

Acts 5: 12-26; “The Heart Cry of the True Christian”, Sermon # 19
in the series – “Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on April 22nd, 2012,
in the Morning Worship Service.

Let us understand that when the text says that believers were increasingly “added to the Lord” it is speaking of people being converted to Christ. Conversion does not necessarily begin when you start coming to church, as important as that is. Conversion begins when you really begin receiving “all the words of this life”. It means that your life is changed so that you have come to know Jesus Christ, and you are now following Him spiritually according to teaching of the Bible. Conversion is not something that is spoken of much in our day. It needs to be spoken of much more. Jesus said in Matthew 18: 3 – “Unless you are converted and become like little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” To be converted is God’s work in the first place. True conversion begins with His effectually calling a person to Himself. It begins when He personally gives to you spiritual light so that you are awakened to your lost estate. It continues as He transfers you from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. True conversion is based upon God’s giving you the gift of spiritual sight, and spiritual life, for Jesus’ sake. Through His working He causes you to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You are perfectly passive in relation to these acts of His salvation. These aspects of salvation are performed by God alone in accordance with His Divine sovereignty and His eternal purpose. But conversion, or your “being added to the Lord”, also takes in your response to what God has done for you through Jesus Christ and by the power of His Holy Spirit. You are not at all to be passive, or indifferent about your own conversion. And if you have been converted you are not to be negligent in your responses if you have received a gift which is this great and this important. You should be responding to everything that God is doing for you, in order to prove to yourself that yours is a true conversion and that you are a healthy Christian. You should begin to learn and receive and act upon “all the words of this life”. This is what coming to church and listening to preaching is all about. This is what joining a church is all about. This is what the Christian life is all about. This is true conversion to Jesus Christ. You are “added to the Lord” as one who has consciously and deliberately received the true life of the Risen Christ to your soul. And you now would live that life out to the glory of God.

So your first work in being converted is to assume the attitude that you would “become like a little child”. A little child has many things to learn and to be taught over many years while they are growing up, but from the time that they are born, that child seeks to learn and to do many things in response to the teaching of its parents. Let’s think of it from the beginning of physical life. A baby is being born, and when that baby arrives, if you do not hear it cry out you know that something

is wrong. There may not be life there. But when you hear the cry you know that there is life, and you breath a great sigh of relief, and you rejoice; for you know that a child has been born into the world. The same is true of a person's being born into the spiritual kingdom of Christ. If you are a true Christian you will do certain things if you have life; things which are characteristic of all Christians. First of all, when you come into this New World of being in the spiritual kingdom of heaven, you will cry out to God in prayer. You will cry out to God in prayer, coming to Him through Jesus Christ your Lord. You will cry out that He would come and change your sinful heart and forgive all of your sins when you hear and understand the gospel. You cry out in sorrow that you have fallen so short of His glory and have lived such a sinful and such a selfish life. And then when you believe in the gospel of what Christ has done for you the sinner, when you believe that gospel, your heart cries out for joy that God is real, that He has answered you and that He has now become your God. Once you have been "added to the Lord", you will hopefully continue to cry out to Him for wisdom on how you should go about to live your life, now that these things have happened to you. You want to honor Him with your life. You want to grow up to spiritual maturity. This is what I would like to talk to you about this morning. If you are a maturing Christian, as these Christians were in our text, you will have a heart cry to receive and to keep "all the words of this life", that have been given to you by the Apostles in the Bible. Your heart will especially cry out to the Living God, the Risen Living Christ, for these 3 things. 1st of all - That you might be faithful to bring the physically and spiritually sick and tormented people that you know, to Jesus and to His ministers that they might be healed and saved. (verses 14-16) 2nd - That you might be faithful to pray for the strength of God's ministers to face the oppositions of wicked religious men. (verses 17 and 18) And 3^{rdly} - That you might be faithful to pray that God's ministers would continue to be able to preach, and that you would continue to support them by your attendance upon their teaching. (verse 19-26) These 3 prayers comprise the heart cry of the true Christian. It is that they might be faithful to God's word and to men's souls.

1st of all - I hope that it will be your heart cry to be faithful to bring the physically and spiritually sick and tormented people that you know, to Jesus and to His ministers that they might be healed and saved. (verses 12-16)

The Early Church had been gathering for worship and teaching in Solomon's porch, which was a part of the temple. It says in verse 12 that they were all of one accord there. It was out of this spiritual unity of purpose that comes what follows. Verse 14 - "And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 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." "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.” I suppose that many of you know this, but I thought that I would mention it at this point; that people in our day, and most people in every generation are more concerned about the health of their body than they are the salvation of their soul. Usually more requests go up to the throne of God for the healing of people’s bodies than for the salvation of specific person’s souls. This ought not to be, but it is plainly the case. Why is this? It is because the health and strength of person’s body is very important to their living a satisfying and productive life now. It is because they know that if they are sick that they cannot do the things that they would desire to do, whether they are good things or whether they are sinful things. The here and now is more important to them than something that might happen to them in the future which they are not sure will happen at all. I am speaking now of the way that many unbelievers think. Most of them are not sure whether there is a heaven or a hell. They hope that there is a heaven, and they may fear that there is a hell, but since they are not sure, the major concern for them is how they are feeling physically now, at any given time. If they feel well physically, then all is well right now for them, they conclude. They do not usually understand the importance of their soul.

And so when it comes their time to die, the people around them who are unbelieving are more concerned that they are made comfortable and that they do not feel any pain, rather than whether they might be saved or not. They are more concerned that their loved one will not have to suffer any more than is absolutely necessary. But they are relatively unconcerned about the spiritual state of their loved one’s soul; what will happen to their loved one, or themselves, after they die. Many unbelievers in our day wrongly believe that the physical sufferings of this life are the only hell that they will ever know, and that somehow they, or their loved ones, will be justified by death alone. That is the doctrine that many believe today. When they die, they believe that because they have had to go through some physical suffering and death, that this is all that a loving God could possibly expect them to have to bear. Because they do not understand God’s Justice they blindly believe, without any Scriptural foundation, that He will automatically usher them into heaven where they will rest in peace forever. None of the way that they have lived their life will ever be brought up because a loving God would never send anyone to hell except the very worst of people.

Now this is a gross misconception and one which will insure, if it is believed, that those who have been so deceived, will indeed end up in hell. No, our text says that each person who will be saved must be “added to the Lord”. In God’s mind they are not automatically associated savingly, with our Lord Jesus, by nature. No, Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 3 calls them “children of wrath, even as the rest. And so, do not fool yourself. Unless you come to believe in Jesus Christ with a saving faith that really changes your sin-sick heart, and takes away all of your sins, you will indeed perish in your sins and be tormented forever in that dreadful place where our God who is holy and righteous and eternally wise will cast you. You

shall not be able by any means to retrieve yourself from that awful place. You must repent of your many sins now while you have physical life and breath. And you must believe in the only One who has lived a perfectly righteous life on your behalf; Jesus, who has died in your place at the cross. When you do this, you will most certainly be saved, and not otherwise. But what shows us the gentleness and the kindness of the purpose of God the Father and our Lord Jesus in the gospel, is that Christ delegated His ability to heal, according the Father's eternal purpose, to His Apostle Peter, to do miracles of physical healing so that people would see and know that there was only one true and living God, and only one true way for people to be saved from their sins. And that is through our Savior. Since people do mistakenly believe that the body is more important than the soul, our Lord Jesus Christ through Peter manifested His great compassion to the sick people and to those who were tormented by unclean spirits. Through Peter, Jesus healed them all. The truth is, God would have you to reason about this from the lesser to the greater. If the only True and Living God could heal the bodies of these sick people, and if He could cast out their demons through the compassion of Christ through Peter's ministry, then He can also do that greater thing; He can heal your sin-sick soul and take away the guilt of your sins if you will believe in Jesus Christ the Lord and call upon His name. Do you reason this way? O, I hope that you do.

I also want you to take notice of the fact that this compassion was shown through Peter, but not without the church's help. The people who had been added to the Lord brought people to Peter so that they could be healed. I am saying to you this morning that the heart cry of the early Church was that people would not only be physically healed, but that they would also be saved from their sins by believing the good news of the gospel. Those multitudes of people who had been "added to the Lord", were so concerned for the physical healing and the salvation of their loved ones and their friends that they brought them to where Peter was ministering, where he happened to be walking by, so that at least Peter's shadow might fall upon some of them. Peter was an Apostle who was given these great gifts of healings to authenticate the fact that He was God's messenger. Men are no longer given this kind of power to do miracles, as it was given to the Apostles in that day. These gifts of miracles were given to attest to the power of God to save people from their sins by the means of the preaching of the gospel. The attention of the people would be drawn to Peter who had this miraculous ability, and they would then also hear the gospel from his lips. But not only from his lips, but from the lips of the other disciples who made up the church there in Jerusalem. The church worked together.

And this church, here in Tama, is also working together, and it will hopefully continue to grow in our working together, to bring people who are not only physically sick and mentally tormented to Jesus, but also bring to church people who are spiritually sick and mentally ignorant of God's will so that they can hear the message of the gospel and the word of God, and be saved. You see, this is what

the Lord is calling each one of us who is a member of this church to do. Truth is confirmed by many witnesses. And here in this assembly this morning there are many witnesses to the truth of the Word of God as it is being preached who are saying in their hearts, “Amen, pastor, the word of truth is in your mouth.” “For it is the words of God’s word the Bible.” “Hereby I grow in the knowledge of Christ, and the knowledge of what is right and wrong.” “Here I find the teaching on grace, and the teaching of the manifold wisdom of God which is in the Scriptures, which will change my heart and my life for the better because I am abiding in it.” “And I want all of my loved ones and friends to be able to come and do the same.” Is this your heart cry? If it is, we will together see Christ’s cause go forward in this place.

Now 2ndly – I would hope that your heart cry might be that you would be faithful to pray for the strength of God’s ministers to face the oppositions of wicked religious men. (verses 17-25)

Verse 17 – “Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.” Now, we must ask ourselves, how is it that these Sadducees could be filled with indignation over the reality of many sick people and mentally tormented people being healed? You would think that it would have made them glad, and they would then have looked into the idea that perhaps they had been wrong about Jesus; that He really was their promised Messiah. Instead they rise up and put the Apostles in prison. This only shows the strength of their unbelief, especially the strength of the malice (of ill-will) in the hearts of these wicked Sadducees. They were “filled with jealousy” some of the translations say. This jealousy was because so many people were being drawn to the faith of Jesus Christ, the very Person whom they had, some months before, helped put to death on the cross. They wanted to keep all of the people in Jerusalem under their religious thumb; they wanted their religious authority over the people of Jerusalem to continue. If these Apostles of Jesus kept on, the Sadducees thought, all of their wealth and all of their dignity and power and tyranny over the people would be lost. They thought that this teaching and preaching of Jesus, as the Savior and Lord of Israel, had to stop. These wicked men had a religion which thrived on having the people keep long lists of man-made additions to God’s law, regulations which bound them up under their own false system of theology. But this new religion of Jesus was setting the people free from their authority and bringing them under the truly Biblical authority of the Apostles. So they were indignant; they were offended. And therefore, they thought that to imprison the Apostles would bring this whole movement to a stop.

Now I hope that you are a Christian who prays for those who are preachers and teachers in the church. It is through their ministry, and your helping to bring people to that ministry that the kingdom of Christ will go forward, even amidst opposition. God looks at the progress of Christ’s kingdom in relation to the building of true Bible-believing local churches. We tend to look at it in terms of

individual people. He looks at it in terms of individual people joining a faithful church. Whenever people are truly being helped and rescued from their sins, they will also be delivered from whatever is false in the religion which they used to be a part of. That is progress for the true kingdom of God. But many people who are leaders in of false religious movements are deceived enough by their own ideas of what religion is, that they will fight to hold on to the people who they hold in their spiritual grasp. They do not understand that in true religion people belong to Jesus. They are added to Him by faith and not by the works of the law. They will oppose our gospel of free grace. Let us believe with all of our heart that God does work all things together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose, even if the one who preaches to us is thrown in prison. This is what happened to Peter and the other Apostles. God has many providential surprises that He will reveal in His own time and in His own way. In these days it was particularly important that the Apostles not be imprisoned for long periods of time. They had many labors for the gospel which they needed to accomplish as free men. God always knows how to work very difficult situations of opposition to His own and His people's best advantage. These Sadducees did not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection. They did not believe in angels or spirits it says in Acts 23: 8. But verse 19 says, "But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought the apostles out." What a marvelous thing this way for the Apostles. How it must have greatly encouraged their faith.

Let us apply it to ourselves this way. There may be a number of situations in our lives which may cause us to think that God is not for us; that God is not with us. Perhaps someday, some of us may face imprisonment. Perhaps we might see the imprisonment of a pastor or a Christian friend. Let us understand that God is watching very carefully all of the stands for truth and righteousness that His dear people take. He knows all of the wicked people who oppose them. And He is able to intervene at any given time to bring them out of these situations. But sometimes He thinks that it will glorify Him more if He does not bring them out, as we shall see in Acts 7 where Stephen is martyred and in Acts 12 when James is put to death with the sword. But even there, when those men were taken home to glory to be their Lord Jesus, God had one of His angels come and release Peter from his chains and lead him out past the guards. He says there in Acts 12: 11, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." Peter's favorite Psalm was Psalm 34. There in verse 7 it says, "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." And verse 19 – "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." The heart cry of God's people in prayer was for Peter to be released and delivered from death, and so it was. But the heart cry of God is that they be fully and finally released from all their persecutions and oppressions and brought to heavenly kingdom. Let me ask you now, does your heart cry out for the preachers

of the Lord, that they remain free to speak? Does your heart cry out that God's word would run swiftly and be glorified? Does your heart cry out for those preachers in prison who cannot seem to get out of prison? Would you go and visit them in prison, even if it meant that you were put under suspicion? In Hebrews 13: 3 it says, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also." Let us have hearts that are tender for the progress of the Lord's kingdom, that we would pray for the men that He has called to preach.

And then 3rdly – I would hope that your heart would cry out to God that you might be faithful to pray that God's ministers would continue to be able to preach, and that you would continue to support them by your attendance upon their teaching. (verse 19-26)

Verse 20 says that the angel said to the Apostles when he opened the prison doors, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." I want you to see that the Lord is watching over His word to perform it. He wants His preachers to speak all the words of this life; this Christian life. God the Father is watching over Christ's kingdom to establish it and forward it. He is doing this in the midst of great opposition. He has said in Psalm 110, "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." "The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion." "Rule in the midst of Your enemies!" Christ is ruling in the midst of His enemies, whether it was in that first generation of the Church, or whether it is now. But still you, the dearly beloved people of God, have a great responsibility and part to play in this forward progress of Christ's kingdom, His Church. In closing this message I would like to ask if your heart cries out to our God in prayer for 2 things? Does it cry out that the one who preaches to you would be faithful to preach, and to live out the words of this life which are found in the Bible? Does your heart cry out to strongly support that preaching of the word; so much so that if it is opposed by wicked men that the religious and political authorities would be afraid to come and take them by force? Do you see what it says in verse 25? "So one came and told them, saying, 'Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!'" "Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned." That was the kind of support which these early Church believers favored their Apostles with; they were there when morning came, and the angel released the Apostles from prison and commanded them to preach again. They did not have to command the people to assemble. The people were faithful to be there. Are you there when the word is being preached? Do you see the importance of attendance upon the public preaching of the word in all of the services of the church? Do you support the preacher so much that people would fear to come and take him to prison? Only the Lord knows the answer to those questions, and He holds all things in His hands. But thanks be to God for

the faithfulness of those in the early Church whose hearts cried out to God for the forward progress of His kingdom.