

Boldly Building Christ's Church!

Text: Acts 5:12-15

Introduction:

As the infant church was beginning to flourish, evidencing the glorious work of the Spirit and testifying to the reality of Christ's resurrection, we came upon a sobering intrusion last time, as we witnessed the immediate destruction of a couple, who had lied to the Holy Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira had sold their land and laid some of the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles, claiming that they had given all of the proceeds to God. And in doing so, they robbed God, lied to the Holy Spirit, threatened the sanctity of the church (in her witness to the resurrected Christ) and brought judgment upon themselves. Their death brought about great fear to those inside and outside of the church, and the pure holiness of God was powerfully magnified, as a glorious accompaniment to the grace that was being showered upon thousands, who had been converted through the Gospel proclamation of the Apostles.

This morning, we move on to consider another brief summary of the growing church, but now with the added context of all that had just happened with Ananias and Sapphira.

I. The Work Moves Forward

We begin with a general summary statement, which tells us that many signs and wonders were done through the Apostles, among the people. "And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch."

Now brethren, this statement is very significant for at least two reasons:

1) The wording here is careful to show that the signs and wonders being performed, were done *through* the Apostles. In fact, the actual wording states, "through the hands of the Apostles..." And the point here is to boldly state that the miracles did not originate in the Apostles themselves, but rather in the risen Christ, who by His Spirit (the same Spirit who just took the lives of Ananias and Sapphira), worked these miracles "through the hands of the Apostles." The Apostles were vessels of clay, through which the risen and living Christ worked, testifying to the reality of his resurrection and His present reign. Christ is orchestrating the success of His church, through these men. He doesn't need these men, but He chose them for

this purpose, as He had ordained to build His Kingdom through the vehicle of redeemed, fallen, human souls.

Indeed the credit for miracles, and for any successful work done in and through the church, is to be wholly attributed not to the clay vessels, but rather, to the One who walks among the Lampstands, and who works in us, to will and to do according to His good pleasure. This is another testimony to the fact that we desperately need the Holy Spirit; we desperately need to plead with God for His Spirit, enabling us to successfully build His church, in the present.

2) This statement is also significant because it further evidences the fact that God has answered the humble prayer of His disciples (found in Acts 4:23-31). What did they pray for, brethren? [Read verse 29]

They prayed for boldness to preach the Gospel, as Peter and John were just arrested and severely threatened by the same religious leaders who had condemned our Lord to death. And they prayed that signs and wonders would be done through the Name of Jesus, as an authoritative affirmation of the Gospel they were preaching. Notice brethren, how this prayer was being answered, as described by our text.

Through the hands of the Apostles, *many* signs and wonders were done among the people. And furthermore, they evidence the fruit of boldness very clearly here, as well. Brethren, where were they performing their ministry, according to the second part of verse 12? At Solomon's Porch! Why is this significant? Because that is where they were, when they were arrested for preaching the Gospel, following the healing of the lame man! And so, here they were, brethren, proclaiming the Gospel of the risen Christ, right back in the temple where they were just arrested, and ordered not to preach in the Name of Christ anymore! Now that is bold...but not in their own strength. This was an answer to prayer, as God had given them a united boldness, which enabled them to go right back to where they were before, that they might preach the Gospel, accompanied by many more God-wrought signs and wonders. Indeed, what a great encouragement and testimony to us, to witness God answering prayer in such a magnificent and glorious way! And once again, we are told that they were all "with one accord" there. They had the God blessed unity of heart and purpose, which the Spirit calls for, and which He blesses with His presence and power!

And then, we move on brethren, to see a two-fold response given, describing the actions of both unbelievers and believers to all that was happening.

1- [Read verse 13] Those who remained presently unconverted, did not dare join them, though they esteemed them highly. The work of the Spirit was powerfully present, but not all responded in a saving way. Yes, they held them in high esteem, but they were unwilling to join them, perhaps partly out of a fear of the Sadducees and religious leaders, who had just severely threatened the Apostles. But perhaps even more so, because of what had just happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira had just attempted to tap into the benefits of being associated with the church, particularly with the desire of looking pious and self-sacrificing...but they were killed for their ungodly self-serving motives. Their death served as a restraint for others to avoid doing the same, or to attempt to join the church for self-serving reasons. The testimony of the Spirit caused these people to marvel and to highly esteem the Apostles, but not unto conversion (where the cost of discipleship was currently too pricey for them).

*Caution- you can have great esteem for the church and for the people of God, without ever being converted. Being impressed by the work of God, even by miracles, does not save a single soul. Obedience to the Gospel (repentance and faith) alone, lead to salvation.

2- [Read verse 14] And yet, at the same time, God was saving His elect! Multitudes of both men and women were joining the church, not as a means of personal gain, but as a means of subjecting themselves to the Lordship of the risen Christ! Indeed, the church was continuing to grow, as the Gospel was faithfully preached, and the brethren were of one accord!

*Question- What was the difference between those who dared not join (but highly esteemed the Apostles) and those who joined? Same message...same Spirit at work...why the two groups? Was one more intellectual or emotionally strong...etc?

And finally, many were being healed of both physical and spiritual illnesses. [Read verses 14-16]. Many were being healed of all kinds of ailments, both physical and spiritual. And a "multitude gathered from the surrounding cities" bringing sick people to be healed, and they were healed. The infectious power of the Gospel was beginning to spill out of Jerusalem and into other parts of Judea. And as we move through the Book of Acts, we will see the Lord's revealed will, that the Gospel would move out to Samaria and to all the ends of the earth, being fulfilled through the vehicle of His Apostles and the growing church!

Note: People were healed by Peter's shadow even, in light of John 14:12ff (as well as thousands being converted in one shot). Note: Faith in Christ's Name is what brings about all

healing, which is why the shadow was sufficient (faith in the Christ, brought them into the Apostle's shadow to be healed).

II. Conclusive Thoughts and Applications

- 1- Fear, reverence, conviction, amazement do not necessitate salvation (Heb. 6)
- 2- A further motivation to pray!
- 3- The great work of building Christ's church continues with us!!!

AMEN!!!