

Dealing Harshly with Sin and Unimpeded Growth (Acts 5:1-42)

I. Introduction

A. *This Week in Clear Living*

1. Why were Ananias and Sapphira judged so harshly?
2. How did the disciples get out of jail?
3. What was Peter's attitude when brought before the council?
4. What famous person did Gamaliel teach?
5. What was Gamaliel's advice concerning the disciples?
6. How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson?
7. How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

Question: Why were Ananias and Sapphira judged so harshly?

B. Ananias and Sapphira were judged for lying (verses 1-11).

1. In Acts 4:36-37, Barnabas sold his land and gave the money to the church.
 - a. The Bible does not teach the commune lifestyle that the early church had adopted.
 - b. No one made Barnabas sell his land and give the proceeds to the church.
 - c. ***The fact that the Jerusalem church went broke is a difficult fact to explain, but the best conclusion is that the Lord expects us to be careful with the money that He has enabled us to have (see I Corinthians 16:1-3 and Romans 15:24-25).***
2. In verses 1-2, Ananias and Sapphira also sold their property. They let everyone think that they were also giving the proceeds to the church, but they held back a portion for themselves.
3. Their sin was trying to make people think they were someone that they were not, and their punishment was extremely severe.

C. In verses 3-5, the Apostle Peter confronted Ananias about his deception, and Ananias immediately dropped dead.

1. Peter told him in verse 3 that he had not been required to give all the proceeds to the church.
2. The fact that he tried to make everyone think that he had was his real sin.
3. In II Kings 1:1-16, Elisha called down judgment from above, but Peter simply left the matter in the Lord's hands.
3. In verse 4, Peter told Ananias that he had lied to the Holy Spirit, not just to the people in the church.

D. ***Acts 5:3 proves the deity of the third Person of the Trinity.***

1. ***The Holy Spirit took Ananias' life, not Peter.***
 - a. ***He showed His omniscience.***
 - b. ***He showed His omnipotence.***
 - c. ***He showed His omnipresence.***
 - d. ***He showed His justice and His willingness to act against hypocrisy.***
2. Ananias was a hypocritical believer, and the Holy Spirit took his life.

Dealing Harshly with Sin and Unimpeded Growth (Acts 5:1-42)

3. The Holy Spirit does not always deal so harshly, but He can.
4. Sometimes Christians die unexpectedly, and for all we know, maybe the Holy Spirit is dealing with some more hypocritical believers.
 - a. No one can say this for certain, but clearly such a thing is possible.
 - b. John 15:6 says, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."
 - c. Matthew 16:16-18 says that Jesus will build His church, and He is using the Holy Spirit to do so.
5. During the early days of the church, the Holy Spirit cleansed the church so that it would have a solid foundation.
6. We can be thankful that the Holy Spirit does not always deal with people in such a harsh fashion. He may not have always done so in the early days of the church, but He did with Ananias and Sapphira.
- E. In verses 6-11, Ananias' wife faced the same fate.
 1. In verse 8, Peter gave her a chance to admit her wrongdoing, but she remained hypocritical to the end.
 2. In verse 9, their sin was described as trying to tempt the Lord.
 - a. Tempt (*peirazo*) - to try whether a thing can be done, in a bad sense, or to test one maliciously, craftily to put to the proof his feelings or judgments.
 - b. By tempting the Holy Spirit, they were testing Him in much the same way that a child tempts or tests his parents.
 3. The result in verse 11 was that great fear came upon the whole congregation.
 - a. Fear (*phobos*) - fear, dread, terror, or reverence.
 - b. They realized that the Lord would be ruling His church with a strong hand.

Question: How did the disciples get out of jail? What was Peter's attitude when brought before the council?

- II. *The apostles did remarkable miracles (verses 12-16).*
 - A. In verse 12, they did many signs and wonders through the Holy Spirit.
 - B. In verse 14, many were saved.
 - C. In verses 15-16, the sick were brought to the disciples so that they could be healed.
 1. The sick were even placed strategically to where Peter could pass by them.
 2. Verse 13 said that many people magnified them. But if that means that the people were giving Peter and the others the glory, then they had the wrong focus.
 3. There is not any evidence that Peter ever took credit for the work that was being done. All of the evidence shows that he quickly gave the Lord all the credit.

Dealing Harshly with Sin and Unimpeded Growth (Acts 5:1-42)

Question: What famous person did Gamaliel teach? What was Gamaliel's advice concerning the disciples?

- III. An angel opened the doors of the jail (verses 17-32).
- A. In verses 17-32, the apostles were in trouble again.
1. The High Priest, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees did not want the apostles to do anything for the Lord.
 2. In verse 18, they were put in the jail.
 3. In verse 19, an angel opened the door so that they could leave.
 4. In verse 20, they were back in the temple telling people about the Lord.
- B. In verse 26, the apostles were apprehended again.
1. In verse 28, the High Priest reminded them that they were not supposed to minister Christ.
 2. But in verse 29, Peter said that they would obey the Lord rather than man.
 3. ***The apostles could not be stopped.***
- C. Notice in verse 30 that Peter was not intimidated by the council.
1. Once again he reminded them that they had killed Jesus.
 - a. Acts 2:36 says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, ***whom ye have crucified***, both Lord and Christ."
 - b. Acts 3:13 says, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; ***whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate***, when he was determined to let him go."
 - c. Acts 4:10 says, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, ***whom ye crucified***, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."
 2. His words would have been difficult for them to hear.
 - a. Peter's powerful transformation and preaching were a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - b. ***We have that same spirit in us, so we do not have to fear our enemies, economic disasters, natural disasters, or anything else. IF WE CHOOSE, WE CAN HAVE AN EASY SPIRITUAL LIFE WHILE IN THIS PHYSICAL LIFE.***
 - 1) We can experience the victorious life of those that lived during the first years of the early church.
 - 2) The keys are to let go of self and to embrace the Lord. This is beyond salvation.
 - 3) As we grow spiritually, that process should begin to occur in our life.

Dealing Harshly with Sin and Unimpeded Growth (Acts 5:1-42)

- c. II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."
3. The council wanted to kill Peter and the others, so they took council among themselves concerning how to go about it.

Question: How was the Holy Spirit building Jesus' church in this lesson? How was the Holy Spirit showing His deity in this lesson?

IV. Gamaliel addressed the men of Israel (verses 33-42).

- A. Once again, the Holy Spirit was at work building the church.
 1. He was using Peter and the other apostles to heal the sick.
 2. He was using them to witness to the lost.
 3. He was giving them victory and power when they stood before the authorities (Matthew 10:17-20).
 4. He even used Gamaliel to get the apostles out of trouble.
 5. Gamaliel had been the teacher of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:3).
- B. What can we know about Saul of Tarsus?
 1. He must have been from an affluent family.
 2. They sent him from Tarsus to Jerusalem to be trained by one of the top Jewish theologians of that time.
 3. He must have been a very zealous Jew, even to the point of trying to destroy the church.
 4. The Lord would strike him down on the road to Damascus and save him.
 5. He would become probably the greatest missionary and servant in the church for all time. We know him today as the Apostle Paul.
 6. He wrote 13 or 14 of the New Testament books, depending on your view about the author of Hebrews.
- C. In verses 33-42, Gamaliel advised the council.
 1. In verse 33, the council was very upset.
 2. In verses 34-39, he wisely told the council to leave the apostles alone.
 - a. Others like them had arisen and come to naught.
 - b. If they really were of God, the council would not be able to stop them.
 3. In verse 40, the apostles were once again told to not preach Christ.
 4. In verse 42, they continued to preach the Lord daily in the temple and in every house.
 5. ***They succeeded because they refused to be stopped. Their determination came from the Holy Spirit. It was not something that they manufactured.***

V. Next week's lesson: "The First Deacons and the First Martyr" (Acts 6:1-7:60)