



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 8: DIVINE PURGING FOR PRESERVATION AND SPIRITUAL PROGRESS **Acts 5:1-42**

In the previous chapter, we learnt of the examples of consecration, unity, fellowship, spirituality, piety, love and heavenly-mindedness of the Christians in the early Church. They surrendered their hearts to Christ wholeheartedly and were willing to give up their possessions to provide for the needs of others. Their lives and possessions belonged to the Lord, and so belonged to His Body, the Church. Each believer recognized Divine Ownership and so was readily available - body, soul and spirit, time, talent and treasure, mind, will and skill, house, household and heritage - all available for His glory and service. Although Barnabas was specifically mentioned, many others demonstrated the same single and sacrificial love towards God and to the Church. **“And ALL that believed were together, and had ALL things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need”** (Acts 2:44,45). **“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. Neither was there any among them that lacked: FOR AS MANY AS WERE POSSESSORS OF LANDS OR HOUSES SOLD THEM, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need”** (Acts 4:32,34,35). Yet, no one was compelled to sell or surrender their property. The Apostles did not lay down any rule, or make a new doctrine out of such spontaneous act of love and devotion. **“Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?”** (Acts 5:4). The practice did not continue for long in the early Church. Later, when needs arose in the Jerusalem Church, special offerings were collected and sent (Acts 11:28-30; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1,3; Galatians 2:10).

During this period of the spontaneous, extraordinary experience, all things were done without compulsion, hypocrisy, praise-seeking, lying, carnal competition or self-centred comparison. There was true revival, heaven-sent revival, Spirit-inspired revival. Like Achan in the early days of Israel's entry into the land of promise, Ananias and Sapphira came with subtlety, hypocrisy and iniquity to introduce sin and evil into the Spirit-filled Church. God immediately arrested the situation and the supernatural, soul-winning, soul-saving revival continued. **“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”** (Acts 5:42).

DIVINE DISPLEASURE AGAINST SIN

Acts 5:1-11; Joshua 7:10-13,16-25; 2 Kings 5:20-27; 6:11,12; 1 Kings 14:6-14; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Deuteronomy 13:6-8; Psalm 50:16-22; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Hebrews 12:15,28; 1 Peter 1:16,17; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11.

The chapter opens with the shocking exposure of a member's hypocrisy, insincerity, deception and hellish iniquity. Ananias' hypocrisy consisted of imitating godly people, lying and deception to win the praise of men, having a form of godliness, appearing to be righteous while hiding a terrible sin in the heart. His sin of pretence was to present himself to men that he was righteous and gain position and recognition in the Church as a consecrated, devoted, spiritual and faithful disciple. While professing to give all to God, he secretly kept back a part of what he professed to have given. His heart was filled with Satan-inspired deception while his mouth proclaimed exceptional devotion to God. And his wife agreed with him to keep their sin against God and against the Church secret. They were in soul-damning covenant to hide Satan in their hearts and cover up sin in their home.

The secret was revealed to the Apostle Peter. The word of knowledge, the discerning of spirits, the word of wisdom, gifts of the Spirit were in operation. Sinners could not hide before Spirit-filled Apostles in the early Church. Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, prominent and preeminent, there will be revelation, inspiration and power. Swift judgment came on these unrepentant sinners who were determined to hinder and stop the soul-saving revival in the early Church. God quickly purged His Church to preserve her in purity and power. **“And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness”** (Malachi 3:3).

DOCUMENTED DEMONSTRATIONS OF SUPERNATURAL SIGNS

Acts 5:12-22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Acts 9:32-35,42; 19:11,12; John 14:12-14; Hebrews 2:1-4; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 12:7-11,20-24; Isaiah 37:36; Acts 27:23-25; Hebrews 1:7-14; Psalm 34:7.

Signs and wonders, miracles of healing and deliverance, supernatural manifestations and protection were daily experiences in the early Church. These miracles were not performed only by the Apostle Peter. The Word reveals that "**many wonders and signs were done by the apostles**" (plural) (Acts 2:43). "**And with great power gave the apostles (plural) witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**" (Acts 4:33). "**And by the hands of the apostles (plural) were many signs and wonders wrought among the people**" (Acts 5:12). Though all the Apostles preached the Word and God confirmed the Word with miracles, healings, wonders and signs following, "**God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul**" (Acts 19:11,12). The Apostle Peter also had some unique, uncommon and special manifestations of the Spirit (Acts 5:15,16).

Yet, we must not limit the working of miracles, healing of the sick and effective, dynamic praying to the Apostles. Believers can have the same power and authority (Mark 16:17,18; Luke 10:1-3,17-20; John 14:12; Acts 6:8; 8:5-8; 11:19-21; James 5:15-18). The Church and the recipients of miracles were filled with joy but the religious Sadducees were filled with indignation. They imprisoned the Apostles but the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and released them to go and continue preaching the saving gospel. The angelic release was to prove that the Apostles were doing the will of God, preaching the gospel. The release was a rebuke to the religious leaders to convict them of their guilt and an encouragement to the ministers of the Word to remain faithful in the high, holy and heavenly calling. Their angelic release was a striking proof to all the people that the message they were hearing was sent from heaven. Angelic ministrations to God's people are still as real today.

DECISIVE DEDICATION TO SOUL-WINNING

Acts 5:23-42; 4:18-20; Galatians 1:10-16; 1 Thessalonians 2:4-6; Jeremiah 1:7-10; Ezekiel 2:4-8; Luke 12:4-9; 24:47,48; Romans 1:15,16; Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:13-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

The Apostles and the disciples, all the ministers and members were persecuted for believing and preaching Christ; yet, they remained devoted and dedicated to the Lord and the preaching of the gospel. They were threatened, imprisoned, beaten, driven from their houses and scattered everywhere; some were hated and rejected by their unbelieving neighbours, others were even stoned and killed. Yet, they continued steadfastly with Christ, with the Church and in the ministry of preaching the saving gospel of Christ. "**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.**" These persecutors acknowledged the zeal, passion and evangelistic success of the Apostles. They confirmed that the city was filled with the message of salvation and life in Christ. The response of the Apostles showed their resolve: "**we ought to obey God rather than men**". They said, 'we have received our commission from God and we dare not play it down at the desire, command or threat of men'. In spite of all forms of persecution directed against the early Church, they ceased not to preach the gospel. "**And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ**" (Acts 5:42). "**Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word**" (Acts 8:4).

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