**TRANSFORMED TO TRANSFORM Church Dreaming Day 19th Oct 2025**

**Acts 5:12-42**

*Act 5:12-16 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

Do we believe God is at work and that He still changes lives?

We can dare to believe He might change the life of a young person. We can hope that a child who grows up in the church might stay. It is even possible for a friend from school might come to youth group, go on Easter camp and be transformed. We know this is possible because many of us can remember it happening – to a friend, perhaps even to us.

And perhaps we even believe that under the inspired preaching of a man like Billy Graham, God can do remarkable things. Many of us can recall when it happened. Even when God changed us! And when we read stories like this from Acts. We know He did. We know He can.

But can God change the life of your neighbour,

 your wayward grandchild,

 your child’s friend’s mother,

 your boss or families from our Grange PS?

Can God change the life of people you see shopping,

 come to our Café

 or walk past us on the way to the beach?

Can God change my life, your life and the life of those who live around us?

 And can God use us as He changes lives?

Today I want to take you on a journey back to the early church. To the first followers of Jesus and the sort of things they saw God doing. And to look again at how they responded! But before we delve in – we need a reality check! Be honest – do you believe the account!? If you were there and all of this was happening – what would you be thinking? Is this the sort of thing you could believe God can do? Does he still work like this?

Imagine – you were on your way to the temple.

 Earlier… you had once heard Jesus speak.

You were suitably impressed, but life was hectic, no time to consider further…

 and so you had continued on as you always had -

 Being a faithful Jew.

 Participating in the daily rituals, weekly routines and yearly celebrations.

You worked hard at keeping the Law, did business with integrity, treated your family well, attended the Temple on the Sabbath.

You had heard that this teacher Jesus had been crucified,

 and despite rumours that his body had mysteriously disappeared

 – some even suggested he had come back to life –

 you just concluded that another radical had met their untimely,

 but not unexpected end, and that would be it!

 ‘Another one bites the dust!’ so to say.

But it appeared that this Jesus sect, instead of being decimated – was growing from strength to strength. And now this! God was so powerfully at work in and through them that even the shadow of one of them was enough to bring healing. And people afflicted with unclean spirits released. And all were healed.

As a result, the crowds flocked to them. The Church was bursting with people being changed by Jesus -

*multitudes of both men and women were being added to their number v14*

There was no doubt about it – the followers of Jesus stood out from the crowd. In fact – wherever they went – a crowd followed them. Crowds of people swarmed to them. And when they gathered – everyone else wanted to join in. They wanted to be a part of what was happening. In particular, people who were lame, blind, leprous, or demon possessed. The outcasts, outsiders and pariahs of the community were welcomed and made whole! Completely changed. Healed, released and now fully alive! It didn’t really make sense. And it was very hard to know what to think, believe, feel. But then – the evidence was irrefutable! Miraculous healings, emboldened followers, changed lives. It was all pretty undeniable!

I love the story that follows. I didn’t read it, but it’s there in your notes.

You can imagine the scene.

 The High Priest and his associates were worried!

 Seeing the crowd that was becoming a part of these new communities,

 they were filled with jealousy and had the apostles arrested!

But in the middle of the night – they escaped.

 And immediately went back to what they were doing before – preaching as if nothing had happened!

The guards are completely unaware – and understandably – when they discover the empty jail - quite puzzled!

In the morning the High Priest and associates turn up at the prison,

 the guards open the door, they go in – and it’s empty!

 The doors were still bolted – but they’re gone!

 Can you imagine the expression on the faces, the questions, the excuses…

 And then – as if to make them look completely ridiculous…

Someone turns up and says *"Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." v.25*

Furious, but aware of the popularity of the apostles they arrest them again.

And say– like frustrated parents: *"We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching…”*

Here in the first days of the Church we find all these wonderful stories. But what I find most amazing is not these remarkable miracles and healings, but the change that has occurred in the apostles themselves. In them a radical transformation occurred. From frightened selfish individuals, to a community of people who boldly lived out and shared their faith, with everyone – whatever the cost! So - God does change lives? But can God change the lives of those you know and love, like He did in days gone by?

It starts with us! Do you believe God could change us, change you, like this? Are we willing for such a transformation to occur?

There is no doubt about the risk they were facing. The Sanhedrin were furious and *‘wanted to put them to death’ v.33*. But Peter would not back down. There was no compromise or wavering: *"We must obey God rather than men.* Peter had now come to the point where he knew – “doing what God wants is more important than anything else! Anything else in the world. He was willing to risk his life, his safety, his reputation, everything, to help others experience and respond to the good news.

My guess is all of us would love this to be true for us. We probably believe it is true of us. We would like to believe that this is where we are at. But how many of us forgive – as we promise when we pray the Lord’s prayer?

 Not just those who are sorry – but all who have wronged us?

How many of us speak of our faith to our neighbours and friends?

 How many of us live simply, so that others may simply live?

How many of us are willing to give up everything – for the sake of the gospel?

 How many of us want to be changed like Peter?

How many of us are willing to risk all to help others experience God’s welcome embrace?

 And what about for us, as a church…

 what cost will we pay to pursue God’s mission for us?

This is what is so stunning about the stories in Acts. Not the miracles, healings and accounts of those released from the power of evil. But how God transformed the apostles from timid and fearful men, who crumbled whenever challenged, to men who are passionate proclaimers of the gospel – whatever the cost.

I remember my friend Adam. An ordinary farmer. Grown up in the Church he decided to become a follower of Jesus when young. Married a beautiful wife, had some wonderful kids. Life was going well. Sure it had its challenges - making a living from a farm was difficult. Dealing with family spread far and wide and elderly parents made it complex. But in all of this, Adam was heavily involved in their local Church, served wherever they could, helped with the youth, led a Bible study, had the privilege of seeing others come to faith. They believed they would give up everything for the sake of the gospel!

And then disaster struck. They lost their home and almost their farm! And they were forced to ask the question honestly: ‘Would we really be willing to give up everything for God?’ You know difficulty, challenges, change are an opportunity for transformation. In facing their great loss Adam realised that their obedience to God was half-hearted, conditional, comfortable. And so, a decision was made – from now on – it was all or nothing! God used their loss to invite them into a new adventurous future, a future which required risk, faith and costly obedience. And so, they left their farm to serve God full time!

As a church we are at a similar cross road! Fortunately, it is not one created by a disaster or significant difficulty. But unfortunately – this lack of crisis means that the cross road we are at can be harder to embrace, because it is harder to see. In fact, it would be easy to just put our head in the sand and pretend nothing needs to change.

As a church things are going well.

* We have great relationships with our neighbours.
* Incredible connections and gospel opportunities within the local primary schools.
* We have a great staff team, dedicated elders and committed people who serve faithfully in many ministries which are greatly appreciated.
* We are about to celebrate with 5 YP as they testify to what God is doing in their life through baptism.
* We heard recently from some of the 35 people who did Alpha.
* And have been privileged to welcome in a number of people over recent years who are being transformed by Jesus.
* Our budget is healthy, our Church facilities comfortable and our attendance reasonable.
* And we have Rajan fired up and building on the good foundations laid for Grange Life!

But – that does not mean we are not at a cross road. It is not crisis time! Allow me to outline three important things that cause me to believe the time is now! It is now we must face the facts and be open to what God may be saying to us about our future, it is now that we must make some decisions to ensure that Grange Baptist has a vibrant future and the ministry opportunities God is giving us are realised!

**Firstly**

Take a moment to look around. Now imagine that we keep going the way we have been going - what will we look like in 5 years? In 10 years? If nothing remarkable changes – all of us will be 10 years older!

Who will serve in the café, be a COACH in the primary school, lead our worship, or run the youth group then?

If we look at who we were 10 years ago and who we are now, we will soon realise that the average age of church is increasing.

This cannot go on much longer or we may be faced with the same difficult and painful decision that Grange UC has just made.

None of us want that. So, decisions need to be made now!

**Secondly**

We are a church which is incredibly well resourced.

Our budget is good and we have around $3 mil tied up in 2 residential properties.

Because of the faithful stewardship of Church folk for generations

 and the recent rapid increase in property prices,

 we are more wealthy than we have ever been!

But, the two residential properties are in need of serious repair.

And any income we could get from these assets is way below what is possible.

This is not good stewardship and we are potentially missing gospel opportunities.

But to work out what else? To explore what could be? That is complex!

We need to be willing for God to come and lead us.

We need to be willing to be obedient and take risks.

**Thirdly**

The ministry and mission opportunities before us are incredible.

The good favour we have with Grange Primary school is a God opportunity.

Rajan and Liz, responding to God’s prompting to lead GrangeLife is not accidental.

The 35 participants in Alpha is a sign of what could be.

The 5 YP being baptised and the encouragement we all experience because of their enthusiastic faith is a blessing.

The growth of Monday Fun Day

The faith conversations at play group

The new Christians walking into Church

The depth of relationships at Café

and the sense of God’s presence among us each Sunday –

are all signs that God is at work.

But we cannot take this for granted!

Are you ready to get on board with what God is doing?

Are we willing to do what it takes to maximise the opportunities before us?

Are we brave enough to make the decisions required to take the next step forward?

God changes lives.

 He changed the lives of the first disciples.

 He changed the lives of those they interacted with.

 He can change the lives of those around us!

But are we willing to allow Him to change us? Am I willing to be changed?

Because in the end – this is the biggest challenge of all.

 The difficulty is not – can or does God change lives? Is God capable?

 But are we willing for Him to change us? Do we really want Him to?

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**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. Think and talk about a time when God changed you or someone you knew?

How did He do it? What changed?

1. Read through the whole chapter. What do you find yourself thinking, feeling, believing? Could you imagine yourself present? What would you find most challenging or difficult to believe if these things happened today?
2. Which character do you most identify with in the story? Why?
* The crowds - healed and released
* The Priests – jealous with rage
* The guards - bemused and observing
* The apostles - remarkably used of God and faithful
1. From the passage or what you know of Peter, what do you think was most instrumental in his change? See Acts 1:8, and Chpt.2.
2. Is there someone you know and love who needs God’s transforming power that we can pray for? How might God use you in their life?
3. Is there something in you that you are unwilling for God to change? Why? What would make that different? What would you really like God to change?
4. What might need to change in us as a Church for God to use us in similar ways? What can we do now to help that happen?*Act 5:12-42 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. (13) None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. (14) And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, (15) so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. (16) The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. (17) But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy (18) they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. (19) But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, (20) "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." (21) And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. (22) But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, (23) "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." (24) Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. (25) And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." (26) Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. (27) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, (28) saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (29) But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. (30) The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. (31) God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (32) And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." (33) When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. (34) But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. (35) And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. (36) For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. (37) After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. (38) So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; (39) but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, (40) and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*