

Acts 5:12-42

“When It's OKAY to DISOBEY” **Part ONE**

As we have been studying the Book of Acts – we are looking at the birth and the foundation of the “Church age” or the “Dispensation of Grace.”

Dispensations are periods of time, chapters throughout history, that divide the manner in which God has worked to accomplish His purposes in regard to mankind.

As Dispensations go, The church was something altogether new from what had come before!

- The law of Moses had been fulfilled.
- The temple and the temple sacrifices were no longer required.
- The outpouring of God’s grace to forgive sins through faith and the sacrificial atonement offered by the Son was a completely new concept!
- Even more so, this offer of salvation being for both Jew and Gentile!
- The Spirit of God now dwelled IN His people, making them the temple and establishing them as God’s people.
- God’s people were no longer bound to one family, or one geographical area of the earth-
 - The church would be a people from every tribe, nation, and tongue with a mandate to GO – and make disciples of ALL nations!

Why is this important to understand?

So that when you and I read through this historical account of the birth of the church-

We understand that God was working in **unique** ways, during a **unique** time, to accomplish His purposes – namely, the beginning of the church age and the Dispensation of Grace.

And so, the historical account of people speaking in tongues, instantaneous healings, immediate judgements, the appearances of the Lord and His angels, miraculous releases from prison cells and more, -

- Become the **PROOF** of the **authenticity** of the messenger and the message.
- **NOT** the expectation of how God must or will work throughout that age.
- That is NOT to say that God is not still working miracles – **He certainly is** – often through the prayers of the saints –

- But once established, **God's people are to live by faith** throughout that dispensation, **God alone** choosing when and how to manifest His authority.

Over the next two weeks we will be looking at Acts 5:12-42, which a series of events with many facets – we will be looking at:

- **The Progress of the Church**
- **The Provision of the Lord**
- **The Perplexation of the Priests**
- **And the Proclamation of the Apostles**

We will see:

- The power of God working to authenticate His messengers and their message.
- The commitment to the continuation of the message and the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- And we will consider this challenging question before the church: “When is it OK to Disobey?”

So let's get started!

<Sermon Part ONE>

Now, if you are keeping track of what's going on in these first days of the church, things are moving pretty fast!

- The Holy Spirit has filled the hearts of the faithful.
- Bold preaching and teaching are happening.
- Amazing works of healing are occurring.

THOUSANDS of people are joining the church.

- Leaders are being arrested - and threatened by the government to be silent... or else...

Even so, the church was continuing to grow and come together in unity –

People were willing to give generously, even sell properties, to provide for the needs of those in the church.

- Now that last bit led to a **wee-bit** of a problem we saw last week with a couple, Ananias and Sapphira, who tried to play both ends by appearing to be generous by selling a piece of property but also lied about giving all the proceeds to the church.

- The consequence of these things being that God, *working in a **unique** manner in a **unique** time at the foundation of the church* – struck them both dead.

You know, when things like this happen in scripture you have to wonder...
 “And then what happened???”

I mean c’mon, that was a pretty sobering moment in the church when God made it very clear how seriously **HE** takes integrity in the congregational gathering!

What happened next was the leaders of the church went right on doing what they had been doing, and the church kept growing because of their faithfulness.

Although having been commanded by their governmental leaders to teach and speak no more in the name of Jesus of Nazareth-

In today’s message - ***in open and public defiance of the government’s orders and threats-*** we find the apostles again at Solomon’s Portico in the temple square – where the preaching, teaching, and miraculous signs and wonders in the name of Jesus continued.

ACTS 5:12-16

The Progress of the Church

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.

Elements of God’s full character, such as His Justice, His Mercy, His Holiness, and His Love are constantly being intertwined through scripture.

This is to keep it ever before God’s people and the church that our God is Sovereign over all.

As discussed earlier, here we see God working through the hands of the apostles – “Signs and wonders” –

The affect being that the members of the church stood together – of one accord – in unity – and God was blessing their ministry with healing works – and church growth!

But something else was happening also – While many came to believe and were saved – others considered the cost – and stepped away.

We love to dwell on God’s love, mercy, grace and compassion –

But He had just graphically reminded the church that He is a God to be feared as well!

- Too often, people take God for granted.
- As if a relationship with Jesus is a **take it or leave it** option without ETERNAL ramifications.
- Too often, people like the **IDEA** of a relationship with God but are not willing to accept the **COST** of a relationship with God.

Look at the amazing contrast of what was happening in these passages-

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.

(That’s good!)

¹³ But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.

(That’s bad!)

- None “*Dared*”- Greek *tolmaō* {*Tahllmahōh*} meaning *boldness, or to have courage.*
- Nor did they want to “*Associate*” with the Apostles- Greek *kollaō* {*kōllahō*} *to glue, unite, or join with.*

For many of the Jews in the temple at that time the thought of joining this movement seemed like a “**good idea**” – **but they lacked the courage to unite with them**

Even though they were witnesses to the miraculous healings

Even though the promise was for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life **when they died-**

- They instead questioned the **PERSONAL** risks, **NOW.**
- Many had been witnesses to the **arrest of Peter and John** –
- and let’s not forget it was not so many weeks ago that the leader of this movement, Jesus of Nazareth, had been publicly executed!

- Add to this, many had heard the story of what happened to **Ananias and Sapphira who were part of this following!**

And, **while respecting and admiring the message and the work of the apostles-**

Decided the risks of being a follower of Jesus Christ were too great.

- Think about that for a moment...

Friends, following Jesus in a personal relationship is a serious commitment.

- **It commands you to lay down your old sinful ways and to follow His righteous ways.**
 - 1 John 3:9
- **It requires you to live by faith and for the promises of Christ.**
 - Philippians 3:13-14
- **It demands that you commit to grow in your faith and understanding.**
 - Ephesians 4:11-15
- **It is evidenced by a life lived with awareness, standing firm in the faith, and being motivated to good works out of love for others rather than self-reward.**
 - 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 / John 13:34-35

In simplest terms – those that have the *tolmaō* {*Tahllmahōh*} (Courage) to *kollaō* {*kōllahō*} (unite, join) with Jesus Christ and become a part of His church –

- **Commit to follow Christ FIRST.**
- **Not counting the cost –**

As the Apostle Paul declared in *Philippians 3:13-14* *forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

(pause)

Tragically, and to their own harm, most will never make that commitment to follow Jesus.

Either blinded by their own arrogance, or **simply too comfortable in their own sins** – they won't even consider the possibility that the Word of God is true.

As is demonstrated here and has been proven by previous passages –

It is not for a lack of PROOF that sinners perish in judgement – but a lack of FAITH.

Regarding a lack of Faith, and Courage to **FULLY commit** to being a disciple of Jesus Christ –

I want to caution you about another dangerous position some take.

There are some who claim to be “Christians” – but who in reality only love God with “*some of their heart*” / “*Some of their soul*” / “*Some of their mind*” and “*Some of their strength.*”

They “*sort of*” love their neighbor as they love themselves.

And they are in effect, “Sort of followers of Jesus”

You can tell who these people are-

- **They do not regularly attend the congregational gathering of the saints (Church)**
- **They are not regularly in prayer.**
- **They do not have a regular practice of times of study in God’s word.**
- **They are not regularly convicted by their sin nor are they striving to overcome them.**
- **Their lives are lacking in regular charitable and loving works.**
- **And the excitement and joy of faithful relationship with Jesus is rarely seen in their lives.**

As you can see – As Christians go - they are most... **IRREGULAR.**

In contrast to the **ZEAL** of a follower of Christ whose heart is **ON FIRE** for the Lord –

The heart temperature of the half-hearted Christian is described as **LUKEWARM** at best.

It is Christians like these Jesus addressed in *Revelation 3:15-17*

¹⁵ “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, **I will spit you out of my mouth.**

¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are **wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.**

If you are squirming a little right now - that's okay.

Jesus also tells Christians like these that while there are consequences to lacking the commitment to following Him fully, **there is also an opportunity to repent.**

An opportunity to overcome your fears and doubts,

An opportunity to trust and follow Him in a fully committed relationship as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 3:19-22

¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

(Pause)

Having been in church ministry for many years- I will tell you that one of the most exciting things to see in a church is growth in spiritual maturity and in God using the ministry and the message of that church to call new believers.

I am excited to see the growth of BOTH, here at Pine Grove Community Church.

What we are witnessing is a Spirit led and God supported work to lead people into a closer and more committed relationship with Jesus Christ.

While many around the Apostles during those foundational days lacked the courage to commit to Jesus -

God was actively calling a **multitude** to bear witness to His mighty works and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation -

Acts 3:14-16

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.

The Apostles were continuing the work of Jesus that He left them to be about. Both in their Message and in their Ministry.

Jesus taught messages and worked miracles.

- The teachings were given in the authority of God.
- The miracles were worked for three primary reasons-
 - To demonstrate His love and compassion for those in need
 - To validate His claims as the Son of God
 - To verify the authority of His teachings

And everywhere that Jesus went, the crowds were drawn to Him.

Building from the Cornerstone of our faith – The Apostles were granted special authority as well in teaching and working miracles.

- Their teachings were given through the power and with the authority of the Holy Spirit of God
- The miracles worked through them-
 - Demonstrated their love and compassion for those in need
 - Validated their claims as Apostles of Jesus Christ
 - And verified the authority of their teaching

And through these things – God was constantly adding to the numbers of the church.

Word of what was happening in Jerusalem spread – Crowds gathered as the Apostles made their way through the streets.

The sick were brought out on stretchers with the belief that even Peter's shadow had the ability to heal.

God was working in amazing ways!

God was choosing to work signs and wonders through the apostles to verify and validate their message and their ministry – to draw people to Himself!

The sick were being healed and even unclean spirits (demons) were forced to flee from those they were afflicting by the words of the Apostles speaking in the name of Jesus.

And it wasn't just inside the city! –

- People from the neighboring cities were hearing the news and coming to seek out the apostles.
- They came for the healing – they stayed for message...

And the response of this was that God was calling and **"multitudes"** of men, AND WOMEN, were being added to the church. *"Believers in the Lord."* Verse 14

Nothing had been seen in like this in Jerusalem since... since... well...

Jesus.

During Jesus' ministry He taught and performed signs and miracles.

The scribes, pharisees, and religious leaders continually asked Him for more signs to validate His claims, to verify His identity.

Again – it was never about a lack of proof – but a lack of faith

And now – here was God **validating the teaching of the apostles** and **verifying THEIR identity as Disciples of Christ.**

- Through the very types of signs and wonders the religious leaders had asked for from Jesus!!

They were **JEALOUS** over the message of Jesus – Because it was powerful, changed lives, **and was not THEIR message.**

They were **JEALOUS** of the ministry of Jesus – Because it actually healed people, helped people, **and was not THEIR ministry.**

In **John 12**, after the raising of Lazarus, Jesus entered Jerusalem and was heralded by the people in the fashion of a triumphant king!

They laid down palm branches and their cloaks before Him shouting *“HOSANNA! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!, Even the King of Israel!”*

They had time and again attempted to challenge Jesus. They had attacked His character, His integrity, and His teachings.

But in **verse 19** we hear them exclaim to one another, *“You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.”*

So, they had conspired, schemed and plotted.

They lied, paid bribes, and repeatedly broke their own laws

All to charge Jesus with **crimes He did not commit** and **put Him to death** in a **judgement He did not deserve.**

Surely, they must have thought, that would be the end of that...

Sure, there were stories of His resurrection, - But these stories would surely fade with time - and in time order, **THEIR ORDER**, would be restored...

But now, just weeks after the death of Jesus- here in the temple square – were His closest followers, teaching and preaching in the name of Jesus.

WORSE... by their hands, in the name of Jesus, the lame were made to walk, the sick were being healed, and those afflicted by unclean spirits were being relieved.

They had arrested their leaders – threatened them – but to no avail.

These men **DEFIED their authority!**

And, in all boldness, and confidence, **continued** to teach and to preach **in the name of Jesus.**

EVEN WORSE... the numbers of those listening to these teachings – BELIEVING these teachings – and proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth as the CHRIST – **was growing day-by-day!**

THOUSANDS! A MULTITUDE!

So again, those who held the highest positions of the Jewish government were compelled to stand and oppose this teaching. This Jesus. And His followers.

ACTS 5:17-21a

The Provision of the Lord

¹⁷But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.

Understand friends the oldest and first response of a government who opposes God and Christ Jesus is to attack His message by attacking His messengers.

Again, we see it is the **High Priest** – THE GUY – who was supposed to be chief among the priests to lead in worship of YHWY – to honor Him – to present the annual sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the nation-

We see him again rise up to oppose Jesus, His teaching, and His followers.

The evidence was irrelevant – because the heart was wicked.

For those who oppose Christ the same is true today.

He was again joined by the Sadducees – who taught there WAS NO resurrection from the dead-

They opposed the message of Jesus, after all, Jesus had been publicly executed – the claim that He was resurrected and alive – was an affront to their teachings!

WORSE – these followers of His were continuing the teaching that those who follow Jesus by Faith:

- Had been forgiven of their sins and been cleansed from unrighteousness
- Their debt to God had been paid on the cross by the blood of Jesus
- And that as Jesus had risen, so they would also rise to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. **Forever.**

(pause)

Last time, they had arrested Peter and John – **THIS time** they arrested **ALL** of the Apostles – LAID HANDS on them- *epiballo* –forcefully laying hands on them.

NEXT WEEK – we will discuss the topic of "*When is it okay for the church to partake in civil disobedience*" ... (NEXT WEEK)...

THIS WEEK – I want us to note the character of the Apostles in this moment.

What we **SEE** is boldness to continue the message and the ministry of Jesus Christ-

- May that never end!

But what we **DO NOT SEE** is resistance to the persecution of the unrighteous that was being visited upon the righteous.

It was with calm demeanor the apostles, without resistance, were forcibly laid hands on, removed from the public square, and placed into a prison cell.

We will talk more on this attitude next week, but do not fail to take note of it today.

So, once again, Peter and John find themselves in a prison cell for their faith. – **and now joined by the rest of the Apostles.**

You can imagine the nightly news broadcast in Jerusalem putting the spin on these troublemakers stirring up problems among the people and defying the commands of the government to 'cease and desist.'

What conversations the Apostles must have had that evening, sitting in cold, dark prison cells.

Peter and John had been warned to stop – OR ELSE!

What would that or else be?

Would they be warned again? – Flogged? – Put up for trial and brought before Pilate for execution?

Were they praying? Were they singing?

We do not know. But we can know this for sure – They were being faithful.

And in this **unique time** – for these **unique men** – God again worked in a **unique way.**

Acts 4:19-21

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.

It must have been early in the morning when the angel appeared.

What an amazing AFFIRMATION for the Apostles that they were walking rightly for their Friend and Savior.

Note this AN angel of the Lord – not THE angel of the Lord so this is not Jesus – but one of the many angelic hosts who serve God and minister to the saints.

Hebrews 1:14 – speaking of angels declares- *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve for the sake of those whose to inherit salvation?”*

Many a sermon has been preached on the expectation for suffering as Jesus suffered.

We understand that those who are perishing in the world believe the message of the cross to be foolishness. (*1 Corinthians 1:18*)

We know those in darkness hate the light (*John 3:20*)

We are seeing, that due to the increase of wickedness, the love of many is growing cold. (*Matthew 24:12*)–

And we know that one day, those perishing in the world will no longer tolerate sound doctrine. (*2 Timothy 4:3*)

These things were begun long ago and were on display during these foundational days of the church.

Listen to the instructions the angel relayed to the Apostles:

²⁰ **“Go, stand and speak** to the people in the temple **the whole message of this Life.”**

- *Go* – “Poreuo” – {pahruhl} - make your way
- *Stand* – “Histēmi” –{histaymee} -Make a stand

- *Speak* – Laleō” – {Lahlayō} - Declare, Proclaim
- *The whole message of this life* – The gospel – for there is life in no other words that we can proclaim – **in the name of Jesus** – the only name with the power to save.

²¹ *Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach.*

Friends – we have been told to do no less –

Our great commission from the Lord is just that-

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” **Matthew 28:19-20**

It is the very reason God has left the church in the world – **YOU, in the world**– as a disciple of Christ Jesus - to continue the **message and the ministry** of Jesus Christ.

My question to you today is this:

Do you dare? Do you have the courage, the *tolmaō* {*Tahllmahōh*} to unite with the apostles and the faithful saints around the world, in this ministry of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and serving in the ministries of the church?

I pray you do. – I pray you will.