

Acts 5:12-16: Would You Like A New Life?

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I. Introduction

How's your life? Is there something you wish you could change? Has your career gone the way you hoped? Do you wish you had a career? How about your personal life, have you found "the one"? Do you wish you had someone to share your life with? Is life meaningless, do you wish you knew your purpose? Have you settled because you couldn't find anything better? Is it even possible to make it better? Jesus promises to make everything in your life brand new...can He?

II. Acts 5:12-16: Are You Sick of Your Life...Would You Like A New One?

5:12-16, in 4:29-30 the apostles asked God for boldness to preach the resurrection of Christ by giving them the power to perform signs and wonders that would heal people. God grants their request and they go on to heal many. This drew massive crowds and many of them, both men and women, were added to the Lord. The apostles continued this practice in the Temple, in Solomon's Porch where they all gathered. However, no other Christians joined them. Why? The temple was the nerve center for the Sanhedrin, Israel's Supreme Court, who had recently jailed and put on trial Peter and John precisely for preaching resurrection in Jesus' name. Thus, the other Christians were likely afraid to join the apostles in something the authorities strictly warned them not to do (4:17-18). Yet in spite of all this, the general public loved the apostles, they held them in high esteem.

And as the news spread about the apostles' ability to heal people, they brought more and more sick people to the apostles. But there was a difference between Peter's ability to heal and the others'. Peter was able to heal with his shadow, which is why many were brought into the streets on beds and couches so that Peter's shadow would pass over them and heal them. Why would the Lord elevate Peter this way over the others? It's likely because in Acts God uses Peter's elevated position as an apostle to legitimize a young rabbi named Saul, who later became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9). That is, the Church had a hard time accepting Paul; they feared him because he persecuted the Church (Acts 9:13-14, 26). But when they compared Peter's apostolic ability to Paul's, it was clear that the Lord had appointed Paul (e.g., they were the only apostles able to perform unusual miracles: Peter with his shadow; Paul with his handkerchief, Acts 19:12).

And not only did the apostles heal people from Jerusalem, but masses of people from the surrounding cities in Judea brought their sick and those who were tormented by unclean spirits. And they were ALL healed. Jesus was not only healing those with physical illnesses, He healed the spiritually sick...and ALL who came to Him found new life.

What is Jesus doing here through the apostles (i.e., what Jesus "began" to do and teach in Luke's Gospel, He's continuing to do in the book of Acts, Acts 1:1)? He's bringing life back to mankind. He's proving that His resurrection power is real. He can bring back life to those whose lives are being taken away little by little through sickness and spiritual forces that are constantly attacking them. Does Jesus' resurrection power work today, can it give you a new life?

To many Jesus is the guy who died on the Cross for their sins. But what does that mean and how can it help you get a new life? In Romans 5:1-11 God tells us that His Son died in order to reconcile us to God, thus we're no longer His enemies because of the Cross. But He also says that His Son's life—not His death but His life—will save us. How can this be? It is so because the moment you believe in Christ, you're not only identified with His death, but with His resurrection life (Romans 6:1-11). That is, we have access to Jesus' power of life every waking moment. We don't have to struggle in this life not knowing who we are, what our purpose is, or with dead-end jobs and relationships. Jesus' life can make everything in our lives new again. In fact, that's what He promises, to make all things new once we become part of Him (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Is this true, is it really possible for Christ to change your life? Yes, we see it over and over in the book of Acts: God gives the apostles His Holy Spirit and it changes the apostles from men afraid of Israel's authorities to men who confront those same authorities without fear. He takes thousands of strangers and enables them to care for one another like close knit family. He takes wealthy individuals and gives them a heart of compassion so much so that they sell their wealth in order to help those in need. And He takes individuals who are suffering from illness and others who are tormented by spiritual forces and gives them new life (Acts 2-4; 5:12-16).

A man struggles to hold on to his career, wife, and children...until the Lord shows up, Jesus' power worked 2,000 years ago, but does it work today? When I met this man, he'd been an alcoholic for 24 years. He'd gone to three different programs to help him quit, but none of them worked. Then he went through a family crisis but before it was over, he had to fly out of the country for work. He couldn't stop thinking about it and it caused him severe anxiety and stress. So he did what he always did: turned to alcohol to take the stress away. After drinking all night, he reported to work the next day and got arrested. With his livelihood now threatened, he returned home and checked into his fourth program. This time it was a bit different. Part of the program was going to church and for the first time he began to sense God in his life. However, the anxiety was still there about his job (which he seemed certain to lose), his marriage, his family, and his ability to cope with stressful situations.

I introduce him to the Lord and little by little, he began to see Jesus show up in His life. He realized that Jesus was not just the guy who died for his sins in order to save him from hell, Jesus wanted to save him right now. In fact, he saw how Jesus was looking out for his livelihood even before he came to believe in Him, i.e., God prevented his arrest due to alcohol—which could've happened many times in the States—from happening inside the country. Instead He allowed it to happen overseas, which safeguarded his paycheck because the federal regulations that would've applied to him, no longer applied and therefore his company couldn't suspend him without pay.

As we delved deeper into the reasons why he drank—he was convinced that he was an individual who could not handle stress, who would lose it when things went wrong, and needed a drink to cope—Jesus began to free him from this false identity and showed him that not only was he capable of handling stress, but he could help his wife cope with hers. Thus, Jesus not only changed him, but his marriage. The fights with his wife went away because he was now a new husband who was patient even though his wife was stressing out. But what if he loses his job? He's no longer afraid of that outcome because he knows that whether he keeps it or not, the Lord will be with Him and therefore he'll be able to handle anything that happens in his life.

III. Conclusion

*And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people....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.*