



Awakened to Movement

Message Notes, September 10, 2017

This week and next week will explore how the powerful moves of God in the early church were always met with opposition from the world and Satan.

As we have surveyed the story of the early church in the book of Acts, we have discovered several profound truths:

1. God uses **ordinary people** to bring His kingdom in the world.
2. We see **God's fingerprints** throughout the story of Acts. These "prints" are evident in dramatic, miraculous events (like Pentecost and healings), but also in deeper, less immediate transformations: joyous generosity, unity and community that emerges across social and ethnic divides, the steady expansion of the gospel as followers freely share Jesus wherever they go.
3. When God moves in and through His people, there is opposition from the enemy and the world. These two realities, **Movement and Opposition**, are like the rails of a train track. The church rides these two rails throughout Acts and all of history.

There are five focal elements that fuel these moves of God:

1. **Prayer.** Every move of God in the Acts story is fueled by prayer. There are 34 references in Acts to God's people praying intentionally for specific things.
2. Openness to **the unknown**. E.g., Jesus' directive to his disciples before His ascension – "go and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit." He gave them no details. This was a huge unknown – What will happen? When? How will we know? They waited and prayed – *in the unknown*.
3. God works in and through **pain and suffering**. In Acts 7, Stephen is stoned to death for his faith. Then, in Acts 8:1-4, "a great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem [pain and suffering]; and all the believers were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria ... But the believers who were scattered preached the gospel of Jesus wherever they went ..."
4. A willingness to be **stretched** and changed. E.g., As God moved in these early Jewish Christians, they were greatly stretched – first, to embrace the despised Samaritans as brothers and sisters, and then, even moreso, the abhorrent, unclean Gentiles!
5. **Sensitivity** to the Holy Spirit. E.g., Revival was in full swing in Samaria, but God called Phillip to *leave* there and go south towards the Gaza desert. What?! Phillip was sensitive and obedient, and encountered there a lone Ethiopian eunuch "of great authority." He shared the gospel with this Ethiopian, who believed and was baptized. Because Phillip was sensitive to the Spirit, the gospel would now penetrate the continent of Africa.

Questions to Consider

1. How are you praying for God to stir in your own life? For God to move in our church?
2. How open are you to the Spirit to move in you or in us in unfamiliar, unknown ways?
3. If you are in the midst of struggle or suffering, ask the Holy Spirit to give insight and fresh perspective about how God is working in this pain for deeper, good purposes in your life.
4. What areas of settledness or comfort might God be wanting to "stretch" in you? Are you open to Him in this?
5. Let's all open our hearts and minds to Holy Spirit – to be sensitive to what He desires to reveal and stir in us.