

The Church – Part 12 The Book of Acts

If you're listening to or reading the words that I'm speaking, let me say that it's no accident. God is still in charge, and whether you've been saved or not, God wants you to be saved. And if you are saved and you're living for Him and doing what He wants you to do as a child of God, then, you keep doing it.

If you're saved and you're out of the will of the Lord, that means you're still saved but you're not doing what God wants you to do and somebody's placed it within your mind and in your heart that you're no good to God anymore. Let me tell you to get that out of your mind and heart right now. God wants to use you as a saved person. If you've trusted Him as your Savior, the Bible says you have eternal life. And that eternal life means forever. The word "eternal" means forever. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

So, if you've trusted Jesus as your Savior, you're on your way to Heaven, so my question is why aren't you serving Him? You need to be serving Him. There could be several reasons why you're not serving Him. Maybe you're living in sin and you like that sin more than you like serving God. Well, let me tell you this. God so loved you that He sent His only begotten Son, and Christ loved you so much He gave His life for you. So, therefore, you need to be serving God.

God loves you. We could never love God as much as He's loved us. We could never love Jesus as much as He's loved us, but thank God, we can serve Him here and we can show Him some of the love back. We can give some of that love back by serving Him today. And if

you're out of the will of God today and someone has told you you could never be of use to God anymore, don't you believe that. It's a trick of the devil.

Right now, I'd like for you to turn in your Bible to Acts chapter 2, and we're going to read about a person here, and we're going to continue on in this section of Scripture about God's church, the purpose of the local church, and we're going to see a man who had actually denied the Lord. He said, "I don't know Him." Now, I call that a backslidden condition. I call that a person who has turned his back on God.

But notice what happened in Peter's life. This is a man who denied Christ just before Christ was crucified, and God used him mightily. But I want you to know that the Bible tells us that, after Peter denied the Lord, he went out and he wept bitterly. That means he was sorry. That means that he wanted to be used of God and he was sorry that he had offended the mighty God, that he had denied his Lord.

If you're in a condition today where you're not serving God and you're not serving the Lord, then you need to weep bitterly. You need to say, "I'm sorry, Lord, that I have not been serving You, that I am just not doing what I should be doing for You as a saved person."

But notice what happened after Peter wept bitterly. He got things right with God. He was a saved man. He denied the Lord, but he was not lost when he denied the Lord. He was a saved man, but he got things right with the Lord and God blessed mightily.

Not only did He bless Peter, but notice what happened in Acts 2:41-42. It says, ⁴¹*Then they*

that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ⁴²And they... this is the people who got saved... continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine... the apostles' teaching, the teaching of the Word of God... and fellowship... they stayed together, they worshiped together, they fellowshiped together, and that verse goes on to say... and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

They ate together, they observed the Lord's Supper together, and they prayed together. This was God's local church at Jerusalem. The people, after they got saved in Acts 4 and the verses we just read, they continued to see people saved. It says in Acts 4:4, *Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.*

We see about three thousand in Acts 2 who got saved, and now we see about five thousand more. And this is not even considering these men's families. So we know that there were more than five thousand people who got saved and more than three thousand people who got saved as Peter preached.

And we notice also what happened because of the preached Word going forth. I believe that one of the reasons we do not see revival in our country is because there is not persecution. Why is there not persecution of the Christians in our country like we see in other countries? I believe it's because the people of this country are not standing up for the Lord. If we had more preachers, more teachers, more churches, local churches who would stand up, proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected, the only way to Heaven, then I believe persecution would come to this land. And I believe when that happens there will be revival.

I'm still praying and asking God to give revival. I don't want to see persecution. I want to see revival before that happens. But the way things are going at this point, I believe that persecution is required for us to get serious with God.

But notice Peter preached, people got saved, but notice what happened. In Acts 4:24, Peter and John got arrested for preaching. Let's read that. *And when they... the people... heard that... In other words, what had taken place with Peter and John, they had been preaching... they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.*

Acts 4:31 says, *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they... that's the people... spake... and they witnessed... the word of God with boldness.* Peter and John preached. People got saved. And as Peter and John preached this, they were persecuted, and no doubt, the people in Jerusalem were persecuted.

You can read later on how that people got scattered. They went everywhere from Jerusalem, preaching and teaching the Word of God. These are the believers who got saved because of a backslidden man who got things right with God and let God use him mightily to spread the Word of God.

Once again, if you're out of the will of God, you need to get into the will of God. You need to say, Lord, forgive me of my sin. First John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* You need to get serious with God, and you need to be serving God today as a saved person.

And I'll remind you of this, that every believer is in full-time Christian service, according to the Bible. Ephesians 6:6-7 says, *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* We're not here to serve men. We're here to serve the Lord, and as we serve the Lord, men will get saved. Men, women, boys, and girls as we trust God to give us what we need to present and that is the Word of God. Romans 12:1 says, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Every believer needs to realize that he is in full-time Christian service whether he gets monetary benefits or not. Now, you may be a doctor or a lawyer or a plumber or an insurance agent or a homemaker or a husband or a wife or whatever, but your chief vocation is that you are a servant of the most high God and you are to walk worthy of your high, holy, and heavenly calling, according to Ephesians 4:1 where it says, *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord...* Paul speaking... *beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.*

We need to be fully equipped and fully trained in our service for the Lord and this is the purpose of the local assembly of believers according to God's blueprint in Ephesians 4:11-16. Let me read a couple of verses. Ephesians 4:11 says, *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* And notice this in verse 12: *For the perfecting...* in other words, the maturing... *of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

If you have this attitude that you don't need to go to church to hear the Word of God, you're wrong. You need to be in and you need to

belong to a local, New Testament, fundamental, Bible-believing local church where the Word of God is preached. And they're still around. Don't use the excuse: "Well, I can't find one. There's one not close to my house." Well, get away from your house. Go out to where that church is located and you get into that good, fundamental, Bible-believing, local church that preaches and stands on the Word of God and get busy for God.

The church was given, once again, according to Ephesians 4:12 for the perfecting of the saints. You need to mature in the Lord, for the perfecting, the maturing, of the saints, for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ. The church was given to train the people of God what to do, how to live, to preach the Word. It's not only for the preacher; it's for every one of us. We are to be in service for God.

Now, one person has said this: What do unbelievers notice as they come into local churches today? Do they see a healthy organism? Do they see well-fed members? Do they see Christ in you? Are they convicted by the awesome presence and person of God?

The greatest need today is for a lost world to see the Lord Jesus Christ manifesting Himself in and through a healthy assembly of believers. The world needs to see Christ-like believers who understand and practice God's Word. When God's people are fully equipped for the work of the ministry, they certainly will not be lax in Gospel outreach nor allow mission programs to suffer. When a church makes its priority edification, then true evangelism cannot help but be enhanced as is well illustrated in I Corinthians 14:24-25. The purpose of the local church is to equip the saint to acquaint the sinner with Jesus.

Let's pray. Father, I pray that what I've said would go forth with Your power, not with my

power but Yours. May Your Word be exalted. May You be exalted. I pray for that person who is out of your will today. May that person realize the need to be serving You. And that person who's never trusted You, may that person received Jesus today by saying, "Lord, come into my heart. I'm a sinner. I can't save myself. Please save me today so I can be with you one day in Heaven." In Jesus' 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.