

You are Anointed for Action

Text: Acts 13:4-12

What is the church? I am not sure we can properly define who we are unless we go to the first church – the one the book of Acts talks about. The pattern we find there, was set so we would never lose our way, so we would never get side-tracked, and always remember what church (as God intended it to be), looks like.

Church should look like this:

1. Active

I love the book of Acts because it is a book of action. There was nothing timid or passive about the early church. Each chapter of Acts is infused with activity and movement.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

The Holy Spirit sent them. He is the initiator of action.

The early church never looked like a retreating army. No, they were an occupying army. Jesus never said, *'go and hide in a monastery'*. No, He said *'go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'*. He didn't say, *'hold the fort 'till I come'* either. He said, *'occupy 'till I come'* (Luke 19:13).

The book of Acts is a historical narrative of how the Church took the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth in the space of just 50 years. Everything in this book is about action.

2. Militant

6 Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,

Barnabas and Saul ended up in a very 'spiritual' place. Paphos means 'boiling hot' and it was the birthplace of the cult of Aphrodite. They believed that she had emerged from the sea in Paphos. And right there they also found a sorcerer who had great influence in the island.

The early church understood that our fight is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers – invisible agents of evil who oppose the mission of the church.

As the early disciples moved through areas and countries, they often found opposing forces. They often encountered ministers of darkness who opposed them:

- That is what happened to Phillip in **Acts 8**. There he found ‘Simon, the sorcerer’. Simon exerted great influence over that town, and he astonished them with his tricks – *‘from the least to the greatest’*.
- We read in **Acts 16** that when Paul preached in Philippi he had to deal with a woman with a spirit of divination.

Wherever the church went they kept dislodging the spiritual powers at work in those places.

Ephesians 5:11 – *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*

They didn’t toy with the works of darkness but they exposed them, confronted them and triumphed over them. It is amazing to read the story of Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19), how he went head-on against the cult of Diana.

Here in Cyprus they confronted Elymas, the sorcerer.

*⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) **withstood them**, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.”*

It is quite clear from this passage that the devil doesn’t want people to know Jesus but I love the boldness of Paul against that false prophet!

In Paul’s teachings, we are exhorted to take our place in the battle:

- **2 Corinthians 10:4** – *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds*
- **1 Timothy 1:18** – *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare.*
- **2 Timothy 2:4** – *No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier*

3. Prophetic

In those days it was not uncommon for people in leadership (even Cesar himself) to be surrounded by sorcerers or priests who could ‘interpret omens’ and predict the future. In Roman times, Graeco-Roman religion and public life were intertwined. Public acts by dignitaries were always also religious acts. Elymas was there to provide guidance. He was a prophet – although a false prophet.

Paul’s decree over Elymas was not false but true and it came to pass! The man became temporarily blind, as a sign.

The church should be listening to what God is saying and declaring it over the earth!

So, the church looked like this: Active, Militant, Prophetic and lastly, supernatural.

4. Supernatural

Another reason why I love the Book of Acts is because it is a book of God's supernatural. The Church starts with a completely supernatural event: The Holy Spirit descended upon believers who started speaking tongues that they had never learned. That event empowered believers to go into the whole world and preach with boldness and power, with signs and wonders following.

The early church modelled it for us so that, 2000 years later, we may continue to be moved with the same apostolic purpose and display the power of Jesus to our generation. **God doesn't intend for His end-time church to be any different from His early church!**

⁹ Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness,

- a) What a contrast of powers: Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit and Elymas full of deception! **Only a church full of the Holy Spirit can counter the power of deception.**

That is why God poured out His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and is still pouring out His Spirit today.

b) V.7 – *Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man*

There was a fight over the soul of this man. On one hand, powers of deception, on the other, God. How do you win a soul? How do you win an intelligent man?

Sergius Paulus was no doubt extremely well educated, a man born into the highest rankings of Roman society. Only that fact explains that he became a proconsul - a governor of a Roman province appointed by the Senate of Rome in the days of Claudius, in the year 47. He was in charge of the army, administration and justice.

Archaeologists have found stones in Rome and Cyprus with his name inscribed in them. He was definitely someone very important.

How do you reach someone like that? – Eloquence didn't do it, debating didn't either – however, signs and wonders did it!

¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done,

He believed when he saw God's supernatural power. He didn't believe because Paul engaged him on a purely intellectual level – after all, he was known as an intelligent man. No. He believed when he saw.

(historia do Jorge em Macau)

^{12b} ... *being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*

He must have been taught the teaching of Jesus, obviously. However, first he saw. He saw, he believed and then his heart was open to the teaching of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 - *⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*

Conclusion

The blueprint for the end-time church has been set by the first church. This is the same blueprint for our church right here in Rowville. We are engaged in the same mission and vision. This is what we are all about.

We are a Spirit-filled, Spirit-activated church. We understand that we have been anointed for action, to be militant, prophetic and supernatural.