**ACTS and US**

**Acts 5 – Preaching in Persecution**

Last Week:

We talked about the name of JESUS, there is power in His name and there is No Other Name by which we can be saved.

After healing the man at the temple Gate, the persecution increased for the Apostles in Jerusalem, but so did the power of God. They were completely unified in heart and mind, and also in sharing their possessions freely, generously and honestly.

**Acts 4: 31-35 “**After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

**32**All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. **33**With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all **34**that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales **35**and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.”

Chapter 5 begins with a couple who were in the midst of a great outpouring of power of the Holy Spirit, but were acting deceitfully and selfishly in the flesh, while everyone else was acting generously and honestly in the Spirit.

Here’s what happens;

**Acts 5**

**Acts 5:1-12 “**Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. **2**With 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.

**3**Then 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? **4**Didn’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.”

**5**When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. **6**Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

**7**About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8**Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?”

“Yes,” she said, “that is the price.”

**9**Peter 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.”

**10**At 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. **11**Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. **12**The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade.”

### This is a very somber part of the chapter. Why did God allow Ananias and Sapphira to die*? (Was it because they didn’t tithe?)*

### What happened to them?

### Peter said, *“Satan has so filled your heart, you have lied to the Holy Spirit.”*

### This was a result of lying to the Holy Spirit.

The *power and presence* was *so strong* in that time among those believers, that the place where they met shook, and they were operating with tremendous power in everything they said and did.

**Acts 2:43** “Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.”

### That kind of power of the Holy Spirit is not to be *“trifled with”*.

 My cousin worked for 25 years at *Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station. He did maintenance on the reactors, the control rooms and the steam turbines. He had to go through extensive training and follow strict protocols with every procedure and operation. If he was careless, or irresponsible or if he “trifled with:” the powerful reactor, he could easily be electrocuted by* 4000 volts of electricity in one shock, or scalded by High-pressure water the is heated to 600 degrees. (fortunately he never had an incident, and retired safely…although he glows green at night).

This is what Ananias and Sapphira experienced. The power was so heavy and their hearts were filled with the presence of evil, that they dropped dead.

The lesson we come away with is that we should pray for God’s power to move mightily, but never disrespect, lie to or “trifle with” the Holy Spirit in our public or private lives.

**Acts 5:13-16“**No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. **14**Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. **15**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.”

The power of the Holy Spirit was manifest in many ways, particularly in the area of physical healing and spiritual deliverance. It was so powerful that people thought that even Peter’s shadow upon them might heal them.

As we read this in light of our Title “Acts and Us”, we have to be open and hopeful that the same powerful Holy Spirit that was in operation then, is with *us* as well. I believe that what happened then, could happen now. It’s up to God, not us. The only thing we can do is be obedient, humble, available and fully committed to the Lord and the furtherance of His kingdom. Then watch what happens. He will move in the ways He wants to, when He wants to and How He wants to. It could be in these same signs and wonders or perhaps even others that we’ve yet to see.

It's vitally important however, that we do not get caught up in following signs and wonders, we need to follow Jesus, if they happen, *they will follow us.*

**Mark 16:17“**And these signs *will follow* those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.”

Along with the powerful move of the Holy Spirit in those early days of the church, was “All In”, they were willing to hold to a the high level of commitment (they shared everything they had), they faced severe consequence for lack of integrity (Ananias and Sapphira), and suffered ever-increasing persecution.

### The Apostles Persecuted

**Acts 5:17-33“**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. **19**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.”

**21**At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

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.” **24**On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

**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! **30**The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. **31**God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. **32**We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

**33**When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

Peter was not afraid. He was still declaring under no uncertain terms that they killed Jesus, and are being called to repent”.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, he had become bold and courageous even in the face of death threats by the powerful authorities. (this is much different than the cowardice he showed a few months ago on the night Jesus was arrested.)

His quote “We must obey God rather than human beings!” is a statement to us in our times.

We will be pressured and coerced into keeping silent or downplaying our convictions in society, when God is asking us to preach the gospel and make disciples. If we are afraid, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to give us boldness to proclaim the truth in the name of Jesus, despite the reaction and consequences.

As we celebrate 4th of July (Independence day), we must remember the protestant Christians who were being persecuted by the Church of England for worshipping and teaching the Bible in freedom. Men like James Madison and Patrick Henry fought for not only political independence but religious freedom as well.

Toward the end of the chapter we meet a very famous Rabbi named Gamliel.Gamaliel was a first-century Jewish rabbi and a leader in the Jewish Sanhedrin (Supreme Court). Gamaliel is mentioned a couple of times in Scripture as a famous and well-respected teacher. Gamaliel was a Pharisee and a grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel (whose writings were a major influence in post-temple Judaism. Gamaliel is quoted in sacred Jewish text today, including the Passover Haggadah. He was also the teacher of a certain young pharisee named Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul).

**34**But 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. **35**Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. **36**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. **37**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. **38**Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. **39**But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

**40**His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

**41**The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

***42****Day 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.”*

The continued the Great Commission, preaching and teaching about Jesus despite opposition, persecution and direct orders not to. The church grew into the thousands in Jerusalem and many people were saved, healed and delivered as a result of their obedience.

These early revolutionaries, much like those that we honor on 4th of July, are the very reason that we have spiritual freedom and the power of the Holy Spirit today. It came at a cost however. They needed to be “All In”, completely dedicated to obeying the commands of the Lord and spread the good news of His kingdom.

[ Recently read of a Pastor who struggled to let his own congregation that he was pleased with the outcome of The Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Row vs. Wade. He felt that it was too controversial of a subject to make a statement on. Finally after a lot of thought and conviction, He let them know his feelings.]

This was an important political issue, that effects the lives of millions of babies.

We have within us the words of life, that effect the eternities of millions of people. We must be bold with the gospel and not be afraid of the reactions and consequences.

When Jesus was training His young disciples, (including Peter), he sent them out on a sort of maneuver. The mission was to take nothing with you, and go preach the gospel, in the face of adversity and opposition. They were to go without a bag, money, change of clothes, not even a staff. They were to rely on the Holy Spirit for all those things, including the very words to say.

**MATT 10:16-20**“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. **17**Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. **18**On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. **19**But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, **20**for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

Sometimes we feel uneasy about our ability to preach the gospel. Do we have enough resources, are we equipped well enough. Some even worry if they are trained well enough. Often we are worried about the opposition, and not being well-received by a world that is sometimes hostile to the message of the gospel. These worries can easily become excuses not to preach the gospel, so we ended up not doing it at all.

The Lord has commanded us;

**Mark 16:15** “Go into all the world and *preach the gospel* to every creature.”

**Matt 28:19-20** “go and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20**and *teaching them* to obey everything I have commanded you.”

**Acts 1:8** “ *be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Don’t be afraid of opposition, reactions and especially not having the right things to say. Go in the power of the Holy Spirit, He will give you boldness, courage and even the very words to say.

**Matt 10:20** “for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

***“Preach the gospel at all times, and use words.***

***His words speaking through you!”***