

(Acts) Purity and Power

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining purity and power in the church by dealing with sin swiftly and seriously, and by setting a precedent for the church to understand the consequences of sin.

Duration: 53:30

Scripture: Matthew 6:19-21, Acts 3:1-10, Acts 4:18-20, Acts 4:29, Acts 4:31, Acts 4:34, Revelation 2:5

Topics: "Spiritual Purity", "Holy Power"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by setting the context in Acts chapter 4, where the disciples had just healed a lame man and were subsequently arrested by the authorities. The authorities commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. The speaker then draws a parallel to the story of Joshua and the battle of Ai, where sin in the camp halted the progression of the people of God. The speaker suggests that sin can also hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the church. However, when sin is dealt with and removed, the power of God is poured out, miracles happen, and multitudes are added to the Lord.

Transcript

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Acts chapter 4. And we're going to pick up tonight, actually, we'll pick up our study in verse 34. But let's pray and then we'll do a little background to catch up. Lord, we pray now as we open your word once again, that you would meet us here tonight.

Lord, we thank you that this is your word. And Lord, through it, you speak to us and Lord, as we consider the things that happened back in those early days of the church. Lord, we know that those things were written to teach us things today as well.

So, Lord, may we be ministered to tonight. May you speak right into our lives personally. May you speak to us as a body of believers collectively.

And Lord, through your word tonight, may you deepen your work in our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

So, as we pick up here in chapter 4, you remember what's been going on. It all happened back in the third chapter there where the disciples were going to the temple, the hour of prayer. And there was that man that was lame.

And Peter and John saw him there and he was healed miraculously by them. And as the crowd gathered around, the apostles began to share the gospel with them. And then as that happened, the authorities came and they arrested them and they took them aside and they commanded them not to speak at all or to teach anything in the name of Jesus.

And of course, the apostles reminded them that there was a higher authority and that authority was God himself and that they were going to be obedient to God. And then, you know, when they left them, they went back to their own company. And that's where we studied last week.

They went back to their own company and they did the wisest thing they could have done. They prayed and they said, Lord, you hear their threats. You hear what they're seeking to do now.

Lord, we're asking you to intervene not to necessarily do anything about them, but Lord, that you would empower us. And you remember, as we studied last week, that's what they desired, that God would give them a fresh outpouring of the spirit. And that is indeed what did happen.

And so in verse 31, going back to that prayer meeting there, and when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness. So there's a fresh outpouring of the spirit, as we pointed out in our last study. And remember, as we talked about that, that when it comes to the whole idea of the baptism of the spirit or the filling with the spirit, it's not just a one time event, but it's something that reoccurs over and over in our lives.

And as often as we sense that maybe there's some dryness, as often as we sense that maybe there's a lack of power, we need as they did to gather together and to pray and to ask the Lord for a fresh outpouring of the spirit. And so he did that. And then verse 32 says, in multitudes of them that believed were of one heart, the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.

Neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common and with great power gave the apostles witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles feet and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. So there in the early days of the church in Jerusalem, we saw this when we were studying the second chapter.

There was sort of a communal thing going on. They were ministering to one another and people were so set on the things of the spirit. They were so focused on the things of heaven, really an eternity that they weren't holding on to material things.

They weren't hoarding their possessions, but they were just freely. Turning those things over for. The use of everyone, just so the whole fellowship could be ministered to in whatever ways the apostles saw fit.

And so they brought these things and they put them before the feet of the apostles. You know, people do. Wild and crazy things when they first get saved.

And, you know, perhaps you can think of. Some of the radical kinds of things you did when you first got saved. I know that I did radical stuff back then.

You know, I went home and I looked at my possessions and I thought, you know, I don't need most of this junk and I just got rid of it. And a lot of the stuff that was precious to me, you know, things that I was really holding on to and cherishing. I had a great album collection back then.

Remember albums, the thirty three and a third? I had a great collection of albums and I was proud of that. And, you know, I had some great underground British rock and roll and, you know, things that kind of, you know, were part of my identity. And yet when I became a believer, I came home and I saw those things that I really did in some ways cherish and I just took them and I dumped them all in the trash can.

And, you know, it was that kind of radical sort of a thing that was going on, and we were having all night prayer meetings and we were out evangelizing and, you know, doing all those things. I was single at the time, so that made things a bit easier when it came to that. But my point is this.

Why is it? That when we first come to the Lord, we have that radical kind of experience where we just really sell out for the Lord. We just turn our back on the material things and we just get that heavenly perspective. But then as time goes on, we seem to sort of drift back into the things of the world.

And I think of even the experience that we had at this church here back in the late 60s and the early 70s with the counter culture, the hippie people and all the great things that took place. And, you know, so many of these hippies they had already, in some senses, turned their back on the establishment and they had, you know, gotten rid of the desire for possessions and things. And so, man, they came to the Lord and then it was just, you know, didn't want to have any part of the world to speak of.

They wanted to just be the Jesus people and have their their focus on heaven and just go about serving the Lord. And, you know, back then there was all the great music that was happening. And it wasn't because there was some big Christian record company where you could make millions of dollars and become a celebrity of some sort.

But, you know, they were just jumping in their VW vans and people would pay them for gas and give them some food and a place to lay their head. They were going all over the country, just sharing the gospel, sharing their music, just loving the Lord. And, you know, the sad thing is a lot of those former hippies and those early Jesus people that did that, they became the yuppies later on.

They were the ones that, you know, started to embrace the whole materialistic thing again. And so often those kinds of things happen. And we need to, I think we need to remember what it was like in those early days.

Remember, Jesus, as a matter of fact, in writing to the Church of Ephesus, recorded in Revelation, Chapter two for us, he he spoke to this church that was in so many ways the ideal church, a great church, sound in doctrine, contending for the faith, full of good works. I mean, just the kind of church that you'd want to go to if you moved into a neighborhood and were looking for a good church. But he said, yet I have this one thing against you.

You've left your first love. And, you know, he he actually said we needed to do something about that. He said, remember from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works or else I will come and I will remove the candlestick from my presence.

And what the Lord was basically saying is that when we come to a place where we realize that we're no longer in love with Jesus like we used to be, we're not to just settle for that. We're not just to say, well, you

know, that was those early days. And I was, you know, really excitable back then.

And I was a little ignorant and all and, you know, just sort of pass it off as that. We need to realize, no, that was a work of the spirit. We need to get back to that.

And how do we do it? Well, Jesus told us, remember from where you've fallen, repent and do the first works. And I think some tonight, perhaps many of us need to think back on those days and remember what it was like back then and get back to those things. And so with them here, they were just it wasn't anything for them to take their possessions and just they they didn't want to be tied to that.

They wanted to be a people who were living for the Lord, a people that were heavenly minded, people that were thinking on the things of eternity. And so that's how they were conducting themselves. And then verse 36 says, and Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which being translated or interpreted is the son of consolation or the son of encouragement.

He was a Levite and of the country of Cyprus. He having land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet. Now here we're introduced to a new person.

In the book of Acts, we, of course, in the beginning of Acts, we had once again a list of the twelve apostles. Matthias was added to the group, you remember, and Mary and a few others were part of that early group. All people that we were familiar with from the Gospels for the most part.

But now here in Acts, a new person is introduced to us. His name is Joseph or Joseph, but the apostles had given him a nickname and the nickname that they had given him was the son of encouragement, the son of consolation. And this is Barnabas.

And of course, as we go through acts, we're going to find out a lot more about Barnabas as he becomes the friend of Paul, the traveling companion of Paul, the the co-apostle in many ways with Paul, but a great man and a man who. Was an encourager. A man who never missed an opportunity to just come alongside of someone and to give them encouragement.

You know, that's a great blessing in the body of Christ to meet those people that are just. They're encouragers, you know, they just come alongside of you and they just come along with encouraging words, they come along and they ask you how you're doing and then they pray for you and then they just tell you, you know, the Lord's got his hand on your life. He's got a good plan.

You know, keep going and we need more people like Barnabas around more sons of consolation, sons of encouragement. And again, here we see a man who was sold out. He came to the Lord and man, he wanted to just go for it completely with the Lord.

Now it says he was a Levite and he was from the country of Cyprus. Cyprus, of course, is the island out there in the Mediterranean. And Barnabas was part of that Levitical order.

He wasn't a priest, but he was part of that family from which the priest came. And he would have had some sort of ministry, perhaps in the temple itself. So he's a godly man and he's a man who, having met Christ, just completely gave everything over to the Lord.

So he had some land and he sold it and he brought the money and he laid it at the feet of the apostles. But a certain man now here, Luke, gives us a contrast. There's a contrast that he's going to develop here

between these two people, between Barnabas, the son of consolation, and this new person that we're introduced to, along with his wife now.

Ananias and Sapphira. They were a couple in the church, in Jerusalem, and they also had some land and they sold it. Now, what motivated them to do that? We're not sure we can speculate a little bit.

Perhaps it was when Barnabas did this. Deed. That there was, you know, just sort of recognition and and praise and honor, not in in a weird sense, but just perhaps, you know, people were looking at Barnabas thinking, what a what a godly man, what a what a wonderful gift, what a blessing that he would take and do this.

And because of this act, you know, he had become highly esteemed in the fellowship. And it could be that Ananias seeing that. That he coveted that same kind of admiration toward himself and that he would be held in that kind of esteem among the people.

We don't really know what motivated him, but he did have a possession and he sold it. But verse two tells us he kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and he brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why have Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

So Ananias comes and perhaps perhaps there was a gathering of people. Maybe it was during one of the services or something. And again, perhaps that was how it happened with Barnabas.

So now Ananias, he's coming to get his reward as he was thinking of it for his gift before everyone. And he comes and he presents it as though he had sold the land for a certain price, but he was being deceptive. Now, Peter, notice Peter is just speaking completely by the Holy Spirit at this moment.

Peter is exercising the gift of the word of knowledge. He has a word of knowledge. He has discernment.

He knows what's actually gone on with Ananias and his wife. No one else knows it, but Peter knows it because the Lord has revealed it to him. And so he basically challenges Ananias and Ananias hearing these words, he fell down and he died.

He gave up the ghost and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, carried him out and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in and Peter answered unto her, tell me whether you sold the land for so much.

And she said, yes, that was the price for so much. Then Peter said unto her, how is it that you have agreed together to tempt the spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door and they shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet and yielded up the ghost.

And the young man came in and found her dead and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. Heavy, heavy stuff. Now, the question is, you kids need to quit running around, OK? The question is, what was their sin, really? You know, some people have thought, well, this is so harsh, I mean, you know, after all, it was their possession.

And if they wanted to just, you know, give part of the money, why why such a harsh judgment? I mean, you know, that that seems unfair that God would require all of the money. I mean, you know, couldn't they make the decision? You see, we need to realize that there was no requirement given. About any of this, this was something that was completely voluntary, there was nothing that the apostles had put forth and said that you need to, you know, sell your land and give your money to the church or nothing like that was going on.

It wasn't those kind of building project where we're going to need to take a 90 percent offering this week instead of the normal 10 percent or whatever. It was nothing like that. It was completely of a person's own volition.

And so they were under no obligation to give any money. They could have given part of the money. But the problem is they were being hypocritical.

They were pretending like they gave the whole amount that they had received when in actuality they were keeping back part of it for themselves. And so their sin was not keeping back the money. Their sin was hypocrisy.

They were being hypocrites. And because of that hypocrisy, they were slain by the Lord. Now, notice they weren't slain by Peter.

Peter didn't pronounce any judgment upon them. He didn't say, because you've done this, Ananias, you're going to die. He didn't pronounce a curse on him.

Peter didn't do anything. He just simply simply just made sure he understood that he knew his sin. And then the Lord sovereignly at this point, the Lord dealt with Ananias and Sapphira.

Now, there's a couple of things that we need to consider from this story. And the question, of course, that arises immediately is why why such a harsh judgment? Why did God deal so severely with them? And how come that kind of thing doesn't happen any longer? Well, we can all be thankful, I guess, to some extent that that kind of thing doesn't happen any longer. But I think there is a reason why.

God dealt with them like he did at this stage in the church's progress, if you go back into the scripture, back into the Old Testament, for example, whenever a new period or Dispensation. Would begin with God's people.

God would often do things initially that were really. More than anything else to set a precedent. Things that he would do in those early stages, he would not necessarily do later on, but he was setting a precedent, and especially when it came to the issue of holiness, especially when it came to issues of sin.

Remember back in the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation, back when the tabernacle was being constructed and the priesthood was being established and the law had just been given. And they're entering into this whole new relationship with the Lord, his covenant people in the Mosaic sense, not in the Abrahamic sense only. And remember back at that time as they were just inaugurating the whole worship.

The tabernacle worship and the beginning of the sacrificial system, the priesthood and all of that, you remember how Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, how they offered strange fire before the Lord and how they were slain by the Lord in a similar fashion. As to the way Ananias and Sapphira were slain, now they were actually consumed by fire, but it was something that was the sovereign move of God. There was

no human instrumentation involved.

God just seeing their sin there in the early stages, he judged it immediately. We find that later on in the history of Israel, as a new period begins under David and the Davidic monarchy, you remember the story there in Second Samuel where David is wanting to transport the ark to Jerusalem and how he transports it wrongly and in doing so, God intervenes and he judges this man, Uzzah, and he was slain and in David himself, he thought that that was harsh. And many people reading that story, they thought, oh, how harsh of God and likewise with Ananias and Sapphira.

But I believe what the Lord was wanting to do here was to set down a precedent. The Lord was wanting to set down the precedent that sin will quench the work of God. Therefore, sin has to be dealt with swiftly and seriously.

And, you know, the apostles learned that lesson. They learned the lesson of Ananias and Sapphira, they learned the lesson that God would not tolerate. Willful sin within the church, and so all throughout the book of Acts and all throughout their epistles, they address the issue of sin and they rebuke sin and they gave instruction on how to deal with sin.

And they taught us that there are times when people needed to be actually removed from the fellowship and things like that. And the apostles themselves, they were strong on church discipline. And under the ministry of the apostles, the church remained very strong.

But shortly after the apostolic period. The church became lax in the area of discipline and the church went downhill from there. And you can see it so clearly as you study church history, it wasn't long after the age of the apostles that the church began to be infiltrated by all kinds of corruption.

And the church failing to purge itself, cleanse itself, failing to exercise the discipline. The church became so weakened, you see, another thing that we understand from this story is that Satan has a variety of methods that he uses to try to undermine the power and the effectiveness of the church. Now, up until this point, his attack has been external.

He's been attacking the church from the outside. And we just read through that. But now he changes his strategy and here what he attempts to do is get in to the church, infiltrate the church and try to undermine it from the inside.

Now, because of the divine intervention of God, his plan failed at this point. And so shortly after this, we'll see that he goes back to the previous strategy of attacking the church once again externally. But as I've already said, after the apostolic age and after those strong men of God passed off the scene, he crept into the church and that has been his greatest weapon against the church ever since the post apostolic age.

It's been to bring it down from the inside out. You know, there's nothing worse than a church that's infected with sin. There's nothing worse than a church that is lax in the area of discipline because it quenches the spirit, it grieves the spirit of God, it brings to a halt the work that the Lord wants to do.

And I'll tell you, it is so frustrating. In that kind of a situation, because it's a kind of situation that should not exist. You know, we can't really do much about the world attacking us, we can't do much about that external kind of an attack against the church.

I mean, we just have to pray about it and and ask God to guard us and keep us and give us strength to persevere. Or, you know, that's pretty much what we do when we're dealing with that kind of thing. It in a sense, it's beyond our ability to stop.

But when the attack is coming from the inside. There is something that we can do about that and we should do something about that. But sadly, that laxity that began to surface in the post apostolic period has been quite prevalent throughout much of the history of the church.

There is a reluctance to deal with sin, there is a toleration of sin, and I think that toleration of sin has been what has really weakened the church as far as it being the witness that it ought to be. You know, we often read about the church here that we see in the book of the Acts and we see the power that they had and we see the effectiveness. And we marvel because they didn't have half the things that we have as far as technology and the ability to communicate and all those things.

But yet they seem to have a greater impact on their world. And we look at that and we wonder, well, why was that? And where is that power that we read about? Well, I think we've lost that power to a large degree because we've lost that. Attitude that God has towards sin and we allow it to come in, we tolerate it.

We give place to it. We don't want to deal with it. And that weakens the church's witness, that takes away that power.

And so I believe that the reason why God dealt harshly here in these early stages or what seemed to be harshly anyway to us was because the Lord was setting a precedent. He wanted them to understand that sin would. Undermine the mission of the church, therefore, it was not to be tolerated.

You know, it's funny when you think about this and as you look at the history of the church, it's important when we talk about dealing with sin and when we talk about discipline, it's important that we really have a biblical perspective on it and a spirit led perspective. And of course, they're going to go hand in hand with each other. But you do have those times.

I think more times than not, you have a great laxity when it comes to discipline, but you do have those times when there was almost like a reaction to the laxity. And then, as is often the case with a reaction, you go to the other extreme and there have been those times in the church where the discipline in the church was so severe. That it was, I think, completely out of sync with what the Lord had intended.

Now you say, well, well, this is pretty severe right here. Yes, it was. But it was God who did it.

You see, it wasn't Peter saying, Ananias and Sapphira have lied to the Holy Spirit. Take them out and kill them. But, you know, later on in church history, unfortunately, in a reaction to the laxity, leaders rose up who did take that mentality.

And John Calvin is an example of that, John Calvin and his zeal to to have a righteous society. There in Geneva, he actually voted to have Michael Severitas put to death for blasphemy, and you see that kind of severity happening sometimes in the church as a reaction to the laxity, but it's an overreaction and it obviously wasn't biblically based were to exercise church discipline. God never tells us to kill anybody.

Church discipline is to point out sin to an individual and, as we pointed out to him, give them the opportunity to repent. But if they refuse to repent, then we are to remove them from the fellowship until

they come to their senses, until they realize the seriousness of the matter and they turn from their sin. And come back to the Lord.

So I think that's really the the message here with Ananias and Sapphira, that we're not to let sin go, we're not to just turn a blind eye to it, but we're to deal with it. Because if we don't deal with it, we will lose. What we so desperately need, the power of the Holy Spirit, you see, we can't do this thing.

Without the power of the Holy Spirit, we can't fulfill the Great Commission, we can't accomplish the purpose for which God has established the church without the power of the spirit. And so the price is way too high to allow sin to go unaddressed, willful sin, blatant sin to go unaddressed. And let me just clarify that that's what I'm talking about here.

I mean, we all have sin. We all have areas where God is still working in us and he's dealing with us and he's showing us things and we're getting convicted and we're repenting. But I'm talking about willful sin, blatant sin, sin that is unexcusable, sin that is just an outright act of rebellion against the Lord.

That's the kind of thing that we cannot afford to allow to go undealt with in our midst because it will deprive us of the power we so desperately need. To accomplish the work of the Lord in our generation. And so as we look at this situation here and as we see what happened with Ananias and Sapphira, we go on and we find that immediately there was a fresh surge of the power of God upon the apostles.

And so we read here in verse 11, and great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things. You know, the fear of God is a good thing. It's not a bad thing.

A lot of people don't even like that terminology. In our politically correct environment, nobody wants to talk about the fear of the Lord because we just want to talk about love, but the fear of the Lord is a good thing. It's that healthy respect of God and his majesty and of his holiness, of his greatness that just says, Lord, I don't want to do anything ever in any way, shape or form to offend you.

Or even further than that, because we have a love relationship with our father, Lord, I would never want to do anything that would hurt you or pain you, which is what grief means grieving the Holy Spirit. But that's what happened as a result of this. And you can imagine that that would have been the outcome.

Great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things. And now look in verse 12. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

The Lord was working powerfully. And, you know, I really believe that. We need a fresh empowering of the spirit in our lives today, in the church today, in 2002, 2003, as we're coming up upon 2003, we need a fresh empowering, you know, people used to think that.

Those guys back in the early period, they needed all that power of the Holy Spirit back then to get this thing launched and, you know, the world they went into was so corrupt and all they needed that that extra power. But when the world became somewhat Christianized, there were these theologians that came along and said, well, you know, we we don't need that anymore. We've got the completed text of the Bible.

We've got the canon of Scripture. But not only that, we've got seminaries, we've got professors and we've got all kinds of really smart people to, you know, tell us things that will help us to do this thing that they didn't know back then. And and during that period.

Eighteen hundreds early part of the last century. When those in the West were thinking that the kingdom of God was just around the corner and we were going to bring it in because that's how the kingdom of God was to come, it was just, you know, through spreading that social gospel, more and more people would start to love each other and the world was becoming Christianized. And they really downplayed the necessity of the power of the spirit back then.

But things have drastically changed since that period of time, haven't they? And back then when they were, you know, kind of forecasting the future, they were saying things are getting better every day and in every way. And it won't be long before things are just perfect. Utopia is coming.

We're going to bring heaven to earth, they thought. But now. Less than 100 years later, our motto is completely the opposite, isn't it? Every day and in every way, things are getting worse and worse and worse, and it's true.

And we've actually come full circle. We've we've come back around to the kind of world, you know, large degree that the apostles themselves encountered when they went out to spread the gospel. I was just reading some articles today and, you know, it's Christmas time and we're here celebrating as Christians the birth of our Lord.

And most people, at least in Western civilization, have perhaps not actually celebrated that in the fullest sense like we would because we're born again believers. But they've acknowledged that Christmas is that day, the birth of Christ. But now there's a big battle right here in the United States of America where Christmas came to such a prominent place back in the 1800s and was given government recognition as a special day and all that.

Now we've come to a place where. You're in trouble in your classroom as a public school teacher, if you even mention the word Christmas and. They want to take Christ out of Christmas.

Some say that's not really a problem, he was never there in the first place, that might be true. But the point is, they want a Christless society, period, they want a godless society, they want a society that's freed from even the mention of the name Jesus Christ. And now they're wanting us to get back to the real celebration that was going on December 25th, Saturnalia.

And they've got all kinds of books coming out now and all kinds of information where you can go back and join in those pre-Christian festivities, the pagan festivities. And most of the stuff that we used to celebrate Christmas came from that anyway. But my point is this, we're back at a place where there is great opposition to the message of the gospel.

And it's my opinion that we desperately need the power of God once again upon our lives individually and upon our church collectively, upon the church. And we need the kind of power that we read about here in verse 12, by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. God have mercy on us and may he fill us with his spirit and may we see a reoccurrence of these things.

The Lord has done this. And I believe the Lord would like to do this again. The other night we were having a meeting, the board of the church was gathered together for Christmas meal.

And as we were meeting, we were just talking about some different things and we got to talking about some of the older, well, some of the old times here at Calvary Chapel, back in the earlier days. And somehow we just got onto the subject of just the power of God that was being demonstrated back then

and the healings and things that were taking place. And Don McClure was telling us something that I never knew he was telling us about how he had been run over by a tractor at the time and his leg was broken.

And, you know, went to the hospital and had it set and put in a cast and all of those things. And then one night is as he was teaching there at the Bible study, they gathered around and laid hands on him to pray afterwards. And as they prayed for him, he said he felt something snap in his foot.

And as he felt something snap, he just thought, I'm healed. And one of the people that was involved with the ministry that he was doing that night happened to be a medical doctor, the one who had set his foot and, you know, treated him medically. And he said when he looked at him, he said, I think I'm healed.

He said the doctor looked at him with a look and as I like, you know, I'm a doctor that that doesn't happen. You know, we can understand certain kinds of healings, but you've got a broken bone. But yet he said, no, I think I'm healed.

So he had it was some sort of a brace kind of thing. And he said he took it off. And he just felt inclined to jump up and he jumped up right out of the chair, landed, felt great and went dancing, jumping around the room, kind of like the guy we read about in Acts three, jumping and leaping and praising God.

And everybody was so thrilled. The Lord had healed. A miraculous healing, said he went home that night and when Gene answered the door, he jumped in, you know, because he had left on crutches and he jumped in, danced around the house.

She thought he was crazy, but the Lord had touched him. I remember Greg Laurie one time telling the story about being right here in this pulpit preaching and somebody sitting in the front row, a gal with her leg broken in seven different places. And he said the Lord spoke to him and said, I'm I want to heal that person tonight.

And he was like, oh, Lord, please, you know, what if it doesn't happen? But he stepped out in faith. He said God wants to heal you. And the Lord healed her.

A break in seven places. You see, those things have happened. Those things have happened all throughout the history of the church.

But the question is, why do they stop? And apart from maybe the explanation of God's sovereignty, I would say they stop quite often because we stop them. By allowing sin to come into the camp and by not dealing with it. Just like back in the time of Joshua, you remember they were going in, they were taking the land, they went to Jericho as God in the first place as they gone into the land and they had this glorious victory over Jericho.

And prior to. The Lord had said, now Jericho is mine, everything in its mind, don't touch anything, it's all dedicated to me. Once we take Jericho, the spoil is yours, but Jericho is mine.

And so they went, they took Jericho, they went next to Ai, a smaller city, by comparison, they thought, no problem, we're going to take this a piece of cake. And they went up against Ai and they were smitten. And they came back and Joshua fell before the Lord and there he was crying out, oh, God, why have you allowed this? And Lord, you've forsaken us.

And, you know, and the Lord spoke and said, get up. The Lord said, there's sin in the camp. And then they went through this process of the Lord revealing that Aiken had taken this golden wedge in this Babylonian garment for himself, he coveted and he was taken and then he was executed.

But you see what happened while sin was in the camp, the people of God could not progress. They couldn't take the land. Their progression was halted.

And could it be that sin has come into the camp and stopped the progression, that work of the spirit among us? Could it be that that's happened in our very own lives? Not just looking out at things collectively, not just looking at our fellowship, not just looking at the church in general, but we always have to bring it down to what about our own lives? Was there a time when there was that sense of God's power? There was that sense of his presence. There was just that sense that the Lord was with you and you were taking ground, you were advancing, you were growing, you were doing all those things that we read about in the scriptures. But then things started to slow down and maybe in some situations things have come to a grinding halt.

Could it be that we've allowed sin to go undealt with in our lives? Could it be that we've actually stopped it ourselves because we brought things back in that the Lord said, I threw those out at one time? And, you know, this happens, it happens more times than we'd like to think. We come to the Lord and he deals with us and he frees us, and as I said initially, we get rid of those things. But as time goes on, we lose focus and we start bringing those things back in.

And then we wonder what happened to those good old days, what happened to that sense of God's presence, what happened to that, you know, that feeling of his power in my life, what happened to that? You know, the Lord speaking to me, what happened to that? Could it be that we've quenched it? Verse 13, and the rest dared not join themselves to them, but the people magnified them and believers were the more added to the Lord multitudes, both of men and women. So you see, when the sin was dealt with, the power of God was poured out. Miracles were taking place and multitudes were added to the Lord.

You see, when God is moving in power, things are happening, people are standing in awe of God, there's a fear and there's that healthy conviction and people are coming to faith. And then we read in so much. And we'll just finish up reading this last part here in so much that they brought forth the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow.

Some of them there came also a multitude out of the cities round about under Jerusalem, bringing sick folks and them which were vexed with unclean spirits. And they were healed, everyone. So great things were happening.

Peter, that man of God. People saw in Peter the power of God. And so they went and they got their friends, their family, their anybody that they could think of that was sick, suffering in any way, and they just put them there in the streets where they thought perhaps Peter would pass by and maybe his shadow would touch them.

And it doesn't say specifically whether or not they were healed by that, but I think they probably were. Later on, we read about the apostle Paul and his ministry that God did unusual miracles through Paul and even through his sweat bands, people were healed by touching the sweat bands. And I think there was a similar thing happening here with Peter.

But the point is this as we close, sin tried to come in. And of course, Satan's objective was to stop the work of God. God stood up against it himself and he thwarted Satan's plan.

But he set a precedent, he left us an example that we are to stand against sin, were to exercise discipline. And only when we do that can we expect to have the power of the spirit of God working in our lives. Only then can we expect that the church will move on and progress as it ought to.

And so as we close tonight, I would just invite you if perhaps you look at your life and it seems that your progress has been halted. It seems like at one time you were closer to the Lord than you are now. It seems at one time that that God's hand was upon you and things were happening, but it all seems to have dried up.

As we close in prayer tonight, I would just encourage you to ask the Lord to search. And to point out if there are things that have come in that have quenched the spirit, if there has been a toleration of sin, if there has been a failure to exercise discipline, and if the Lord would reveal something that you would then just put it before him and ask him to deal with it so that you can see that progress that God wants to make in your life and through your life restored. Let's pray.

Lord, that is our prayer tonight. And we look at this text here and. Lord, we see this important lesson and so, Lord, for us individually.

Here tonight, Lord, speak to our hearts. If there are things that we have allowed to creep back into our lives that you don't want to be part of our lives, Lord, convict us this evening. Lord, perhaps some have harbored sin for a long period of time.

And they've wondered why things are the way they are now. Lord, may you show them that that sin needs to be confessed. And turned away from and that you'll remove it and you will restore.

And Lord, for us as a fellowship, oh, Lord, purge. The sin, Lord, you said if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged by you. And so, Lord, may we do that so that you can work.

In us, among us and through us, like you desire to work in our hearts tonight, your work of conviction and your work of grace. We thank you for your mercy in Jesus name. Amen.

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