against God's church and there will always be a witness for the Lord here with us, with the people, with human beings.

The New Testament begins with the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The fifth book of the New Testament, of course, is the book of Acts. The four Gospels tell us about the life of Christ until the day when He was taken up into Heaven. The book of Acts tells us about the life of the early church when the risen Christ was doing great things and mighty things in and through men such as Peter and Paul. And we look at the book of Acts and the acts of the apostles, it should really be called the acts of Jesus Christ because as we read the book of Acts we see the Lord Jesus Christ working in and through His chosen apostles, men such as Peter, John, and Paul.

The Lord Jesus Christ is still working and acting today. To do His work, He uses willing

hands, mouths, tongues, feet, and minds, because He works through people. He works through His church just as He worked through Peter, John, Stephen, and Paul, so He can work through you. Are you allowing the living Lord to work in and through you?

In Hebrews 13:21 it says: *²⁰Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

In Philippians 2:13 it says, *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* We need to be working. We need to be doing of His good pleasure, not of ours, but of His.

Now, notice in the book of Acts with me if you would. In the book of Acts and the first 12 chapters of that book, we see the apostle Peter, and he is the main actor or the main person, the main character that you read about. And in the remaining part of the book of Acts, chapters 13-28, the apostle Paul is the main actor or the character that you read about. And I want you to notice something. Peter and Paul were not supermen but they were people just like we are and God used them in a wonderful way. Both Peter and Paul demonstrating the out-working of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what we're to be doing today. The same God who used Peter and Paul and worked in them and through their lives is the same God who is willing to use us today.

Now, I want to speak with you and share with you these next few lessons that we go through about the church... what's taking place in the church, what took place, what happened, how the church came about, and actually where we are today in the local church.

Well, first, we see the birth of the local church. Now, some people believe that the church started back when Jesus Christ walked on this Earth. Some people believe that the church actually started on the Day of Pentecost. Well, let me remind you it makes a difference when it started, but we need to keep in mind that it started, that Jesus Christ founded His church. I believe that Jesus, while He walked on this earth, He was forming the local church. He was getting people ready. And we read in the book of Acts how that, I believe, on the Day of Pentecost that the church received the power, that it was actually sanctioned by God on that day to do the job that the Lord said it would do and that it should do.

In Acts 2:47 it says: *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* And I believe that those 120 people who were in that upper room waiting for the Day of Pentecost, they were praying and fasting and waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit, waiting for the Day of Pentecost. I believe that was the church, the foundation of the body of believers who were there, and I believe that was the beginning. It was the sanctioning by God of the local church.

Notice in that verse once again, verse 47 of Acts 2, *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* And when the Holy Spirit came, the church was born. Some believe in Acts 2:47. I believe that, according to Matthew 16:18, *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock...* [That's upon Jesus Christ Himself...] *I will build my*

church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I believe He was getting ready. He was forming that local church then. He was getting people ready to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out His work on this earth through the local church, through the church that He was founding. The Holy Spirit came to live in a body of believers, and this body is called the church, according to Matthew 16:18.

In I Corinthians 12:13 it says: *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* Christ began building His church on the Day of Pentecost. Now, remember, I believe that He had started working on this as He walked on this Earth and He told the apostles in Matthew 16:18, he says, "I'm going to build the church and the gates of Hell is not going to prevail against it." I believe He was starting it then and it was sanctioned on the Day of Pentecost. Someday, the building will be completed, and he will come and take us to Heaven.

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 it says: ¹³*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren...* And I submit to you today, and this is not Scripture... this is me speaking now. I submit to you today that one of the fastest growing denominations in this world today is the Church of the Ignorant Brethren, the ignorant brethren who refuse to study the Word of God and get in it and understand what God has for His people. And God help those preachers who are standing today who never study, who never pray, but they simply get up to be seen of man.

In I Thessalonians 4:13-18 once again, verse 13 says, ¹³*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.* ¹⁴*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also*

which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

And I trust that you're comforted today as a child of God, realizing that Jesus Christ could come at any moment and take us to be with Him. Now, I believe that the church, the real church that we keep calling the church today, that we see believers and we say they are the church. Well, they make up the church but the true church... the church means a called-out assembly, and on that day when He says, "Come up hither," when we're all called out, I believe that's when God says, "Now, you're the church. Now, you are my church. You are my people. You have been called out."

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that we're not the church today. I'm saying that God, once again, He's going to give us all the glories that we could ever imagine, especially when He says, "Come up, church. Come up, my people. I'm calling you out of this world." And if you've been saved, if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you've been called out of the world even right now to serve Him and not to serve the world, not to do the things of the world but live for Jesus Christ.

And I want you to notice with me if you would some wonderful promises that God gives. In Acts 1:4 we read about a wonderful promise which God gave. God promised that there would come a day when He would send the

Holy Spirit, and this Holy Spirit is also called The Comforter. In Acts 1:4, it says, *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.*

When did they hear? Well, I'm glad you asked that question, because we look in the book of John and we see Jesus Himself speaking, and He says in John 14:16, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.*

John 14:26: *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

John 15:26: *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me*

John 16:7: *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

John 16:13: *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to live in the believers. The Spirit would also teach the believers and comfort them and guide them into all truth. Christ would leave the disciples that we've read about in the book of John. He would leave the disciples but the Holy Spirit would come to them. Christ would go up; He would go back to

Heaven, but the Holy Spirit would come down.
And just as today He is with us, He was with
those people back on the Day of Pentecost,
because He came on the Day of Pentecost.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time
we've had. I pray for those who have not
trusted You as Savior, may they ask Jesus to
come into their heart right now. For those who
are saved, may they live for You and do Your
will, for it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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Until next time, this is Doug Anderson
reminding you it's a good life living for the Lord.
May the Lord bless you richly is our prayer.