

**Speaker** : Associate Pastor David Seah

**Sermon Title** : Warning: Contains Power

Our mission:

**Salt** – Bringing meaning to the seeking and hurting.

**Light** – Living strategically – who is influencing us, who are we influencing and the answer to these 2 questions will determine how we are using our resources.

Ultimately when people see our good deeds, they will glorify God in heaven.

The emphasis made thus far has been on a personal level. In the final message of this series, I wish to bring a reminder that our mission is to our world – society and nation.

If we are not careful, we, the church can become, what I call, a gated community. Watch this video cartoon.

### **Veggie Tales – Gated Community Music Video**

Friends, we are not called to be a gated community. We are destined to be a church without walls. God has given us His power for us to reach our community and to touch our nation.

## **Introduction**

Jesus began His Church with power.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1: 8 (NIV)).

The Holy Spirit is sent to empower the Church to be a witness. Power was given so that the Church will be an agent of change.

This Scripture suggest that there is a widening scope to our witness – Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria... We can liken that to be our influence on our family and friends, our neighbourhood, the society at large and our nation and beyond.

## **I. The Early Church**

The Early Church was faced with persecution. First from the Jews, then from the Romans.

1. Persecution under Nero (c. 64-68).
2. Persecution under Domitian (r. 81-96).
3. Persecution under Trajan (112-117).
4. Persecution under Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-180).
5. Persecution under Septimus Severus (202-210).
6. Persecution under Decius (250-251).
7. Persecution under Valerian (257-59).

8. Persecution under Maximinus the Thracian (235-38).
9. Persecution under Aurelian (r. 270–275).
10. Severe persecution under Diocletian and Galerius (303-324).

Yet the church thrived. No force could hold them back nor wipe them out. They persevered and grew under persecution. Not only they faced persecution, they also faced plagues and calamities of all sorts.

For example, in 251 to 266 A.D., a killer epidemic in what became known as the Plague of Cyprian struck the Roman world. 5,000 people a day were said to be dying in Rome. Rome was completely ill-prepared to help the sick or deal with mass death. Mass migration to places of safety took place. But Christians stayed back and expended themselves in works of mercy that simply dumbfounded the pagans. They buried the dead, not just their own; provided food and water, ministered to the sick and consoled the dying without seeking favour in return. They saved an immense number of lives but many too lost their own lives in caring for the sick. Their faith led to a pandemic (pan = all; demos = people) of love. The Church's reputation as a bearer of hope was indisputable.

Historians like Lucian, Tertullian and the like, described the early Christians as practitioners of kindness and love who brought meaning and hope to many, especially in the dark days of calamities and plagues.

The church never retreated into an asylum. They never kept their salt nor hid their light. Instead, they directed their energy and resources strategically towards transforming society.

A historian by the name of Eusebius observed that the early Church's engagement in society was not merely an emergency service but an on-going mission.

- The Church was always at the forefront of charity with distribution of alms in general and support for widows and the disabled in particular.
- The church cared for prisoners. Christians would go all out to minister to prisoners at the mines where conditions often proved fatal.
- The church cared for the slaves and the poor.
- The church provided employment and ensured that every able-bodied person had work.

As the gospel continued to shine through the lives of the believers, cities that were filled

- with the homeless and impoverished, Christians extended **charity** to them;
- with newcomers and strangers, the Church offered an immediate basis for attachments **[belonging]**.
- cities filled with orphans and widows, believers provided a new form of spiritual **family**.
- cities torn by violent ethnic strife, the church offered an unshakable basis for social **solidarity**.

The Church was a powerful witness then. The Church today ought to be just as powerful a witness. Why? Because the same **Holy Spirit** is still moving in hearts of believers and giving them power.

## II. The Church Today

The Malaysian Church:

1. Tremendous increase in giving to missions, to the poor and needy.
2. Increase in number of Christian social and welfare homes.
3. The increasing participation of believers in ministry and in church leadership.
4. Rising number of Christians from 6 % in 1980 to about 10% in 2000.  
(I foresee a higher number with the recent census).
5. The growing att at Sunday church services (For eg AG Churches – started with a few in the 1950’s to more than 300 churches with about 35,000 members today).

We thank God that Calvary Church has:

- i. Given towards humanitarian needs;
- ii. Sent teams to foreign countries (Nepal, Indonesia, etc) – missions teams or what?
- iii. Supported local churches and centers – drug rehab, Malaysian Care, Dialysis Centers;
- iv. Established Sunshine Home, Street Church, Calvaryland, CLM, Heart Club;
- v. Etc.

I’m glad that Calvarites in their personal capacity:

- i. have been involved in Charitable foundation;
- ii. joined initiative groups to paint houses of Orang Asli;
- iii. Participated in the Rukun Tetangga;
- iv. V-Impact initiatives;
- v. Etc.

But there is so much more we can do and we need to do.

The needs are endless but the power the Holy Spirit gives is limitless.

## Conclusion

### **[NOW]**

As we seek to be transforming agents of our society and nation, God had given us the power to:

- **Evangelize**
- **Lend a voice**
- **Initiate action**

**How does point 2 and 3 play out?**

- First of all, fulfill your basic role as a citizen - Register as a voter!
- Know your MPs; write to ministers, politicians, media, etc; feedback on parliamentary bills before they are passed – Bar Council does it; so should we who know God’s laws.
- Provide leadership in professional bodies – economic, legal sector, or racial or religious integration efforts (**7 spheres of Influence**).

- Participate in social action or lobbying groups.
- Special Interest organisations (for different ages, vocations, economics, social, charities, hobbies, interests, concerns, etc).
- Foundation (Charitable, education, hospital, etc).
- If you are in a political party or an NGO, participate in policy-making.
- Be involved in think-tank groups of the government or NGOs.
- God may call some to be an MP (Cite William Wilburforce who helped abolish slavery in UK).

**Remember, we are to:**

- First of all, be Christian (a Malaysian Christian, instead of a Malaysian, whose religion is Christianity).
- Set clear priorities as to our belief in God and responsibility to self, family, church and society.
- Have strong biblical foundation (otherwise, how would we know what is right or wrong? For e.g., the banning of the use of the word Allah, no religious freedom for the restricted people group.
- Exhibit exemplary Christian testimony and leadership in our industry, service or discipline.
- Lend our voice in policies and decisions making.
- Involve in constructive engagement with those in authority.

The Malaysian Church today may not be facing severe persecution or killer epidemic. But the call is the same: Power has been given to us to transform our society and our nation.

What are we doing with these opportunities?

Luke 24:49