

GTW – Acts of the Holy Spirit – Acts 5:1-7:60
“The Expanding Church’s Healing Ministry, Hellenistic Christians,
Deacons Established, Stephen’s Speech and Martyrdom”
September 30, 2020 – Dr. C. Patrick Hartsock

- **5** Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ²With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.

³Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” ⁵When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

⁷About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land? “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” ⁹Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

¹⁰At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Lessons from the Ananias and Sapphira story:

1. When you have **knowledge of a spouse’s or Christian friend’s wrong decision**, speak up and **confront them**, do not remain silent, over their potential sin. (vs. 1-2)

Personal reflection or Small Group Discussion: Have you ever had to confront someone near and dear to you concerning their possible disobedience or potential sin?

2. **Satan is real** and he desires to turn our hearts away from following the Lord. Remember he is “the father of lies.” (vs. 3)
3. **We are responsible** for what we do with all that the Lord has given us. **We are accountable** for what we do with what the Lord has given us. All we have is his not ours, we are just stewards of what he has entrusted to us. (vs. 3-4)

4. When we lie about what is the Lord's, we don't just lie to others, **we lie to the Holy Spirit**. We are not just lying to human beings we are lying to God the Holy Spirit.
5. As you know, the Holy Spirit is one of three **persons** within the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a personality, not an it and **the Holy Spirit can be "lied to."** (vs. 3-4)
6. **There are consequences for our sin.** All of the consequences of our sin were not taken away by the Cross. Our consequences are not always as final as what happened to Ananias and Sapphira, but real consequences nonetheless. (vs. 5, 10)

Multiple Reactions to the "signs and wonders" of the apostles:

- **Signs and Wonders (the confirmation of their message) :** "¹² The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade." (vs. 12)
- **Fear and Avoidance (the result of religious intimidation):** "No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people..." (vs. 13)
- **Believing in the Lord (the fruit of the Holy Spirit touching new believers):** "Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number." (vs. 14)
- **The response of non-believers (both in Jerusalem and beyond):** "As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed." (vs. 15-16)
- **The high priest's reaction of persecution of the apostles:** "Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. (vs. 17-18)
- **The Holy Spirit's reaction to the persecution of the apostles:** "But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life." (vs. 19-20)

Group Sharing, or personal reflection: Has the Holy Spirit ever moved miraculously with power, purpose, or wonder in your life? Describe what happened.
--

- **The apostle's obedience to the Holy Spirit:** "...an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life." At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people."
 - **Men of principle** – they **submit** to the Lord and the Spirit at all costs
 - **Men of obedience** – they **obey** the directives of the Lord and the Spirit no matter what
 - **Men of courage** – they **return** to where you were persecuted before

- **The high priest's and associate's reaction to the Holy Spirit's miracle:**

"When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³ "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside. So they went back and reported, ²³ **"We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside."** ²⁴ On hearing this report, **the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss** (*diaporeo* = perplexed, thoroughly at a loss; *peri autous* = about them) , wondering what this might lead to."

Acts 6:21-24

1. Sent to the jail for the apostles
2. Found the jail still locked and guarded
3. Found no one inside the jail
4. Were thoroughly perplexed

"²⁵ Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. ²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." ²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"

Acts 5:25-29

Personal reflection or small group discussion: When have you exercised your faith and had to swear your allegiance to the Lord rather than men or religion?

³³“When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while.

³⁵Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men.” Acts 5:33-35

The logic of Gamaliel’s (a Pharisee not a Sadducee) address:

1. “Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.” (vs. 36)
2. “After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.” (vs. 37)
3. “Therefore, in the present case I advise you:
 - a. Leave these men alone!
 - b. Let them go!
 - c. For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.
 - d. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men;
 - e. you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” (vs. 38-39)
4. “His speech persuaded them.
 - a. They called the apostles in
 - b. and had them flogged.
 - c. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus,
 - d. and let them go.” (vs. 40)

⁴¹The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴²Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah...⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” Acts 5:41-42,

1. The apostles were **jailed**
2. The apostles were **freed** from jail by the miracle of the Holy Spirit
3. The apostles **returned to teach** in the temple courts (see also Acts 12:1-11; 14:19-20)
4. The apostles were **arrested again** and brought before the Sanhedrin
5. The apostles **declared their allegiance to God** rather than religious leaders
6. The apostles were **flogged and rejoiced** that they were counted worthy to suffer
7. The apostles **continued to teach, proclaiming** the good news of Jesus
8. The apostles **spread the word, the disciples increased** and even priests were converted

The creation of deacons in the early church (Acts 6:1-6)

- **The complaint:** “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.” Acts 6:1
- **The dilemma:** “So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.” Acts 6:2
- **The answer:** “Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. ⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group.” Acts 6:3-5
- **The deaconate:** “They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.” Acts 6:5
- **Their ordination:** “They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.” Acts 6:6
- **The principle:** The Lord calls (1 Cor. 1:24-26) and (1 Cor. 12:4-7) gifts all his people to ministry, that he calls and gifts different people for different ministries

Stephen’s Teaching, Sermon and Martyrdom:

“But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him (Stephen) as he spoke.” Acts 6:10

1. **They could not win the argument with Stephen** (he was “filled with the Spirit” and fulfilling Jesus promise of Luke 21:15 – “For I will give you words of wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.”)

“Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” ¹² So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law.” Acts 6:11-12

2. They started a smear campaign against Stephen with lies and innuendoes.

“They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ¹³They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. ¹⁴For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.” Acts 6:12-14

Personal reflection or small group sharing: Have you ever faced opposition to your faith, through lies and innuendoes? How did you react and what was the final result?

3. From theological debate, to slander, to violence.

“All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” (Moses’ face shone, Stephen’s face shone – this was God’s deliberate action to give the same radiant face to Stephen as to Moses, was this not God’s way of showing that both Moses’ ministry and Stephen’s interpretation of it had his approval.) Acts 6:15

4. God’s own personal confirmation of Stephen’s life and ministry

Stephen’s Defense and Sermon:

- **Four major epochs of Israel’s history, dominated by four major characters: ***
 1. **Abraham** and the **patriarchal age (7:2-8)**
 2. **Joseph** and the **Egyptian exile (7:9-19)**
 3. **Moses** and the **Exodus and wilderness wanderings (7:20-44)**
 4. **David and Solomon** and the **establishment of the monarchy (7:45-50)**

*John Stott – “The Message of Acts”

Stephen’s Tirade and Martyrdom:

Five accusations of the high priests and Sanhedrin:

1. “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised (7:51)
2. “You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (7:51)
“Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One.” (7:52)
3. And now you have betrayed and murdered him...” (7:52)
4. “...you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” (7:53)

The Five Reactions of the High Priest and Sanhedrin:

1. "When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him..." (7:54)
2. "At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices..." (7:57)
3. "...they all rushed at him..." (7:57)
4. "they dragged him out of the city
5. and began to stone him. (7:58)

The Introduction of Saul into the story line:

"Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul." (7:58)

The Five Responses and Realities of Stephen to his Martyrdom:

1. "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God..." (7:55)
2. "...and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." (7:56)
3. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (7:56)
4. "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (7:59)
5. "Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep." (7:60)