

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The early church was filled with a spirit of sharing and caring for one another; **Acts 5 and 6** give us two examples. It also gives us examples of how sin and problems within the church threatened that spirit.

In **Acts 5:1-11**, we read that a couple named Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land and conspired together to hold back a portion of the sale before presenting it to the apostles. The reason for this is not specifically stated, but is generally thought to be a desire to be recognized by the church as Barnabas was (**Acts 4:36-37**). Peter immediately knows of their deceit, one more example of God's special empowerment of His Apostles. Peter doesn't ask them why. There is no room for excuses. They lied to God and put the Spirit of the Lord to the test. The consequences are immediate and severe. First Ananias is confronted and dies, and then about three hours later Sapphira, after being given a chance to confess the truth, also dies. This event might have derailed the growth of the early church, but the decisive way it was handled and the power demonstrated by God through His Apostles caused more growth.

In **Acts 5:11**, we read, "*And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.*" The word "fear" used here comes from the Greek word **phobos** (φόβος). It carries with it a couple of ideas: 1) fear, terror, alarm; 2) reverence and respect. **Acts 5:12-13** seems to imply that both ideas might have been in mind.

The word **ekklésia** (ἐκκλησία), often translated "church" is also used in **Acts 5:11**. We will discuss this word more fully in a later lesson.

As was the case previously, **Acts 5:14-16** indicates that more men and women believed, and were added (some translations add to *their number*).

**Acts 5:17-42** details more persecution and challenges to the word. The continued growth of the church caused jealousy among the Jewish leadership, specifically the High Priest and Sadducees.

The Apostles are arrested and put in jail but are freed by an angel of the Lord who tells them to continue preaching in the temple. After being found in the temple preaching, the Apostles are brought before the council. The council, angered by the Apostle's refusal to stop preaching wants to kill them, but a man named Gamaliel advises caution. As a result, they are flogged and released. Acts 5:41-42 gives us the Apostle's reaction and response, "**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 6:1-6** presents the next problem in the church. Hellenistic Jews complained against the native Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily serving of food. The Apostles had the congregation select seven men to see to this work, leaving them free to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Once the men were selected, the Apostles prayed and laid their hands upon them.

**Acts 6:7** tells us that the number of disciples continued to increase, and even many of the priests were being obedient to the faith. It is interesting that every time the disciples face a challenge and resolve it, church growth is the immediate result.

As the church begins to grow again, more challenges occur. **Acts 6:8-15** tells of one of the seven, a man named Stephen performed great wonders and signs and came into conflict with some men called, "the Synagogue of the Freedmen" who brought him up on charges of blasphemy.

**Survey of Acts - 03 (Acts 5-6)**  
The First Sin, Challenges in the Early church

Student Copy

**2. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, THE FIRST SIN IN THE CHURCH**

- 1) After reading Acts 5:1-4, describe what the problem was with holding back part of the price of the property they sold.
  
- 2) Compare Peter's statement in Acts 5:3 with James 1:14-15. How did Satan fill their heart?
  
- 3) What does Acts 5:3-4 tell us about the relationship between the Holy Spirit and God?
  
- 4) How did Ananias and Sapphira, "*put the Spirit of the Lord to the test*" (Acts 5:9)?

**3. SIGNS AND WONDERS, MORE PEOPLE BELIEVE**

- 1) Compare the signs and wonders of Acts 5:12-16 with the faith healers of today.
  
- 2) According to Acts 5:14, what was the purpose of the signs and wonders?
  
- 3) If we read Acts 2:47, what can we infer about Acts 5:14?
  
- 4) Harmonize Acts 2:38; 4:4; 5:14; 5:31-32; 6:7; Romans 1:5; Galatians 3:27; Hebrews 5:9

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**4. MORE PERSECUTION FROM THE JEWS**

- 1) Why were the high priest and his associates filled with jealousy (Acts 5:17)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) In Acts 5:26, why would the captain be afraid the people might stone them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Acts 5:28 refers to what previous passage in Acts?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) In Acts 5:29, the Apostles said, “*We must obey God rather than men.*” How can we reconcile this passage with passages like Romans 13:1,2; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17?

**5. GAMALIEL’S ADVICE**

- 1) Compare the response of the Jews when they were cut to the quick in Acts 5:33 with Acts 2:37
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) Summarize the advice that Gamaliel gave the Jews.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) From Acts 5:40, what does it mean to be flogged? Is this a fulfilment of the prophecy Jesus made in Matthew 10:17?

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**Survey of Acts - 03 (Acts 5-6)**  
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- 4) What did the Apostles do after being flogged and released?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) If you had just been flogged and threatened and told to stop preaching, what would your response be?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) What does Acts 5:42 tell us about how we are to share the Gospel?

**6. MORE PROBLEMS FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT (ACTS 6:1-15)**

- 1) Why was neglecting the Hellenistic widows such a problem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What was the more serious problem, that the widows were being ignored, or that the brethren couldn't resolve it without complaining to the Apostles? Why?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Who selected the men to be put in charge?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) From Acts 6:3, what were the qualifications of these men?
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_

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5) Name the seven men chosen.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_

6) What is a proselyte (Acts 6:5)?

7) Give two reasons why the Apostles might have laid their hands on the seven men.  
(Refer to Acts 8:14-19; 13:2-3)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

8) How did choosing the seven men to assist with feeding the widows help the word of God to continue spreading as we read in Acts 6:7? (Consider Acts 6:2-4)

9) What was the purpose of the signs and wonders Stephen performed in Acts 6:8?  
(Refer to Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4)

10) List four charges that were brought against Stephen (Acts 6:11-14)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_