

# Acts 5

If Acts is, as I believe it is, a document to help Theophilus defend Paul in his trial, the events of this chapter would readily speak to the Romans who would have been considerably impressed by the actions of a God who could strike someone down that had offended Him. Much of Roman religion was a placating of the gods and trying to gain their favour for success in love, war, business, against illness etc. Therefore, to hear of a God that could do this would be impressive and add great credence to Paul's defence. Couple that with Gamaliel's argument - that you could actually be opposing God if you oppose this movement, would have subtly been a good defence of Paul and his preaching the gospel.

The Ananias and Sapphira incident is one of the most challenging incidents in the book of Acts that has important ramifications. It tends either to be dismissed as far-fetched and unbelievable by liberal scholars or semi-ignored as being rather too challenging by others. Hopefully in our discussions we can learn some really useful lessons from this.

The opposition that follows is perhaps rather predictable and inevitable. It is slowly intensifying with breaks in between (we don't know how quickly these events follow one another), but it will culminate in chapter 7 and into 8 with the stoning of Stephen and the more widespread persecution that followed. God, however, would use all this to spread and grow His church.

## Read Acts 4.36-5.11

Compare Barnabas with Ananias and Sapphira. Were A and S envious do you think?  
What was wrong with what Ananias and Sapphira did?  
Do you think that Sapphira had a small chance to repent from the way Peter dealt with her?  
Do you think that Peter expected this outcome?  
What can we learn from this about church attitudes to sin and church discipline?  
Why did God work this way then, but mostly gives us many chances to repent?

## Read Acts 5.12-16

Compare v.13 with v.14. How do we make sense of "no-one dared".... and "more and more"?  
Word of what is happening is spreading and people are coming from neighbouring towns.  
Why do you think Peter (plus other apostles) stayed in Jerusalem rather than going out?

## Read Acts 5.17-26

What are the Sadducees so jealous and worried about?  
How does God act and how does this leave the Sanhedrin?  
What do you think they might be thinking at this point?  
What do the apostles do and how does the guard behave this time?

## Read Acts 5.27-32

When they re-arrest the apostles, what is the Sanhedrin's main complaint?  
How does Peter answer and why is this so "loaded"?

## Read Acts 5.33-42

What is the substance of Gamaliel's argument?  
Do you think he was beginning to have second thoughts about all this?  
Would you rejoice at being flogged? Why were the apostles rejoicing?  
Would you have been put off by this? What did the apostles continue to do?

Reflect on what it must have felt like to have been a part of the church in these very early days.