



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### "RIDING THROUGH" THE BOOK OF ACTS- LESSON 5

Our last lesson ended with the early church being of "one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). They were marching forward in faith, despite the persecution. They were learning what true fellowship or "koinonia" was all about.

The first word in Acts 5 is "but." This definitely connects the two chapters, suggesting some type of contrast. This week we will see God deal with the church in a radical way, reminding them of the importance of purity and holiness.

#### First Day

1. Read Acts 5:1-42. From your first reading, what is the main point of each section?

Section 1: (Acts 5:1-11)

Section 2: (Acts 5:12-16)

Section 3: (Acts 5:17-28)

Section 4: (Acts 5:29-32)

Section 5: (Acts 5:33-39)

Section 6: (Acts 5:40-42)

2. Again read Acts 5:1-11. Who are the main characters? Describe them using one or two adjectives.

Ananias and Sapphira were witnesses of the generosity of Barnabas and the disciples. They must have wanted to be a part of the excitement of what was happening. Together they made a fool-proof plan that no one could see through -- or so they thought! It's interesting to note that the name Ananias means "God is gracious" and Sapphira means "beautiful."

3. Answer the following questions:
  - a. What was their plan?
  - b. Who found out?
  - c. What was the result?
4. Name the sin (or sins) that they were guilty of committing.
5. List some reasons why they might have done this.
6. How did Peter know what they were doing?
7. Was Ananias obligated to sell their land and give the money to Peter?  
(Acts 5:4)
8. How are verses 3 and 4 evidence of the Trinity?
9. Read Joshua chapter 7. List the similarities between Achan and Ananias and Sapphira.
10. Do you find any similarities in your own life? Are you hiding anything from God?
11. Can we ever get away with sin? Read Luke 12:2-3, Numbers 32:23, and Galatians 6:7 to explain your answer.

So often it seems like people "get away" with their sins. We wonder why God allows them to continue in what they're doing. Numbers 32:23 says to "Be sure that your sin will find you out." This is a principle of Scripture and a law of God. He is serious in His judgment of sin.

It's comforting to remember that nothing is ever hidden from God. He sees everything and knows everything. God will surely judge righteously and all things will be brought out into the light. We don't have to wrestle with the injustice of it all, God will take care of it. **Romans 12:19** says "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." We can rest in knowing that He is a just and a righteous God.

This ends our lesson for today. Tomorrow we will examine more closely the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. For our closing thought, reflect on the things you did and said today. Was there even a hint of dishonesty? Remember that God desires us to be above reproach in all that we do. He also forgives us when we blow it. I rejoice in that, don't you?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29

### Second Day

**Review the memory verse.**

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was more than only lying. Their sinful act was premeditated and stemmed from pride. They were pretending to be something that they were not. They wanted to appear to be more spiritual than they really were. They were guilty of saying one thing, but doing another. This is called hypocrisy.

1. Read Acts 5:1-11.
2. Using a dictionary, define the word "hypocrite."
3. Explain how Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites.
4. Give examples of other ways we can be hypocrites within our families.

The word actor comes from the Greek word "**hypocrite.**" In the Greek, it literally referred to an actor who donned elaborate masks to play his role. Ananias and

Sapphira were wearing the mask of spirituality as they acted. They wanted to portray a greater dedication than they really had.

We hide behind many masks ourselves. We have the "**Supermom**" mask, the "**Perfect-wife**" mask, the "**I-can-do-it-all-myself**" mask, along with the "**Super-spiritual**" mask.

5. Can you think of a time in your own life when you desired to appear better than you were? How do we, as Christians, allow others to think we're more spiritual than we are? What mask are you wearing?

One of the greatest causes of hypocrisy is the fear of man. We often care more about what people think of us than what God thinks of us.

6. What does Paul say about pleasing man in Galatians 1:10? How does it relate to our memory verse? From Proverbs 29:25, what happens when we fear man?
7. Is there any bit of hypocrisy in your life? Are you a man-pleaser? In what way? Ask the Lord to search your heart and reveal anything you need to confess. Pray for a heart that's ready to receive His correction.
8. What does God think about lying? Read Proverbs 6:16-19.
9. When does the apostle John regard believers as liars? Read 1 John 2:3-5 and 1 John 4:20.
10. What are we commanded to do in Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:9?

We know that God can never lie (Numbers 23:19) but satan himself is the father of lies (John 8:44). God's Word promises that those who lie will not go unpunished (Proverbs 19:5). They will be stopped (Psalm 63:11) and silenced (Psalm 31:18). Proverbs 14:5 says that "a faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness will utter lies." **Which witness are you?**

11. Why do you think their sin was judged so harshly by God (Acts 5:5 and 10)?

There was great fear among the people after they witnessed the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:11). Peter was probably shocked himself. Can you just imagine if God killed everyone who tried to look more spiritual than they were? Who would be left? I believe that God was making a "never to be forgotten" lesson for the early church. He abhors sin and wants His church to be pure, without blemish. This judgment in the early church was meant to reveal God's Holiness and opposition to deceit and sin. Some say that it was an act of mercy to the early church because He was saving them from corruption and ungodliness. **Galatians 5:9** says that a little leaven (sin) leavens the whole lump. God was keeping the leaven out of the church.

12. What could have been the result of their sin going unpunished? What could have happened to the church?

13. Why are internal problems in the church oftentimes more serious than external problems?

14. What leaven in your life is affecting those around you? How does your sin affect your family, your friends, and the body of Christ?

A lot to think about today, isn't there? Hypocrisy is always hard to study because God is so faithful to point out what needs to be removed from our own lives. I believe that knowing God can see deep into our hearts and loves us anyway is a "**Reason to Rejoice,**" don't you?

### Third Day

**Review your memory verse. How can you apply this today?**

The church triumphed over the attacks of Satan. They conquered because they believed God and relied on the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Read Acts 5:12-16.
2. What was the result of all the miracles done by the hands of the apostles?

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. The people of Israel needed a sign to believe (1 Cor. 1:22) and God was proving to them that the apostles were His messengers. These wonders validated their ministry. After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the people held the church in high regard, yet they weren't pushing the doors down to join (Acts 5:13). **Gee, I wonder why?** But still the Lord was saving multitudes of people. It is here that Luke mentions for the first time the salvation of women. Luke's Gospel is sometimes called the Gospel of women because he does speak more about women in the early church than do the other Gospel writers.

Verse 11 is the first mention of the word "church." Church is from the Greek word "**ecclesia**" which means the "called out ones" or the congregation of the Lord.

All this was taking place on **Solomon's porch**. This was a roofed colonnade that resembled a long porch, stretching along the eastern side of the temple courtyard. It was a noble structure, supported by a wall 400 cubits high and consisted of stones of a vast bulk, being 20 cubits long and 6 cubits high. (J.B. Payne, **The Zondervan's Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible** and **The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge**)

3. Do you think it was Peter's shadow that healed the people?

The shadow was not powerful in and of itself. It was "simply a point of contact and a place of release for people who were prepared to receive healing." (John Courson)

4. Read Acts 5:17-28 and answer the following questions:
  - a. What was the Sadducee's reaction?
  - b. What did they do?
  - c. What do you think they hoped to accomplish?
  - d. Did the apostles seem to resist arrest?

Since the Sadducees didn't believe in anything supernatural, these divine healings were making them crazy! The word "**indignation**" in verse 17 is better translated envy or jealousy.

The apostles were put in a "**common**" prison (Acts 5:18). This was a public prison owned by the people of Jerusalem.

5. How were the apostles released from prison? (Acts 5:19)
6. Peter was released from prison again in Acts 12:3-11. Read this account. What was Peter doing when the angel appeared? Why do you think he had so much peace?
7. In Acts 5:20, what did the angel tell the apostles to do?

Notice that the apostles were instructed to go back to the temple to preach. They were arrested from this same place. They didn't hesitate or procrastinate, but immediately returned to the temple. What a great example of courage and obedience these men are to us. They didn't fear what man could do to them. I'm sure they had to be somewhat fearful because, after all, they were human. But they didn't allow their fears to overshadow their trust in God. We definitely see evidence of that "dunamis," or dynamic power they received at Pentecost.

8. Explain the scenario in Acts 5:21-28. Did the Sadducees' attempts to stop the miracles succeed? What happened?
9. What was the motivation behind the actions of the Sadducees? (Acts 5:17, 26-28)
10. When our actions are motivated by something other than our love for God, what can be the results?
11. Have **YOU** ever been motivated by fear? Can you share with the group? What was the result?
12. How did the high priest refer to Jesus in Acts 5:28?
13. If what the apostles were saying was true, what were the Jewish leaders guilty of? Read Matthew 27:25 and 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

14. How do you think the council explained away the miracle of the apostles getting out without the guards even knowing?
15. How do people today still "explain away" the great things that our awesome God is doing? Give some examples.

The apostles continued to preach after they had been ordered to stop. This is clearly a case of civil disobedience. Christians are called to be subject to the authorities of the government in Romans 13:1. However, when a government requires one to do something which contradicts what God plainly orders us to do, then we can say along with the apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

We do need to be careful that it is a command from God that we are obeying and not just our opinion or passionate feeling on an issue. God had specifically told them to preach the Gospel to every creature. The Word gives us many examples of civil disobedience (Exodus 1:17-21, Joshua 2:4, Daniel 3:18, and Daniel 6:10). Notice they all had Scriptural authority (not based on feelings) and had an attitude of humility rather than bitterness, hostility, or violence.

16. Give a present day example of a time when it would be right for a Christian to participate in civil disobedience. (Please be sensitive not to use this as an opportunity to be a "soap box" preacher!)

This ends our lesson for today. Can you pray for the Lord to give you the courage to step out in your faith like the apostles did?

#### Fourth Day

**What's your memory verse? Are you applying it?**

1. Read Acts 5:29-32.
2. What was Peter's powerful statement in verse 29?

The word "**ought**" is better translated "must" or "of necessity." To obey is not a suggestion but a command from God.

If you are not obeying God, you are rebelling against Him. Many times we think of rebellion as radically turning away from God. Webster defines rebellion as defiance of or in opposition to something or someone. The prophet Zephaniah had his own definition.

3. Read Zephaniah 3:1-2. This describes the state of Israel, which was in rebellion against God. List four things that characterize rebellion:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  
4. Meditate on these four aspects of rebellion. **Are you obeying His voice? Are you receiving correction? Are you trusting in Him? Are you drawing near to Him?** Remember, if you're not obeying Him, you're rebelling against Him. Let God speak specifically to your heart.
  
5. Peter's message contained three important elements of the Gospel. Give the verse that speaks of the following:
  - a. The resurrection of Jesus:
  - b. The ascension of Jesus:
  - c. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit:
  
6. What did Peter call Jesus in Acts 5:31?
  
7. What does God the Father call Himself in Isaiah 43:3? Can you find other verses that refer to God the Father, or Jesus Christ, as Savior?

The word "prince" in verse 31 means "originating" or "founder of."

8. Why does Peter call Jesus a prince? Where else is He referred to by this title?
  
9. Did Peter's message change from what he was originally preaching? (Acts 2 and 3) Did fear cause him to compromise?

10. How are the apostles a great example of 2 Timothy 4:2-5?

11. How does 2 Timothy 4:2-5 challenge you?

In Acts 5:31, Peter speaks about Jesus being exalted to God's right hand. This speaks of being in a place of honor, power, and authority.

12. Who was a witness of Jesus being at the right hand of God? Read Acts 7:55.

Peter warned the council that they were now dealing with the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:32). He once again gave them a chance to repent and officially reverse their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. (Psalm 110:1, Acts 2:33-34, Mark 14:62, 16:19, Romans 8:34, Acts 7:55) He should have that place of honor and authority in our hearts.

13. Our last question for the day. Have you been allowing the Lord to rule and reign in your life? What changes can you make to give Him His proper place of authority?

### Fifth Day

**Write out your memory verse.**

The council was furious with the apostles! They had decided to kill them until the Lord intervened by using one of the Pharisees who sat on the council. Let's see what happened.

1. Read Acts 5:33-42.

2. Who was the man who stepped in? What do we know about him from Acts 5:34 and Acts 22:3?

Gamaliel was a loved and respected Pharisee. The name Pharisee literally meant "the separated one." They devoted themselves to keeping the law in every small detail. They had become ritualistic and taught the doctrines of men as if they were doctrines of God (Matthew 15:7-9). They appeared extremely righteous on the outside but were full of hypocrisy on the inside (Matthew 23:13-36). They perverted Scripture (Matthew 15:1, 9), justified themselves before men (Luke 16:14-15), and were blind to spiritual things (John 3:1-10). Jesus called them vipers (Matthew 12:24-34), blind (Matthew 15:12-14), serpents (Matthew 23:33), hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-19) and children of the devil (John 8:13, 44). They oftentimes sought to destroy Jesus, test Him, accuse Him, and entangle Him.

Gamaliel was different. He was known among his peers as "The Beauty of the Law" because he walked with great integrity in his attempt to keep the law.

3. What advice did he give? (Acts 5:38-39)
4. Is this wise counsel for the church today? Why or why not?

Gamaliel mentions two men, Theudas and Judas of Galilee. We don't know anything about Theudas but Judas was a rebel at the time of the census in AD 6. He held the position that since God was the King of Israel, to Him alone was tribute due. He said that no taxes should be paid to Caesar, because it would be considered treason. The Zealots were the remains of this party.

5. What happened to the apostles? (Acts 5:40)
6. What was the apostles' reaction? (Acts 5:41)
7. What did Peter write later in his life regarding suffering in 1 Peter 4:12-16?
8. If we suffer with Jesus, what else will we do with Him? Read Romans 8:16-18 and 2 Timothy 2:12.
9. Have you ever suffered for His name?

10. Do you rejoice in persecution? What's your usual response?

The disciples continued to preach and teach about Jesus daily in the temple. They continued with even more zeal and determination.

**Let's review ...**

11. What thought specifically spoke to you from:

a. Day 1:

b. Day 2:

c. Day 3:

d. Day 4:

12. What changes are you ready to make in your life after studying Acts chapter 5?

This ends our lesson for this week. I pray that you found a "**Reason to Rejoice**" every day. Were you looking? Remember that you don't have to pretend to be something that you're not -- God totally loves the YOU that He made YOU to be! Let the example of Ananias and Sapphira be a warning to you against putting up false fronts. George MacDonald said, "Half the misery in the world is caused by people trying to look rather than trying to be!"