Acts

Lesson 5

The Spirit of God began to move dramatically in and around Jerusalem. What began as a very small group of fearful believers was now growing strong in numbers and in power. But where God moves Satan always shows up to hinder the work. His first tactic was outward persecution with threats of physical harm and imprisonment. Because the disciples immediately went to the Lord in a prayer of faith, this tactic didn't work. Persecution only made them more unified and kept their eyes on God. The more Satan attacked the more grace was administered to the people of God, and that in turn enabled them to continually depend on His power to defeat the enemy. Truly in their weakness they became strong. This is true faith in action. In Acts chapter 4, the more opposition came from without the more closely the Church bonded together within. The Church can learn much from our forefathers in this. Today, it is not so much persecution or trouble from outside that is the Church's biggest problem. Maybe, if it were, there would be a much more united fight against our enemy. In these last days the Church has a greater problem with inward struggles of pride, dissensions, critical spirits, and selfish desires that make unity almost impossible and so weaken God's people. In Acts 5 Satan uses this very poison in an attempt to infiltrate this infant Church. For God to establish His authority and standard of holiness He wanted for the body of Christ, this sin that gripped the hearts of Ananias and Saphira had to be dealt with severely and swiftly. As a result others learned to take God and His hatred of sin seriously.

READ ALL OF CHAPTER 5

1. Was giving property or possessions required of these believers?

2. Why do you think Ananias and Saphira lied about what they had given?

3. *What exactly is their offense, and why do you think the penalty was so drastic?*

4. *How did the people respond to such severe discipline? In what other situation did they have the same drastic response? See Acts 2:43*

5. *Read Joshua 7. What similarities and differences do you see between Achan and Ananias and Saphira?*

6. *What did you learn about God in these accounts?*

7. *What motives are prompting the Jewish leadership? Vs. 17 & 28   What is ironic about their complaint? See Matthew 27:24-26*

8. *What did the angel tell the disciples to do upon their release? Why would this not be a normal response to being released from prison?*

9. *What principle about obeying civil authorities do the disciples model? Acts 4:18-20 and 5:29*

10. *In what way are these believers fulfilling prophecy? Matthew 10:17-20*

11. *What did Gamaliel advise, and what did He understand about God that the other religious leaders apparently missed?*

Before they were released, the disciples were flogged or beaten. This Greek word is "dero" which means "to beat or scourge so as to take off skin ." (Zodhiates) This usually referred to a beating in which "the offender was stripped from his shoulders to his middle and tied by his arms to a pretty low pillar, that he might lean forward, and the executioner might more easily come at his back… It is said that, after the stripping of the criminal, the executioner mounted upon a stone to have more power over him and then scourged him both on the back and breasts with thongs made of ox's hide in open court before the face of the judges." Manners and Customs of the Bible.   For the Jews there was a limit of 40 lashes that could be given (Deuteronomy 25:3). Therefore, to make sure they didn't break that law, they limited the beatings to 39 lashes. Roman scourging or beating had no limit of lashes, and many were literally beaten to death

12. *What was the disciples' response to their beating, and in light of the above information, why is that so remarkable?*

Prayer requests:

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Group time notes:

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