

**ACTS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 5 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now what takes place in Acts chapter 5 is born out of what took place in Acts chapter 4 where these Jewish Christians were sharing with each other, helping each other out, there was a oneness. The church was growing, things were happening.

And we see that what they believed was manifested in their lives. Let me show you what I mean as we look in Acts chapter 4. In Acts 4:34-37 we are told, **“Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”**

Now, as we move into Acts chapter 5, we are going to see a sharp contrast between this man called Barnabas and a husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira.

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Acts chapter 5, beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**ACTS 5****VERSES 1-2**

Notice the contrast here. We have Barnabas who gave all to help others. We see the church growing. And then, as we come to Acts chapter 5 we see this word, “**But.**” That is never a good word when it is applied to man.

And all the love, the sweetness we saw in this early church was not swept aside by this act of rebellion and lying to God. It was a deceitful action on both Ananias and Sapphira, they both were in on it and they are both accountable to God as we will see!

Now you may be thinking, “Why in the world did they do this?” The answer is simple. They saw how Barnabas was received when he gave, and they wanted that respect, that attention.

They also thought they can kill two birds with one stone you might say by selling their land, giving some to the apostles and then keeping the rest for themselves.

Here is where the problem comes in. They wanted the people to think they gave all to the apostles, making themselves look better than they were, and they figured what they don’t know won’t hurt them!

How wrong they were for their sin will not only affect them, but it can affect those around them if left unchecked, not dealt with.

And what Ananias and Sapphira are as the New Testament example of this deceit, we see in the Old Testament that Achan did the same.

We see this played out for us in Joshua chapter 7 as he lied and took the spoil of their victory from Jericho, something they were not to do. And his sin stopped the progression of the children of Israel from moving forward in the Promise Land!

Bruce puts it like this, “The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.”

Interestingly enough, the words “**kept back**” in the Greek is NOSP<sup>H</sup>IZOMAI and it means “to misappropriate.”

In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament this same Greek word is used of Achan’s theft and in Titus 2:10 it means to steal! Not a pretty picture as the church is getting started!

And please understand that they were not required to do this. They were not required or forced to sell their possessions and give all the money to the apostles!

They could have done whatever they wanted with it, the money was there’s! But instead of being honest they lied about how much they gave and this is nothing more than hypocrisy!

You see, the Greek word for hypocrisy is HUPOKRITES and it speaks of “one wearing a mask.” During their plays the actors would wear a big, bold mask to be someone they were not and thus, the idea here is being someone you are not, pretending!

George Macdonald put it this way, “Half the misery in the world is caused by people trying to look rather than trying to be.” It is the “Be Attitudes” and not the “Look Attitudes.”

How true that is. People wanting the attention, drawing people to themselves, making themselves into something that they are not. And what is interesting is they do draw a following and it is never a good thing!

And think about this, Ananias means “*God is gracious*” and Sapphira means “*Beautiful*.” That is not at all what they were showing here, they are mocking the grace of God and their actions were not beautiful, but ugly!

And God has made us His children and as we go out into the world, or, as we are in the church, do they see the nature of God flowing from our lives to glorify Him or are we trying to draw people to ourselves to get all the attention?

Now, keep in mind that church was just born and now we see this happening. What is God going to do? We don't have to guess. Let's read on and see.

#### VERSES 3-4

How did Peter know that Ananias lied? Because of the spiritual gift that was given to him, the word of knowledge (I Corinthians 12:8). This is a supernatural gift where the Holy Spirit imparts to us certain knowledge that we could never acquire on our own.

On the other hand, the word of wisdom is dealing with the information you have to make important decisions, a wise word to settle a matter.

But here, as the Holy Spirit gives to Peter the word of knowledge, he nails Ananias! Instead of praise for what he did, Ananias was rebuked because God sees all!

Also, did you notice who Ananias lied to? It wasn't to Peter or the other Christians that were there. It was to the Holy Spirit.

And I understand that there are those cults who don't believe that the Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Holy Trinity, but notice what Peter says in verse 4 of Acts chapter 5, "...

**You have not lied to men but to God.**"

The Holy Spirit is not some kind of force, like electricity or wind, but a person, ***GOD!***

I don't think it could be any clearer than that unless you come to this with a pre-conceived idea of who the Holy Spirit is and you have to negate these words, but it does not change the truth of the matter.

Now, as you read of this couple, were they saved? That is a great question and as you look at what is said I believe they were, but they were not walking in the Spirit and their actions could have harmed the church!

There is no indication that they were not part of the **“multitude of those who believed”** spoken of in Acts 4:32.

The second point is they had to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit or why would it matter if they lied to the Holy Spirit?

Also, in this section we see a lesson for believers about sin and for the unsaved, why would lying even matter.

And yes, Satan can influence our lives, we can follow his leading and at times, and God alone knows the time and the situations, death can be a form of chastening for the believer.

And as much as Satan influenced Ananias, he was still responsible for his actions!

Boice put it like this, “True Christians do not lose their salvation by sinning. The punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, though extreme, was for this life only.”

I think that is important for us to remember. You see, if our salvation was based upon what we have done, our own righteousness, we would never make it.

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The work is finished on the cross of Calvary for us by Jesus and we must receive that by faith and not by works. No one is saved by works, not one! The work that God has begun in us He will finish as He did with Ananias and Sapphira.

Does God still do that? I believe that He does but here, in the early church, He was trying to protect this influence upon it so that it can get started.

The reason I say God still does this is because of what we are told in I Corinthians 11:28-32 where some were partaking of communion in an unworthy manner and some were sick, and some had died.

And in I John 5:16-17 we are told, **“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.”**

The sin leading to physical death is the last sin that a believer commits before God says, “That’s it, you’re coming home.” And that is what we will see with this couple as we read on.

#### VERSES 5-6

Notice that Peter did not pronounce judgment upon this man, he did not kill this man, this was a judgment of God.

Now we read this, and it seems a little harsh, doesn’t it?

First of all, we need to understand that God is not only holy, but He is righteous, so whatever He does is perfect, it is right!

Secondly, this was a critical juncture for the early church and such impurity, sin, scandal and satanic infiltration could have corrupted the entire church at its root. “The Church has never been harmed or hindered by opposition from without; it has been perpetually harmed and hindered by perils from within.” (Morgan) How true that is!

Thus, what we see here is that God removed this cancer, which can infect the entire body, before it could destroy the work!

Now, why doesn't God do that today? Because no one would be left! Now that is kind of tongue and cheek, but I think He does do it at times, as I have said. In I Peter 4:17 we are told, **“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”**

And, as I have said, I believe Ananias was a believer who crossed the line and God took him home! He immediately dropped dead in front of Peter and I am sure Peter must have looked a little surprised at this. And then we see that, **“young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.”** Acts 5:6.

But there is much more to this story and we will see what happens as we read on.

#### VERSES 7-10

We see three hours pass by and I am sure that Sapphira was wondering where her husband was at. She knew he went to see Peter, but he has not come back yet. And when she sees Peter, he asks her a simple question about the money that they gave, and she lies to Peter!

Make no mistake about it, Sapphira was a willing participant in this sin and she too was judged by God and died.

I can't imagine what these guys were thinking, “Not again!” But they come, the ones that buried Ananias, and they bury his wife, Sapphira as well.

This was a serious problem in the early church and God dealt with it quickly. But, as you look at what happens in the church after this, it would never be as pure as it was prior to this. Up until that time they had all things in common and now, with this incident, it almost ruined them. And we will see this in Acts chapter 6 with divisions rising up in the church!

Notice what takes place in the early church, what this incident did to them as we read on.

VERSE 11

I bet it did. I bet that great fear fell upon them. I would imagine that each individual examined his heart to make sure it was right with God. I am sure this deterred them from sinning. God desires a pure church.

I want you to see the change here as sin entered the picture. In Acts 4:33 we are told, **“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.”**

So, the church began with **“great power”** and **“great grace”** and it has moved to **“great fear”** as we see here in Acts 5:11.

This is not necessarily a bad thing. We are told in Hebrews 12:28-29, **“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”**

All of these should be present in the church, ***GREAT POWER, GREAT GRACE,*** and ***GREAT FEAR!***

God desires us to live holy lives, lives that are separated from the world and unto Him! Paul in Ephesians chapter 5 is comparing wives to the church and husbands to Jesus and he says this, **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”** Ephesians 5:25-27.

The point I would like to bring out here is that God desires holy families and a holy church and God did deal with this family to keep His church pure!



Isn't it interesting that today the church is moving away from dealing with sin and is more interested in making people feel good about themselves.

You can see what God thinks about sin and that it needs to be dealt with. God still wants a pure church and that can only be accomplished as we walk in holiness, submit to the Holy Spirit's guiding!

Now, one more point here and that is the word, "**church.**" This is the first time it is used in the Book of Acts and Bruce makes this point, "The Christian *ekklesia* was both new and old – new, because of its relation and witness to Jesus as Lord and to the epoch-making events of his death, exaltation and the sending of the Spirit; old, as the continuation of the 'congregation of the Lord' which had formerly been confined within the limits of one nation, but now, having died and risen with Christ, was to be open to all believers without distinction."

#### VERSES 12-13

Let me share this prayer that the early church prayed in Acts 4:29-30 where we are told, "**Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to *Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.***"

God answered that prayer and worked in and through these dear saints in a powerful way!

Today, many feel that this power that was given to the early church was only for them, for the first century believers and not for us today. They needed some help in getting the church started but once it was started, that power is not needed anymore!

Now we have programs, seminars, we have this, and we have that, and we lack the power to move the Gospel message forward.

Look at the church today, don't you think we need the power of God to work today just as much as He did in the first century? Of course we do, and thus, may we pray that God would give us a boldness to speak His Word and that His Spirit would give to us the things we need to bring people to saving faith, to move the Gospel forward!

And here is one of the greatest shows of God's power working through His people, "...  
**And they all were with one accord . . .**" Acts 5:12.

Look at the church today. There is such disunity because our selfish hearts and stubborn minds are harder to move than any mountain. It is all about us instead of the body of Christ, and like I have said, we draw people to ourselves instead of the Lord. Oh, we may sound holy, spiritual, but look at the church in Corinth that manifested all those spiritual gifts and yet, they were carnal, and Paul rebuked them!

We also see that there were some that were afraid to get caught up with this Jesus because they saw what happened, heard what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. In other words, this helped purify the church. It kept out those who were just fake in the faith!

Today, we open the doors for the unsaved to come pouring into the church, which there is nothing wrong with that. When it becomes wrong is when we water down the message, stay away from Scriptures that they will not like, and this is happening in many, many churches across America today!

You see, in today's philosophy of building a church, with the many seeker-friendly churches, purpose driven, emergent churches that are growing out there, Peter would have been excommunicated from their organization. Why?

Because he kept people away! Now, let me say this, he kept the hypocrites away, people who are not really saved but come to play church. They saw the seriousness of a relationship with God and thus, they rejected fooling around with God.

Today we are doing the exact opposite. We allow people to continue in sin so they don't leave the church, and what we do is make people comfortable as they live in sin and don't know the Lord.

Let me share this article with you and you will see what I mean. It was written July 4, 2017, so it is very relevant to what I am saying here. We are told,

In the 1970's, however, a shift began to take place. In an effort of make church "relevant," pastors tried different techniques to get people to come in the doors. One pastor went so far as to do a survey where he asked people what kind of church they would want to attend. Using that information, he set out to build a church that unchurched people would attend. Rather than call them to repentance as Peter did, this built the church on the principles and desires of unregenerate people. The goats started coming in to the churches and crowding out the sheep.

Churches began all kinds of activities to keep the goats coming in so that they could pay the bills. This is not new to our time. Charles Spurgeon recognized this trend more than a century ago. "An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it during the past few years. It has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them."

Churches today go to great lengths to get people to come into their buildings trying to win them. They have contests and entertainment, concerts, clowns, drama, motivational speaking, life enhancement sermons, and entertainment evangelism where they discuss popular television programs from the sixties, but they are afraid to preach the gospel for fear of offending the goats.

Spurgeon said, "Providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church." Christ said to go into the world and preach the gospel, not to placate the goats so they will feel comfortable. Spurgeon commenting on the crowds leaving Jesus in John 6: "I do not hear him say, 'Run after these people, Peter, and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick, Peter, we must get the people somehow.'"

Using carnal means to attract people only attracts carnal people. . . . Whatever you use to get people into your church, you will have to top next time to get them to come back. You will continually have to outdo yourself to keep entertaining the goats, because they are not coming for the right reasons. The church cannot compete with the world on the same level, because it lacks the financial resources that the entertainment world has, so we come off as a cheap imitation.

Pity the poor sheep of the church who languish and go without food as the pastor runs off trying to amuse the goats so they will come back. Sheep need feeding and tending, but many are starving spiritually. Pastors need to return to tend the flock that God gave them and quit trying to appease the goats who will only be separated from the sheep at the judgment. Remember Paul Washer's words, "If you use carnal means to attract people, you will only attract carnal people."

He does hit the nail on the head and what Spurgeon warned us about some 130 years ago, we see flooding into the church today. And the focus today is to build up self, but that was not the way the early church was. And when you look at the Scriptures, they tell us to crucify the flesh, not build it up!

Then how did the early church grow? Let's read on and see.

#### VERSES 14-16

Remember what we read in Acts 5:11,13 **“So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things . . . Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.”**

Yes, there was fear, this was serious and yet, the church kept growing. Yes, the people knew it was a serious thing to be a Christian, but we see that the Spirit of God kept moving with power.

And notice, that the believers were **“added to the Lord.”** You mean they were not added to Calvary Chapel or this denomination or that denomination?

No, they were added to the Lord and they counted the cost and were willing to surrender all to follow Him! They were true believers.

May we not get such a narrow view of things and think we are building up Calvary Chapel. The reality is, we are bringing people into the Kingdom of God!

And, as I have said, we are not to water the Gospel down so much that people don't understand the cost! We give the whole truth and nothing but the truth of God's Word!

We also see here that the shadow of Peter healed many people, is that true? No, Peter's shadow did not heal anyone, the Lord did. Then what about his shadow as it says here?

This shadow of Peter had created that point where faith was released. The moment his shadow fell, it seems like they were healed. So not that there was something spiritual or it was all about Peter's shadow. It was just a matter of faith. I think that that is true today in many cases. And God is Sovereign and heals those whom He wants to heal. Not all are healed as we can clearly see in our lives!

We saw that with the woman who had the issue of blood all those years and when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment she was healed.

That was the contact point for her faith to be released; Jesus healed her, not His garment. In fact, she was believing what Malachi 4:2 says, "**But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.**"

The Hebrew word for "**wings**" can speak of the hem or edge of a garment and I believe that is how this woman saw it!

You see, Malachi is saying that the Messiah will bring healing in the hem of His garment and thus, she understood what the prophet had said, and she now believes that Jesus is the Messiah and touches the hem of His garment and she is instantly healed! It was a step of faith on her part.

One other point regarding this, Stott says, "It may be significant that the verb episkiazo, which Luke chooses, meaning 'to overshadow', he has used twice in his Gospel of the overshadowing of God's presence."

One example is given to us in Luke 1:35 which says, "**And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'**"

Peter's shadow did not heal, but the power of the Highest, the power of God did!

### VERSES 17-18

Now we should not be surprised when this happens, but we usually are. You see, what happens as you serve the Lord and God is moving is that people will come against you, try to stop you.

And that is what we see here. As God is working we see persecution begin and once again we see that here as the apostles are now locked in prison for touching people with the Good News of Jesus, with the healing power of Jesus!

Who arrests them? Probably Caiaphas, the High Priest and many of the Sadducees. And why are they so upset with these men?

**“they were filled with indignation”** or **“they were filled with jealousy.”** People were being drawn to the followers of Jesus and not to them and they were jealous of it! How sad. It is not about us, it is about the Lord and yet, once again we see people who want the attention and when they were not getting it, they came after those who were taking it away from them!

We are told in Proverbs 27:4, **“Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?”**

Yes, wrath is bad, so too is anger but jealousy is worse because it keeps gnawing away at a person until it consumes them!

Think about the brothers of Joseph as they sold him into slavery because they were jealous of him.

And in Mark 15:10 listen what caused the Jewish religious leaders to send Jesus to the cross? We are told, “**For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.**” When a person is afraid of losing what they have the affects can be deadly.

And make no mistake about it, when you are living for the Lord, when you are serving Him, people will try to stop you. It is as Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, “**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**”

You serve the Lord and let nothing get in your way of doing that!

#### VERSES 19-20

I think the Lord has a great sense of humor, especially when you see what transpired here.

You see, the Sadducees didn't believe in angels and yet, who comes to free these men? It is an angel that comes and frees the apostles from their imprisonment.

So, yes, God does have a sense of humor.

And think about it. Do you think locked doors will stop the Lord from working? Of course not, and they are not just set free, they are then sent forth with a purpose, a mission, to go to the Temple and speak the words of life, point people to Jesus.

Isn't that interesting. The angel does not tell them to go and hide but go and speak with “**all the words of this life.**”

He is talking about the life we have in Christ as John said in I John 5:20, “**And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.**”



Make no mistake about it, we are not giving to people information about a future life, or an afterlife or even eternal life. Yes, the Bible speaks of these things but what we are giving to them is what Jesus said in John 10:10, “**... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**” The Amplified Bible puts it like this, “**... I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows).**” And The Living Bible puts it like this, “**... My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.**” He is speaking of having that abundant life here and now and that is only found in Jesus and that is what we are bringing to people, Jesus!

#### VERSES 21-23

Peter and the other disciples, except for John were fearful to even watch their Lord be crucified. And now, after they are arrested, and this angel sets them free, they are told to go to the Temple and preach the Gospel and that is exactly what we see them doing.

They did not go to some isolated place but a place where people gathered, including the religious leaders. That is boldness, that is the power of God working in them and through them.

It is as Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**”

As we will see, they have filled Jerusalem with the things of Christ! Not by their own strength, own power, own intellect, but by the power of God’s Spirit coming upon their lives and we see the Gospel message moving forward!

Why did they do this? Because, it's as Peter and John said back in Acts 4:19-20 when they were threatened by the religious leaders not to speak any further of Jesus, "... 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.'"

Again, this is funny to me. We see that the Sanhedrin convened to decide what to do with these men, and they call for the guards to bring them from the prison. The guards were there. The prison doors were locked. Everything was as it should be except the prisoners were gone!

I can't imagine what they were thinking, but when you see doors locked, guards in place, no way to escape and yet, they were not there, you have to at least ponder just a little, "Maybe God set them free!"

#### VERSES 24-28

They had enough of a problem with these followers of Jesus, spreading this good news, and now this. They didn't know what would happen now; they didn't want this following to grow even more!

Now put yourself in their situation, in these disciples who were in the Temple sharing Jesus and now they are going to be arrested again. What would you do? Would you fight for your rights? Would you incite the crowd by saying, "Look what they are doing! Don't let them take us away!"?

That is not what these men did. They did not look to worldly solutions to their problems but submitted to the will of God. This was a spiritual issue that was not going to be taken care of by carnal means and yet, how often we do the exact opposite! May we learn the lesson.

And did you notice that they are not charged with escaping from prison. Did you ever wonder why? Maybe the reason is that if they did charge them from escaping from prison they would have to explain how this happened. How they got away from the locked doors, the prison guards, and they did not want to do that nor give these men an opportunity to speak of how this happened!

So, they ignored that issue and focused on two indictments.

The first thing they had against these men is that they ignored the order to stop speaking of Jesus. In Acts 4:17-18 we are told of this, **“But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.’ So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”**

But they obeyed God and spoke of Jesus to the people.

The second indictment is even worse for these religious leaders as they say their actions are going **“to bring this Man’s blood on us!”**

Isn’t that interesting because in Matthew 27:25, as Pilate is trying to wash his hands of Jesus and His death, the Jews said, **“... ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’”**

Now they are concerned about what will happen!

Let me say this. The apostles did want to bring the blood of Jesus upon these people, these religious people and all people, the cleansing, saving power of Jesus!

He is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world and His shed blood, applied to our lives by faith, cleanses us from all our sins. We want the blood of Jesus to cover the lives of our family and friends, that they come to saving faith as well!

Now the religious leaders hated Jesus so much they couldn't even say His name. They say, "**this Man**" twice in these verses and yet, it is this Man, Jesus, whom the apostles have spoken of and filled Jerusalem with this Good News – what a testimony!

What are we filling our homes with? What are we filling our workplace with? What are we filling our gatherings with? What are we filling our lives with? May it be Jesus!

### VERSES 29-32

Let me clarify this for you because many have taken this to an unbiblical conclusion. When Peter says, "**We ought to obey God rather than men**" he is not saying that we don't obey the law of the land, we don't follow the rules of the land. We should obey rulers and their rules, but not when they contradict God.

And if you are struggling with this, just read Romans 13, I Peter 2, and even when the Lord instructs us to pay taxes! We are to obey the government, those in authority over us unless they tell us to do something that goes against what God has said in His Word, even paying taxes as Jesus Himself paid to Rome!

Also, in some of your Bibles, like mine, it says "**... 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'**"

But the Greek word for "**ought**" is DEI and it means "**must**," they had to do these things, why?

Because their faith was real, and nothing was going to stop them from speaking forth the truth. Jeremiah, as he went through some tough times, no one wanted to listen to him, no one was saved through his ministry, and he was frustrated, tired of the persecution.

And in Jeremiah 20:7-9 we are told of what took place, **“LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; Everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, ‘Violence and plunder!’ Because the word of the LORD was made to me A reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.”**

In other words, if your faith is real, you won't be able to hold back!

And notice what these men do. They speak forth the Gospel message to these religious leaders who put Jesus to death and now they want the disciples of Jesus dead! We will see that as we read on.

One writer put it like this in regard to our witness, no matter the situation we find ourselves in. He wrote, “Regardless of how hostile and oppressive our surroundings, no matter how philistine [barbaric] the workplace, how callous the students, how neurotic the neighbors, we are meant to share Christ by life and word.” (R. Kent Hughes, Acts The Church Afire, p. 87) Absolutely!

How did they know what to say? Remember back in Luke 12:11-12 what Jesus told them, **“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”**

I believe the Holy Spirit does the same with us as we are placed in various situations; He brings to remembrance those things we know so we may share them with others.

One other point here in verse 32, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling by the Holy Spirit is needed for salvation, as Paul says, **“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”** Romans 8:9.

But also notice in this verse here in Acts that obedience is also linked to our salvation, as Hebrews 5:9 says, **“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”** Our obedience does not save us but it does show we are saved!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23, **“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”**

A very sobering thought!

So, these religious men hear this message and how did they respond to it? Let’s read on and see.

### VERSE 33

I think we can safely say that they did not like what they heard. They were probably thinking, “Who are you to tell us to repent?” “We don’t need this forgiveness.” “Don’t blame us for the death of Jesus.” “Don’t you know who we are?”

You see, the word **“furious”** DIAPRIO means “cut to the quick.” In other words, they were convicted but instead of turning to Jesus they wanted to put to silence those who testified of Jesus and made them feel this way!

There are only two ways to respond to conviction, to turn to Jesus or fight against Him, to repent of your sins or to ignore them!

And since they did not have a leg to stand on, they resorted to threats as Boice said, “Since they were unable to contend with the disciples on the level of truth, they resorted to naked authority and force. First, threats. Second, a beating. Ultimately, death.”

### VERSES 34-39

Here we are introduced to a man by the name of Gamaliel. He was the grandson of Hillel, who was the founder of Israel’s strongest school of religion. And he stands up to make a statement regarding these men.

Let me share a few things regarding this man. Gamaliel was given the title *Rabban* (“our teacher”), which was a step above the title *Rab* (“teacher”) or *Rabbi* (“my teacher”).

Saul, who would become Paul after his conversion, was schooled under Gamaliel. He was a highly respected Pharisee, in fact, the Mishnah says of Gamaliel “Since Rabban Gamaliel the elder died there has been no more reverence for the law; and purity and abstinence died out at the same time.”

Of this man, my pastor wrote, “Due to his knowledge of the law and because he walked with great integrity in his attempt to keep the law, Gamaliel was called “The Beauty of the Law” by his contemporaries. A brilliant thinker and one of the most influential teachers in all of Jewish history, Gamaliel was Paul’s teacher. Jewish historians tell us that Gamaliel’s one criticism of Paul was that it was impossible to find enough reading material for him. This is not surprising, since those who study Greek tell us that Paul’s vocabulary and sentence structure is the most sophisticated of any Greek writer. The guy was brilliant.” (Pastor Phil Ballmaier)

He also was a Pharisee and they had more political power than did the Sadducees. Thus, if they wanted to put to death the apostles, they needed the help or support of the Pharisees, especially this man!

So, they put the apostles outside and Gamaliel begins to speak. And he points to two previous followings, Theudas and Judas.

You see, they had people fighting with them, for their cause, until these leaders died and then so did the movement.

Thus, if Jesus is of God, you can't do anything to stop it and if He is not from God, it will die out since He has been put to death. They just needed to sit back and wait and see what happens.

Let me say this because that is how some Christians see things. This is not a good indicator to see if something is good, to see if something is from God, or it is not.

Think of all the cults and false religions that have millions of followers even after the death of their founder. Then what is a good indicator if something is of God or not?

The Word of God! Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17, "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**"

Make no mistake about it, Gamaliel was a fence sitter, kind of wait and see, and yet, the truth before them proved that Jesus is the Christ, they just ignored it.

Not only did His whole life testify to who He was, but His death and resurrection were the crowning signs that He is the Messiah!



As Stott wrote, “We should not be too ready to credit Gamaliel with having uttered an invariable principle . . . the Gamaliel principle is not a reliable index to what is from God and what is not.”

So, we see here those who respond with hostility to the Gospel message and those who respond with indifference to the Gospel message, and the same is true today! But don’t let that stop you from sharing!

#### VERSES 40-42

Before they let them go they beat these men. And this was not just a slap on the face. Beaten can be also translated skinned; the beating they received stripped the skin off of their backs.

One writer put it like this, “It was no soft option; people were known to die from it, even if this was exceptional. It was meant to be a serious lesson to offenders.” (Marshall)

Now, why flog these men if they were just going to wait and see what happens to these Jesus followers?

Because they wanted to scare them so they would not speak anymore of Jesus!

Now what did the apostles do? Did they run away and hide themselves? Did they pout that nobody loves them? Did they send letters complaining of the way they were being treated? Did they protest in the streets? What did they do?

**“And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” Acts 5:42.**

We should do no less. Think of running backs in football. How many times do they get knocked down, even lose yardage? Almost every play they get knocked down if they are carrying the ball, and many times they do lose yardage.

Do they go back to the huddle and say, “Don’t give me the ball anymore! I am tired of being knocked down. I just want to sit here and do nothing!” I hope they don’t say that because they are not doing what they should be doing, running with the ball!

The same is true of us as Christians. We get knocked down. Sometimes we lose yardage. But like these men, we get back up and we share our faith! We don’t give up. We don’t sit out. We move forward with the power of God’s Spirit upon our lives to move the Gospel message forward!

And look at verse 41 of Acts 5, **“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”**

How do you stop people like that? You can’t! They just boldly proclaimed what they believed!

Then why do we have such struggles today? Because we are self-centered and when trouble comes, we bail out, but not these guys.

Don’t be moved from the call of God in your life, keep your eyes on Jesus and serve Him with a joy in your heart that overflows to others, no matter what happens, what you go through!

As I close this evening I want to leave you with these two quotes from Charles Spurgeon.

The first deals with the bold heart, and he says;

“Now, I charge every Christian here to be speaking boldly in Christ’s name, according as he has opportunity, and especially to take care of this tendency of our flesh to be afraid; which leads practically to endeavors to get off easily and to save ourselves from trouble. Fear not; be brave for Christ. Live bravely for him who died lovingly for you.”

He then goes on to challenge the cowardly heart and he says,

“Yet you are a coward. Yes, put it down in English: you are a coward. If anybody called you so you would turn red in the face; and perhaps you are not a coward in reference to any other subject. What a shameful thing it is that while you are bold about everything else you are cowardly about Jesus Christ. Brave for the world and cowardly towards Christ!”

I am not going to close on that, but I hope we are all challenged by it. Because I believe that same power that worked in the early church is still at work today in each of our lives if we would only ask God to empower us and then step forward and do the work.

If we do step forward and do what God has called us to do then what they said of the early church they will say of us, “**... ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’**” Acts 17:6.

What a testimony to have for Jesus. May people see us as those who have turned the world upside down for Jesus!