



Focus Points...*For Acts 5*

Stop And Consider...

- * The remarkable commitment required by the early church for new members; and
- * The apostles' firm insistence that their followers uphold the highest level of character.

Look...

- * At the apostles' remarkable healing ministry and how it helped expand the church; and
- * At the familiar pattern of Peter's "*kerygma*" (or "*kerygmatic*") preaching.

Listen...

- * To Ananias and Sapphira's conspiring lies; and
- * To the Jewish leader, Gamaliel, as he provided the Jewish leaders with godly insight and wisdom for dealing with the growing influence of Christians in Jerusalem.

Prayer:

As I present myself to You, Lord, enable my study to help me to understand the joy of faith and the depth of sacrifice of Your early disciples. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

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Commentary:

The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira must have sent shockwaves throughout the Christian community. If there were any converts who had second thoughts about selling all their possessions and giving them to the apostles, Luke's account in Acts 5:1ff. should have erased them.

"Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events."



It was already a dangerous thing to be a follower of Christ unless one was willing to walk straight. With the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, "no one else dared join" them (Acts 5:11). Commentators are not all in agreement on the translation of this verse. Many think it means that people no longer just casually joined the



disciples without thoroughly thinking it through and gaining formal introduction from the apostles. Whatever the meaning, Luke emphasized two things:

- * *First*, the apostles and their followers were “highly regarded” (5:13).
- * *Second*, the number of those who believed increased dramatically.

As a result, Solomon’s Columnade could no longer contain the crowds. It became the place the believers “used to meet together” (Acts 5:12).

Luke continued to describe the apostles’ ministry.

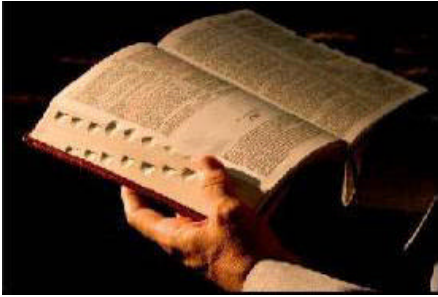
“The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.” Acts 5:12 (NIV).

Matthew called miracles “miracles.” John called them “signs.” In both his Gospel and in Acts, Luke called them “signs and wonders.” The crowds were so frenzied and excited that they just wished for Peter’s shadow to pass over them and heal them (v. 15). (Cf. The Woman with the flow who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment in Matthew 9).

Reading this account, one question which arises is, Did people also seek healing from John’s shadow? Did Luke’s silence in this regard demonstrate that Peter was more popular than John? Not necessarily. But note that while John had not been mentioned since Acts 4:23, Peter had been mentioned multiple times in chapters four and five. Both will not be mentioned again until chapter 8.

Amid all the wonderful news of the growth of the Christian movement, the persecution mentioned in Acts 5:17ff. brought everything back to reality...but with a few twists. The high priests and their associates were filled with jealousy over the remarkable growth of the Jesus movement. It seemed nothing—not even crucifying Jesus—could shake the priests’ unbridled disdain for Jesus’ followers (cf. Matthew 27:18 where the same group handed Jesus over to Pilate out of “envy”)

So they arrested the apostles and put them into jail...at least that’s what they thought. Acts 5 recorded the apostles’ first miraculous jailbreak. To where did they flee? Actually nowhere! All the Jewish leaders had to do was look out their windows. The apostles were right in the very heart of the Temple preaching, teaching and drawing in even more crowds.



Daily Bible Habit

The Acts Of The Apostles

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When confronted, Peter and the others boldly and forcefully repeated what they had said before. They would obey God, not men.

Never ceasing to take opportunity to witness even to the High Priest, Peter again shared the *kerygma*, the Good News with them. Of course, this only made them more “furious” or, as the Greek connotes, it enraged them so much it cut their hearts (Cf. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

Finally, Gamaliel, a noted leader among the Pharisees, saw how deliriously jealous and obsessed the Jewish leaders had become. His persuasive speech, found in Act 5:35ff, basically described how God took care of previous trouble-makers. “Leave these men alone! Let them go!” he pleaded.

“For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” Acts 5:38-39 (NIV).

The good news was that Gamaliel persuaded them...at least for a time. The bad news was that apostles weren't just let go. The Jewish leaders' had to unleash their hatred, envy, frustration and anger on someone. The apostles were the scapegoats.

Having been beaten and being subjected again to the accustomed release protocol which always included the command not to preach, the apostles did again what they had done so many times before:

“they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the Good News that Jesus is the Messiah” Acts 5:42 (NIV)

The result? The number of disciples continued to increase (6:1).

Prayer:

Lord, by my reading of this account, help me see how Your church expanded greatly, even under persecution. Enable me, even amid the threat of persecution, to express my faith freely. Open my mouth and send Your Spirit that I might have timely and appropriate words as I proclaim You to others. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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