

# Unity Strengthens the Church

Acts 4:23-5:11

## Persectuion cycle in Acts

- i. Devoted church (Acts 2:42; 3)
  - shares gospel (Acts 3).
- ii. Evangelistic church (Acts 3)
  - experiences persecution (Acts 4:1-22).
- iii. Persecuted church (Act 4:1-22)
  - unifies together (Acts 4:23-5:11).

## The cycle in Acts mirrors Luke.

- i. Luke 9//Acts 2:42 – Devoted to Jesus’ teaching.
- ii. Luke 10:3//Acts 3-4 – Jesus sends them out as “lambs in the midst of wolves.”
- iii. Luke 10:9//Acts 3 – Proclaim the gospel.
- iv. Luke 10:10//Acts 4 – Expect persecution but still proclaim, “the kingdom of God has come near.”
- v. Luke 10:17-18//Acts 4:23f – Regroup/devotion.

**Big Idea:** Unity gives us strength to proclaim the gospel; therefore, we work for unity and continue living for Christ.

<sup>23</sup> When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup> who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'--

<sup>27</sup> for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup> while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." <sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

<sup>32</sup> Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup> and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

<sup>36</sup> Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. <sup>1</sup> But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup> and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? <sup>4</sup> While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God."



**Big Idea:** Unity gives us strength to proclaim the gospel; therefore, we work for unity and continue living for Christ.

## Unity Strengthens the Church

- i. Struggle together (v. 23).
- ii. Pray together (vv. 24-30).
- iii. Evangelize together (v. 31).
- iv. Unify together (vv. 32-37).
- v. The devil attacks unified believers (5:1-11).

## 1. Struggle together (v. 23).

“<sup>23</sup> When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.”

## 2. Pray together (vv. 24-30).

<sup>24</sup> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup> who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit ... <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. <sup>29</sup> And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup> while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

## Powerful Prayer includes:

- i. Prayer with other believers (v. 24a).
- ii. Reliance on God's power & plan (v. 24b; 29).
- iii. Truth according to God's Word (vv. 25-26).
- iv. Requests for boldness (vv. 1:8; 4:13; 29-30).

### 3. Evangelize together (v. 31).

“<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered **together** was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

## 4. Unify together (vv. 32-37).

<sup>32</sup> Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup> and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. <sup>36</sup> Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Unity (at least) includes:

- i. One heart and soul (v. 32).
- ii. According to the Apostles' Teaching (v. 33).
- iii. Results in radical generosity (vv. 32b; 34-37).



## 5. The devil attacks unity (vv. 5:1-11).

“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup> and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup> But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? <sup>4</sup> While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”

5 attributes (and 1 cure) for hypocrisy (5:1-4).

i. Fake piety (vv. 1-2).

ii. Attention Seekers (vv. 1-2).

iii. Tools for the devil (v. 3).

iv. Deceptive/scheming/liars (vv. 3-4).

v. Greedy (v. 3).

vi. Fear God (vv. 5, 11; Ps 111:10).

Decide to work together for unity, so that we can overcome the enemy and reach the world for Jesus.