

The Book of Acts
Chapter 5

Acts 5:38-39

- I. Review of chapter 4
 1. In Acts chapter 4, Peter and John were arrested for preaching the resurrection of Jesus following the healing of the lame man in front of the temple.
 2. The apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus (the gospel message) to the gathering crowd, and as a result, the church grew with another 5,000 believers!
 3. Standing trial before the Sanhedrin court, Peter preached the gospel to these experts of scripture, quoted prophesy, and gave the high priest and the elders a Bible study on Jesus.
 4. Because the healed man was standing in front of them, and because so many people believed the gospel, the verdict was just a threat for them to stop preaching Jesus.
 5. But Peter said they would have to keep declaring what they saw in obedience to God.
 6. The persecution brought about a great prayer meeting with the church, where they prayed for even more boldness to preach and stretch out the Lord's hand to heal.
 7. Their prayer was answered, everyone was filled with the Holy Ghost, the building shook, and they all spoke the world with boldness!
 8. The chapter ended with Barnabas donating proceeds from a property he had sold.
- II. Acts Chapter 5
- III. God's Judgment of Hypocrisy (Verses 1-11)
 - A. Desiring the praise of man
 1. **[1] What was the nature of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?**
 2. Perhaps trying to copy the generous act of Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira decided to do the same, but apparently, they were more interested in the honor they would receive for their generosity, than they were in helping the needy.
Acts 5:1-2
5 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,
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.
 3. In the Gospel of John, we read about people who:
John 12:43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.
 4. **[2] What was the root of their sin?**
 5. Apparently Ananias and Sapphira were motivated by hypocrisy, pride, and lying, and desired the same kind of honor as the other disciples who had sacrificed all.
 6. But, they were unwilling to make the same level of consecration that the others had.
 7. They agreed to sell a parcel of land and give a part of the sale proceeds to the church, but foolishly, they decided to pretend to give all.
 8. The Pharisees and scribes demanded meticulous observance of the ceremonial Law of Moses, and of the many traditions of the elders, but Jesus also pointed out their desire for the praise of others:
Matt 23:5-7, 11-12

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

9. This appears to be the motivation of Ananias and Sapphira.
- B. The high cost of hypocrisy
 1. **[3] Were they killed because they did not bring all the price of their land to the Apostles?**
 2. Ananias and Sapphira were not commanded to sell their land or to bring any part of the price to the Apostles.
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.
 3. Their judgment came because they attempted to deceive Peter and the other Apostles, and for lying to God.
 4. **[4] Why did God judge them so severely for their sin?**
 5. God chose an immediate and severe judgment, and it served as a somber warning to all the members of the new and growing church.
 6. Ananias was not acting against Peter as a man, but against the Holy Ghost who had filled and used Peter.
 7. Peter recognized that Satan was behind this act: heart:
*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?*
 8. The filling of his heart was something Ananias had opened himself to, even while pretending to worship the Lord. You just can't dance with the devil while singing to the Savior. It won't work. Not for long anyway.
 9. Perhaps this severe judgment of Ananias and Sapphira was to prevent the sin of hypocrisy from getting seated in the early church.
 10. May it have no place in us! Hypocrisy not only damages the hypocrite, but also others who may miss out on heaven because of their actions:
Matt 23:13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.
 11. Immediately after Peter confronted Ananias with his sin:
Acts 5:5-6
5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.
6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.
 12. His wife, Sapphira, unaware her husband had just passed away, confirmed her role as an accomplice to deception and met the same fate as her husband.

13. One thing is certain in a troubling story like this—we can be sure that God will never condemn anyone unjustly.
 14. We may not know all the facts, but the righteous Judge does, and He also knows the high price He had to pay for forgiveness of sins. That is not to be trifled with.
- IV. The Power of a Holy Church (Verses 12-16)
1. **[5] What upsurge of the power of the Holy Ghost did the Apostles experience after the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira?**
 2. This tragedy in the church brought a unity and a demonstration of Holy Ghost power:
Acts 5:11-14
11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.
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.
13 And of the rest [pretenders like Ananias and Sapphira] durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.
14 And believers [those who truly trusted in God] were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)
 3. The result was respect, signs and wonders, keeping the pretenders out, and attracting true believers.
 4. **[6] Was there any healing virtue in Peter's shadow?**
 5. *Acts 5:15-16*
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.
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.
 6. Faith in the prayers of the apostles was so high that some believed there was even healing virtue in the shadow of Peter passing over their sick ones.
 7. However, the Apostles laid no claim to such virtue. Peter and John had made it very plain that the lame man (chapter 3) was not healed by their own power or holiness but by faith in the power of the name of Jesus (Acts 3:12-16).
 8. If a shadow, or a piece of cloth, or a prayer over the phone, or a live-streamed video can generate faith in God, let it be so!
 9. Multitudes came to see and were healed, and the number of believers continued to grow.
 10. But as we saw in chapter 4, growth and attention brought more severe persecution.
- V. The Second Persecution (Verses 17- 28)
- A. The apostles arrested
 1. The center of apostolic preaching was, and still is, the resurrection of Jesus. And that message was substantiated over and over by the miraculous works of the Holy Ghost.
 2. And once again this drew anger and strong opposition from the Pharisees.
 3. **[7] What was the council's second persecution against the Apostles?**

4. In Acts 4, it was the ruling religious authorities who arrested Peter and John, and again, the same group, were filled with indignation and arrested the apostles:
Acts 5:17-18
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 [jealousy],
18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.
 5. Again, the gospel message agitated the ruling religious leaders because they had been responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.
 6. And the Sadducees were particularly agitated because they did not believe in resurrection at all.
 7. But once again, the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus, the healings, signs, and wonders, condemned the religious leaders and put their own authority in question.
- B. Miraculous deliverance
1. But it didn't take long for them to learn that they were not fighting against men but against God, and no one can win that fight.
 2. You may remember the Old Testament Prophet Jeremiah who wrote a scroll full of prophecy against King Jehoiakim, and the king responded by cutting and burning the scroll.
 3. Nevertheless, the prophecy came to pass just as God had said, and confirming that God's Word is everlasting, He gave Jeremiah the words again to write down (Jer. 36).
 4. Last week we mentioned Paul's words to Timothy, that although he, Paul, was bound, the Word of God was not bound (2 Tim. 2:9).
 5. **[8] What miracle of the Lord thwarted their purpose?**
 6. And on this occasion, when the council of the religious rulers tried to stop the preaching of the gospel by imprisoning the Apostles, the angel of the Lord opened the prison door, and sent them back to the Temple to continue preaching in the name of Jesus.
Acts 5:19-20
19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,
20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.
 7. Oh, and it gets even better!
- C. Shock and disbelief
1. **[9] What was the frustration and disadvantage of the council in their second trial of the Apostles?**
 2. The angel that had opened the prison doors for the apostles, told them to go back to the temple to preach. So they obeyed (reading from the NLT):
Acts 5:21-25
21 So at daybreak the apostles entered the Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching.
When the high priest and his officials arrived, they convened the high council—the full assembly of the elders of Israel. Then they sent for the apostles to be brought from the jail for trial. 22 But when the Temple guards went to the jail, the men were gone. So they returned to the council and reported, 23 "The jail was securely locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!"

24 When the captain of the Temple guard and the leading priests heard this, they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end. 25 Then someone arrived with startling news: "The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, teaching the people!" NLT

3. Imagine the shock of these leaders and the captain of the temple guard at this miracle.
4. And don't forget what happened the morning Jesus was resurrected. Matthew 28 records that it was the temple guard who was responsible for watching the tomb, and they saw the angel of the Lord move the stone away.
5. When they reported it to the temple leaders, they bribed them to keep silence on the truth they had seen.
6. And now the captain of the temple guard has another undeniable miracle to try to explain. His guards were still in front of the locked jail door, while their prisoners were teaching in the temple.
7. The members of the council found themselves at a decided disadvantage before these Spirit-filled men of God.
Acts 5:26-28
26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.
27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,
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.
8. But you may remember that, at the temple leader's encouragement, the crowds demanded Jesus' crucifixion, and after Pilate washed his hands declaring his innocence of this man's blood, the answer came back:
Matt 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.
9. The apostles weren't the ones who brought this Man's blood on them—they had asked for it.

VI. The Boldness of the Apostles (Verses 29- 33)

1. **[10] What was Peter's answer to the reprimand of the high priest?**
2. Peter had once denied the Lord, even cursing at a servant girl, but he was now bold as a lion in the presence of these rulers.
Acts 5:29-32
29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. [similar to their answer the first time Acts 4:19-20 Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye]
30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.
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.
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.
3. Jesus had warned them not to fear those who only had power to kill the body, but to fear Him who had power to cast into hell (Matt 10:28). So they boldly told the council they must obey God rather than men.

4. The lesson we must learn from this is that when we are truly led by the Spirit, we have God's protection, and need not fear what men will do to us.
 5. Through the years, saints of God have faced persecution, and yes even death, but the message of truth is never defeated.
 6. Preaching the gospel will save men and women, boys and girls, from sin and hell.
 7. Peter boldly preached that message to the council again, that through Jesus, men could find repentance and forgiveness of sins.
 8. The rulers were cut to the heart, yet were also enraged that they had been put on the defensive before these courageous and powerful men. They wanted them dead:
Acts 5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.
- VII. The Warning by Gamaliel (Verses 34-42)
1. But on this occasion, the Lord used Gamaliel, a respected doctor of the Law of Moses to bring sound reasoning and cool thinking to their hot heads.
 2. We learn later that the young Saul of Tarsus, had studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).
 3. **[11] What advice did Gamaliel give to the council? Why did they agree to follow his advice?**
 4. *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;*
 5. Gamaliel wisely advised them that if the work of the Apostles was of men, it would come to nothing of itself, but if it was of God, they could not overthrow it.
 6. He told them they should let these men alone, lest they be found to fight against God.
Acts 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God:
 7. Of course, they had just witnessed the undeniable miracle of God setting the apostles free from the jail, so they grudgingly agreed to obey his advice.
 8. **[12] What was their second attempt to try to stop the Apostles from preaching in the name of Jesus?**
 9. But they refused to release them till they had again beaten them and warned them not to teach in the name of Jesus.
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.
 10. **[13] What was the Apostles' attitude toward their persecution?**
 11. These Spirit-filled and dedicated men took the beating and departed, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Lord Jesus who had suffered crucifixion for them.
Acts 5:41-42
41 And 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 ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.
 12. Because of the Apostles' personal dedication, their ministry triumphed, and spread from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8).