

11-8-20 Great Days Ahead

Did you have a great week last week?

How many are over 2020? How many are thinking they may be over 2021?

Anyone stronger in the faith from different trials this year?

Anyone had their faith shaken this year? Maybe their faith put to the test?

If I had the ability to look into the future and say that 2021 will be more trying than 2020, what would you say? (Boo! Get out of here!)

I can say this with all confidence, there are Great Days Ahead! Greater than the days of the past.

Some of you are looking at me like I am smoking something. I will never tell!

When I read my bible and watch what is going on around me, I am astounded at just how right God is.

Every day of my life I am growing more and more certain the only thing that is certain is God. And He is the only one that we can fully trust in.

The book of Acts gives us great insight of what its like to live out a Christian life. I believe that many of us have little to no idea of the calling God has called us to.

What has 2020 showed me? That my faith needed to be tried. That I had been putting faith in too many places, rather than in one place, God.

What if this really is God's training ground? Not only to try one's faith but to divide the fakes from the real ones.

We must lean into God, His will, and His word more.

Great Power, Great Grace and Great Fear Led to:

I. God happenings

- They witnessed God answer prayers. **Acts 4:29-30, "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."**
- **Read Acts 5:12a, "And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people."**
- What they prayed for God was answering it in real time.
- The word for "signs" means a "mark or token" given to point people to God. The word "wonders" has to do with the response to these signs. These signs were done by the "hands of the apostles."
- While God's judgment came out of the mouth of an apostle in the previous passage, now we see how healing and mercy come through the hands of the apostles.
- These miraculous signs were designed to authenticate the authority of the apostles as we see in

2 Corinthians 12:12, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.”

- **Mark 16:20** tells us these signs and wonders also verified the message of the gospel and were not to be sought out for their own sake but rather to point people to Jesus:

Mark 16:20, “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

- I count 17 times in Acts where “signs” led to people getting saved. This is in line with what our Lord said in **John 4:48: “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”**
- Are we ready for God happenings? Being used of God to see miracles and wonders happening?
- Or are we going to sit by and watch it happen as we have before?

II. A Commitment to Gather

- **Verse 12b, “and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.”**
- One of the defining characteristics of these first Christians is they were committed to community with each other. Note they were **“all with one accord”** together.
- This was their habit as we saw in **Acts 2:1: “When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord (together) in one place”** and in **Acts 2:46: “So continuing daily with one accord (together) in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house.”**
- According to one study, on average, evangelicals gather for a worship service only 1.8 times a month! Brothers and sisters, as our culture continues to cave and it becomes increasingly difficult to live for Christ, we need to gather more often, not less often.
- These first followers gathered in “Solomon’s Porch,” a covered porch area that ran along the eastern wall of the Temple. It was where the lame man was healed and where the apostles had been arrested in **Acts 4:3** for preaching about Jesus. Yet, here they are, gathered in this very public place in the center of the city.
- For perspective, this would be like gathering at the Washington Monument, only more so, because the Temple was the religious center of Judaism.
- Are we committed to gather? I can tell you that this could be the area that Satan attacks in the most in the days, weeks and months ahead.

III. The Bar for Holy Living was Risen

- **Verse 13a, “Yet none of the rest dared join them....”**
- **The word “none” literally means, “not even one.”** The word “dared” has the idea of “courage.”

- Interestingly, the word “join” is used seven times in Acts and means, “to cleave or be glued together.” It’s a good reminder that when we join a church, we are gluing ourselves to gather with God’s people.
- After hearing what happened to a couple dealing with hypocrisy, many unbelievers were afraid to attend. In short, they were hesitant to join with believers because of the holiness of God.
- While we want our facility to be user-friendly, we will never water down the gospel or minimize the holiness of God just to make people happy.
- In an age of easy believism, superficial spirituality, and cheap grace, we will continue to proclaim that Jesus is the only way, that the way is narrow, and discipleship demands our very lives.
- No matter what our society says, no matter who is in the white house, governor in Albany or Oneida County leaders, marriage is between one man and one woman and life begins at conception and must be protected.
- We will stand on God’s Word and its holy perfection over what any man, or woman say! Even if someday the Bible gets marked as hate speech, we will continue to preach it and live it!
- There’s a cost to following Christ, isn’t there? Maybe all this Covid-19 and election craziness is for a purpose. Could it be God has drawn a line in the sand for the churches in America?
- Anyone can say they are a person of faith. Faith in what?! The Jesus Christ of the Bible, uncensored or a fake Jesus that fits every narrative of someone’s life choices?
- It’s time for believers to raise the bar on holy living. It’s time to put the idols (hobbies, TV, video games, social media, arguing, drunkenness, porn, gossip, hatred of others, bitterness, hatred, these are evidence, fruit of the flesh **Galatians 5:19-21**) away and get about the business of God.
- **Read Galatians 5:22-26**

Great Power, Great Grace and Great Fear Led to:

IV. A Good Reputation in the Community.

- Even though there was a hesitancy to join the First Church of Jerusalem, Christ followers were thought of highly according to the last part of verse 13:
- **Verse 13b, “but the people esteemed them highly.”**
- Christians were considered favorably because of how they cared for the little, the least and the lost.
- It’s helpful to know the cultural setting in which this passage was written. Rome had a law called patria potestas, which meant “the father’s power.” By law, children were regarded as the patriarch’s personal property, and he could do with them what he wished. A displeased dad could disown his kids, sell them into slavery, or even kill them with no consequences.
- When a child was born, the newborn was placed between the father’s feet. If the father picked up the baby, the child stayed in the home. If he turned and walked away, the child was either left to die or sold at auction into slavery.

I read an article called, “How Christianity Invented Children” by Pascal Gobry.

“We have forgotten just how deep a cultural revolution Christianity wrought. In fact, we forget about it precisely because of how deep it was: There are many ideas that we simply take for granted as natural and obvious, when in fact they didn't exist until the arrival of Christianity changed things completely. Take, for instance, the idea of children.

One of the most notorious ancient practices that Christianity rebelled against was the frequent practice of “expositio,” basically the abandonment of unwanted infants. But really, Christianity's invention of children — that is, its invention of the cultural idea of children as treasured human beings — was really an outgrowth of its most stupendous and revolutionary idea: the radical equality, and the infinite value, of every single human being as [made in the image of God].”

- Believers have a responsibility to do what is right and godly. We also must set the example and be above reproach, in a way earning favor to be heard!
- It matters what you do in the community of believers and unbelievers. They are watching, what will they see and testify about you?

V. People Being Saved ALL the Time!

- While some people stayed away, others were drawn to Christ as we see in **verse 14**:
- **“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and woman...”**
- While following Christ was alarming to some, many others found Christ to be extremely appealing. The word “added” means, “kept on being added,” showing this happened all the time. The word “multitudes” refers to “a great many, a throng of people.”

Let's review the explosive growth of Christianity in the book of Acts so far...

- **2:41: “that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”**
- **2:47: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”**
- **Acts 4:4: “However, many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”**
- By A.D. 300, there were millions of believers scattered throughout the Roman empire.
- In a culture which looked down on women, don't miss how Luke mentions both **“men and women”** were getting saved in **Acts 5:14**. There are a dozen other references to women coming to Christ in Acts.
- God is still in the saving business. God's chosen way is to use sinful men and women who have turned their lives over to Him.
- If you are a believer what does your life say about God? Are you an example of God's grace and mercy? Are you on the look-out for God serving moments? Or are you too busy serving yourself? Is Sunday services a time for you to be encouraged, and sharpened to be used the next week for God? Or is it a box you check off as your service, time for God that week?

- **“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” Rom.10:14**
- We must get our eyes off ourselves, our social media, news sources, our couches, and get to work!
- **“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8**

Great Power, Great Grace and Great Fear Led to:

VI. Hurting People Being Healed.

- **Read verse 15**
- It’s quite a picture isn’t it? Those who were sick were taken outside into the streets. The word “sick,” doesn’t just refer to physical illnesses, though it certainly does include physical ailments; it also describes those who are “vacillating in faith, doubting, weak, powerless and without strength.”
- The use of “beds” and “couches” helps us see that Christianity is not only for all genders but for all classes of people. They didn’t just throw them on the ground in the dirt.
- People esteemed the apostles so much they felt if they could just get in Peter’s shadow they would be healed of their sickness. There was a belief in that culture that a shadow had power – they would flee from an evil man’s shadow but would seek to come into the shadow of a good man. There’s no evidence that Peter’s shadow had any power, but it does remind us of **Psalm 121** and God’s power!
- **Verse 16** shows how badly the hurting wanted to be healed. These people were not only from all classes and genders, but they came from all places: **Read verse 16.**
- The word “tormented” means to be harassed and helpless and the word for “healed” also means to serve. Once people were set free, they were able to serve others.
- We’re reminded we are saved to serve.

2 Corinthians 1:4, “who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

- We need to be ready to help people that are hurting. God has used what we have gone through as an opportunity to minister to other people who are going through it.
- We are all uniquely on different journeys, but have the same Lord and Savior, and everything we come up against is not only an opportunity to learn but to serve.
- There is a healing every man, woman, and child need healing from. Their sin debt! Unless they come to a life changing, Holy Ghost led meeting with Jesus THE Christ. They will step out into eternity in debt to that sin.

- Every born-again believer is a spiritual doctor, a preacher of the good news. We have the remedy to the plaque, virus, called sin.
- Are you living with, Great Power, Great Grace, and Great Fear of God?
- Are you looking for opportunities to serve others?
- We maybe struggling with things, but our eternity is set, in heaven with God. There are too many out there struggling and their eternity is in the balance.
- Satan will try to distract you and I from carrying out our responsibilities, helping the hurting, if we let him.

Conclusion

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