

Living Out Our Faith - Pt6
Acts 4:23-37 - 5:1-11

V23

- The church, still in its infancy state, was faced with its first outward persecution, and will respond in the manner in which God has called it to. This is a model for the church today when it comes to responding to persecution.
- “Own companion” means the same kind or those who were kindred in spirit to them. It’s easy for us to think that these mature men, Peter and John, who were apostles, did not need anyone and would only take their struggles to God. But this verse shows us they needed the body of Christ. Although they were not in despair they still needed encouragement. Encouragement for the believer is like gas to a car; with it there is no destination you cannot reach. And without it you’re just stuck.

V24-28

- Notice what those who were kindred in spirit did after receiving Peter and John...
 1. They listened to them
 2. They showed deep care
 3. They showed great sensitivity to their needs
- Once someone has unloaded their burden on you immediately turn to God in prayer (**Romans 15:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:13**). Notice two things about their prayer: 1. It was spontaneous, and 2. It proclaimed God as sovereign Lord. The Greek word is “despot” and it comes from a word that is translated husband. It can also mean Lord of everything or ruler. This same word was often used to describe a human ruler who was a tyrant, in control of everything. In contrast, spiritually, this word is used to describe the Lord, who also controls everything, but not as a tyrant who uses his authority to oppress the people. Instead He’s a compassionate, loving ruler that uses His authority to bless the people.

V29

- Notice their prayer also included two specific requests, which stemmed from recognizing that God was in control of everything and in charge of the direction of their lives. Many will state with their mouths I know God is in control of everything, but by their actions they show they’re the ones really making the decisions.
 1. God take note - look at the enemies’ threat
 2. Give us boldness - confidence to speak Your word
- Notice that they didn’t ask God to kill those who were threatening them, nor give them an escape from Jerusalem; they simply desired a fresh touch of power from the Living Lord.

V30-31

- The disciples now get real specific concerning three things that validate true ministry: Healing, miracles, and exalting Jesus’ name.
- Jesus states this very same claim in **Luke 4:18**, and desires this for others in **John 14:12**. This affirmation is also found in **1 John 5:14-15**. Three things occur to show us that God was pleased with their prayer request:
 1. The place was shaken - God’s presence (**Exodus 19:18**)

2. They were filled with the spirit - consecrated or set apart
 3. They spoke the word with boldness – application; prayer answered
- Question? How would you respond after you have prayed for a specific situation in your life and the place starts shaking? If you follow these steps: praise report, encouragement, prayer, then perhaps the physical place will not shake but spiritually and internally you may be moved by the Spirit of God.

V32-35

- Instead of persecution disintegrating the body, thus bringing about division, persecution drew the body closer together, thus causing unity. This word can be translated of one heart and one soul - becoming spiritually and emotionally one.
- The early church realized that nothing they had belonged to them but to God. They sought to meet needs, and did so by sharing voluntarily. Also notice that unity, compassion, power, grace, sufficiency, and wisdom go hand-in-hand.

V36-37

- Growth should cause us to have a desire to be concerned and involved with our brothers and sisters. To some this is just a story, as many of you have read it before. But the question is have you translated it to your life? Biblical stories are of little use to you personally if you don't move them from the pages of the book to the practice of your life. Here's how you can do this:
 1. **Show initiative** - no one can pull you from one point to another spiritually; you must desire to go there
 2. **Have compassion** - we cannot operate on the basis of someone else's compassion; you must reach out and cultivate this in your own life
 3. **Become vulnerable** - you cannot reach out to others unless you're willing to know others faults, be known, and risk being hurt
- I believe that the rewards of this story with regards to applying it to our lives outweigh the risk of us being hurt. The only biblical way the church can respond to persecution is with prayer, compassion, and unity, which will bring about growth (**Deuteronomy 15:7-10, 1 John 3:17**)

Acts 5:1-11

V1-2

- This story is a continuation of chapter 4:34-37, when there was such unity of faith in the body that it motivated people to sacrifice in such a generous and compassionate way. With unity came trust (v37), and the Apostles were apparently entrusted with the caretaking of this generosity. While all this generosity is spreading through the church we get to verse 1 and the word "but," meaning a change is coming.
- As the Church is experiencing this great move of compassion, concern, and commitment to each other, something ugly is also about to be introduced inside the church for the very first time. George MacDonald wrote, "*Half of the misery in the world comes from trying to look, instead of trying to be, what one is not.*" The name that Jesus gave to this practice is called hypocrisy. It means to wear a mask or play a role as an actor.
- One of Satan's chief weapons when God is working in power is to be on hand with the counterfeit, all in hopes of corrupting that which is impacting the lives of

- Up to this point there is nothing wrong. The problem occurs when instead of telling the truth about the amount of the sale they lie about it in order to look more spiritual. Understand this; they were under no obligation to give the church anything, it was done of their own free will just like the sin their committing before us.
- This story proves that not all lying is verbal because lying is deception. It says, “I can provide you with just enough facts about a situation and purposely leave out other facts in order to lead you down a wrong conclusion, thus deceiving you.” That’s what Ananias and Sapphira did. They sold a possession and instead of letting the Apostles know they kept back some of the proceeds for themselves, leading them to believe they were giving it all to the church.
- It wasn’t just the generosity of Barnabas and others that motivated them, but also the image of selflessness and spirituality to others that really inspired them to put up such a charade. People will go to great lengths to project an image of themselves even though they know it’s the furthest thing from the truth. And as we’ll see, if this sin is not judged quickly it’ll spread swiftly to others.

V3-6

- Ananias was expecting the praise of man but instead he gets the rebuke of God. Verse 3 - Peter lets him know who it was that stirred them up to commit this sin - Satan. If Satan cannot defeat the church with outside attacks, then He’ll go on the offense inside the church. He knows how to lie to the minds and hearts of church members and get them to follow his orders, even genuine Christians. Don’t forget **Ephesians 6:10-18**, concerning putting on the whole armor of God. It was written to believers not unbelievers because it’s the Christians who are in danger of being used by Satan to accomplish his evil works.
- Oliver Wendell wrote, “Sin has many tools but a lie is the handle which fits them all.” Also verse 3 is a strong reminder of the deity of the Holy Spirit, as you can lie to the Holy Spirit. **Ephesians 4:30** says you can also grieve the Holy Spirit.
- Verse 4 - nobody asked you to sell the property, and when you did you could have done with the money as you wished. Peter says Ananias conceived this in his heart. That word means to place or lay; and it’s the same word used in **Acts 4:37** when describing how Barnabas laid the proceeds at the Apostles feet.
- Instead of emulating Barnabas’ selfless act in laying a blessing down so others might be refreshed, Ananias lays sin in his heart that brings judgment to himself, and as we’ll see, those he was called to protect. In the end Peter tells him that he did not lie to man but to God; and that’s the last thing Ananias heard this side of eternity. This caused a ripple effect upon all who would hear.

V7-11

- Three hours pass and Sapphira comes in. She’s unaware of the fate her husband has met. **John 15:15** says God keeps His servants in the light, but Satan will attempt to keep you in the dark, unaware of your impending demise.
- Verse 8 is an example of **1 Corinthians 10:13**, how God will give you a way of escape. Spouses let this be a warning that no matter how much you love your spouse never agree with them to sin against God, as it may cost you more than

- This was not about them robbing God of money, but rather about them lying in order to rob God of His glory. This event had a profound effect upon the Apostle Peter, as it was him who would later write in **1 Peter 4:17** that judgment begins first with the family of God.
- Ananias means God is gracious. It's interesting that Peter would say how they agreed together to test the Holy Spirit. Translated: To see how much one can get away with before He judges. Although God is gracious He is also holy. **Habakkuk 1:13** says His eyes cannot look upon evil. He can't stand to see it. Many mistake God's grace as a license of God accepting of their sinful lifestyle. Oh, they are so wrong!
- Sapphira means beautiful. It has been said that beauty is only skin deep but ugly goes clear to the bone. Well Sapphira may have been beautiful but her heart was ugly with sin. God has warned us in **Romans 6:23** that the reward for sin is death. Verse 11 - the church goes from great power and great grace (**Acts 4:33**) to great fear.