

"Church on the Run"  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
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"And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city. But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans." (Acts 8:1-25)

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Pastor Wally spoke of folks having a "short" week and others a "long" week, but a week is still seven days, so what makes a week seem shorter and longer to me? Explain.

Pastor Wally spoke of the differences between "preaching" the Word used in Acts 8 and "proclaiming" the Word that "preaching" the word was tantamount to gospelizing ("To gospelize is to proclaim and apply the gospel for the conversion of unbeliever AND for the building up and grounding of believers firmly in the faith"; Pastor Wally definition: gossiping about Jesus to others). In his message preached on September 16, 1888, entitled "All At It", Spurgeon pointed out: "I would call your attention to the translation in the Revised Version,

where Philip is said to have “proclaimed” the word. The word “proclaim” is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word “preach.” “Preach” has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse; whereas gospel preaching is talking, discoursing, and telling out the gospel in any way. We are to make known the word of the Lord. Generals may have to stand still in the center of the battle to direct the forces; but in this battle all the common soldiers marched to the fight. This was to be a soldiers’ battle; and of that sort all the battles of the cross ought to be.” Spurgeon’s point is simply this – when we use the word “preach” today, we are often referring to the activity that a pastor engages in from the pulpit on Sunday morning (“a set discourse”). But that is not what is in view in Acts 8:4-5, 35. Rather, the text in Acts is talking about the general work of evangelism that is incumbent upon all Christians. In fact, the word translated as “preaching” in verse 4 is the Greek term euangelizo, which means evangelize. Why do disciples today struggle to share the Gospel...to evangelize or to feel that evangelism is a duty best relegated to pastor/elders only? Explain.

Do I consider myself to be conversationally fluent speaking “Jesus” to others? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Luke was explicit in pointing out that Saul was an equal opportunity persecutor hauling both men and women off to prison. Spurgeon went on in his message to say that “As there were no exceptions on account of educational defects, so were there no exclusions on account of sex. Men and women were to spread abroad the Knowledge of Jesus. We read that “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hauling off men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad” (and these must have been men and woman) “went everywhere preaching the word.” There are many ways in which women can fittingly proclaim the word of the Lord, and in some of these they can proclaim it more efficiently than men. There are minds that will be attracted by the tender, plaintive, winning manner in which the sister in Christ expresses herself. A Christian mother! What a minister is she to her family! A Christian woman in single life—in the family circle, or even in domestic service—what may she not accomplish, if her heart be warm with love to her Saviour! We entreat Martha and Mary, Lydia and Dorcas, and all the elect sisterhood, young and old, rich and poor, to instruct others as God instructs them. Young men and maidens, old men and matrons, yes, and boys and girls who love the Lord, should speak well of Jesus, and make known his salvation from day to day.” In other words, the Great Commission isn’t just for educated men of the clergy. It is the task of the entire church. There is work to be done and both men and women are needed for the task. Do I believe that the ability of women to “proclaim [the Gospel] more efficiently than men” has been marginalized in some ways by the 21<sup>st</sup> century church? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally said that the Jerusalem church was over 11,000 strong when Saul began persecuting them which resulted in them being scattered. Spurgeon went on in his message to say “In every church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad, more or less. He never means that a church should be like a nut shut up in a shell; nor like ointment enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Just now we have little of that form of persecution which drives men from home. But godly people are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that certain young men should have to go to a distance; but should we regret it? We lament that certain families must migrate to the colonies. Does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry, but the Lord has need of some of his servants in places where there is no light. In many ways the great Head of the church scatters his servants abroad; but they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, “Where can I do the most good?” and if he can do more good anywhere beneath the sun than in the land of his birth, he is bound to go there, if he can.” What is my reaction to learning that some member or family of the church is leaving for some reason? Is it optimism and blessings for the departing member/family or something less edifying? Explain.

Spurgeon said that “In every church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad.” Can that be said of our church? If so, how so? If not, why not?

“They all paid attention to [Simon], from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.” John Piper pointed out that “the object of Simon's faith—the thing in which he believes—is the power of supernatural phenomena—the power of miracles that you can see with the physical eye, not Jesus Christ and the glory of his grace.” Pastor Wally spoke of the increase in psychics online. Apparently there are so many, I found a link online asking if I was “Tired of Fake Psychics? Find Real Mediums Online!” How easy is it for me to focus on the “miracle” and totally disregard the source of the “miracle” or to a promise that appears to immediately meet a dire need without considering who the guarantor of the promise is?

Pastor Wally said that the Christian (Disciple) life is a race of endurance and added that I am to finish the race “well” or in other words to finish having given my personal best effort. How do I see myself finishing the race...having exhausted all of my energy or am I coasting across the finish line? Am I in His race, or am I taking a leisurely stroll through the countryside, or have I been tripped up (Gal 5:7-8) and am now sitting alongside the race course with an injury that keeps me from continuing the race at this time? Explain.