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# Signs of Life: Spiritual Power

Acts 5:12-16

May 23, 2026

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## SCRIPTURE

Acts 5:12-16 (NKJV) [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. [13] Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. [14] And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, [15] so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. [16] Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed

Introduction:

The first church was called to be witnesses unto the resurrected Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel and make disciples of all nations. From the very moment the Spirit descended at Pentecost, we saw the exciting and undeniable reality of the Holy Spirit's power fall upon believers, giving them supernatural boldness to preach the Word without apology and to stand confident and unshaken amid fierce persecution. These were ordinary men and women; fishermen, tax collectors, and common laborers who had been transformed into fearless heralds of the risen Lord.

As we move into the growth of the first church, we see great power, but also great fear, great purity, and great persecution. Today, we look at the manifest spiritual power that flowed in and through the early church, and the gospel impact that followed.

## MAIN POINT Point 1

Spiritual power flows through a pure church

## SCRIPTURE

Acts 5:12 (NKJV) [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.

As the church grew in number and influence, the same empowering Spirit who filled them with boldness also drew a clear and unmistakable line in the sand regarding the purity and holiness that was required of the first church. Ananias and Sapphira stood as sobering examples of how seriously God takes honesty regarding the motives and actions of His people.

Their sin was not merely in withholding a portion of their money — it was in the deliberate deception, the crafted pretense of full devotion while harboring secret self-interest. It was intentional and calculated: They wanted the reputation of radical generosity without the reality of it. The Puritan Thomas Watson once observed,

## QUOTE

— Thomas Watson

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"A hypocrite has God in his mouth but the world in his heart."

## SCRIPTURE

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1 Corinthians 5:6-7 (NKJV) [6] ...Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? [7] Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.

Their story reminds us that God is never mocked, and that He searches the innermost chambers of the human heart with absolute and penetrating clarity. After this sobering incident, we see two remarkable things happen in immediate succession.

First, a holy and reverent fear fell upon the hearts of both the church and the surrounding community, understandably so. This was not merely the fear of punishment, but the deep, trembling awe that comes when men and women encounter the living God in His uncompromising holiness. The congregation was reminded, in the most dramatic terms, that the church is not a human institution operating by human standards for human ambitions, but a holy community indwelt by the very Spirit of God created for His glory and purposes. Second, and perhaps surprisingly to some, there was a greater measure of divine power manifested through the apostles in remarkable healings and signs, which in turn drew even more believers into the family of God. It is as though the purifying of the church, the removal of corruption and pretense from within, created the conditions for a fresh and powerful outpouring of God's grace upon those without.

## SCRIPTURE

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1 Peter 4:17 (NKJV) [17] For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Purity and power, it turns out, are not opposites. They are partners. Where God finds a people willing to walk in integrity and transparency before Him, He is pleased to pour out His Spirit in ever-increasing measure. David Guzik observes this:

## QUOTE

— David Guzik on Acts 5:12

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"We shouldn't miss the connection between the purity preserved in the first part of the chapter (with the death of Ananias and the fear of God among the Christians) and the power displayed here. God blessed a pure church with spiritual power."

Paul alludes to this principle when writing to Timothy about the kinds of vessels God seeks to pour His power into and through.

## SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 2:20-21 (NKJV) [20] But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. [21] Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

## APPLICATION

There's nothing that impedes the unhindered flow of God's power in our lives and in a church more than un-dealt with sin or elusive, erroneous motives. If you find yourself with a desire to see God's miraculous power work through you, please understand that you, at the same time, are inviting God's purifying power to work in you! And sometimes, that can be a very painful process...As John Owen (1616–1683) wisely observed, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." This reminds us that God's sanctifying work is never passive; it is an active, sometimes fierce, refinement of the soul. He puts to death things that cause stains in your spiritual life. He resists you in areas where you allow your pride to rule. He increases strain and difficulty where you are working apart from Him or against Him. He does this not to harm us, but to purify our lives, sanctify us, and make us vessels of power. Many people desire power but resist purity. They complain about a lack of spiritual substance, but avoid any sacrifice.

With this power came varied reactions from those on the outside.

## MAIN POINT Point 2

Spiritual power divides before it unites

## SCRIPTURE

Acts 5:13-14 (NKJV) [13] Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. [14] And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women...

At first read, this is a bit of a conundrum. On one end, no one dared to join them. On the other hand, believers were increasingly added to the Lord.

It's difficult to know with certainty if Luke is referring to the Apostles or the church.

One reading suggests that it could be that the Apostles were gathered at Solomon's porch, and no one dared join them but esteemed them highly. After the incident of God's judgment in the church through Peter, some people decided to keep their distance. Probably the more accurate reading is that the gathered church was an intimidation to those who didn't want their hearts and actions to be exposed. They esteemed the church's work... after all, they were feeding the poor, showing radical generosity toward those in need, and were certainly bringing good to their neighbor. But there was also an authenticity that radiated from this group that many people wanted to avoid. People can esteem the church, respect its leaders, and appreciate its community without ever crossing the threshold of genuine faith and costly commitment.

## SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) [12] For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

## SCRIPTURE

Luke 12:51 (NKJV) [51] Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.

## QUOTE

— *Pastor Josh*

This reminds me that most people won't rush to join a church where their sin might be exposed and their motives confronted.

In Acts 5, the church was not trying to make unbelievers comfortable enough to join them; they were proclaiming Christ with such holy conviction that sinners were either sobered by the presence and truth of God or genuinely added by saving faith.

## QUOTE

— *Pastor Josh*

The church is not called to appease guilty consciences, but to appeal them with truth; not to make unbelievers comfortable in sin, but to awaken them to repentance and faith in Christ.

## APPLICATION

Many churches today operate in a way that runs counter to what we see in Acts 5. It seems that the ultimate goal has become ensuring no one feels uncomfortable, confronted, or convicted. Services are carefully modeled to dance around issues that should demand moral clarity, but are rather discussed in abstract obscurity. It's almost as if the prevailing philosophy is, "We can win more people to Jesus if we downplay holiness, lower biblical standards, and ensure we toe the line to keep people coming back from week to week." This is nothing new. In the 1930s, as the German church faced the rising tide of National Socialism, the majority of Protestant churches chose comfort over conviction — softening their message, accommodating the culture, and avoiding confrontation to preserve their congregations and their standing. It was only the remnant, those who formed the Confessing Church under men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who understood that the church's power was never in its cultural relevance or its capacity to make people comfortable, but in its uncompromising fidelity to Christ. Bonhoeffer himself warned, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil." The church that refuses to speak with clarity does not preserve itself — it loses itself. From the very beginning, the Holy Spirit showed that the church's witness should not rest in compromise and complacency, or in cultural relevance, but in purity and spiritual power, undeniably testifying to the living Jesus.

## MAIN POINT Point 3

## SCRIPTURE

Acts 5:15-16 (NKJV) [15] so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. [16] Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

One of the undeniable realities found not only in the book of Acts, but in the ministry of Jesus, is the miraculous power demonstrated over sickness and demonic spirits at work in people's lives. Before I teach any further, I want to make an unapologetic statement: I believe Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His power is unlimited and His authority unchallenged.

Jesus saves, heals, and delivers with the same power and authority as He has always displayed.

On one side of the spiritual gifts spectrum are those who deny that supernatural healing gifts of the Spirit exist today. They make the statement that "The healing gifts were only for use through the apostles to testify to Jesus, but we don't need that today because we have the Bible."

I think a balanced reading of Acts pushes back against the idea that signs and wonders were performed only through the apostles. Acts 5 certainly emphasizes "through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people" (Acts 5:12), and that apostolic function mattered. Their ministry carried a unique, foundational authority in the early church.

But Acts also records Stephen, a servant (deacon) chosen in Acts 6, doing "great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8), and Philip, the evangelist, preaching in Samaria while the crowds saw "the miracles which he did," including deliverance and healing (Acts 8:6-7). Even Ananias, an otherwise ordinary disciple in Damascus, is sent by the Lord to lay hands on Saul so that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:10-18). So while the apostles clearly had a unique role, Luke does not present miraculous works as being mechanically restricted to the Twelve. God can work through anyone at any time who is surrendered to His call and open to His Spirit. He still can and does today.

On the other side, there are those who read these passages and try to create proof texts to endorse modern-day healing and deliverance ministries.

It should be noted that Acts does not present miracles as something believers generate, schedule, or command at will. The power is never man-centered. The initiative belongs to God. In 1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, Paul says that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit," and that the manifestation of the Spirit is given "to each one for the profit of all". He then lists gifts such as healings, miracles, prophecy, and discernment, but immediately adds that "one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:9-11).

That phrase matters: as He wills. Miraculous gifts are not produced by human demand, emotional pressure, or spiritual technique. They are given and governed by the sovereign will of God. Hebrews 2:4 says God bore witness to the gospel "with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will."

So our responsibility is not to chase signs or manufacture supernatural moments, but to be faithful, surrendered vessels whom the Lord may use however He desires. The emphasis should never be on the healing as much as it should be on the healer. It should be less about producing miracles and more about producing surrender.

## APPLICATION

The same God who worked through apostles also worked through servants, evangelists, and ordinary disciples, but the focus was never the vessel. The focus was always Christ and His gospel. Miracles in the New Testament were never presented as spiritual entertainment or as a personal platform-building exercise. They served the advance of the gospel, the edification of the body, and the glory of God. The miracle was never the main message. The miracle bore witness to the message: Jesus Christ is risen, sinners must repent, and salvation is found in Him alone. The New Testament does not teach us to deny God's ability to work supernaturally, nor does it teach us to presume upon His power; it teaches us to submit to the Spirit, to possess faith, to steward His gifts, and to let every work of God point back to Christ, not us.

## ILLUSTRATION

I sincerely question so-called "healing ministries" that seem to use the suffering of desperate people as a platform for personal reputation. There is something deeply troubling when a man claims to move in the power of God, yet carries himself in a way that draws more attention to his own name than to the name of Jesus. Peter was not walking through the streets promoting "Pope Peter's Apostolic Healing Crusade." He was not selling premium spots along the road where his supernaturally infused shadow might have a better chance of passing by. He was not promising a tenfold return to anyone who would sow a seed into his ministry. Note: Many commentators agree that people seeking Peter's shadow followed a bit of a folkstale that the shadow carried supernatural power. But God in His grace even used this actication of faith as a point for people to trust in Christ and recieve from Him, much like the woman who rached out to touch Jesus' robe. Peter never denied the power of God working through him, but he never flaunted that power as though he were the source of it. He did not merchandise the anointing. He did not manipulate the hurting. He did not commandeer the work of the Spirit for selfish gain. And this is the regular pattern in Acts. Whenever people tried to give glory to the servants of Christ for miraculous works, those servants refused it. They rebuked man-centered worship and redirected every eye back to Jesus. The miracle was never the platform. Christ was the message. The power did not belong to the vessel. The power belonged to God.

## QUOTE

— Pastor Josh

True servants of God do not use miracles to build their own kingdom. They humbly make themselves available for Christ to build His kingdom through them.

## SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV) [7] But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Deliverance:

Here, people were healed of sickness. Luke the physician doesn't mince words or inflate the truth. As a trained medical doctor, Luke understood the difference between psychosomatic improvement and genuine physical restoration. His vocabulary throughout Acts reflects clinical precision; he uses specific Greek medical terminology that his contemporaries would have recognized. So when he says "they were all healed," he is not speaking in generalities or offering a hopeful exaggeration. He is making a diagnostic statement. Every single person who came was made whole.

## APPLICATION

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This is worth pausing on, because we live in an age that has learned to be skeptical of the miraculous. We've been trained to look for the exception, the qualifier. But Luke offers none. The text doesn't say "many were healed" or "some found relief." It says all. This is the comprehensive, unrestrained power of God flowing through the early church, mirroring what we see in the ministry of Jesus Himself. As Peter preached, Jesus of Nazareth was "a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him" (Acts 2:22, NKJV). Now that same power was being demonstrated through His followers, confirming the truth of the gospel they proclaimed.

Additionally, those tormented by unclean spirits were healed from the bondage that these spiritual forces had on their lives. Notice that Luke distinguishes between physical sickness and spiritual oppression.

These are not the same category, and the early church understood that. Physical illness has physical causes, but spiritual torment has a spiritual source. The Greek word used for "tormented" carries the idea of being harassed, crowded in on, vexed constantly. These were people who had no peace, no rest, no freedom in their own minds and bodies because dark spiritual forces had established a grip on them.

And yet the authority of Christ was sufficient for both. There was no disease too advanced and no demon too entrenched. This tells us something critical about the nature of the kingdom of God: it is an invasion of enemy-held territory. Jesus said, "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28, NKJV). The healings and deliverances in Acts are not sideshow miracles; they are evidence that the risen King is actively reclaiming what belongs to Him.

## APPLICATION

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For us today, the application is twofold. First, we should never reduce the gospel to mere information. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16), and that power extends to every dimension of human brokenness, physical, emotional, and spiritual. But it also depends on God's timing, purpose, and initiation. It seems to me that the greater miracle than physical healing is the spiritual salvation a sinner experiences when touched by Jesus. When Peter quotes the famous Isaiah passage about healing, he seems to indicate that the greater meaning is the spiritual healing that takes place when you come to Christ: [1Pe 2:24-25 NKJV] 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. Second, we should be careful not to swing to the opposite extreme and treat every hardship, sickness, or challenge as a demon to be rebuked. Luke's careful distinction between illness and spiritual oppression reminds us that discernment matters. The Christian life is not lived in superstition but in the wisdom that comes from walking closely with the Holy Spirit, who "will guide you into all truth."

#### Conclusion:

The questions we should ask ourselves today ought to go beyond the questions of healing or no healing.

Are we vessels pursuing purity, allowing the Holy Spirit to refine us to be usable conduits of His grace and power? Are we recognizing that our job is to surrender to Jesus, not to entertain or appease the world around us? Are we expecting and available to let the Lord use us when and how He wants in order to demonstrate His love, power, and truth to people He is drawing to Himself?