

“WHEN TO STAY AWAY FROM CHURCH”

Acts 5:12-16

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INTRODUCTION

People have many reasons for staying away from church:

But, here in this passage we have an unusual reason for avoiding “church”: I’d better stay away or I might die! (Compare: “Lightning might strike me”, or “the roof might cave in on me.”) But, notice that the people who died were not unbelievers—but deceitful believers.

There are some people who ought to stay away from church: *People who really do not want to live for God but are phonies, people who are merely curious, people who merely want recognition, or people who want to follow the crowd.* But, those who are truly interested and are being drawn to Christ definitely ought to “associate with the believers (see 9:26; 17:34—same verb used).

Yes, some should stay away from church—But most people should come—ESPECIALLY CHRISTIANS WHO NEED TO FELLOWSHIP AND GROW IN CHRIST.

I. THE CHURCH’S RESOURCES

A. _____ (1-11) (Remember what could happen to half-hearted Christians.)

B. _____ (12, 15-16)

1. Persons displaying the power—Apostles (12)

2. Persons receiving the benefits of the power

a. The sick of Jerusalem (15)

Compare the handkerchiefs of Paul (19) and the hem of Jesus’ garment (Mt. 9:20).

God even honors “superstitious faith” if it is genuine faith in Him.

b. The sick of the surrounding region (16)

c. Demon possessed (“afflicted with unclean spirits”)

Notice also that “all were being healed.”

THIS IS VERY MUCH UNLIKE THE HEALING CRUSADES TODAY!

*But, did not v. 13 say that unsaved people tended to avoid the Christians? People here throng the streets, but do not come into the church unless morally and spiritually serious. Those who are not genuine, in time of persecution, tend to **either fall away** or **they join the adversaries of Christians in persecuting them: “Crucify Him, crucify Him.”***

II. THE WORLD'S RESPONSES

A. _____ the Church (12b, 13a)

All the believers were together in fellowship (v. 12b); but “none of the rest”—i.e. unbelievers who were not coming to faith in Christ—“dared to associate with them.”

This verse does not:

- Refer to believers—don't you use it as an excuse to stay away from church!
- Refer to rulers—only to those who likewise were uninterested and insincere.

Notice that:

- People who were joining **were not products of a mere membership drive.**
- The verb “associate with” has the idea of “stick to” as with glue. They would not dare to hang on to other believers in a hypocritical fashion.

B. _____ the Church (13b)

The unsaved world “*held them (believers and apostles) in high esteem.*”

Why don't more people honor the church today?

- There is far too little purity.
- The church has little genuine spiritual power.
- The church has little genuine love—as manifested in the sharing of goods.

C. _____ the Church (14)

There was not a decrease—as one might have expected: “And, all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number” NASB; compare 2:41; 4:4. [Not added “to the Lord” as in KJV—“in the Lord” in the original is joined with “believing”—i.e. **believing in the Lord.**”

- People were being added to the **visible fellowship.**
- There were many new “believers in the Lord.”
- There were “multitudes” of new Christians.
- Some estimate that there may have been as many as **20,000 Christians** by this time!
- People were “**constantly**” being saved.
- Both “men and women” were being saved. Both are important in the body of Christ; note how the Bible stresses this fact!
- The church was with one accord (12b) in Solomon's Porch on the east side of the temple mount and outer court. **Once again a stress on their UNITY.**

CONCLUSION

As a church, we need purity, power, and unity in our walk with God.

God wants us to be genuine.

If we are phonies and hypocrites—it could be dangerous for us to go to church.

But, if you are saved and desire to live for God, you must go (Heb. 10:25).