

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Open up your bibles with me to the book of Acts 5.

Last week we covered the first eleven verses of the chapter as we covered the events behind the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira and how judgment came upon them immediately because God had to cut the cancer off before it spread in the early church.

And in doing so, the church would realize that God is holy – and the fear of God came upon the church.

So tonight, we are going to see how the Holy Spirit continued to work among the early church and the response of the people to what happened at the beginning of chapter 5.

Let's pray...

**[Act 5:12-42 NKJV] 12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.**

Toward the end of chapter four – when Peter and John had returned from facing the Sanhedrin – they returned back to the other believers and the scriptures tell us that they prayed.

One of the things they prayed for was for boldness so that they may be able to continue to speak God's Word to the people.

The other things that they prayed for was that signs and wonders may continue to be done through the name of Jesus.

So, here in verse 12 – their prayers are answered.

The Holy Spirit empowers the apostles to do signs and wonders.

But here is the key – once again we see that the church was in one accord.

There was a sense of togetherness – which is a miracle in itself.

Just like on the Day of Pentecost

And time after time, we see example after example of great things happening when the church is in one accord / when the church is together.

How were they in one accord?

They kept their eyes on Jesus.

They didn't focus on drama – who is wearing what or who did what to whom – or who wasn't nice to them – they kept their eyes on Jesus.

I had you make a note where it says that immediately after Ananias and Sapphira - none of the rest dared join them –

## Who are the rest?

These were the nonbelievers who really didn't want a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ – they simply wanted to see what was going on – they were looky loos.

You see church –

After what happened to Ananias and Sapphira, there was a new respect for the holiness of God that came upon the church.

And the outsiders, who until that time had been coming to the temple to hear the Apostles preach, started staying away

They realized that going and standing with the Christians, and appearing to be something they weren't could be harmful to their health.

So the crowds thinned a bit, but those who were really coming to faith continued to come together for one purpose.

**14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,**

So the “others” the “rest” they didn't join the church.

However, the Holy Spirit continued to work and those that were not just casual observers – they came and they became believers.

They understood God's holiness

They knew that there might be consequences – especially from the religious rulers.

But they still came anyways.

**15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid [them] on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.**

So what's happening here in verse 15 -

First of all this verse is tied to what Luke told us back in verse 12 – the signs and wonders were being done by the Apostles.

So because signs and wonders were being done – the idea is that if Peter's shadow happened to touch one of these sick individuals – they would be expected to be healed.

Now, keep in mind that Peter had already made it clear when the lame man was healed in chapter 3 that he had nothing to do with it.

That Jesus had healed him.

Here is the thing church, I am pretty sure that almost everyone here in this room possess something that may be referred to as passive faith – that is that we believe that God can heal.

But there is a difference between believing that God can heal and that God will heal.

That second type of faith is no longer a passive faith but an active faith.

That is what these people are doing by bringing these individuals to Peter, they are exercising their active faith that God will heal them.

There is an incident recorded for us in the gospel of Matthew, that is a perfect illustration of what is happening here in chapter 5 –

**[Mat 9:20-22 NKJV] 20 And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. 21 For she said to herself, “If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.” 22 But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, “Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And the woman was made well from that hour.**

Now, what type of faith did the woman have? Passive or Active?

Active –

Who healed the woman? Jesus or His coat? Jesus, right,

Now - Did Jesus rebuke the woman and say, "What wrong with you, touching my garment didn't heal you – I did" No – He honored her desire to get healed (her active faith)

So it could be that many of those whose Peter's shadow touched did get healed that day as God honored the active faith of the early church.

**17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who [were] with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.**

They were filled with indignation – zeal, envy, jealousy.

This was one of the problems that the chief priests had with Jesus just a few months earlier. They were jealous of His popularity among the people.

And now they are showing the same jealousy toward the apostles.

They may be jealous because these guys were simple fishermen or because they were preaching the resurrection, something they didn't believe in, and thousands of people were following them.

So, we have a warning – be careful about jealousy.

Our flesh is prone to bring others down.

It could be at work or even within the church. Remember, Ananias and Sapphira had envy toward Barnabas – that is how it all started. That led to them lying to the Holy Spirit.

I was reading this book – and the author had a friend who was a very successful crab fishermen.

And the crab fishermen told him his secret.

He said he took off the covers of all of his crab baskets (the covers are supposed to prevent the crabs from leaving once the bait has been eaten) however, by removing the top this allows for the crabs to more easily climb into the basket.

So what keep the crabs in the basket? The crabs themselves. The crab fisherman realized that as some crabs would climb up the side of the wall to get out, the other crabs would pull them back down –

Unfortunately – there are many people that act like crabs – waiting for someone to pull themselves up so that they can bring them back down.

So because of the jealousy of the Sadducees, all the Apostles are thrown in prison.

**19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."**

God sends an angel to release the Apostles from prison.

For what purpose?

So that they could go home and relax and be safe from persecution? No

God sends an angel so that they could go back to do the thing that He called them to do – to preach the gospel.

The Bible tells us that in terms of spiritual things, without Jesus we are spiritually dead.

The Bible tells us that we were dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1)

For those of us who have tasted of this eternal life, we know that it began when we came to the point in our life where we realized we needed help with our guilt and our sin.

We understood that Jesus took care of our sin problem by dying on a cross and paying for our sin.

Then we opened up our hearts to receive God's free gift of forgiveness, and we received this new life, and passed from the land of the dead into the land of the living.

And that is what the apostles did – they went back out and preached in the temple.

**21 And when they heard [that], they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to**



have them brought. **22** But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, **23** saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" **24** Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.

The religious rulers were surprised to hear that the apostles were out there preaching again.

They send people to the prison and everything is as expected – the guards are in place – no walls have been torn down – but the apostles are gone.

The religious rulers start to get worried about what is going to happen when the people find out.

Instead of worrying that they were sinning against God – they worried more about what the people were going to think of them.

They feared man more than they feared God.

**25** So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" **26** Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. **27** And when they had brought them, they set [them]

**before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 But Peter and the [other] apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."**

All throughout history, there have been times when Christians are forced to make a choice of whether to obey government, or whether to obey God.

If you have ever read about or watched any of the documentaries about Corrie Ten Boom – you will know that during WWII, in Holland, there were some Christians who chose to disobey the Nazis and helped to hide the Jews – and many were thrown in prison because of that.

Some people will point to Paul's letter to the Romans where he said that there is no authority except from God – and those that govern us are there because God appointed them – therefore if we resist them, we are resisting the will of God and bringing judgment upon ourselves.

There is a big difference between resisting government because of high taxes and resisting government because they pass a law saying that it is illegal to preach Jesus Christ.

We only disobey when the government directs us to disobey the laws of God.

**30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand [to be] Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And **we are His witnesses** to these things, and **[so] also [is] the Holy Spirit** whom God has given to those who obey Him."**

Notice that the apostles as they are brought before the religious rulers – they are not putting up a defense for what they did.

They are not asking for mercy.

All they are doing is simply stating why they continued to preach the gospel.

The apostles were eyewitnesses to the entire thing.

The Holy Spirit is also a witness to the resurrection of Jesus by the miracles that were done through the apostles.

**33 When they heard [this], they were furious and plotted to kill them.**

The religious rulers didn't like that Peter put the blame on them for killing Jesus.

They didn't want to hear that they needed forgiveness and needed to repent.

So they plotted to kill the apostles in the same way they plotted to kill Jesus

**34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.**

The Sanhedrin (the religious rulers) was comprised of mostly Sadducees – remember, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection.

Gamaliel, he is a Pharisee – they believed in the resurrection.

He was also the most prominent teacher of the law during these days.

In fact, later on, we will find out that he was Paul's teacher.

**35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. 36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. 37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. 38 "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God."**

Gamaliel convinces the Sanhedrin to not kill the apostles.

And he tells them that they should have a wait and see approach.

You see, Gamaliel brings up other examples of rebellions that faded away after the leader was killed.

So he tells the Sanhedrin – let's wait.

Let's see what happens to this rebellion (this is how they looked at the early church)

If it is just a fad, it's not going to stand the test of time – it will quickly fade –

But then he gives them a warning – if it is from God, you'll be fighting against God, and you won't have a prayer. So back off. Let them go.

In Isaiah 45 – we have a warning for those who choose to fight against God.

**[Isa 45:9 NKJV] 9 "Woe to him who strives with his Maker! [Let] the potsherd [strive] with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork [say], 'He has no hands'?"**

Unfortunately many times, we find ourselves picking fights against God because we want our will to be done instead of His will.

Gamaliel was not a believer – he had enough evidence to make the declaration that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

He simply decided to wait.

Just like those that hear the gospel or see the transformation power of the Holy Spirit in someone but still decide wait.

**40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten [them], they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.**

So once again, the apostles were told to stop preaching and this time – they were physically beaten.

Most likely, they received 39 lashes – why 39? Because God commanded in his law that a criminal shall never receive more than 40 lashes. (Deut 25:3)

So just in case they counted wrong, they only gave 39

**41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus [as] the Christ.**

Preaching (our word "evangelize" comes from the Greek word euangelizo used here) involves telling people the good news about Jesus Christ, and introducing them to the life of trusting in Jesus.

Teaching is the explanation of the Scriptures, explaining God's ways, the thing that makes us grow in the Lord.

A healthy church should have a balance of preaching and teaching.

Why were the apostles rejoicing for having being beaten?

**[Mat 5:10-12 NKJV] 10 Blessed [are] those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great [is] your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

The leaders thought they could intimidate and discourage the apostles with a beating. Instead, they left rejoicing. They were not rejoicing that they suffered, but that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. It was a privilege to be associated with Jesus in any circumstance, even to suffer shame.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

