

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

SIGNS AND WONDERS OF GOD - God's Spirit-filled apostles heal miraculously, escape imprisonment and speak boldly despite persecution. Jean Davies w/c 3rd May

Acts 5:12-14; 17-39

The passage just prior to today's verses is a very solemn one, relating how God dealt with the deception by a man, Ananias, and his wife, Sapphira. This drastic purging by God of deception from the early church consolidated the believers further in true holiness, resulting in added spiritual power.

Whereas signs and wonders are usually associated with what can be seen and heard, they can also be in the personal experience of the inner man and woman. The verses in our passage display both outward and inward manifestations of God's working in signs and wonders. In Acts 5:12-14 we are told of the miraculous signs and wonders performed by the apostles who, with all the believers in Jesus, would meet to tell and teach the Gospel of Christ. Healings of both physical and spiritual illnesses and diseases were undertaken in this new, God-given power of the Holy Spirit.

If ever the religious leaders of the nation were to protect their power, they would have to subdue this "sect" which was spreading like a virus throughout Jerusalem and beyond. Arrest of the apostles was inevitable – go for the leaders and the rest will scatter! However, God would again work in signs and wonders in their angelic deliverance from the depths of prison to confound the religious authorities and guards (vs17-24). Signs and wonders of a different sort come into play once again when the apostles display obedience and determination to persevere in their Lord's command to "Go and make disciples!". What a wonderful inner transformation from paralysing fear of men to unyielding obedience to God summed up in their courageous statement through Peter (vs 29-32). Despite furious reactions in the Sanhedrin, wise advice from Gamaliel, apostle Paul's former tutor, is another sign that God's plans and purposes cannot be thwarted.

Reflections

- 1 Who do you know in need of a miraculous healing, physical or spiritual; and what are you doing about it? V12
- 2 Why are we not seeing more men and women coming to faith in Christ and wanting to join our fellowships? Vs 12-14
- 3 Where in your life are you finding it easier to please men rather than obey God, and why? Vs29
- 4 How can you be sure that your decisions are God's plan and purpose for your life? v39

These signs and wonders of God in the early church which were worked in, through and for the apostles and all believers were not of the apostles themselves, but because they were filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This rapidly growing number of believers in Christ, led by the obedient apostles, were becoming a force to be reckoned with not because of **who** they were but because of **whose** they were.