

The Power of a Spirit-Filled Church

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[0 : 00] Have you ever been in the middle of a difficult situation and wondered how you could possibly get through it? It's when we yield to the Holy Spirit that we see the incredible power that God makes available to each and every one of us.

We rise, we persevere, and we triumph. Today we're going to explore how the early church filled with the Holy Spirit triumphed over the attacks of Satan.

It was a church that was unified, magnified, and multiplied. Let's take our first look this morning at the power of a Spirit-filled church and the unfailing unity of a Spirit-filled church.

We are in the book of Acts this morning in chapter number 5, beginning with verse number 12. And through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

Again, we see the place where the early church weekly got together to worship Solomon's porch or Solomon's portico in the temple.

[1 : 25] Then during the week, they got together in small groups in their homes, and they ate together, and they fellowshiped together, and they spent time in God's Word together.

The early church, as we see described in Acts chapter number 5, they stood together as a unified front. We've seen already multiple times in the book of Acts that the early church were in one accord.

They were together, and they were unified, completely unified in their devotion to Jesus Christ and in their devotion to one another.

Now, this unity wasn't superficial, and it wasn't simply obligatory. That when we come together, you know, we better be unified so we can show the world. No, it wasn't that they felt obligated to be unified.

It's because they were unified together in their devotion to Jesus, and they were unified together in the mission that Jesus had left them with.

[2 : 33] The mission to go forth, to as you go, make disciples, and to be teaching and baptizing, just like Jesus Christ had commanded.

In our modern world, unity often seems elusive. From politics, to sports teams, to worship styles, even to Bible translations, divide the church today.

Now, you'd be wondering about sports teams dividing the church. Well, then you haven't been in an Alabama church on the Sunday after an Alabama and Auburn game. A lot of things can divide the church, and so we need to fight for unity.

We need to fight for us to be together and serving the mission that He has left us with. Remember, as a body of believers, our unity in Christ should surpass all of these differences, no matter what our differences are.

Jesus Christ trumps all of that. Jesus Christ is the most important. So we need to strive to build bridges and not walls. This week, consider, think about how you can contribute to the unity of our church community.

[3 : 55] Maybe it's through encouraging words or seeing things from another's perspective. Or maybe, as Lawrence mentioned a little earlier, stepping into a service role.

The military has found this to be true through many, many decades and through many centuries.

When a war is going on, and they're on the front lines, the soldiers are on the front lines, and people are getting shot at, and their lives depend on it, they are less prone to complain about the food, complain about their lodgings, and complain about things that really don't matter.

Why? Because they're united in the mission. Because there's one important thing that they're united together in. Hey, let's stay alive. And so, but they find, the military finds, that then when we're not in

a conflict, when we're not in a war situation, when people are going through their daily routine, going back to the barracks, they go to work, do their job, whatever that job is, and they go back, and things tend to, people, the soldiers tend to get a little bit more irritable, morale tends to be lower. And so we have to understand that today, in our world today, we are at war. We are at war for the souls of men, women, boys, and girls.

[5 : 27] Satan is doing everything he can to keep people from trusting Christ, and understanding the gospel. And so the mission is, share the gospel.

The mission is to go and tell others about Jesus Christ. Jesus said he would not will that any should perish, but all should come to repentance. So step into a service role, whether it's working with the building and grounds, whether it's working in the children's ministry, or the prayer team, or the worship team, or the hospitality team, whatever it is, we're all working together to accomplish the one mission, to be the most effective that we can be in reaching others for Jesus Christ, seeing one another grow, equipping and encouraging one another within the body of Christ as well.

So it's through unity that we see the unwavering magnification of a Spirit-filled church. We find, first of all, they were unified.

Verse 13, Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

Now, the early church wasn't just a social club. They were a people that were set apart. They were different from the world around them. And when they got together, people noticed their authenticity, their love, and the miracles that God was doing among them made others take notice.

[7 : 02] And they earned the respect of their community because of everything God was doing in their midst. Now, this verse probably means that no hypocrites or unbelievers joined them when they worshipped.

Because, think about it, the case of Ananias and Sapphira that we saw last week frightened them a little too much. You know, I know there's some stuff in my life that's not right, so maybe if I hang around to them too close, maybe I'm going to drop dead.

And so none of the rest dared join them, but people esteemed them highly. The New Living Translation, I think, brings out the meaning of this verse much more clearly.

Verse 13, But no one else dared join them, even though all the people had high regard for them. So we find that they were, they had a fear that God was doing something in their midst.

There's something going on that we don't understand, and we don't want to drop dead. But yet, there was, they were held in high regard because they said they're different.

[8 : 17] There's something different about them. They were esteemed highly by the world and by the crowd around them. So how often do we, as modern believers, think about it, live in such a way that magnifies God?

How will our neighbors look at our life and say, it must be a God thing in their life. There's something that is different. How do our actions, how do our words, and how do our lifestyles reflect our faith in God?

Are you the same at work as you are at home? Even, even maybe more convicting, are you the same at home as you are at church?

Remember we talked a couple weeks ago about the masks that we wear? Let's unmask ourselves and realize that, now when the mask comes, we have to be careful, that when the mask comes off, if we realize that we are not displaying the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, self-control, then we better let the Holy Spirit produce that in our life.

Because there's, being who I am is not an excuse. We need to be like Jesus. And so we need to unmask ourselves and be the same everywhere we are. Because if people, because people notice, well, you know, wait a minute, they're like that at church, and, you know, we were over at their house, and we saw the way they acted with their kids, and, you know, at work, you know, they're the same.

[9 : 49] Over and over and over again, people are going to begin to magnify God because of the way that we act. So let's challenge ourselves to live in such a way that magnifies God and make others look at God with admiration.

Not just this faraway God that is religious, that religious people talk about, but yet people will want to be like us because of our lifestyles.

Because of who we are. As we walk in love, as we walk in integrity, and as we walk in humility, our unity will influence our community.

Unity supports God's mission, and our unity will influence our community. God calls the church to be a vibrant, to be a powerful body that bears much fruit and along the way working together in perfect unity, not in perfect doctrine, or perfect systems, or perfect worship, or even perfect leadership.

See, that's why we're likened to a body. Because it gets things done. What gets things done is unity in diversity.

[11:08] 1 Corinthians 12, 12 says, For just as we are, just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

We're all different. We all bring something different to the table, bring something different to the family. And so in diversity, there is unity, and there is a synergy that takes place when we all come together, and we serve together, we work together for one mission.

It's just like getting a team of horses or a team of oxen yoked together, pulling together in the same direction.

It's always going to be much more effective, and it's going to be much more powerful than the same amount of horses, the same amount of oxen, pulling even just slightly in different directions.

It's as we pull together on one path that God sees the most, and God is able to work the most powerful way that He can within our body.

[12:14] So the Spirit-filled church will be unified, unified in the mission that we're here to accomplish. The Spirit-filled church's positive actions will be magnified, and the world's going to notice, because the early church was unified in their mission and their devotion to Jesus Christ.

The early church magnified God, and by so doing, they were magnified by the community around them, because they saw the unity, they saw the love they had for one another, and it made, it had a profound impact on their community.

Next we see the unstoppable multiplication of a Spirit-filled church. Not only were they unified, not only were they magnified, but they also were multiplied.

Let's look at verse 14. And believers were what? Increasingly added to the Lord multitudes of both men and women.

Despite persecution, despite opposition, the early church grew rapidly, in spite of others who were reluctant to come and get a little too close to them, because they were afraid that they might drop dead as well.

[13:30] There were still people coming to know Jesus Christ as their Savior, because during the week, even though people were a little bit afraid to come and get a little too close to them while they worshipped, during the week, individuals were going to those they knew.

Individuals were going around the marketplace and were sharing the love of Jesus and were sharing the gospel with those around them. More and more men and women believed and were added to their number.

Now, rapid numerical growth was a phenomenon of the early church. And I think it's interesting that we see so often, we see they were in one accord and the church multiplied.

They were in one accord and daily people were being added to their number. They were in one accord, Acts chapter 5, and people were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

So we see in Scripture, in the early church, multiplication came with unity. And unity allowed multiplication. Their authentic faith, their unity, and even the miraculous signs that the apostles were working were irresistible to those that were around them.

[14:52] Similarly, today, the church should be growing. Not just in numbers, but in the depth of our faith, in the depths of our love.

Because when we are busy sharing our faith, when we are building relationships with others, and sharing love, and sharing the gospel, God will do His part.

And people will come to know Jesus as their Savior. We will be baptizing on a regular basis. and the church will grow. God will do His part, but we've got to do our part as well.

Go and be His witnesses. Go and share. Now consider your part in the multiplication of the local church. It might be sharing your faith with a neighbor.

It might be mentoring a new believer. And I know some of you are. It might be in supporting missions, as we saw this morning, exemplified in the ministry of the Rakals in the Philippines.

[16:08] Everything that we do, we give, we offer, they are teaching these children, and they're reaching their families as well. Remember, a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.

When we share the truth, when we share God's love, when we share our faith, we don't lose anything by it. We actually gain from it. So one candle lighting from another loses nothing. The Spirit-filled church will be growing. And then lastly, we see the unmistakable signs of a Spirit-filled church.

Let's look at verses 15 and 16 together. So that, so we see all this going on, people were daily being added to the church, multiplied, a multitude of men and women and boys and girls were coming to know Jesus as their Savior.

And the church was held in high regard by the community so that others around them brought the sick out into the streets, laid them on beds and couches that at least the shadow of Peter passing by them might fall on some of them.

[17:23] Now part of the thinking during this first century and before was there was some, there was a lot of belief that the shadow of a person represented the person as well.

Verse 15, also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, the demon-possessed, and they were all healed. Now the apostles were used in the early church to perform miracles demonstrating God's power and also God's love. They met physical needs which verified their message and pointed to spiritual truths.

These signs and wonders were ways of God authenticating the ministry of the apostles. Just as there were special judgments at the beginning of a new era, so there were also special miracles, there were special signs at the beginning of each new era in Scripture from the book of Exodus on. At the beginning of the period of law, Moses performed great signs and great wonders. Elijah, Elisha performed great signs at the beginning of the era of the prophets.

[18:49] Jesus, when He came and He instituted the church age, the age of grace, He performed miracles, He performed signs, and each time God opened a new door, He called man's attention to it.

It was His way of saying, follow these leaders because I have sent them. The mighty wonders of the apostles that they were working, I believe, was a partial fulfillment of the Lord's promise.

And you remember when Jesus said that His followers were due even greater works than He did? They would continue to do them and they would do them in great numbers and the apostles here were continuing the ministry of Jesus, a brand new era.

So the apostles and the prophets laid the foundation of the church. And today, pastors, teachers, and evangelists are building on that and in turn, they are equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry.

So it started with the apostles and God gave to the church pastors, evangelists, and Bible teachers in order to equip the saints so that they can do so everyone can together accomplish the work of the ministry.

[20:13] There are no apostles today and if there are no apostles, there cannot be any longer any apostolic signs or signs of the apostles that we see, we find in the book of Acts in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse number 12.

But this certainly doesn't mean that God's limited. It doesn't mean that God can't heal today. It doesn't mean that someone can ask, hey, would you pray for me? The doctor said they found a tumor and it's malignant.

And we've heard so many cases of God's people praying and they go for their next appointment. They have another PET scan or another MRI or whatever and they come back and they said we can't explain it but there's nothing there.

That's God. God is still in the miracle working business today. So it doesn't mean that God has stopped working but now we have the completed Word of God and we test teachers today not by their miracles but by what they say.

Even in the Old Testament we know that Satan can counterfeit miracles. Do you remember when Moses was there before Pharaoh? What were his, what were Pharaoh's magic people, magic men, his, the guys who had around him, what did they do?

[21:42] They mimicked some of the miracles that Moses did. I thought he cooled Moses, snake ate the other snakes. But as time, but the, the thing that we're given in the Old Testament is a guy

might come and prophesy and perform a miracle but what was the one test according to Deuteronomy 13?

Do they pull you away from God and do they say something that's not part of God's will? So the test wasn't the miracle because Satan can counterfeit miracles.

The test was do they speak the truth? If they don't speak the truth they are a false prophet and what do you do with a false prophet? Now we don't do this today but he said kill them.

Kill the false prophets. So it's important that it was not in the miracles but it was whether the message was true to the word of God. And also I find it significant the end of verse number 16.

What does it say about the healing?

They were all healed. There were no failures and nobody was sent home because they didn't have enough faith. Well we're sorry.

[22 : 59] We, it didn't work. It didn't take. It must be you. No. The power came from God. God was authenticating the apostles ministry.

Everybody who came for healing was healed and was sent home healed. Today we test just like they did in the Old Testament. Does someone speak the truth and does it align with the word of God?

But I want us to understand the greatest miracle that takes place is the transformation of a sinner into a saint. The transformation of someone who is without Jesus apart from God lost in their sin. Holy Spirit illuminates their mind helps them to understand the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and they surrender and they trust Jesus as their Savior.

I want you to know that every single day the resurrections take place. the dead are brought to life. Those who were dead in sin are given brand new life in Jesus Christ.

[24 : 15] And so God is still in the miracle working business. And if God wanted a real live person or a real dead person brought to life He could do that too.

So you the great thing is you and I can take part in miracles every day. When we share the gospel when the Holy Spirit produces new life in another person's life or in the midst of their death they come to life in Christ you and I can take part in miracles as we share the gospel.

We can all participate. Romans 16 Paul believed in the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. So this week take some time to reflect on the transformative power of the gospel. How much power you and I wield as the Holy Spirit uses His word through us. Share your testimony with someone. How you came to know Jesus as your Savior.

They can't refute what happened to you and then you take God's word and you share what He can do through them. Share your testimony and share how God changed your life.

[25 : 30] So in conclusion this morning we've looked at how the early church was unified in their love for Jesus and in their care for one another. We looked at how based on their life their lifestyle they magnified God and in turn those around them were held in high regard and high esteem by those around them because they were different and people wanted to be like them.

Also the early church multiplied because of their unity because of them sharing the gospel and because God was fulfilling what He had promised in His word.

So let's be the church today standing together in unity living in a way that magnifies God and working toward the multiplication of God's kingdom and expecting to see God working miracles.

So some next steps as you take your connection card this morning you're going to see on the back of today's connection card not only I I didn't change the members the memory verse this morning but maybe today is trusting Jesus for the first time.

But a next step would be strengthen my relationships with my community church community embrace unity spend time this week intentionally strengthening your relationships with fellow believers within the body of Christ pray for unity seek reconciliation maybe where it's needed attend a small group Sunday school a Bible study or a church event with a goal of deepening our relationships and promoting unity within the body of Christ next thing would be next step might be to commit time each day to praise and to worship our heavenly Father celebrate and magnify God commit time each day to praise him maybe through a song maybe through prayer through worship or just expressing your gratitude to him thank God thank you for saving me thank you Father that you don't give up on me thank you for being who you are and as you do this keep in mind what Jesus

[28 : 02] Christ did on the cross in your place as well as how our lifestyle how we live can encourage others around us and then thirdly share my faith with someone this week participate in the multiplication share your faith with someone this week it could be someone maybe who's drifted away from their faith someone who no longer attends local church offer them an invitation it could be sharing the gospel with them it could be stopping and saying how about I pray with you right now is there anything that you would like for me to pray with you about pray for God's guidance as you engage in conversations and remember our role is to share the gospel share the love of God show grace and leave the results up to him there is power in a unified body of Christ and as in a way you and you