

## Acts Chapter 5

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- Whenever God is at work, Satan is always there to oppose that work. No surprises there, the surprise is in where the opposition comes from - which is often from within the church as opposed to from without.
  - The church had just come through a severe trial in which an outward threat, the promise of persecution if they did not cease from preaching about Jesus, was overcome through prayer.
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- The result of that victory was a renewal of sorts; being filled with the Holy Spirit, they went forth speaking the Word with boldness.
- So Satan attempted to destroy the church from within.

V: 1-11 Ananias & Sapphira. Thus far everything about the early church has been positive. There has been some push back from the religious leaders, some external opposition but everything on the inside of the church has been positive as the Holy Spirit has added to the church continually such as should be saved.

- This is the first instance and example of “church discipline” or correction within the church.
- The previous chapter ended with Barnabas donating the proceeds of his property to the church, and presumably those funds being used to minister to the brethren, and we’ll hear more of Barnabas, the “son of consolation” later.

**Ananias:** Greek form of the Hebrew name Hananiah which means “Yahweh / Jehovah is Gracious.”

- While God is certainly gracious, Ananias would soon learn that God is also Holy.

**Sapphira:** Beautiful, Pleasant. She would learn that it’s not enough to be beautiful on the outside, inward beauty begins with truth.

V: 1 **“But”** – contrast. In contrast to what Barnabas the Levite had done in Ch. 4.

- The Holy Spirit had moved and touched Barnabas’ heart; Barnabas responded in obedience and sold his land – and gave it to the church. Thus Barnabas begins his journey “walking in the Spirit, denying the lust of the flesh.” **Galatians 5:16**

- All of this was a notable act, inspired and recorded by the Holy Spirit at the end of chapter 4.
- Contrast: Ananias & Sapphira also sell their land, but it is different with them.

V: 2 They kept back part of the proceeds, his wife being “privy” / aware (NKJV)

- The word “privy” implies a sense of privileged information, a type of confidence, or secrecy, a lack of transparency or openness.

**Numbers 32:23** “... and be sure your sin will find you out.”

- We can hide things from people, we can deceive them at times, but we can't hide anything from God, He is never deceived. God won't be mocked, if we say that we're a believer and flaunt our sin, or live a double life - sooner or later it will come out and be exposed.

V: 3 But Peter, a contrast to the contrast – but Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit – again exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit (The contrast being that Ananias & Sapphira are not filled with the Holy Spirit.)

**Romans Ch. 12 & 1 Corinthians Ch.12:** list some of the **spiritual gifts**.

**1 Corinthians 12:8** “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.”

- Peter exercises / demonstrates the gifts of discernment, word of knowledge, and wisdom – all boldly.
- Peter immediately recognizes the fingerprints of Satan: “*Why hath Satan...?*”
- Answer: because that is what he does!

**John 8:44** “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

**Genesis 3:1-7** Satan questioned – misquoted – contradicted, the Word of God.

- **Satan lied to Eve, resulting in death.** Satan's lies always lead to the end result which is death.
- **What a contrast: Jesus always speaks the truth, He is Truth – and He came to give us life and that more abundantly – eternal life.**
- Were Ananias & Sapphira saved? Did they die and go to Hell?

- We don't know for sure, but the way that Peter phrased this statement is interesting.
- "Filled" – not just put it in your heart, or given you the idea that... but "filled".
- "Filled" (G4137) πληρόω [pleroo /play·ro·o/] – fulfill, fill, be full, complete, to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim.

**1 Corinthians 3:16** "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

**Matthew 12:30** "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad."

- If Satan completely filled his heart, was there any room left for the Holy Spirit, was he the temple of the Living God?

V: 4 They didn't have to sell the property, and they didn't have to bring all of the money for it. The issue wasn't their giving, the issue was their hypocrisy.

**Psalm 51:6** "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts..."

- The sin was not in holding back part of the proceeds; it was in presenting it as though they were giving the whole thing, an appearance of something that was not – hypocrisy. They wanted to make everyone believe that their commitment was greater than it actually was.
- **Hypocrisy:** (Webster's) the false profession of desirable or publicly approved qualities, beliefs, or feelings, esp. a pretense of having virtues, moral principles, or religious beliefs that one does not really possess.

Jesus was always pretty up front / stern with hypocrites:

**Mark 7:6-9** "6He answered and said to them, well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 7Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9And he said unto them, full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

**Matthew 7:22-23** "22Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? 23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

- Peter identifies the root cause of Ananias' demise: Ananias thought he was talking to Peter, in front of other witnesses – the only problem is that one of those witnesses was God Almighty – he lied to God.
- Ananias did not have a sense or understanding of being in the presence of God, he did not have a fear for God.

**Proverbs 9:10** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.”

**Proverbs 8:13** “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...”

**Isaiah 33:6** “And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is His treasure.”

- Another proof text for the doctrine of the Trinity: Holy Spirit = God (from verse 3). Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God.

**1 John 5:7-8** “For there are three that bear record in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”

(Matt 3:16-17, 28:19, 2 Cor. 13:14, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 3:18, 2 Pet. 1:2-3, Rev. 1:4-5)

V: 5 Hyper Pentecostals looking for an example of being “slain in the spirit” – here it is.

**Romans 6:23** “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- In this case we see a tangible result of sin.

**Hebrews 11:25** “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;”

- Often times because there is not an immediate consequence of sin, because of that people assume that there is no consequence and feel all the more free to commit sin – but eventually it always leads to death.
- God is long suffering toward us, room to repent.
- *There is a bigger picture here that we should take note of:*
- Part of an abiding relationship with Jesus involves pruning, and or purging.

**John 15:2** “Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

- Sinai / 10 commandments – calf worship – 3,000 slain / purged.
- Consecration of Tabernacle – Nadab & Abihu – strange fire – 2 purged.
- Korah's rebellion preceded the entry into Canaan, the promised land – the earth opened up and purged the rebellious ones.
- Joshua prepared to enter the promised land – all the men were then circumcised / pruned / purged of their flesh.
- Joshua's defeat at Ai revealed the sin of Achan, who was purged as God began a new thing.
  
- In our text the church is getting started, thousands are being added to the fellowship of the saints - but this couple is purged out of the midst for their rebellion against God, as an example to others.

**1 John 2:19** “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

- Great fear fell upon all those that heard. Why? The reality of God being in their midst!

V: 6 Ananias fell down dead, and the young men picked him up and buried him; that is the Jewish custom to this day. People get buried the day they die.

V: 7-9 Ananias' wife Sapphira comes in a few hours later and Peter asks her about the proceeds from the property - giving her a chance to come clean

- For the same reasons Peter accurately predicts her eminent death.
- Their lust for recognition or standing within the church conceived sin in their hearts (V:4) which led to their deaths.

**James 1:15** “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

- Hypocrisy will not be allowed to stand:

**2 Timothy 3:1-5** “<sup>1</sup>This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. <sup>2</sup>For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; <sup>5</sup>having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away!”

V: 10 Sapphira fell down to the ground dead, just as Peter said would happen. Again the young men scoop her up and bury her next to her husband.

- The death of Ananias & Sapphira ushered in the birth of a new church ministry: **Undertaker Ministry!**
- **The church, which had been birthed at the foot of the cross, is now in it's infancy and we see that it is immediately challenged in different ways.**
- We'll talk about specifics in a moment, but this is something that all new believers, or those who are turning a corner in their faith walk can relate to – being challenged in your faith.
- **Faith that is challenged and still stands is real faith.**

V: 11 “Great fear” – “phobos” – “terror”.

- This “correction” brought them back to what Jesus said about giving:
- it changed how offerings were offered – with humility, discretion, not a display.

**Matthew 6:1-4** “<sup>1</sup>Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. <sup>2</sup>Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. <sup>3</sup>But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: <sup>4</sup>That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.”

- They've moved from “great grace” (**Acts 4:33**) and “great power” to “great fear.” These are all necessary elements to the church.

**Hebrews 12:28-29** “<sup>28</sup>Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear: <sup>29</sup>For our God is a consuming fire.”

V: 12 The purging that leads to purity, eventually produces power.

**2 Chronicles 7:14** “If My people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

- There is a direct link between purity in the church and power. Many people today promote the various “signs and wonders” ministries - but sadly their extravagant lifestyles demonstrate a real lack of of purity in their personal lives, they are the opposite of what they claim to be, and the very thing that we're warned to avoid.

- Ananias and Sapphira's deaths had a purifying effect upon the church and:

*“They were all with one accord...”*

- Prayer produces unity, unity empowers prayer.

**Matthew 18:19** “Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.”

- **Result:** “Multitudes” are added to the Lord.

V: 13 All of this had an immediate, and a sobering effect upon the church and upon those who considered becoming a part of the church.

- The church was held in high esteem, the people magnified them, but they weren't in as big a hurry to join in.
- Many considered more carefully the commitment they were about to make – we need to consider carefully, not just emotional decision.

**Isaiah 1:18** “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

- Meaning what we sing, pray, speak.
- “Lord draw me close” – “Lord help me go deeper with you” “More love, more power...” - more purity, less sin, more truth, less hypocrisy!

**John 15:1-3** “<sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. <sup>3</sup>Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

**Philippians 1:6** “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

V: 14 “*And believers - multitudes - were increasingly added to the Lord...*” (NKJV)

- Not just to the church, but to the Lord – personally.

		Peter	Church	Body of Christ
Acts 2:41	3,000 “added to them”	Testifying	Spirit filled witness	External
Acts 4:4	5,000 “believed”	Trial	Persecution	External
Acts 5:14	“multitudes” – “to the Lord”	Test	Purging	Internal

**2 Chronicles 7:14** “If My people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

**Correlation between purity & power: Internally** / relating to the body of Christ / church.

- We may not be able to impact external situation / politics relative to purity, morality, or righteousness.
- We can impact the internal environment within the church, and specifically in our own relationship with the Lord through a commitment to personal holiness.
- By the power of the Holy Spirit that is exactly what we are called to do.
- **When the church is what God wants it to be, then He will add to it as He see’s fit.**

**Acts 2:47** “... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

**V: 15-16** The Holy Spirit was moving so powerfully through the Apostles and through the church that people on the outside recognized this and sought their help, they brought their sick to the Apostles just as they had done with Jesus.

- Those who brought the sick, the lame, and the demon possessed to the disciples were not disappointed. “<sup>16</sup>... and they were healed every one.”
- There isn’t a modern hospital or clinic on the planet that can boast that!
- There are different aspects of faith; one is that most of us possess what might be termed as “passive faith”. We believe that God can heal, but there’s a big difference between believing that God can heal and that “God will heal...” The latter is “active” faith.
- We see examples of both in scripture where people went from having a “passive” faith to an “active” faith wherein God moved and people were healed.

**Matthew 9:20-21** “<sup>20</sup>And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of His garment:  
<sup>21</sup>For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment I shall be whole.”



- Her faith moved from passive faith to active faith when she made her way through the crowd and touched the hem of Jesus' garment.

**John 5:9** The lame man at the pool of Bethesda had to leave his passive faith behind and use an active faith in order to obey Jesus, pick up his mat, and begin walking for the first time in 38 years.

**Matthew 8:5-13** It took active faith for the centurion to trust that Jesus could heal his servant by just speaking the word.

- It takes an active faith when people come forward for prayer for healing:

**James 5:14-15** “<sup>14</sup>Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: <sup>15</sup>And the prayer of faith shall save the sick,...

- It's not about the oil, or the anointing with oil - it's an act of faith. Whether it's the act of asking, or reaching out, or seeing the shadow cross over - it's a trigger to faith that gives the active faith, believing it will happen at that moment.

Why don't we see these things today?

**Corruption:** In all fear and lowliness, the apostles gave glory to God. Many people today would be corrupted if they had that kind of power.

**Lack of priority:** (**Matthew 6:33**) The apostles set the priority to give themselves continually to the Word of God and to prayer. Today our schedules don't allow for that kind of dedication.

**Preoccupation:** Too many distractions, (**1 John 2:15-17**) we're not very deep because our minds are filled with too many extraneous things. The apostles had a deep relationship and experience with God, meditating in His Word day and night.

**1 John 2:15-17** “<sup>15</sup>Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

- All of this is not to say that God can't work in our modern culture, but the elements of purity and commitment are missing. I do believe in the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, who knows what He might do if He found just the right person or situation to be glorified in.

V: 17-18 Sadducees: materialists – indignant. They were opposed to anything that was supernatural.

- Indignation: (G2205) **zélōs**; to be hot, fervent. Zeal, used in a good sense and more often in an evil sense, meaning envy, jealousy.
- The Apostles / disciples were obviously ignoring the council's decree relative to preaching about Jesus. It was obvious that many others were being drawn to the Lord and they considered this a problem.
- Whenever God is working and moving, the enemy is always there to resist - and so often that resistance or push back comes from within, from the religious.

**John 15:20** “Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;...”

- This is that age old battle between the living truth and the dead traditions.
- **The religious leaders had three reasons for jailing the disciples:**
  1. Peter & John and not stopped preaching in the name of Jesus, they were defying the laws of the nation.
  2. The witness of the church was refuting the doctrines held by the Sadducees, giving every evidence that Jesus was truly alive.
  3. They were filled with indignation / jealousy - these un-trained, un-authorized men were being given great success, whereas their efforts seem to fall flat.
- Jailing the disciples, isolating them, preparing to either punish or kill them seemed like the most obvious solution. What they didn't realize is that persecution always has the opposite effect upon the church - it's like pouring gasoline on the flame

V: 19 “**But**” – contrast. Religion, the religious leaders imprisoned the believers, but the angel of the Lord - Jesus sets the captives free!

**Isaiah 61:1** “The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”

- **God never imprisons us. He always sets us free!**

**John 8:36** “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Brought them forth, as in carried them, like God beckoned Noah to come into the ark with God.

V: 20 They weren't set free for their comfort or convenience, they were set free for a purpose, for a mission! Speak the Word!

**Ephesians 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

- Three components to this command: 1. **Go**. 2. **Stand**. 3. **Speak**.

1. **Go**: Move! Do something! Find something to do and get busy! (Ask God!)

**James 1:22** "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

**James 2:17-18** "<sup>17</sup>Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. <sup>18</sup>Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." (Actions!)

2. **Stand**: Stand your ground, stand for Jesus, declare Him, identify with Him!

**Matthew 10:32-33** "<sup>32</sup>Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."

3. **Speak**:

**1 John 1:3** "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

**2 Timothy 4:2** "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Jesus re-commissioned Peter saying:

**John 19:16** "... feed My sheep."

Paul declared:

**Acts 20:27-28** "<sup>27</sup>For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (The whole counsel of God) <sup>28</sup>Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."

- We want people to know the grace of God, the peace of God and the power of God - all these things come from just knowing God!

**2 Peter 1:2-3** “<sup>2</sup>Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, <sup>3</sup>according as His Divine Power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that called us to glory and virtue,”

“... *all the words of this life.*” boy there’s a mouthful!

**John 10:10** “... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

V: 21 & 25 Obedience! No hesitation, early that morning they got right to it! That is love!

Jesus said:

**John 14:15** “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

**1 John 5:3** “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.”

V: 21b-23 The disciples have already left the prison, the Sadducees convene the Sanhedrin, the council / senate of the children of Israel with the intent of conducting a trial before they punish the disciples.

- After they are organized and assembled, they send for the disciples in prison, but the guards find everything in order at the prison except that the prisoners are not there.

V: 23 Getting to be a bad habit:

1<sup>st</sup> Guarding and empty tomb.

2<sup>nd</sup> Guarding and empty jail cell.

- Understandable in a way, they had been guarding an empty Temple for years!
- God help us not to cling to the last dying vestiges of a dying tradition or of our “religious beliefs” and pre-conceptions when the true and living God is standing in our midst beckoning us to Himself.

V: 24 The elders and leaders of Israel didn’t have a clue what was next or what to do.

V: 25 They were told to go, and they went to the Temple. They were told to stand, and they're standing boldly as men, not cowering. They were told to speak, and they are teaching the Word of God to God's children!

- By faith, manifested in obedience, they are honoring God!

**Ephesians 6:13-14** “<sup>13</sup>Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness,”

V: 26-27 The officers went and got the disciples, but they did so “without violence” - meaning they were nice to them, respectful, not abusive - but only because they feared the people, they were afraid of getting stoned.

- This means that the disciples exercised a choice. They no doubt recognized the same thing the guards saw - that the people were prepared to stop the guards from taking the disciples, this means that the disciples co-operated with the authorities, they willingly submitted to their authority.

**Romans 13:1-2** “<sup>1</sup>Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. <sup>2</sup>Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”

V: 28 Did we not command you not to teach in this name?

**Acts 4:18, 21** (yes)

- Filled Jerusalem with their doctrine / teaching.
- Why? Because that is what they've been commanded by God to do!

**Acts 1:8** “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

- The angel of the Lord turned them loose from jail for this expressed purpose, and they were being obedient to what the Lord had commanded.
- And God has made them successful in their efforts as they've sought to be obedient to God. Pentecost, 3,000 got saved. Then a few days later another 5,000 then more recently “multitudes” all of whom have probably gone out to spread the good news and now all of Jerusalem is filled with their doctrine. The Holy Spirit is indeed moving!

- They've got two complaints: You're still teaching in the name of Jesus and you're blaming us for killing Jesus. Kind of like saying "stop telling the truth..."
- When Jesus was about to be crucified, and Pilate was trying to let Him go, the people were stirred up by these same religious leaders and in a tumult said:

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

- There is and has always been a price both in this world and in the next for rejecting the Savior.
- In this life the love and the peace, and the comfort, the contentment that we reject when we reject Jesus. The Jews in particular have suffered for the last 2,000 years because of it. Also the Gentiles who've rejected the truth have suffered needlessly as well.

V: 29 "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" They submitted to the authorities and allowed them to jail them, then God turned them loose, now they've allowed the authorities to detain them and bring them back to the council - these are things that the civil authorities can do.

**1 Peter 2:13-15** "<sup>13</sup>Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

- But when the civil authorities insist that they act contrary to the Word of God - that's where they / we must follow Jesus, and not the civil authorities.
- The word "*ought*" is translated at "*must*" in NKJV - we must obey God. This is a divine imperative, not a choice.
- If that means if we lose our freedom, or property, or our lives - so be it.
- When king Darius was tricked into signing a decree that no one should pray to any god except to the king, Daniel opened the windows of his house, and with his face toward Jerusalem, prayed to God. He didn't even try to hide it. Likewise, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused to bow down and worship the golden image at the command of King Nebuchadnezzar. (**Daniel 6 & 13**)
- Throughout scriptures we find those standing up and defying the laws of man when those laws were in conflict with the Law of God.

- Just like with the Apostles, God can change or reverse any thing that the civil authorities can do. They were taken to jail and God set them free - He can do that for us if that is what He wants to do - or we can have an awesome jail ministry.

**Galatians 1:10** “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.”

- We see here the difference between being a “diplomat” - trying to appease or make everyone happy - and being an “ambassador” bringing the message of our Master un-diluted, untainted.

**2 Corinthians 5:20** “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”

- Here we do see scriptural authority for civil disobedience: but it is within limited perimeters, and it is with all humility.
- Two requirements related to civil disobedience: scriptural authority & humility.

V: 30-32 The Jehovah’s witnesses are critical of this particular passage. They say that the cross is a pagan symbol, and because of that the church is guilty of embracing paganism, because of the presence of crosses in churches.

- They try to use this as a proof verse that Jesus wasn’t crucified on a cross, but on an actual tree. The phrase “tree” is often used symbolically of the cross.
- The Greek word for a living tree is “*hugros*” but the word used here for tree is “*xylon*” (G3586) which means something made from wood, such as a beam or a cross from which one is suspended.
- We don’t know the actual shape of the cross because different types were used, some used an “X” shaped cross, they also used a “T” shaped cross, along with the traditional depiction of a cross - the shape isn’t the key point.
- The point is that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins and that because of His sacrifice we have eternal life!

**Galatians 3:13** “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:” (*xylon*)

- Boldness, boldly spoken! Remember the disciples’ prayer?

**Acts 4:29** “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.”

- Peter is addressing a court comprised mostly of Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. He is directly contradicting one of their pet doctrines - that there is no resurrection, and thereby no accountability.
- Peter is also affirming their accusation: “<sup>28</sup>...intending to bring this man’s blood upon us.”
- Yes, you killed Him - but God raised Him from the dead.
- Peter didn’t change the message at all to suit this audience.
- As part of that un-compromised message Peter and the other Apostles are declaring where the real power is!
- They’ve just said we will obey God rather than men: God has the power to raise the dead! He’s the one we need to fear. You can put us in jail, and God can get us out. You can kill us, and God can raise us up again.

**Matthew 10:28** “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

- God has all the power, we’re not too worried about you guys...
- In this we also see the “Trinity” or the “Tri-unity” of God as well.

“<sup>30</sup>*The God of our fathers*” - God the Father. “<sup>30</sup>*Jesus*” - Son. “<sup>32</sup>*Holy Spirit.*”

**1 Timothy 3:16** “And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness: **God** was **manifested in the flesh**, justified in the **Spirit**, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

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- When Jesus had been on trial before this same religious council they had trouble getting two witnesses to agree on a false accusation and the high priest was getting upset. At one point he addressed Jesus directly:

**Matthew 26:63-64** “<sup>63</sup>But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. <sup>64</sup>Jesus saith unto him, thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

- This incensed the high priest who tore his clothes and accused Jesus of blasphemy.



- Now it's several weeks later, after that conversation and Peter is talking to the same men, and he's telling them that God has done exactly what Jesus said He would do.
- That Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God the Father, that He truly is the Prince or Ruler and Savior - and that is who they are testifying of!
- Isaiah refers to the Messiah as the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6) and Daniel refers to the Messiah as the "Prince of princes" (Daniel 8:25).
- As the Savior, He brings Israel unto repentance in order that they might receive the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus said:

**Luke 13:3** "... except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

His first words in public ministry were:

**Matthew 4:17** "... repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

- It is interesting to think about the Apostle Paul, who when he was Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was probably there when Jesus was condemned to death and heard first hand the things that had been spoken by Jesus at that time. He was probably there to hear Peter and John, and the other disciples speak as well.
- You have to wonder how God was working in Saul's heart. He knew the scriptures well enough to realize that there was something to the testimonies he was hearing and perhaps it was getting harder and harder to ignore.
- When Saul / Paul was finally apprehended on the road to Damascus Jesus told him:

**Acts 9:5** "... it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

- Even though Paul had been breathing out threats against the church and persecuting the church greatly, God was at work in his heart.
- Paul was struggling against his traditional beliefs and positions, traditions have a greater hold on people than almost anything else and is very difficult to break.

V: 33 They heard Peter's words and reacted immediately:

**James 1:19-20** "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

- People respond differently to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 2:37** “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

“Pricked”: (G2660) pained, grieved, pierced.

“Cut”: (G1282) with a saw, sawn through, metaphorically: enraged

- They were cut to the heart - they were “furious” meaning the words of the disciples hit home: When you throw a rock into a pack of dogs, the one that yelps is the one that was hit.

**Hebrews 4:12** “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged 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.”

- At this moment they have a choice to make: they can yield to the Spirit of God and received the wisdom of God’s Word as it speaks of Jesus, and themselves, and their own complicity and sin - or they can reject it out of hand and refuse to receive the truth.
- Obviously they choose the latter and yield to the flesh as opposed to the Spirit.
- They immediately take counsel to slay them, to murder them.

**Galatians 5:19-21** “<sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, <sup>21</sup>envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

V: 34-39 The counsel of Gamaliel: seemingly a good man, a wise counselor.

V: 34 Gamaliel: A respected member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council over Israel. He is a Pharisee which means that he’s a conservative, a student of the Law, interpreting it literally.

- Secular sources record: 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.
- In this setting he seems like a moderate person, the voice of reason in a hostile crowd, but he was also the teacher credited with instructing Saul of Tarsus.

**Acts 22:3-4** “<sup>3</sup>I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. <sup>4</sup>And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”

- Part of the fruit of Gamaliel’s instruction was Saul’s persecution of the early church which he later became a leader of.
- Granted we can all pretty much agree with his reasoning in this particular event, but at the same time like his student Saul he was around to see the life, ministry, and miracles of Jesus while they were all happening.
- Gamaliel would have been there when the blind were made to see and the lame were made to walk and I wonder what his thoughts were then or what he did with the information he had.
- We know in part what he did with it, he placed Jesus in the same category as a couple of other rebels who’s movements led to destruction.
- Gamaliel was there when they crucified our Lord Jesus. He saw sun go dark in the middle of the day, he heard the shophar blown as Jesus gave up His Spirit, he saw the veil of the Temple torn in two but none of that seemed to click.
- Where was his wisdom when the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies from all of the Law & Prophets was standing more or less in front of him?

**Answer:** The same place ours would be apart from the power of the Holy Spirit working in us.

**1 Corinthians 3:19** “... The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God”

**1 Corinthians 2:13-14** “<sup>13</sup>Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup>But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: For they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

*Jesus said:*

**John 3:3** “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

- Like that old saying about missing heaven by 18 inches, intelligence doesn’t get us into Heaven, it is a matter of faith.

- At this point Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, or any other believing Pharisees have been cast out and are no longer an influence within the Sanhedrin. But there is a growing number of believers within the priesthood - it's just that Gamaliel, who is not a priest, is not among them.

V: 35-38 Gamaliel urges caution and patience. He cites two previous "movements" - characterized more as insurrections - which in the end added up to nothing.

- Gamaliel spoke the truth; if it is a work of men, then it will come to nothing if it's for the Lord.

**Zechariah 4:6** "... Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

**Psalm 127:1** "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it..."

- The flaw in his reasoning is that if it's a work of the flesh, often times the enemy will help out and it will appear successful. There are many cults, or pseudo Christian enterprises that thrive.

V: 39 Perhaps Gamaliel is considering the possibility that this could actually be of God. If that is the case then I see progress - whereas he didn't get it when Jesus was ministering - perhaps that is beginning to change.

- The last place we want to find ourselves is to be at odds with God, and have Him working against us or visa versa.

**Romans 8:31** "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

- The opposite rings true as well - if God is against us, who can be for us?

**Isaiah 45:9** "Woe unto him that striveth with his maker!..."

V: 40 The Sanhedrin agreed and were swayed away from killing the disciples.

- God used Gamaliel to accomplish His purposes.

**Proverbs 21:1** "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will."

- The disciples were still "beaten" and "commanded" not to teach in the name of Jesus before being let go.
- There was a price to pay for their ministry and obedience to the Lord.

**2 Timothy 3:12** “Yea, and all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

- **Side note:** Who delivered the beating? Most likely the same Temple guards who brought them “without violence.” Awkward... could have been a business like, following orders kind of a thing, or it could have been a real difficult task as they considered the same things that Gamaliel had spoken of.

V: 41 They walked away from this “negative” experience rejoicing in the Lord, praising God that they were counted worthy to suffer “shame” or persecution for the name of Jesus.

**James 1:2-4** “<sup>2</sup>My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; <sup>3</sup>knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. <sup>4</sup>But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

Jesus said:

**Matthew 5:10** “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their is the kingdom of heaven.”

**Philippians 3:10** “That I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”

- Persecution never really hurts the church, it strengthens and empowers the church. These believers knew the resurrection power of Jesus, it was reflected in their ministry in part because they also knew the fellowship of His sufferings.

V: 42 Daily in the Temple and in every house they ceased not to be obedient to what Jesus had commanded them to do. They were witnesses of His death and resurrection.

**Acts 1:8** “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

The angel of the Lord freed them from prison and commanded them to:

**Acts 5:20** “Go, stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life.”

- They didn’t allow the culture, society, or the rulers to distract, sway, or intimidate them away from doing what Jesus had called them to do.
- They were fanatics!
- Winston Churchill defined fanatics with two characteristics:

1. They can't change their minds.
2. They won't change the subject.

What if that was us?

**Matthew 10:19-20** “<sup>19</sup>But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. <sup>20</sup>For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”

- God doesn't give you that kind of grace until you need it, but the cool thing is that when you do need it - He is there! He gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to speak, to respond in ways that we never could have otherwise.

“... *they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*”

- Preaching is to the un-converted, preaching is proclaiming the Gospel to those that need to be saved.
- Once a person is saved they no longer need preaching per se, now they need teaching whereby they may grow.
- Too many churches are preaching to the saints who never grow out of infancy into maturity as believers.

**Hebrews 5:12 - 6:2** “<sup>12</sup>For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. <sup>13</sup>For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup>But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. <sup>6:1</sup>Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection (maturity); not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, <sup>2</sup>of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

- Conversion comes through the preaching of the Gospel, but growth comes through the teaching of the Word.

**1 Corinthians 13:11** “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** “<sup>16</sup>All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup>That the man of God may be perfect (complete, mature), thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”