

Acts 5:12-16 – Signs and Wonders

I. Introduction

- What are God's purposes in signs and wonders?
 - to testify to the presence and power of God
 - to bear witness to the truth of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ
- Whether it is God's ordinary providence, or God's extraordinary providence in the form of a miracle, either way, we need to believe that God exists, and that God is at work in the world.
- We need a biblical supernaturalism to protect us against the harmful, naturalistic modern mindset such as Rudolf Bultmann's: "We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means and at the same time believe in the spirit and wonder world of the New Testament."
- **Application:** Our God is not limited or inhibited by the physical realm. He is above it and can do with it what He pleases. We must be inoculated against unbelieving, anti-supernaturalism by taking to heart a passage like this, and believing the account of what God did.

II. The Signs of the Apostles (vs. 12)

- "God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure." (*Westminster Confession*, 5.3)
- Word revelation ceased at the end of the apostolic age (see Dan. 9:24, Eph. 2:20 and cf. Eph. 3:5, Heb. 1:1-4). Miracles are especially associated with the apostolic office, which was a foundational office in the church (2 Cor. 12:12, Rom. 15:18-20)
- Elders are not given the "gift of healing" in the apostolic sense. But elders pray for God to heal (Jas. 5:14-15), and in faith we believe God can and does heal miraculously.
- The terms "signs" and "wonders"
 - A sign points beyond itself to something else: miraculous signs were designed to point to Jesus and the Apostles as those who had divine authority and whose Word should be listened to (Acts 2:22, 14:3)
 - A wonder is something that produces wonder, awe, reverence, and amazement
- **Application:** Whenever we see God do something in the world, whether it is the resurrection of a dead soul granting faith, whether it is a physical healing, or whether it is some other gracious act of God's provision, do we respond with a sense of reverence and awe? Do we glorify God for what He has done? The works of God must never be "ho-hum" to us.

III. The Church Growing through God's Power (vs. 13-14)

- Acts 2 recorded the addition of 3000 to the church. Acts 4 recorded the addition of 5000. Now, Luke says that more than ever, men and women were being "added to the Lord." This is a time of outstanding church growth. This is a supernatural work of God.
- Miracles, on their own, do not produce saving faith. Take for example the resurrection of Lazarus (John 12:9-11). Additionally, the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus reminds us of the insufficiency of miracles on their own, and the sufficiency of God's Word (Luke 16:29-31)

- **Application:** Miracles don't change hearts on their own. The Holy Spirit must change the heart for someone to believe God's Word.

IV. God's Power Manifested in Healing and Deliverance from the Demonic (vs. 15-16)

- Acts contains extraordinary examples of miraculous healing through the hands of the apostles (Acts 5:14, 19:11-12).
- Many signs and wonders dealt with physical healing and deliverance. The gospel of Jesus Christ came to bring healing to a broken, sin-cursed world, and deliverance from the power of the evil one. Therefore, the signs of miraculous healing and deliverance from evil are signs that point to this purpose in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- J.C. Ryle on the purpose of these miracles: "They [all the miracles] are intended to fasten in our minds the great truth that Christ is the appointed healer of every evil which sin has brought into the world. Christ is the true antidote and remedy for the soul-ruining mischief which Satan has wrought on mankind. Christ is the universal physician to whom all the children of Adam must repair, if they would be made whole. In him is life, and health, and liberty. This is the grand doctrine which every miracle of mercy in the gospel is ordained and appointed to teach. Each is a plain witness to that mighty fact, which lies at the very foundation of the gospel. The ability of Christ to supply to the uttermost every want of human nature, is the cornerstone of Christianity."
- **Application:** We must never separate such miracles from their intended purpose: to point us to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, and the necessity of faith in Him to be delivered from our sins.
- The pattern of biblical history is that when God gives further Word-revelation, such as through Moses and the Prophets, or through Jesus and the Apostles, there were often signs and wonders that accompanied that Word revelation to further attest to the truth of the revelation itself. However, miracles are not limited to such times. They are, however, associated in great measure with new Word revelation.
- Our basic mission in the church is to see the nations disciplined by baptism and observing the commands of Christ. And we cannot accomplish that mission in our own strength. It requires spiritual resurrections (contrary to the natural fallen state of mankind) for that mission to advance. It is an impossible commission apart from the supernatural power of God.
- William Carey: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."
- It is not always God's will to heal (2 Cor. 12:7-10). And it is God's will that is always best, though we may not see how or why.
- **Application:** Our faith is tested by what we pray for, and what we anticipate God doing, while we always rest in the sovereign will of God. It takes faith to pray for great things, and it takes faith to wait on God, or to receive an answer to prayer different than what we asked for.