

ACTS LESSON 5

Acts Chapter 5

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Memory verses for this week: *Psa 44:20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Psa 44:21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*

Introduction: In Chapter 4, we saw persecution come upon the first church there in Jerusalem. But the church stuck together in one mind and one accord, and God was glorified.

This chapter further reveals the life of the early church. There is the matter of Ananias and Sapphira, the power of the early church, and the persecution which arose as a result. There is the ongoing matter of the apostles before the Jewish authorities. The final portion of Acts 5 presents the hearing the apostles had before the Sanhedrin. There, a wise scholar named Gamaliel counseled to leave them alone. The apostles returned to the church rejoicing they were worthy to suffer for His name's sake.

I. The Sin and Death of Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, Acts 5:2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

A couple in the early church sold a possession and gave a portion of the proceeds to the church. They lied and told the church that they had given it all. In Verse 3, Peter confronted Ananias. How Peter knew of their deceit, we are not told. Perhaps the Holy Spirit directly revealed it to Peter.

Notice that Peter linked Satan to Ananias' deceit. Jesus said the devil is the father of all lies (John 8:44). Notice further that Peter indicates that Ananias' lie was actually to the Holy Ghost. All sin is ultimately against God. As this couple perverted the purity of the early church, their sin was against God's Spirit.

Apparently, the deed of Barnabas had inspired Ananias and Sapphira to sell their possessions and make a contribution to the church.

Acts 4:36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Acts 4:37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

There is never anything wrong with giving to the church. What was wrong in this case was the fact that they purposefully attempted to make others believe they were giving all of the proceeds, when in reality they held back part of the price. They did not have the same spirit in which Barnabas had in his contribution. It was as if they wanted to get credit for the deed without the sacrifice. David said that he did not want to give anything to God that did not cost him something.

2 Sam 24:22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood.

2 Sam 24:23 All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee.

2 Sam 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

In verse 2, we see that the couple conspired together to do this deed. In their minds, all they had to do was fool a few men. They did not realize that God would reveal their evil deed. It says in verse 3 that "Satan" had filled their heart to lie to the Holy Ghost. Ananias lied when he said he was giving all that he had to God. Many times God's people pretend to be fully surrendered to the Lord when deep down in their heart they have sin hidden from the eyes of men. Each of us needs to ask the Lord to reveal those "hidden sins", and repent of them and be wholly and totally sold out for the Lord. This is an area that Satan wants to use to defeat the Christian. Unless we are totally committed to the Lord, we will never live the total victorious Christian life that is filled with joy that Jesus promised to those who are saved.

Acts 5:4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Peter reminded Ananias that he could have done whatever he desired with his possession and its proceeds. He evidently had sought the praise of peers in the church in presenting the appearance of having given all. Notice at the end of the verse that Peter reinforces his charge in more detail. "*Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*"

In verse 3, the charge had been lying to the Holy Ghost. Now it is lying to God. These do not contradict each other. Rather they complement each other. Here is a clear equation of the Deity of the Holy Spirit. He is a person of the Godhead.

Acts 5:5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

Acts 5:6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

After being confronted, Ananias literally fell dead. The phrase translated “gave up the ghost” literally means, ‘he expired.’ We are not told the actual cause of death. However, what is clearly implied is that God dealt with him. Subsequently, *“great fear came on all them that heard these things.”* The fear of the Lord is again amplified in the early church. The mention to him being wound up is a reference to the practice of the day of enshrouding the deceased, wrapping the body in strips of cloth. To this day, it is a practice in Israel to bury the deceased within 24 hours of death. Here, it evidently was immediate.

While Ananias had the possession, it was his to do with whatever he desired. Even after he sold it, it was his to do whatsoever he chose; even if that meant keeping all the money for himself or just to give a small portion to the church. Peter declares that when he came and said he was giving it all to the church, he did not lie to man but to God. We see the Holy Spirit and God being used in synonymous terms.

The Trinity is made up of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each being God, but yet separate entities. Because Ananias lied, he dies and is buried by the young men of the church. It is a serious thing to lie to God, because all things are open before His eyes and He knows our hearts even better than we know them ourselves. We see the effect of his death on the church, “great fear came on all them that heard these things.”

You and I need to learn from the errors of those around us, and not make all the same mistakes in our lives. That is why God penned both the good and bad deeds of men in the bible that we might by their examples understand that to live Godly and to fear God is the only way that we can have total peace and successful lives.

1 Cor 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

1 Cor 10:2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

1 Cor 10:3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

1 Cor 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

1 Cor 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

1 Cor 10:6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

1 Cor 10:7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

1 Cor 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

1 Cor 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

1 Cor 10:10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

1 Cor 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1 Cor 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Acts 5:7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

Acts 5:8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

Acts 5:9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

Acts 5:10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

Acts 5:11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Later that day, Sapphira, his wife, arrived and was similarly confronted by Peter. She answered him with the same lie her husband spoke earlier. Peter then accused her of tempting the Holy Ghost. He then sternly informed her that those who had buried her husband were waiting to bury her. She immediately fell over dead and was promptly buried beside her husband.

The epilogue to this account may be how God views premeditated sin within the church. Recall when Israel entered the land in Joshua 6, God dealt severely with Achan. As willful deceit was introduced into the church, God likewise dealt with it severely.

Here, we catch a glimpse of the intensity of God's holiness and His accompanying judgement against sin polluting the initial purity of the church.

Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

In the list of the six and seven things God hates in Proverbs 6:16-19, dishonesty is mentioned twice.

Pro 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

Pro 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

Pro 6:18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

Pro 6:19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

In verse 11, we find that the fear of the Lord was amplified in the early church. When realizing that God can and will take the life of those destroying the testimony of the

church, it indeed will enhance the fear of the Lord. Recall that in I Corinthians 3:17, the Apostle Paul wrote, *"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."*

The context is of the local church. The body of believers collectively, as well as individually is the temple of the Holy Ghost. When some willfully subvert it, they risk the wrath of God. Do not think that God cannot or will not so act even in this age. Many have witnessed God so dealing on more than one occasion against Christians willfully causing damage within a church.

It is so sad to see Sapphira come in with the same lie and have a similar fate befall her. We can come up with grand schemes among ourselves, but if God is not first in our lives, the schemes may very well cause us to fall. Peter charges them with having agreed together to lie about the gift.

We need to always be honest in our dealings, and not make vows that we can not fulfill. While this couple did not make a vow to God to give all the money, their pretence that they were giving it all to the church cost them their lives. Because of this, great fear came upon all the church. How important should Christ be in our lives?

Luke 14:26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

Jesus was not saying that we should hate our families, but was saying that no person should be more important to us than Jesus Christ.

Matthew Henry pointed to the sin of covetousness as the root reason for Ananias and Sapphira lying unto the Lord.

They were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God and his providence: *They sold their land*, and perhaps then, in a pang of zeal, designed no other than to dedicate the whole of the purchase-money to pious uses, and made a vow, or at least conceived a full purpose, to do so; but, when the money was received, their heart failed them, and *they kept back part of the price*, (v. 2), because they loved the money, and thought it was too much to part with at once, and to trust in the apostles' hands, and because they knew not but they might want it themselves; though now all things were common, yet it would not be so long, and what should they do in a time of need, if they should leave themselves nothing to take to? They could not take God's word that they should be provided for, but thought they would play a wiser part than the rest had done, and lay up for a rainy day.

Thus they thought to serve both God and mammon—God, by bringing part of the money to the apostles' feet, and mammon, by keeping the other part in their own

pockets; as if there were not an all-sufficiency in God to make up the whole to them, except they retained some in their own hands by way of caution-money. Their hearts were divided, so *they were found faulty*, Hos. 10:2. They *halted between two*; if they had been thorough-paced worldlings, they would not have sold their possession; and, if they had been thorough-paced Christians, they would not have detained part of the price. 3. That they thought to deceive the apostles, and make them believe they brought the whole purchase-money, when really it was but a part.

They came with as good an assurance, and as great a show of piety and devotion, as any of them, and *laid the money at the apostles' feet*, as if it were their all. They dissembled with God and his Spirit, with Christ and his church and ministers; and this was their sin.

II. The Power of the Apostles and their Influence

Acts 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

Acts 5:13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

As the early church began to mature, God granted to them the ability to perform miracles. Again, these were manifestations of the interim temporary gifts of the Holy Spirit given in the interval between the birth of the church and the completion of the New Testament almost two generations later. These gifts were to help and encourage the young church in the absence of a written New Testament.

They also served to validate and authenticate the church amid the unbelieving opposition of the Jewish world in which they were immersed. Notice that they all continued to be "with one accord." This is the fifth time the early church has been so described in the book of Acts.

Notice that as devout Jews now believing in Christ, their place of assembly still was within the Temple complex. Solomon's porch was a portion of the Temple which had remained since Solomon's time on the eastern portion of the Temple mount.

It is not directly stated in verse 13, however, what is implied is that the upper classes were reluctant to become part of the early church. However, the people (i.e., the common people) magnified the apostles.

Acts 5:14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

Acts 5:15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

Acts 5:16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

The result when sin is purged from God's work is unity of spirit. A great work always follows, in this case, many souls were saved and the church grew in size and faith. As the fame of the miraculous power of the early church spread throughout Jerusalem and the surrounding region, multitudes came to be healed. There was even hope the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow those ill. Notice that *"they were healed every one."*

We see that many signs and wonders were wrought among the people. We found in John that Christ performed the miracles that men might believe that he was the Son of God, and that believing men might be saved.

John 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The Word of God was confirmed by all these signs. Because of the people believed and there was great unity in the church, God performed many miracles. With unity, the church can do great things with God empowering us. We saw the effect of what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. The church had great fear come upon it, and the hypocrites, those that were not true to the Lord, did not join but went away. They feared something bad would come upon them. But the true believers still came and were added to the church. The influence of the apostles was apparent. Many sick were brought to the disciples to be healed.

Our influence should be positive to the world and those that do not know Jesus as Savior. He also calls to their attention how that Judas in the days of taxing had many to follow him and how he ultimately perished and his followers were dispersed. Because of this, Gamaliel convinces them that nothing would come of the apostles if all they were teaching was false. But if it were true, they could not stop it. "Ye cannot overthrow it if it be of God." It was true, and almost 2000 years later, we still are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. The Second Persecution

Acts 5:17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

Acts 5:18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

In as much as many of these miracles were taking place near and perhaps in the Temple, the Jewish authorities certainly were aware. Both the high priest and his cohorts of the Sadducees were “filled with indignation.” The Sadducees in distinction to the Pharisee also were a ‘party’ or ‘denomination’ within Judaism of the first century.

In contrast to the Pharisees which were the conservatives of the day, the Sadducees were theologically liberal. Though it is not so stated, what might be inferred is that they are a party. They at some time in the past had assumed a leadership role politically in the Jewish government. In any event, all the apostles were put in jail.

As we noted last week, sometimes religious leaders are the biggest enemies of God’s church.

Acts 5:19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

Acts 5:20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

An angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. God, through His angel commanded them to return to the Temple and once again preach the message of eternal life.

Acts 5:21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

Acts 5:22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

Acts 5:23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

Acts 5:24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

Acts 5:25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Acts 5:26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

The following is an example of obedience by God’s people and the irony and consternation of their enemies. As the Temple gates were opened first thing in the morning, the freed apostles promptly returned to the Temple and began to teach. Oblivious to what had taken place overnight and what was going on in the Temple courts, “the council and all the senate of the children of Israel” convened. The word translated as council (sunedrion sunedrion) is the great Sanhedrin or ruling legislative body of the

Israel. It was comprised of the powerful religious leaders of the land.

It was before this same body our Lord was sentenced to die. The word translated as senate (gerousia geroursia) evidently was a separate body. The word has the general sense of 'elders.'

In any event, the religious and political leaders of Israel met to confer over what to do with the upstart church causing such a stir. In finding out those whom they had jailed the night before had miraculously escaped and were back preaching in the Temple courts, there must have been great confusion and consternation.

It is recorded that *"they doubted whereunto this would grow."* That is, they were at a loss of what would come further of this. The commander of the Levitical Temple police along with a contingent thereof brought them peacefully back to the Sanhedrin.

It is noteworthy, that though the leadership of official Israel detested the apostles and the early church, the common people thought differently. The authorities were cautious fearing the possible actions of the people.

As many times in the life of the apostles, the angel of the Lord intervened in their behalf. It says that the angel came and delivered them from the prison and told them to go and preach to the people all the "words of this life." When you and I are conversing with the lost of the world, we need to remember that we can talk about the weather, our families, sports, or if we will do it, we can talk of the Lord.

The Gospel of Christ is more important than any other thing we can talk to others about. All of the other things are insignificant compared to the "Word of God." It is permanent and will never go away.

Mark 13:31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

The apostles were obedient to the command, and God really blessed them. It says that when the report of their escape came to the High Priest, they wondered where this movement would go and how much it would grow.

Acts 5:27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

Acts 5:28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Upon being rearrested by the authorities, the apostles were taken before the Sanhedrin. The 'Sanhedrin' was the basic ruling body of occupied Israel. It was both legislative as well as judicial. The high priest confronted the apostles concerning their previous order

not to witness, teach, or preach Christ.

Act 4:16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

Act 4:17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

Act 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Of interest is the phrase, “this name.” Of course, this is a reference to the name of Jesus. To the Jews, ‘the name’ was a reference to Jehovah. The early church applied it directly to Jesus. The Jewish authorities no doubt had picked up upon the equation the early Christian leaders were making between Jesus and Jehovah. They then forbade any teaching about either.

Moreover, the early church had “filled Jerusalem” with their doctrine. To their credit, the apostles and the church had faithfully fulfilled the Lord’s injunction to be witnesses first in Jerusalem. What an example for the church today! These early Christians, in the face of aggressive opposition, had filled their community with the witness of Jesus Christ.

The boldness of their witness is further evident in that the Sanhedrin perceived that the church blamed the death of Jesus Christ upon them—ye *“intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”* The irony is that this same crowd some time earlier had said concerning Jesus, *“His blood be on us, and on our children”* (Matthew 27:25). And indeed it was. The simple thought is that they now resented being blamed for the guilt of the death of Jesus Christ.

We see the captain and the officers are filled with fear, due to the people. They feared that they might be stoned to death. The High Priest reiterates that he told them to not be preaching in the name of Jesus. That if they continued doing this, that they might bring “this man’s blood upon us.” Funny how they forgot what the people said when they cried out to Pilate.

Mat 27:24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Mat 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

IV. The Apostles Answer the Council

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Peter boldly answered, *“We ought to obey God rather than men.”* Two scriptural principles are in view here. In general, we as God’s people are under scriptural mandate to obey human governmental authority, even willingly. See Romans 13:1-7, Titus 3:1, and I Peter 2:13-15.

1Pe 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

1Pe 2:14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

1Pe 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

However, when human authority countermands the clear command of God, we then are enjoined to rather obey God. The events in the life of Daniel are a clear Old Testament illustration of this principle.

Once again in verse 30, the resurrection of Jesus is brought to the forefront. Peter, in affect said, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of the Jewish patriarchs—raised Jesus from the dead. The phrase *“the God of our fathers”* is a distinctively Jewish term. Moreover, Peter forcefully reminded them again that it was they who had killed Him and hung Him on a tree. The word translated as tree (xulon xulon) is a metaphor of the cross. It can also mean ‘wood,’ particularly in the sense of wooden timber, beam, or cross.

Acts 5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Acts 5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Peter moves on to the exaltation and glorification of Christ after His passion. See Philippians 2:9-11.

Php 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Php 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Php 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God has exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Savior. The word translated as Prince (archgov archehos) has the sense of ‘the highest ranking ruler.’ Put in other words, He is King of kings as well as Savior. Both His rank and authority, as well as His mercy and

grace, are in view. Furthermore, God has exalted Him *“to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”*

As in Acts 2:38, the concept of repentance, particularly as it applies to Israel, is a basic synonym for salvation. Here, it pertains to the spiritually hardened Jewish leaders. It reflects the turning away from rejection and hatred of Christ and trusting Him. The result is a forgiveness of sins. Seeking forgiveness is never a cause of salvation. Rather, it always is a result of salvation. People asking God to forgive their sin does not convey salvation. However, when they turn to and trust in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, forgiveness comes as a result.

In verse 32, the apostles were witnesses both of the death and the resurrection of Christ. Peter reminded them that God’s Holy Spirit also witnessed their rejection and crucifixion of Him. The term obey is a basic synonym for faith in Christ. Recall that *“by faith Abraham obeyed”* (Hebrews 11:8).

Notice the response of the Jewish authorities. *“They were cut to the heart.”* The phrase translated as cut to the heart (diapriwidiaprio) literally means ‘cut through’ or ‘cut in half.’ The sword of the Spirit in Peter’s tongue had pierced through their hardened hearts, dividing asunder their soul and spirit. See Hebrews 4:12.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Notice further their reaction. *“They took counsel to slay them.”* When the gospel is presented in the power of the Holy Spirit usually one of two reactions take place. The recipients are convicted as in Acts 2:37, willing to repent. Or, they are angered as here. The difference perhaps lies in the spiritual condition of the heart of the hearer.

Oh that all men would have the convictions and strength to obey God rather than men like Peter and the apostles had this day. Peter effectively preaches another great gospel message as he declared:

1. The Jews slew and hanged Jesus on a tree.
2. God raised Him from the dead.
3. God hath exalted Him to be a prince and a Savior.
4. They were the eyewitnesses of these things.

Because the members of the council are convicted and were cut to the heart, the council decides to try and slay them. This shows how evil the heart can become once you do one evil deed. They had killed the Lord, now a few more disciples are expendable to keep the status quo. God help us to never be involved in evil, but to do righteous deeds.

V. The Warning of Gamaliel

Acts 5:34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

Acts 5:35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

Acts 5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

Acts 5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

Acts 5:38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

Acts 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

As the tempers within the Sanhedrin escalated, a scholar by the name of Gamaliel arose and counseled caution. Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, the great rabbi. He was a teacher of Paul, (Acts 22:3) and later became the president of the Sanhedrin. He was first of seven rabbis to be called Rabban or great rabbi.

Some have speculated that Gamaliel was one of the doctors of the law (literally ‘teacher of the law’) who heard the boy Jesus (Luke 2:47). Gamaliel counseled the Sanhedrin to back off from slaying them (which they did not have legal authority to do either from their own law nor from the Romans).

He reminded them how several other Jews in recent history had led movements which ultimately came to nothing. He wisely (and perhaps by God’s leading) advised, *“if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”*

The Sadducees were evidently the majority party at the time. They opposed the preaching of Christ’s resurrection not only because they hated Christ to begin with, but they also did not believe in any kind of resurrection. The Pharisees, however, though not ready to believe in the resurrection of Christ, did believe in the resurrection as a matter of principle. It was one of their major tenets.

Gamaliel may have used Peter’s witness of the resurrection of Christ as a tactical maneuver to win an internal political victory within the Sanhedrin.

Gamaliel was a wise man, and spoke a warning to these religious leaders. He was a Pharisee, while the others were Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection

while the Sadducees did not. (Acts 23:8) Peter and the apostles were preaching the resurrection of Jesus. Gamaliel was a doctor of the law and was well trained in the law of Moses and had a good reputation among the people. In this warning, he uses things of the past to make them stop and think.

A man named Theudas had stood up and boasted to be someone when he was not. He also calls to their attention how that Judas in the days of taxing had many to follow him and how he ultimately perished and his followers were dispersed. Because of this, Gamaliel convinces them that nothing would come of the apostles if all they were teaching was false. But if it were true, they could not stop it. "Ye cannot overthrow it if it be of God." It was true, and almost 2000 years later, we still are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

VI. The Apostles are Beaten

Acts 5:40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.
Acts 5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.
Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

In any event, most of the Sanhedrin agreed with him. They ordered each of the apostles beaten and further ordered them to not speak in the name of Jesus. They then let them go.

Notice how the apostles responded in verse 41. They rejoiced that *"they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."* The word translated as to suffer shame (atimazw atimadzo) has the additional sense of 'being insulted,' 'dishonored,' or 'treated with contempt.'

They perhaps recalled the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:10-12 where Jesus said, *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."*

The fact is, when God's people face persecution for righteousness sake, there is spiritual rejoicing. They had done what was right before God. They knew it. And the forces of hell could not stop them. They therefore rejoiced in facing the same opposition of their Lord. Years Later, Paul and Barnabas did the same when they faced fierce persecution in Acts 13:50-52.

They immediately commenced witnessing and preaching Christ, notwithstanding the order of the Sanhedrin. They preached daily in the Temple under the very noses of the

Jewish authorities. The word translated as preach (euaggelizw evangelidzo) literally means to 'evangelize.' Some have questioned whether teaching and preaching in every house was a reference to having services and Bible studies with believers already part of the church.

The term evangelidzo clearly implies preaching the gospel to the lost. Moreover, the subject of their evangelizing was "Jesus Christ." Therefore, it seems clear the early church witnessed and preached everywhere they were received to every soul that would listen. Their method involved both teaching and preaching. Both remain a ministry of the church to this day. Teaching is a ministry primarily directed toward the mind whereas preaching is a ministry directed primarily toward the heart. The early church did both. It remains an example and prototype for the church to this day.

Because they would not stop preaching in the name of Jesus, the apostles were beaten. If they came tomorrow and said if we preached in Jesus' name, we would be beaten, I wonder how many would show up for the church services. Many care so little about the things of Christ that they don't bother to come to church except on special occasions. But if we were going to be beaten, it would make us all stop and think, would it not? I hope we'd come and bear it, and like these apostles, go away rejoicing that we were found worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' name. They did not quit, and by God's grace, we will continue on until Jesus calls us home.

J. Vernon McGee pointed out that the way the apostles were handled was not right.

If these men were innocent, they should have let them go. If these men were guilty, they should have held them and punished them. Beating them and then letting them go was a sorry subterfuge. They should have listened to Gamaliel a little more carefully.

Things aren't much different today. There is that gray line between guilty and not guilty. The courts today let people off by giving them some light sentence. My friend, if a person is guilty, he should be punished. If he is not guilty, he should be let go with no sentence.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.