SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Five, Verses 1–42

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men — a lie at the apostles' feet, a shadow in the street, an opened prison, and men who rejoiced to be flogged

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

A couple lies to the Holy Spirit and great fear falls on the church; the apostles are jailed, freed by an angel, and hauled before the Council, where Peter answers, "We must obey God rather than men," and a Pharisee warns the rulers that they may be fighting against God. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 5:1–42

the lie · the signs · the prison · the Council · the counsel

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

Five movements from a lie at the apostles' feet to preaching from house to house

—	**How to Read This Study** · *the four voices & their colors*	3
—	**Before the Passage** · *from Barnabas's gift to the Council's flogging*	3
I	**Lying to the Holy Spirit** · *Acts 5:1–11 · Ananias and Sapphira*	4
II	**Signs in Solomon's Portico** · *Acts 5:12–16 · the signs and the shadow*	7
III	**The Prison Doors Opened** · *Acts 5:17–26 · the prison and the angel*	8
IV	**We Must Obey God** · *Acts 5:27–32 · Peter before the Council*	9
V	**If It Is of God** · *Acts 5:33–42 · Gamaliel and the rejoicing*	11
VI	**The Passage in the Whole Bible** · *cross-references*	13
†	**At a Glance** · *the four voices side by side*	15
†	**Key Insights & Questions for the Table** · *discussion*	15
†	**Sources** · *where each voice comes from*	17



"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name." — Acts 5:41

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 5:1–42

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men — God guards His church from rot within and rage without — and the word keeps going every day

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 5 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:29

"But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."

† Before the Passage

Acts 4 ended on a high note. The believers "were of one heart and soul," no one called his property his own, and landowners sold fields and houses and laid the money "at the apostles' feet" (4:32–35). Luke gave one name as the example: Joseph, called Barnabas, "Son of Encouragement," who "sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet" (4:36–37). Chapter 5 opens with the word "But." Ananias and Sapphira do the same outward thing with a lie folded inside it.

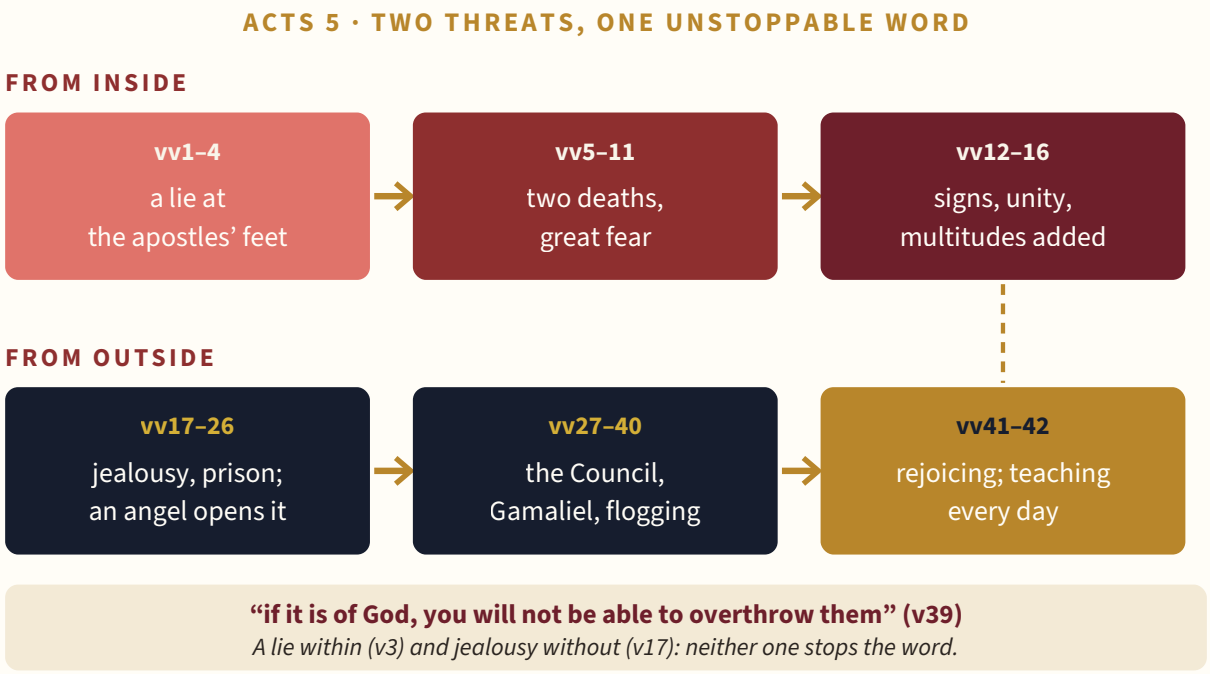
Outside the church the pressure was rising. The Council had already "commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (4:18), and the apostles had answered that they could not stop (4:19–20). The high priest's party were Sadducees, who "say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit" (23:8) — and in this chapter an angel opens their prison while the apostles preach the risen Jesus in the temple. The believers gathered in "Solomon's portico" (5:12; 3:11), the long colonnade on the east side of the temple court where Jesus Himself had walked (John 10:23).

F. F. Bruce, quoted by Guzik, draws the Old Testament line: "The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua." In Joshua 7 Israel had just entered the land, and one man's secret

theft from what belonged to God stopped the advance. Here the church has just been born, and one couple's secret keeps back "some of the price." Luke even uses the same verb the Greek Old Testament used of Achan (see the Greek below).

The chapter closes with Gamaliel, "a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people" (5:34) — the rabbi under whom Saul of Tarsus was trained (22:3). His counsel saves the apostles' lives for now, but not their backs: they are flogged and released, and they go out "rejoicing" (5:41). The two threats of the chapter — a lie inside and a fist outside — both fail, and the last verse finds them "every day, in the temple and from house to house" preaching "Jesus as the Christ" (5:42).

FIGURE · TWO THREATS, ONE WORD



Read the top row (trouble inside the church) and the bottom row (trouble from the rulers): each threat ends with the church growing and the word still preached.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 5:1–11

Lying to the Holy Spirit

A borrowed reputation, a price kept back, and great fear on the whole church

[1] But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, [2] and ⚠ kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. [3] But Peter said, "Ananias, ⚠ why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? [4] "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? △ You have not lied to men but to God." [5] And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and ⟳ great fear came over all who heard of it. [6] The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. [7] Now there elapsed

> *an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.* [8] *And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."* [9] *Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to* ⚠ *put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well."* [10] *And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.* [11] *And* ⟳ *great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.*
>
> ACTS 5:1–11

> *"Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."*
>
> ACTS 4:36–37

> *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known."*
>
> LUKE 12:1–2

FIGURE · TWO GIFTS AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

TWO GIFTS LAID AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

	BARNABAS · 4:36–37	ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA · 5:1–10
sold	"a tract of land"	"a piece of property"
brought	"the money"	"a portion of it"
kept back	nothing claimed as his own	"some of the price" (v2)
laid it	"at the apostles' feet"	"at the apostles' feet"
known as	"Son of Encouragement"	"lie to the Holy Spirit" (v3)
the end	trusted, sent, used (9:27; 11:22)	carried out, buried (vv6, 10)

The land was theirs to keep (v4). The sin was the pretense: "You have not lied to men but to God."

Compare the two columns: the outward act is the same; what differs is what was kept back and what was pretended.

νοσφίζομαι

NOSPHIZOMAI · “KEPT BACK” · G3557

To set apart for oneself, to embezzle. Only three New Testament uses: Acts 5:2, 5:3, and Titus 2:10, where slaves are told to be “not pilfering.” The Greek Old Testament uses the same verb in Joshua 7:1, where “the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban” — Achan’s sin. Luke’s word choice makes Bruce’s comparison (quoted by Guzik) almost unavoidable. Ananias did not have to give anything (v4); he pilfered from a gift he said he had given.

ψεύσασθαι

PSEUSASTHAI · “TO LIE” · G5574

From *pseudomai*, to lie, to deceive. Peter says Ananias lied “to the Holy Spirit” (v3) and then, “You have not lied to men but to God” (v4). Set the two verses side by side and the Spirit is God — not a power or an influence, but a Person who can be lied to. Sapphira’s sin is described as putting “the Spirit of the Lord to the test” (v9), the wilderness sin of Israel (Exodus 17:2).

φόβος · ἐκκλησία

PHOBOS · “FEAR” · G5401 · EKKLĒSIA · “CHURCH” · G1577

“Great fear” comes twice (vv5, 11). *Phobos* is the word behind “phobia,” but in Scripture it is also the reverent awe of a holy God. And verse 11 is the first time Luke calls the believers *ekklēsia*, “church” (KJV has “church” at 2:47, from a later text). The church is first named in Acts on the day it learns that God is holy.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads the couple’s motive as a hunger for the praise Barnabas had received: “Pride corrupts the church more quickly than anything else.” “It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality of spiritual life.” He is careful about the deaths: “Peter did not pronounce a death sentence on Ananias,” and “It isn’t the business of the church to pronounce a death sentence on anyone.” God acted. Were they saved? “It is impossible to say for certain, for only God knows”; he cites 1 John 5:16 and Boice — “True Christians do not lose their salvation by sinning” — so the judgment may have been for this life only.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew’s

Sproul’s “Lying Donors” (8 Feb 2004) sets Barnabas’s generosity beside the couple’s conspiracy: they passed off part as the whole. “They had the audacity to lie not only to the Apostles and the church but, as Peter points out, to the Holy Spirit.” “With their transgression, God took their lives instantly.” He then turns to Malachi — withholding from God is robbing Him — and asks, “Can you imagine any regenerate person wilfully, with malice aforethought, setting out to rob God?” He closes on cheerful giving: “Remember, the tithe is the low point.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry traces the sin to its source: “Satan filled his heart; he not only suggested it to him,” but took possession of it. The lie was to the Holy Ghost, and so to God, and the sudden deaths were a just judgment that guarded the Spirit’s honor and warned the whole church at its beginning. He draws a warning for every professing Christian: “It is often of fatal consequence for people to go a greater length in profession” than their hearts will carry. The result was the one Luke records — “Great fear came upon all the church.”

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 5:12–16

Signs in Solomon's Portico

One accord, high esteem, multitudes added — and Peter's shadow in the street

> 12 *At the hands of the apostles* △ *many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all* ◷ *with one accord in Solomon's portico.* 13 *But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.* 14 *And all the more believers in the Lord,* ☆ *multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,* 15 *to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.* 16 *Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and* △ *they were all being healed.*
>
> ACTS 5:12–16

σκιά

SKIA · "SHADOW" · G4639

A shadow or shade. Seven New Testament uses; Paul and Hebrews use it of the Law as "a mere shadow of what is to come" (Colossians 2:17). Luke reports the people's hope that Peter's shadow "might fall on any one of them" (v15); he does not say the shadow healed anyone. Guzik: "there was no power in Peter's shadow itself." Marshall (quoted by Guzik) notes that the idea that shadows had powers "was current in the ancient world." The healing in verse 16 is the Lord's, and "they were all being healed."

ὁμοθυμαδόν

HOMOTHYMADON · "WITH ONE ACCORD" · G3661

Literally "with one passion" or "one mind." It is one of Luke's favorite words for the early church (1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). After the judgment of verses 1–11 the church did not scatter; it gathered in the same place, "all with one accord." Verse 13 holds the tension: outsiders "dared" not join them casually, yet "the people held them in high esteem," and "multitudes of men and women" were added (v14).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees the unity of the believers as itself a sign of the Spirit at work — "Our selfish hearts and stubborn minds can be harder to move than any mountain." He links the power to the purging just described: "God blessed a pure church with spiritual power." On the shadow he is sober. People hoped for it, but "there was no power in Peter's shadow itself," and he cites Marshall that shadow-magic "was current in the ancient world." God met people where they were and healed them anyway; the lesson is the purity and the power, not the method.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads verses 12–16 as the sunshine after the storm: "God had come out of his place to punish, but now returns to his place" to show mercy. The signs were miracles of mercy, and the church that had feared God now drew sinners: "Believers were the more added to the Lord." He enjoys the picture of the shadow — "Peter comes between them and the sun, and so heals them" — and, like Guzik, gives the credit to the Lord who worked through His servants.

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 5:17–26

The Prison Doors Opened

Jealous rulers, an angel by night, and an empty jail with the guards at the doors

17 *But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and* ⚠ *they were filled with jealousy*. 18 *They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.* 19 *But during the night* △ *an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,* 20 *"* 🗎 *Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."* 21 *Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the* ⟳ *prison house for them to be brought.* 22 *But the officers who came did not find them in the* ⟳ *prison; and they returned and reported back,* 23 *saying, "We found the* ⟳ *prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up,* 🕒 *we found no one inside."* 24 *Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.* 25 *But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in* ⟳ *prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"* 26 *Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).*

ACTS 5:17–26

ζῆλος

ZĒLOS · "JEALOUSY" · G2205

From *zeō*, to boil. The word can be good ("zeal" for God, John 2:17) or bad, as here: the high priest and the Sadducees "were filled with jealousy" (v17). Notice the verb. Ananias's heart was "filled" by Satan (v3), the rulers are "filled" with jealousy (v17), and the apostles have "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching (v28). Every heart in this chapter is full of something. Sproul: "One of the most powerful forces on the planet is jealousy."

ζωή

ZŌĒ · "LIFE" · G2222

The angel's command is to speak "the whole message of this Life" (literally "all the words of this life"). The Sadducees denied resurrection and angels (23:8); God answers them with an angel sent to free men who preach resurrection life. *Zōē* is the life of God Himself, given in Christ — the "Prince of life" of 3:15.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes the irony of locked doors: "Locked doors are nothing for God or those who He uses." But the angel did not free them for their own comfort — "They were set free for a reason; and after this they were not always delivered," and he lists the traditions of the apostles' martyrdoms. They went straight back to the temple at daybreak. When the captain came, they went quietly, though the crowd would have defended them: "But their trust was in God and God alone." "Their past experience of the power of God had filled them with faith for the present."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "If It Is of God" (29 Feb 2004) begins with the second arrest: "The saga continued as the guards went and arrested the Apostles once more." Why the hostility? Jealousy, he says, because the real thing shames the imitation: "Nothing exposes the counterfeit faster than the appearance of the genuine." And it came from the religious establishment: "Throughout the ages, the most violent enemies of God have been the clergy." The angel's rescue only set the apostles back in the temple, teaching, by morning.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry is delighted that the jail could not hold the gospel: "There is no prison so dark, so strong, but God can both visit his people in it" and bring them out. The angel did not send them into hiding but back to the most public place in Jerusalem. Meanwhile the Council sits in perplexity over a locked, guarded, empty prison, and Henry draws the moral: "Those often distress and embarrass themselves that think to distress and embarrass the cause of Christ."

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 5:27–32

We Must Obey God

The high priest's charge and Peter's answer — the cross, the throne, repentance and the Spirit

27 *When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,* 28 *saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."* 29 *But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.* 30 *"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.* 31 *"He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* 32 *"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

ACTS 5:27–32

"But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.""

ACTS 4:19–20

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—"

GALATIANS 3:13

πειθαρχέω

PEITHARCHEŌ · "OBEY" · G3980

From *peithō* (to persuade, obey) and *archē* (rule): to obey one in authority. Four New Testament uses — Acts 5:29, 5:32, 27:21 and Titus 3:1, where believers are told to be subject "to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient." The same Bible that commands obedience to rulers records Peter's "We must obey God rather than men." Both stand: ordinary obedience to authority, until authority forbids what God commands. Guzik: "submission on the human level is never absolute." And verse 32 turns the word around — God gives the Spirit "to those who obey Him."

ἀρχηγός · σωτήρ

ARCHĒGOS · "PRINCE" · G747 · SŌTĒR · "SAVIOR" · G4990

Archēgos is a leader who goes first and opens the way — a founder, a pioneer. Four uses: "the Prince of life" (3:15), here, and twice in Hebrews, "the author of their salvation" (2:10) and "the author and perfecter of faith" (12:2). Paired with *sōtēr*, it gives the whole Christ: He rules and He rescues. Henry: "There is no having Christ to be our Saviour, unless we be willing to take him for our prince."

ξύλον

XYLON · "CROSS" (LIT. "TREE") · G3586

Wood, a tree. The NASB renders "hanging Him on a cross"; Peter literally says "on a tree" (so KJV). Guzik: "Peter referred to the cross as a tree because he drew an association from Deuteronomy 21:22-23," the law that a man hanged on a tree is accursed of God. The rulers meant it as a curse; Paul explains that it was — Christ became "a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls Peter's reply not a defense but an explanation: "it was a simple explanation of action." The high priest worried about Jesus' blood coming on them; Peter does not soften it. On authority, Guzik is balanced: Christians submit to rulers, but "submission on the human level is never absolute." In a few lines Peter lays out the whole gospel — human guilt, the cross, the resurrection, the exaltation, repentance and forgiveness — and he explains the "tree" from Deuteronomy 21:22–23.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In the same sermon Sproul treats "We must obey God rather than men" less as a lesson in civil disobedience than as a model of bold preaching. Peter does not argue his rights; he preaches Christ — who He is, His atoning death, His resurrection, His exaltation as Prince and Savior. Sproul presses the point on a generation that shrugs at theology: "Do not ever say that doctrine does not matter." The apostles were on trial for a doctrine, and they would not trade it for their safety.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "A Prince and a Saviour" (25 June 1876) asks hearers to "NOTE HIS TITLES" and then to approach Him under both. The Lord is exalted, and that is good news: "Never did he so well deserve the name of Saviour as when he climbed to his throne." Repentance itself is His gift — "Repentance includes a most needful sense of sin, and the Saviour can give thee this by his Spirit" — and so is forgiveness: "Jesus has gone to heaven on purpose to give this complete forgiveness." Then he presses: "Lean all thy weight on him," and "Sinner, wilt thou now be saved or not?"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry hears in verse 29 the settled rule of every faithful servant — they must obey God rather than men — and in verses 30–31 the whole gospel in a sentence. Christ is exalted "a Prince and a Saviour," and Henry will not let us split the titles: "There is no having Christ to be our Saviour, unless we be willing to take him for our prince." The offer is to Israel, the very nation that had crucified Him. The Council heard it and raged instead of repenting: "The enemies of the gospel not only deprive themselves of its comforts, but fill themselves with terrors."

V
MOVEMENT

ACTS 5:33–42

If It Is of God

Gamaliel's counsel, the lash, and joy at being counted worthy

33 *But when they heard this, they were ⚠ cut to the quick and intended to kill them.* 34 *But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.* 35 *And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men.* 36 *"For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.* 37 *"After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.* 38 *"So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;* 39 *but △ if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found ⚠ fighting against God."* 40 *They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the ⟲ name of Jesus, and then released them.* 41 *So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, ☆ rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.* 42 *And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

ACTS 5:33–42

"Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

MATTHEW 5:11–12

FIGURE · GAMALIEL'S TEST

GAMALIEL'S TEST · ACTS 5:35–39

THEUDAS v36	**claim** "claiming to be somebody" **following** about 400 men **end** killed · dispersed · "came to nothing"
JUDAS OF GALILEE v37	**claim** "in the days of the census" **following** "drew away some people" **end** perished · "scattered"
JESUS' APOSTLES vv30–32	**claim** "God raised up Jesus" **following** "multitudes of men and women" (v14) **end** "you will not be able to overthrow them"

Henry approves the counsel; Guzik calls it fence-sitting that ignores the evidence;
Sproul: "That was good advice but not perfect advice."

Gamaliel sets the apostles beside two failed movements; notice that only the third has a risen leader, and that our teachers weigh his counsel differently.

διεπρίοντο

DIEPRIONTO · "CUT TO THE QUICK" · G1282

From *diapriō*, to saw through. Only twice in the New Testament: here and at Stephen's speech, "they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him" (7:54). Williams, quoted by Guzik: "Luke graphically describes them as 'being sawn asunder (in heart).'" Compare Pentecost, where hearers were "pierced to the heart" and asked what to do (2:37). The same message can pierce a man toward repentance or saw him into rage.

θεομάχοι

THEOMACHOI · "FIGHTING AGAINST GOD" · G2314

Theos (God) + *machomai* (to fight): God-fighters. The word occurs only here in the New Testament. Gamaliel meant it as a caution; Luke means it as a verdict on everyone who sets himself against Christ. Saul, Gamaliel's own student, would hear the same idea from the risen Lord: "it is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sees the danger first: "Right then, the death of the apostles was set in motion." Gamaliel calms them, but Guzik is not impressed with his reasoning. Wait-and-see is the fence-sitter's position, and it ignores the evidence already in front of the Council — an empty tomb, healed men, an opened prison. "Success is not the ultimate measure of truth." The flogging could not stop them: "Whatever beating or shameful treatment the Sanhedrin gave them, it did absolutely no good." They left rejoicing and went right on preaching.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul calls Gamaliel's counsel "good advice but not perfect advice." The second half is true — what is of God cannot be overthrown, and Christ's church will stand. But the first half does not hold: "It is not true that if something is not of God, it fails," and he points to the long endurance of Islam. The apostles' response to the lash is the real lesson. They rejoiced to be counted worthy, for, says Sproul, "The only glory we have is the glory of the cross."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Preaching Christ" takes verse 42 as its text — "they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" — and makes it the rule of every pulpit: "Whatever we fail to preach we must preach Him." Christ is a theme that unites believers ("Let a man stand up and exalt Christ, and we are all agreed") and that converts sinners: "This is a seed which seldom rots under the clod." He fits every hearer — "Are there rebels? Preach Christ; it will suit them." — and "Jesus Christ is a topic that will keep in all climates."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry admires Gamaliel's prudence — a human work comes to nothing, but "If it be of God, you cannot overthrow it" — and faults the Council for flogging men it could not condemn: "The unnecessary use of power is an abuse of it." The apostles counted the beating an honor: "Reproach for Christ is true preferment." And they did not slow down. Every day, in the temple and in homes, they kept preaching Jesus as the Christ.

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

Holiness at the threshold, the Prince at God's right hand, and joy in suffering

> *"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire."*
>
> HEBREWS 12:28–29

> *"Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. … Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*
>
> EPHESIANS 4:25, 30

> *"But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 11:31–32

> *"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,"*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 2:9–10

> *"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*
>
> HEBREWS 12:2

> *"and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.""*
>
> ROMANS 11:26

> *"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."*
>
> 1 PETER 4:14

> *"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 3:12

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik, with Bruce, reads Ananias as Acts' Achan: a sin at the threshold of a new work of God, judged severely so that the people would learn God's holiness. Stott's rule keeps the balance — "It is a good general rule that secret sins should be dealt with secretly" — this public sin was publicly exposed.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the text and weighs the hard questions; Sproul presses the doctrine and the motive (jealousy, robbery of God, the glory of the cross); Spurgeon preaches the exalted Prince and the Christ of verse 42; Henry turns every scene into counsel. They differ on Gamaliel — Henry approves, Sproul half-approves, Guzik calls it fence-sitting — and agree that God guards His church and His word cannot be stopped.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The lie	Pride wanted Barnabas's praise; God acted, not Peter; their salvation is God's to know.	A conspiracy to pass part as whole; they lied to the Spirit — and robbed God.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Satan filled the heart; fatal to profess more than the heart carries.
II · The signs	Unity is itself a miracle; a pure church, a powerful church; no power in a shadow.	— (not treated in the sermons sourced)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	God returns from punishing to mercy; Peter between them and the sun.
III · The prison	Locked doors are nothing to God — but they were not always delivered.	The genuine exposes the counterfeit; jealousy drives the clergy.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	No prison too dark for God; persecutors embarrass themselves.
IV · The Council	An explanation, not a defense; submission to men is never absolute.	Bold preaching of Christ; never say doctrine does not matter.	He deserves "Saviour" most on His throne; repentance and pardon are His gifts.	No Saviour without the Prince; rage instead of repentance.
V · Gamaliel	Fence-sitting; success is not the measure of truth; the lash did no good.	Good but not perfect advice; the only glory is the cross.	Whatever we fail to preach, we must preach Him.	Needless power is abuse; reproach for Christ is true preferment.

ACTS 5:1–42 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **The first named church learns God is holy.** Verse 11 is the first time Acts calls the believers *ekklēsia*, and it is followed by "great fear" — the fear of the Lord, not panic. THE GREEK
- **The sin was the pretense, not the price.** "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?" (v4). Ananias was free to keep the land; he was not free to lie about it. Sproul: they passed off part as the whole. THE TEXT
- **Achan's verb.** Luke's "kept back" (*nosphizomai*) is the verb the Greek Old Testament uses for Achan in Joshua 7:1. Bruce, via Guzik: Ananias is to Acts what Achan is to Joshua. THE GREEK
- **Lying to the Spirit is lying to God.** Verse 3 says "the Holy Spirit"; verse 4 says "God." The Spirit is a Person who can be lied to and tested (v9). THE TEXT
- **Pride corrupts fastest.** Guzik: "Pride corrupts the church more quickly than anything else." The couple wanted Barnabas's reputation without Barnabas's heart. GUZIK
- **Every heart is full of something.** Satan "filled" Ananias's heart (v3); jealousy "filled" the rulers (v17); the apostles "filled Jerusalem" with teaching (v28). THE TEXT
- **The genuine exposes the counterfeit.** Sproul: "Nothing exposes the counterfeit faster than the appearance of the genuine." Jealousy, not theology, drove the arrests. SPROUL

- **Obedience to men is real but not absolute.** The word for "obey" (*peitharcheō*) also commands obedience to rulers in Titus 3:1. Guzik: "submission on the human level is never absolute." THE GREEK
- **No Saviour without the Prince.** Henry: "There is no having Christ to be our Saviour, unless we be willing to take him for our prince." Spurgeon: repentance itself is His gift. HENRY
- **Joy under the lash.** They rejoiced to be "considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (v41). Henry: "Reproach for Christ is true preferment." HENRY

† Questions for the Table

1 **Ananias wanted the reputation Barnabas had without paying what Barnabas paid. Where am I tempted to look more spiritual than I am?**

It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality (Guzik).

5:1-4; 4:36-37

2 **Peter says the land was Ananias's to keep (v4). Why is a lie about a good deed so serious to God — and what lie of mine needs to come into the light?**

You have not lied to men but to God.

5:3-4; Luke 12:1-2

3 **"Great fear" came on the church (vv5, 11), and yet the church grew (v14). How can the fear of God make a church more attractive instead of less?**

A pure church is a powerful church.

5:11-14; Heb 12:28-29

4 **Where in my life — work, family, the yard, the unit — does obeying God put me against what men expect of me? How do I tell real conflict from mere stubbornness?**

Submission on the human level is never absolute (Guzik).

5:29; Titus 3:1; Rom 13:1

5 **Jesus is "a Prince and a Savior" (v31). Do I want Him as Savior but resist Him as Prince? Where?**

No having Christ as Saviour unless we take Him for our Prince (Henry).

5:30-32; Phil 2:9-10

6 **The apostles went home bleeding and rejoicing (v41) and were back at it the next day (v42). What shame for Christ have I been avoiding, and what would "every day" faithfulness look like for me?**

Reproach for Christ is true preferment (Henry).

5:40-42; Matt 5:11-12

Acts 5 shows the church guarded from both sides: God will not let it rot from a lie within, and He will not let it be silenced by the rulers without. The same holiness that struck Ananias opened the prison and filled the flogged apostles with joy. Tell the truth, obey God first, and keep preaching Jesus as the Christ — every day.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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