

## **ACTS: I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH (PART 9)**

**Acts 4:32-33** And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

The First Century Church was so sold out to the Great Commission that they put the church's message and ministry FIRST in every part of their lives, including their possessions.

THE DEVIL HATES (AND FEARS) UNITY! He has tried persecution of the church from without and that hasn't stopped them, so now he tries corruption from within, through Ananias and Sapphira. The enemy within the church is ALWAYS more deadly than the enemy without!

Their sin was LYING TO THE HOLY GHOST, giving a false outward impression of "unity" with the rest of the church in hopes that their private, inward reality wouldn't be detected.

**Acts 5:9** How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?

Who is it that you have "agreed together" with to do something that both of you know is against the Word of God? What a dangerous place to live!

The fall into sin does not happen overnight. Satan knows that the wages of sin is death, but his greatest desire is that we NOT receive the immediate consequences of our sin! Why? Because he knows the Bible!

**Ecclesiastes 8:11** Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

If you find yourself in a habitual pattern of sin, but you are not experiencing any consequences, fall on your knees immediately and REPENT! Why? Because Satan is setting you up for a fall!

**Acts 5:11** And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

At this point, we move from "great power" and "great grace" (Acts 4:33) to "great fear" (Acts 5:11), which falls on the church and the city. THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD ALWAYS BRINGS THE TRUE FEAR OF GOD.

**Acts 5:12-16** And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

v. 13 – "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them (APOSTLES); but the people magnified them."

v. 14 – "And believers were the more added to the Lord."

Verse 13 is not saying that the community was afraid to join the church, since verse 14 tells us exactly the opposite. It states that, as the church looked on their leadership with less familiarity and more reverence, and "magnified" the office God had given them, revival broke out again!

**If you want to loose a supernatural move of God in the church, then hold in high esteem the ministries that God has set in the church!**

**Acts 5:17-25** Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Just imagine the astonishment of the members of the Sanhedrin when they heard this report! Here they were trying to stop the miracles, but their actions against the Apostles only multiplied the miracles!

**Acts 5:26-33** Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this **name**? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your **doctrine**, and intend to bring this man's **blood** upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, **We ought to obey God rather than men.** The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for **to give repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

v. 28 – High Priest remembers what he orchestrated just weeks ago ...

**Matthew 27:25** Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

**REVIVAL ... NAME exalted, DOCTRINE spread, BLOOD proclaimed**

v. 31 – How does GOD give repentance? Don't WE do that? Remember that you can only repent if God allows you to feel your need of it!

The council was educated, ordained, and approved, and yet they had no ministry of power. The Apostles were ordinary men, yet God's power was at work in their lives. The council was trying desperately to protect themselves and their dead traditions, while the Apostles were risking their lives to share the living Word of God.

v. 29 – If there's tension between obeying God and men, OBEY GOD!

**Acts 5:34-39** Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: **for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.**

Gamaliel, a Pharisee, is held in such high respect that the Sadducee-dominated Sanhedrin listens to his advice. His perspective is that men and their movements come and go, so if the situation is simply left alone it will pass. He doesn't realize that this movement is not of men, but of God! And he also doesn't realize that God is using him and his words to protect the church!

**2 Corinthians 13:8** For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

**Acts 5:40-42** And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 5:10-12** Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

v. 42 – **DAILY!**

**Acts 6:1-7** And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Grecians = Greek speaking Jews from other nations (new "strangers"!)

Spiritually immature people in the church have many more needs (and are much more likely to feel "neglected") than established saints.

v. 2 – “it is not reason” = “it is not fitting” (it is not a good “fit” for us)

SPIRITUAL LEADERS in the church must make the ministry of the WORD and PRAYER a priority! It is not that they are “too good” to serve tables, it’s that serving tables would be a distraction to their priority!

This is not to suggest that serving tables is a menial task, because every ministry in the church is important. In fact, one of the men appointed here (Stephen) becomes the catalyst for the next phase of revival in the book of Acts! This is simply a matter of priorities; the Apostles were doing jobs that others could do just as well. Dwight Moody taught that it was better to put ten men to work than to try to do the work of ten men!

**Church problems give us an opportunity to exercise our FAITH, not only faith in the Lord, but also faith in our leaders and in each other.**

The early church was not afraid to adjust their STRUCTURE in order to make room for MINISTRY. It is tragic when churches actually destroy ministry and hinder growth because they refuse to modify their structure!

The Apostles were not afraid to share their authority and ministry with others because they realized that authority and ministry come from GOD.

v. 3 – The qualifications for any MINISTRY POSITION within the church: (1) honest, (2) wise, (3) full of the Holy Ghost!

v. 4 – **Your pastor’s job description: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”** IF YOU TRULY DESIRE TO HAVE AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH, YOU NEED TO DO ANYTHING YOU CAN POSSIBLY DO TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN!

Look at the list of deacons (“servants”) appointed: Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. THESE ARE ALL GREEK NAMES! And this teaches us two lessons:

1. The Hebrew part of the church did not hold on to any idea of “seniority” or “superiority,” but let the most qualified people serve.
2. If you can identify a problem in the church, or have a burden for something to be done, God wants to use you to fix it!

And what is the result of the Apostles sharing ministry?

**Acts 6:7** And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.