

DISCIPLINE, GROWTH AND PERSECUTION

Acts Five

Introduction:

- 1. The work of the Lord's church is three-fold:**
 - a. Evangelism: preaching the Gospel to the lost.**
 - b. Edification: building up the saved by worship and teaching.**
 - c. Benevolence: helping those in need as we have opportunity.**
- 2. The church at Jerusalem is a model in all three of these areas.**
- 3. The church especially excelled in benevolence.**
 - a. Many had come from afar, had been converted, and stayed on in Jerusalem to learn more.**
 - b. After a time their resources ran out.**
 - c. The church helped the needy through the generosity of its members.**
- 4. Those who had property sold it, brought the money, and gave it to the apostles for distribution to the needy.**
 - a. There was no command or coercion.**
 - b. It was purely voluntarily to deal with a temporary need.**
 - c. It was not replicated in any of the other New Testament congregations.**
- 5. The last chapter closed with the example of Barnabas selling his land and giving it to the church.**
- 6. This chapter opens with another example of Christians selling land, and bringing money to give to the church, but there is a difference!**

Discussion:

- I. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA LIED TO THE HOLY SPIRIT (1-11).**
 - A. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, sold their land.**
 - 1. Apparently, they had pledged to give it all to the church.**
 - 2. They wanted the praise that comes for such giving.**
 - 3. However, they agreed to keep back part of it.**
 - 4. They did not have to give at all, nor did they have to give it all.**
 - 5. They could have changed their pledge, but they wanted the praise that comes for giving all.**
 - B. It was essentially a test of the Holy Spirit.**
 - 1. If they could deceive the Spirit filled apostles, when it eventually was found out, it would weaken the influence of the apostles.**

2. God could not permit this to happen.
- C. Peter asked, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? ... You have not lied to men but to God.”
 1. Satan had deceived him, yet Ananias was responsible.
 2. To lie to the Spirit is to lie to God for the Spirit is God.
 3. Ananias fell down and died immediately.
- D. Three hours later, Sapphira came in not knowing about Ananias.
 1. Peter tested her by asking, “Did you sell the land for so much?”
 2. She also lied and died.
- E. Great fear (Greek: phobos - fear, terror, or alarm) came upon all who heard.

II. THE CHURCH GREW GREATLY (12-16).

- A. Church discipline, if handled properly, results in growth.
- B. Through the apostles, many signs and wonders were done.
 1. People brought their sick into the streets so Peter’s shadow might fall on them and heal them.
 2. People from surrounding towns also brought their sick.
- C. “Believers were increasingly added to the Lord.”

III. PERSECUTION REARED ITS UGLY HEAD AGAIN (17-42).

- A. Jesus had warned His apostles: “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (Jno. 15:20).
 1. Paul and Barnabas told the churches, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
 2. Paul warned: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).
- B. The high priest and the Sadducees were angry that the apostles were preaching Christ so successfully.
 1. They arrested the apostles and put them in prison.
 2. An angel freed them and told them to teach in the temple.
 3. The next morning, the Sanhedrin assembled.
 - a. The temple police were sent to bring the apostles.
 - b. The guards were on duty, the doors were locked, but no one was in the cell.
 - c. While they were in a quandary, word came the apostles were teaching in the temple.
 - d. The captain brought them without violence for he feared the people.

- C. The High Priest demanded: “Did not we charge you not to teach in this name and you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching?”**
- 1. The apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than men.”**
 - 2. Peter again preached the Gospel to the Sanhedrin.**
 - a. God raised up Jesus, but you murdered Him.**
 - b. God raised Him to sit at His right hand.**
 - c. We are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit.**
 - 3. The high priest and Sadducees were so angry they wanted to put the apostles to death.**
- D. Gamaliel, a Pharisee, a famous scholar suggested a compromise (Acts 22:3).**
- 1. It would save the Sanhedrin from murder which would implicate them all - Sadducees and Pharisees alike.**
 - 2. It would save the apostles, who had done no wrong, from being killed.**
- E. Gamaliel’s speech is a masterpiece of diplomacy.**
- 1. A man named Theudas claimed to be a messiah, but his movement fell apart and he was killed.**
 - 2. A man named Judas made a similar claim and his movement also failed and he died.**
 - 3. If this movement (Christianity) is of men, it also will fail.**
 - 4. If it is not of men, then if they oppose it, they will be found fighting against God.**
- F. The apostles were scourged and set free.**
- 1. They rejoiced they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus.**
 - 2. They preached Jesus as the Christ.**
 - a. They preached daily.**
 - b. They preached in the temple and from house to house.**

Conclusion:

- 1. Satan will always raise up opposition to the spread of the Gospel.**
- 2. Persecution makes strong Christians stronger.**
- 3. We can be added to the Lord by doing what they did to be saved (Acts 2:38; 3:19).**