

God Shakes the Church (9.9.1985)

by Nigel Lee

Nigel Lee's sermon emphasizes the early church's reliance on prayer and God's sovereignty amidst external threats and internal challenges.

Duration: 1:17:54

Scripture: Acts 2:41, Acts 4:23-31

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experience of preaching in a bar at the student's union. Despite the distractions of people drinking and eating, he mustered the courage to speak about the gospel. Surprisingly, a man named David, who used to argue with the speaker, became interested in the message and sparked public debates that attracted more listeners. By the end of the week, around 400 people were attentively listening to the gospel. The speaker emphasizes the importance of revering God and responding to His holiness, as well as the power of prayer and the miraculous signs and wonders that accompanied the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem.

Transcript

Read together from chapter 4. Acts chapter 4, verse 23. I'll read in English, and you follow in your own version, and the translators over the headphones can read along from 4.23 down to 5.11. On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

Sovereign Lord, they said, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David. And he quotes from Psalm 2. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats.

Enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of

God boldly.

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

There were no needy persons among them, for from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus whom the apostles called Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. Now, a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

With his wife's full knowledge, he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart, that you have lied to the Holy Spirit, and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men, but to God. When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died, and great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land? Yes, she said, that is the price.

Peter said to her, how could you agree to test the spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also. At that moment, she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in, and finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. Let us pray together. O God, God our Father, come upon us tonight as we consider these solemn verses from Holy Scripture.

Lord, we pray that you would speak to us in those areas where we need encouragement and challenge and correction. O God, we call upon you that this passage may live in our imaginations and our hearts as we sit here together tonight. May your word accomplish the purpose for which you gave it.

We have been singing, O God, of the purity of the bride and the happiness of the Son of God as he sets eyes upon her. O God, use your word to purify us, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, we've read of two or three great events from the experience of the early church. Events that are not common, are they, to our own experience? Have you ever been in a building that was shaken to its foundations during the course of a prayer meeting? I've been in a building that was shaken by an earthquake, and then the prayer meeting started. Never a building where the sense of God was so real in a prayer meeting that the place was shaken to its foundations.

I'm sure we have known something of that sharing of possessions that none amongst us may have need. But do you know much about people being instantly struck dead for tempting the Spirit of the Lord? I don't know any church or any Christian youth movement where these experiences are a common reality. The church, as we read the Acts of the Apostles, is moving on from the day of Pentecost.

We must ask ourselves, what can we learn from these verses? For our teams, for our family life. The day of Pentecost, in many ways, is like a wedding day. And there are certain features of a marriage that are entirely temporary.

Certain parts of that marriage festival that belong only to that day and are not regularly repeated. The long white dresses that the lady wears. She doesn't spend the rest of her married life going around in a long white dress.

The bridesmaids. You don't see married people being followed around for the rest of their life by two or three ladies in pink dresses or blue dresses holding flowers. I don't know what customs you have in your country.

We have cars that drive around with white ribbons on the front if they're carrying newly married people. But married people don't spend the rest of their life going around in cars with white ribbons on the front. You all have certain customs, certain symbols that express the solemnity and the joy of that one unique special day.

And so too when we read of the Acts of the Apostles, we read of the day of Pentecost. There were certain features that are not constantly, regularly repeated all the time in the life of the church. The important thing about a marriage is not the day it started, but how it continues.

And the day of Pentecost was like a great marriage festival, a great public celebration party, if you like, there in Acts chapter 2. But as we read through the book, we begin to see how the church goes on and some of the struggles that it went through. And in these verses that we read, we can see the church under attack. Under attack from two separate directions.

From the outside with the threats of the authorities and from the inside. In chapter 4 of the Acts, Peter and John have been summoned before the Sanhedrin. Now this was the highest council in the Jewish land.

This wasn't some little Galilean parish council. This was the most solemn gathering with the highest authority in the Jewish nation. Turn back to chapter 4. Verses 5 and 6. The next day the rulers, the elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.

Anas the high priest was there and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and other men of the high priest's family. These were the folks that had actually sat in judgment over Christ and condemned him to death. And in verse 18 we see that these men commanded Peter and John not to preach Christ anymore.

They called them in again. They commanded them not to speak nor teach at all in the name of Jesus. Satan's attack from outside.

Satan's goal is always to stop evangelism. To prevent people from preaching Christ. And so the early church is suffering the buffeting and the anger of the external authorities.

But then in chapter 5 we can see also that Satan fills the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira. So soon after the church is spoken of as being filled with the spirit, chapter 4 verse 31, now we see two of them allow their heart to be filled with Satan. So the church of Jesus Christ as it moves on from that great day of Pentecost is under attack.

The first thing we notice from the verses that we read together is how they go to prayer. The immediate response to the problem that they have is to gather people together for prayer. This wasn't because they had some great long tradition of prayer meetings.

This wasn't because it was Tuesday night or Wednesday night. So we always have a long extended prayer meeting Wednesday night. I mean we've got to, we're on our way.

This was simple reality. They were faced with a problem so they went to prayer. I believe in fact many of them were already gathered for prayer.

Why? Because they were afraid of what would happen to Peter and John. Peter and John were in front of the Sanhedrin. Peter had already shown that he could deny Christ if he found himself in a difficult situation.

They knew about this weakness in Peter. He said to Christ, I will never deny you. I will even go to death for you.

And then when he found himself somewhere near a court scene in a trial, he quickly denied the Lord. And so they were praying for him. This is the quality of life in the early church.

They knew about this weakness in Peter. You will recognize weaknesses in fellow Oemas. How easy it is just to criticize the other one and not to pray for them.

You recognize weaknesses in the leadership. How easy to go around criticizing. Church was here praying for Peter.

They were at it again in Acts chapter 12. You remember how Peter was locked up alone this time. Under sentence of death.

And the angel came and woke him up in the night. He said, come get up, get out. And Peter began to walk towards the door and the door just opened, you know, amazing sort of electronic thing.

Again and again I think of this scene when I walk towards these doors that just open, you know. The angel took him out into the street and then said, bye bye. You know your own way home now.

And Peter came to the house where they were all gathered praying for him. Matthias and Ebenezer and all these old brothers praying away for Peter. Little knock at the door.

Lord we pray for your servant Peter in the jail. Lord would you uphold him this night in his time of trial. The little servant girl looks out the little box thing and sees that it's Peter and runs back in to tell them all.

And old brother Methuselah is launched into one of his long long prayers and she has to stand waiting for 20 minutes until he finishes. They used to pray for Peter because they knew his weakness. I imagine they were pretty anxious about John too.

John was known as one of the sons of thunder. John had an explosive temper. In Luke chapter 9 you can see him making the most ferocious suggestions to Christ as to what he could do with Samaritans.

The Samaritans didn't welcome Christ into their village. And John had never been so insulted in his life. Jesus was always so kind to Samaritans.

He even told stories about a good one. And these Samaritans wouldn't accept Jesus into their own village. And John was just about ready to get them.

He says Lord shall we call down fire from heaven to consume these wretched evil Samaritans. And Jesus said to John come on we're getting out of this village. Praying for John that he wouldn't lose his temper and smash Ananias on the face.

You know they really did care for each other. They were praying when two of their number were in difficulty. And then Peter and John come back and give the story as to what happened.

And then they continue in prayer. You know it's possible to think that you believe in prayer because you're in OM because OM is said to believe in prayer but you yourself actually don't pray very much. Because you go to so many prayer meetings you can even begin to find prayer itself boring.

The early church was real in its prayer life. And then listen how they pray. Verse 24 they lift up their voices together to God and they say Sovereign Lord you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them.

You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant. Their anchor in prayer is God himself. They begin to just pause on the threshold of coming into his presence and they stop and think who am I coming to.

I'm coming to the Sovereign God of all the universe. I'm about to speak to my creator. I'm going to speak now to the one who himself speaks through the Holy Spirit.

Do you ever stop on the threshold of coming into God's presence? And just say to yourself who am I? Why am I coming? And who is the God I'm approaching? And why should he listen to me? Just pause and think of God himself. You know sometimes we're so fast to rush into the presence of God and gabble out our stories and our needs. And we have every right to do so.

Because he is our father. And he will not complain and he will not object. He lets us come just like that.

Because he loves us. I sit sometimes upstairs here in this conference center in my office. I have three children.

It's very interesting to watch the different ways in which they come into the room. I can be in the middle of an important, personal, private conversation with somebody and a door flies open. Bang! My son comes harraying into the room.

Climbs up on my knee, straight from the sandpit. He's covered with filth and muck all over my trousers. It doesn't matter who I'm talking to.

Dad, dad, he says, dad I want 15 francs, 15 francs, dad, dad, quick. Ice cream. Can you give me an ice cream, dad? Alright, here's an ice cream.

He goes off. He's like some exocet missile that's got out of control. He's only young.

I have a daughter who's nearly 11. She's 11 just next week. Quietly into the room.

Puts her head round the door. If I'm talking to someone she says, sorry. What's the difference between them? Just five years.

But she's begun to mature in her approach. She's begun to be aware of realities in life. And it is to be part of our maturing in our prayer relationship with God that we consider more deeply who he is and why should he listen to us.

That we're more aware of the reality of our relationship with him. Of course you are welcome into his presence. Let me say nothing that will keep you embarrassed outside the door.

He wants you to come. Let us be aware of who we are and who he is as we approach. They're faced with threats of imprisonment, these disciples.

It looks as if the whole of Jerusalem may rise up to squash out the early church. And they come and they say, sovereign Lord, you are the God in control of our lives. God is in control of your life.

The one that you've been speaking with today, he is in absolute sovereign control of the development of your life. I look back to turning points in my own experience. I think of a man in England called Roger Forster, known perhaps to some of you.

He once invited me to go and help him on an evangelistic campaign in the university. I'd never done anything like that in my life. He said, I want you to take the lunchtime meetings.

Lunchtime meetings, I imagine everybody in nice quiet rows sitting listening to me. He said, it's in the bar of the student's union. I was given a microphone and 20 minutes.

There were people all over the room drinking pints of beer and stuffing pork pies into their face. They didn't look as if they were going to pay the slightest attention to me. My knees were knocking so loud I hardly thought they would hear what I said with my mouth.

And I was thrown back on the sovereign Lord. God began to work during that week in the most unexpected ways. There was a young man called David who used to sit right in front of me in the third row and he used to argue every single day.

He wanted the microphone to put his point as soon as I'd finished and we would have a kind of a public argument. I didn't know what was going to happen. I was nervous.

And more and more people began to come to listen to the argument. By the end of the week about 400 people were sitting there in absolute silence listening to the gospel. A number of those folk turned to Christ during those lunchtime meetings.

And for me it was a turning point in my whole ministry. God is in control of the development of your life. And sometimes it's the unexpected things, the big challenges that are going to become actually very very important in your future.

They lift up their voices and they say sovereign Lord, creator and the one who speaks. Then in verses 25 and 26 we notice that they begin to quote scripture. They start to quote Psalm 2 back to God.

Psalm that we were looking at just over a week ago in this room as Peter Maiden was preaching one Sunday morning. You know, as you pray, wait to see if God will bring scripture to your mind that you may

quote back to Him. One of the most effective ways of praying is to bring scripture back to God and talk about it to Him.

God's answer to satanic attack always lies in what He says. Turn back with me for a moment to Genesis chapter 3. The story there of the fall of man. The serpent had come more crafty than any of the wild animals that the Lord God had made.

And the serpent begins to poison the mind of Adam and his wife. He poisons their mind with two lies. In verse 5 he says, you know, you can do a lot better if you ignore God's restraints.

All these boring old disciplines and restraints that God puts on your life, I mean, how stupid. You could do an awful lot better if you just ignored them. And in verse 4 he suggests that God's judgment isn't really real.

That's just scare talk, the sort of thing that you say at night to make the children keep quiet. You will not surely die. You won't face any consequences if you go your own way.

You won't suffer any loss. You won't get into defeat if you go your own way. If you deliberately cross over the boundaries of your own conscience, well, you'll be alright in the end.

Don't worry about it. And so they sinned. They suffered a broken relationship with God.

Verse 8, the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And they suffered a broken relationship not only with God but with each other. In verse 12 the man said, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some of the fruit and I ate it.

It's all her fault. And before long to love and to cherish becomes to lust and to dominate. And then they suffered also thirdly a broken relationship with themselves.

The shame of being naked. The miscommunications now between them. The dislike of themselves.

Statistics throw up some very interesting things. I read in a magazine recently that something like two thirds of women dislike themselves. And the roots of it are here.

I read somewhere else that the average British married couple spends no more than 55 minutes a week in conversation. They both talk equally much although I'm told the men do 90% of the interrupting. The figure for North American married couples is down to 27 minutes a week.

That's not much is it for people who spend their lives together, share the same bedroom, the same bathroom, the same dining room table. How much loneliness and sadness and misunderstanding there is in so many marriages. And the roots of it are right here in Genesis chapter 3. God says you will live in pain.

You men will have to go out and work in the sweat of your brow and you'll all finish up returned to dust. So much for a life of being like God. They believe Satan's lies and they finish up with mistrust and loneliness and fear.

And friends that is the way people live in their millions all around us. The unhappiness and the misery not more than a kilometer from where we now sit. And loneliness and the heartache even in Loven.

Right there in Genesis chapter 3 it has its roots. Satan seems to have won a victory. How will God deal with it? He deals with it by what he says.

He takes the initiative to speak. God does three things. First of all he asks questions.

Then he gives promises. Then he passes judgments. He comes in verse 9. Called out to the man, where are you? God is a great one for asking us questions isn't he? Where are you? Where are you now in life? Where are you in your Christian life? How is it with you as you walk with the Lord? There are many different kinds of questions aren't there? If someone says to you, will you marry me? They want information.

They want more than information but they'll start with information. But if I find one of my children has drawn with an orange crayon up and down the white walls that are beside our stairway. All over the white walls endless drawings up and down all over the place.

And then I say to him, now what have you done? I'm not seeking information. Those are questions that seek to teach lessons. To help the other person to understand.

Now God frequently asks those kinds of questions. He says here to Adam, where are you? He knew exactly where he was. He said to Saul of Tarsus, why do you persecute me Saul? He knew exactly the psychology and the spirit of Paul.

The Lord says to people, why do you call me Lord and yet still disobey me? The Lord knows exactly why we do. Jesus came to that woman in the garden and said, why are you so sad? He said to that man who was possessed with demon upon demon. He said, what is your name? Jesus isn't asking in order to get information but in order to help us understand.

The Lord begins to move against Satan there in the garden of Eden by asking a question. Has the Lord been asking you any questions here this week? Power of God's questions. And then secondly he gives promises, verse 15.

The Lord said to Adam and his wife, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head, you will strike his heel. He directs that remark to the serpent.

The Lord promises there will be victory for mankind over the evil one. He also promises that the race will not be wiped out but will continue. Adam's wife will have children.

And then he passes judgement. He doesn't just destroy them, he sends them on out of the garden to live there by the sweat of their brow. God wants to ask you questions about your life.

Secondly he wants to give you promises for the future. This is the power of his word in your own experience. But thirdly he also passes judgement on our flesh.

God could easily have wiped out Adam and his wife. But instead he sent them out of the garden. And he said to Adam, you will now plant the ground and only through painful toil will you get any fruit.

You will plant good crop and it will produce thorns and thistles instead. Why does God speak like this? What is he trying to teach Adam? Just think, Adam was made out of what? Adam was made out of the ground. Made out of earth, mud, ground.

He had been a little piece of ground that was to be fruitful for God. He had been told to go out and till the ground and to bring forth fruit and to multiply and to produce a crop for God. He was to be responsible also for that bit of the ground that was now running around on two legs.

But he produced the thorns and the thistles of rebellion and sin out of this bit of ground. And God says now as an educative discipline you will find that the ground when you plant good seed it produces thorns and thistles along with a good crop. And so Adam finds himself under the educative disciplines of God.

There are consequences that result from our sin. And God uses these consequences to teach us his ways. God speaks in three ways.

And Adam believed God. It became for Adam the beginnings of a whole new resurrection life. He then renamed his wife.

She had been called Isha up to that point. And now he calls her Eve. Maybe you've been wondering why I haven't been calling her Adam and Eve up to now.

It's because she wasn't called Eve up till verse 20. He believes that God has got a great future for him. He believes in the word of God.

He trusts in the Lord and has his own experience of resurrection. You and I are to soak ourselves in what God says. These early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles they were able to pray quoting scripture freely back to God.

Adam's whole hope for the future was based on what God had said to him. Although it was so little. Are you beginning to get God's word deep deep down into your mind? Will you be able to come before God quoting scripture in prayer? Let me tell you I'm not very good at Bible memory programs.

Those that can learn scripture that way I envy you. Terrific. Carry on.

I have tried learning Bible verses at red traffic lights. I've tried sticking them up on shaving mirrors and for me it doesn't work. I find when I begin to study scripture and see how book after book works and sticks together, verse after verse stays stuck in my mind.

These men and women in the Acts of the Apostles were men who were soaked in God's word. I can remember out in India on the team. We used to get up early early in the morning not past five or so.

I used to go out to a little Indian tea shop. Now don't imagine anything like any tea shop you may have seen here in the West. There is a rusty pot.

There is some water from the river. There's some tea dust. There's some milk.

Some spices. Boiled and boiled and boiled and boiled and then strained through the foot of an old stocking into a dirty glass. It's the most life giving stuff I've ever drunk.

I used to come to this little tea shop soon after five in the morning. Wake the old man up. Help him light his fire.

Have my first cup of tea of the day. And have another one about 45 minutes later. And just have an hour and a half in God's word before I had to get back to the team.

Day after day after day. I used to do the same at college. The major miracle of the 20th century that they let me pass the degree at the end of all this Bible study when I was actually studying English literature.

Soak yourself in God's word. Begin to understand book after book of the Bible. And allow your praying to be more filled with scripture.

Let's move quickly on. Because I want to come yet to Ananias and Sapphira. They then began to pray in verse 29 for boldness.

Lord they said you enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. It was their boldness that had got them into trouble already. And now they're asking for more boldness.

Some of you remember Billy Jones here during this past week. Billy had a marvelous boldness on the team. I can remember preaching at the back of a truck once at the end of an Indian village street.

And I heard an enormous row at the other end of the street. I walked down and I found Billy surrounded by a huge crowd of Muslims. And Billy was insisting that Jesus was the son of God.

And the Muslims were saying they would kill him if he said it once more. And the row was getting hotter and hotter. And when I arrived Billy was saying this.

Line up one at a time. Line up. I'll fight you one at a time for Jesus.

Billy had a tremendous boldness. Billy has been into some of the prisons of the world when he's travelling on the ships. Asked to see the prisoners in the condemned cell.

And in various countries of the world has led men under sentence of death into the kingdom of Christ before their execution. A man of boldness. A man filled with the spirit of God.

They prayed for boldness and two verses later their prayer was answered. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God boldly. This is the early church at prayer.

Filled with the real vision of who God was. Not afraid of the enemies. Determined to serve the Lord.

But they're asking God also to do signs and wonders that will exalt Jesus the Holy Servant of God. Let me ask you. What was the first sign and wonder that God did in answer to that prayer? Two of the church dead.

Not long after that prayer meeting. When they said oh God will you exalt your Holy Servant Jesus with great signs and wonders here in this city. Ananias and Sapphira were dead.

In Acts chapter 3 verse 15 they had been praising Jesus as the author of life. Now they begin to discover he's the author of death as well. What actually happened? There is a movement of sacrifice and generosity within the church.

Men like Barnabas are selling their property and giving for the poor. Ananias and Sapphira sell something but secretly keep back part of the price for themselves. They pretend to give it all but they become hypocrites.

Their hearts are filled with deceit. Now this church has been talking in verse 27 of chapter 4 and verse 30 in chapter 4 of God's Holy Servant Jesus. Friends we, we here in this room, we owe Emma's.

We must respond to God's holiness if we expect anyone else to. All this is in a context of great evangelism. Things are on the move.

The disciples are encouraged. The Lord God was in heaven and he was their friend. And on earth now we're seeing miracles.

On the very first day of evangelism three thousand are swept into the kingdom. We know something they say about prayer meetings that shake the building. God is on our side.

God will smash our enemies. God will deal with this wretched Sanhedrin. We have been filled with the spirit of power.

We need not to be afraid. Now it's no good, it's no good friends, praying that other people will submit to Christ if we are not prepared to. Consider your salvation.

What have you been saved from? Is it not precisely this kind of deceit and hypocrisy? Are Christians to be judged by higher standards than others out in the world? Of course they are. What else did you think? Do you think you can be joined to the body of Christ? Do you think you can be filled with the Holy Spirit? Do you think you can publicly declare yourself to be a Christian and not live differently? That difference must reach right through into the secret places of your inner motivations, your heart. They have great prayer meetings talking about the Holy Servant Jesus.

They expect God to deal with their enemies sternly and with justice. Secretly in their own hearts they have this motive. They have this motive.

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They fearful thing to fall into the hands of God. Jesus did just that for us, so that we might be redeemed, so that we might no longer live under condemnation, so that we might learn to walk in newness of life, a holy life filled with the Holy Spirit. Solemn thing, isn't it, to ask for signs of the authority of the Holy Servant Jesus.

God gave them a sign. Seeing what was in the heart of Ananias and Sapphira, he struck them dead on the spot. What effect does all this have on you? As we draw to the end tonight, what effect does this story have on your emotions? Do you think God has become different? Are you a little bit afraid that God may strike you in some way? Well, that would be the wrong reaction.

We are told not to have that reaction, here in these verses in Hebrews 12. We read of Moses, he was afraid, the people were terrified, verses 19 to 21. Moses said, I am trembling with fear.

Verse 28 is for you. Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful. And let us so worship God acceptably, with reverence and awe.

God wants us to have of him an exceedingly high view. He cares about the way we think of him. He cares about our growth in real holiness in life.

And yet, here in these verses, he says we are not to be afraid of him. Adam had been afraid. Hiding behind that bush in the garden, God called him out into the light.

He stood there in his nakedness exposed before God. And God then covered him with garments. Those animals had to die so that Adam and Eve could be covered.

God took away their shame. God reassured them of his love, of his future purposes and plans for them. God gave them a way to go and disciplines in life that would work towards their holiness.

And we are to worship God with thankfulness. That Christ's death is fully sufficient for our cleansing, absolutely and eternally. We are to worship the God of the acts of the apostles with reverence and awe.

What a kind God he is. Kind even to the early church. Think of Adam the moment Eve had come to him with that half-eaten apple.

What should Adam have done? What do you think he could have done? She's done wrong. His wife has sinned evidently. She has disobeyed God.

She will have to leave the garden. Maybe he should have pointed his finger and sent her out. Maybe he should have said you are under the condemnation of God, you silly creature.

You must go. Would you have done that? Would you have said to Eve, you know, we've made a mess of this holy place. We will have to leave.

What you have done Eve is very, very wrong. You've got to go. But Eve, I'm coming with you.

Should Adam have gone outside the garden, not sinning, but going with her out of love and to care for her and protect her out into the outer darkness? He didn't of course, as we know. It took a far greater man than Adam to do that. Jesus himself, who came and stood beside us in the darkness of our sin.

Not condoning what we do, and yet prepared to come alongside us and be with us and to be made sin, him who knew no sin. In order that we might become the righteousness of God. What a kind and loving God we have.

He is holy. We are to treat him with due reverence and awe. Eve came up to Adam and held out the fruit and said, here, take an eat of this.

And he did so, and the whole of mankind was trapped in the fall. Take, eat, said Eve. Have you ever heard anybody say those words to you? Take and eat.

This is my body which was given for you. Take and eat. The Lord Jesus comes in order to make us his own.

To draw us into his family. To feed us on his living bread. Teach us how to worship God.

That we grow up to be like him. God is a kind God. I want you to see even the God who dealt with Ananias and Sapphira so severely.

He is your loving heavenly father. Turn back to Acts chapter 5. And with this we end. Verse 11.

Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. The church was shaken. And then verse 12.

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. As you read down through to verse 16 you see tremendous blessing breaking out in Jerusalem. There is that beautiful balance that we want in our evangelism.

We respect and reverence God with due fear. We see God pouring out a blessing on the lives of many thousands around us. May he fill us with his spirit.

His holy spirit. And may we know not just the shaking of buildings but the shaking of towns and communities. The shaking of universities and families for him.

May this year ahead of us be marked by our own growth in holiness and power in our evangelism. We are secure in relationship with God. May we know apostolic experience in our work.

Let us pray. Forgive us O God that we sometimes treat you so lightly. Thank you for these verses from your word.

Help us father in our meditating on the greatness of Jesus your son. That in our own private experience we may frequently be moved to worship him. That our own lives may be adjusted into his likeness.

Thank you O God for the way you speak gently and firmly to us. May we speak with authority in the days to come because we are under your authority. For your namesake.

Amen.

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