

What does it look like when we care more about our reputation than our integrity before God? Acts 5 opens with a story that cuts right to the heart of that question. Ananias and Sapphira did not lose their lives because they held back money. They lost their lives because they wanted the applause of people more than they wanted to walk honestly before God. That tension is more familiar than we might want to admit. We live in a world that rewards image management, and the temptation to present a polished version of ourselves, even in our faith, is real and constant. This passage reminds us that God is not impressed by appearances. He sees what is actually happening in our hearts. From there, Acts 5 takes us on a journey through the explosive growth of the early church, where God's power was so visibly at work that people were being healed and transformed in remarkable numbers. But growth attracted opposition, and the apostles found themselves arrested, beaten, and ordered to be silent. Their response is one of the most striking moments in all of Scripture. They walked away from their beating rejoicing, not because suffering felt good, but because they understood that suffering for Jesus was itself a mark of faithfulness. Acts 5 invites us to ask ourselves a serious question about where our priorities truly lie and whether we are willing to follow Jesus even when it costs us something real.

Title: Don't Trade Truth for Applause: Faithfulness, Opposition, and the Cost of Following Jesus

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Acts 5, Pastor Bo examines what genuine Christian faith looks like in practice across four key dimensions. The sermon opens with a personal testimony about hiding addiction and the exhaustion of managing a false image, which sets the stage for the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Their sin was not in withholding money but in crafting a deceptive appearance of total sacrifice to earn the approval of others. From there, the sermon moves to the powerful work God was doing through the apostles in the early church, demonstrating that when God is truly at work, people take notice and lives are changed. The sermon then addresses the reality that gospel advancement draws opposition, as seen in the apostles' arrest, and that resistance does not indicate a departure from God's will. Finally, Peter's declaration before the Sanhedrin -- that God must be obeyed above human authority -- anchors the sermon's call to let God's Word have the final say. The sermon closes with the remarkable image of the apostles leaving their flogging rejoicing, challenging believers to remain faithful even when obedience carries a cost.

Key Points:

Do not trade truth for applause -- God is concerned with who we truly are before Him, not the image we project to others

When God is genuinely at work through believers, people notice and are drawn to Christ, not to the people themselves

Gospel advancement regularly produces resistance, and opposition does not mean a believer is outside of God's will

When human authority conflicts with God's Word, obedience belongs to God -- His Word has the final say

Suffering cannot silence a faithful witness -- the apostles rejoiced in their suffering because they counted Christ as worthy of whatever the cost

Scripture Reference:

Acts 5:1-42 (primary text, covering Ananias and Sapphira, apostolic signs and wonders, the arrest and miraculous release of the apostles, their appearance before the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel's counsel, the flogging of the apostles, and their continued proclamation)

Matthew 6:1 -- a warning against practicing righteousness before others in order to be seen

Proverbs 12:22 -- God detests dishonesty and delights in those who are trustworthy

Psalms 139 -- David's prayer inviting God to search his heart and reveal anything offensive within him

John 14:12 -- Jesus promises that those who believe in Him will do the works He has been doing

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 -- Paul's teaching that people plant and water but only God produces growth

John 15:20 -- Jesus warns His followers that servants are not greater than their master and that persecution will follow

Isaiah 40:8 -- the enduring and unchanging nature of God's Word

Matthew 5:11 -- the blessing Jesus pronounces on those who are persecuted and insulted for His name

Stories:

Pastor Bo's personal testimony of drug and alcohol addiction, living a fragmented double life to hide his struggles from different groups of people, and coming to faith in Christ at Mount Zion, where he first understood that he could not hide from God and did not need to

The account of Ananias and Sapphira, who sold property, secretly kept a portion of the proceeds, and presented their gift as if it were the full amount in order to gain the reputation of total sacrifice, resulting in both of their deaths

The apostles' miraculous release from prison by an angel, who instructed them to return immediately to the temple courts to preach -- the very activity for which they had been imprisoned

The account of Gamaliel's counsel to the Sanhedrin, in which he cited the failed movements of Theudas and Judas the Galilean as examples of human efforts that came to nothing, and advised that if the apostles' work was from God, no human power could stop it

The apostles being flogged by order of the Sanhedrin and leaving rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus, followed by their continued daily proclamation in the temple courts and from house to house

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FROM THE SERMON

Acts 5:1-42 (primary text for the sermon), Matthew 6:1, Proverbs 12:22, Psalm 139:23-24, John 14:12, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, John 15:20, Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 5:11

Acts 4:32-37 (the context of believers selling property and giving to the apostles, which sets up the Ananias and Sapphira account)

Luke 22:54-62 (Peter's earlier denial of Christ, providing background for his transformation into a bold witness)

Romans 8:28 (the theme that God works through all circumstances, including suffering and opposition)

Hebrews 13:8 (the unchanging nature of God and His Word, referenced thematically)

Ephesians 2:10 (the theme of believers being called to works that God has prepared in advance)

Romans 5:3-4 (the theme of rejoicing in suffering, which parallels the apostles rejoicing after being flogged)

Pastor Bo described how he managed multiple false versions of himself before coming to Christ -- in what areas of your life are you still tempted to present a version of yourself to others that does not match who you truly are before God?

Ananias and Sapphira were not punished for keeping part of the money, but for deceiving others about what they had given -- how does the distinction between the act itself and the deception behind it challenge the way you think about integrity in your own spiritual life?

Peter's prayer in Psalm 139 -- asking God to search his heart and reveal any offensive way in him -- is described as a dangerous prayer for someone only concerned with appearances; what would it look like for you to pray that prayer with complete sincerity?

The sermon argues that when God is truly at work, the result is not that people become impressed with us but that they are drawn to Christ -- how do you evaluate whether the fruit of your faith is pointing people to yourself or to Jesus?

Jesus promised his followers in John 15 that they would be treated the same way he was treated, yet we often expect obedience to God to make life easier -- how has your own experience of opposition or resistance either strengthened or shaken your faith?

The angel who freed the apostles from prison told them not to flee but to go right back and preach the very message that got them arrested -- what does this tell us about how God views opposition, and how should it shape the way we respond when faithfulness brings consequences?

Peter's declaration that we must obey God rather than human beings was made before powerful men who had the authority to have him killed -- what human voices or authorities in your own life most tempt you to compromise your obedience to God?

The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing after being beaten, not because the suffering felt good but because they considered it an honor to suffer for the name of Jesus -- how does your own relationship with Christ shape the way you respond when following him costs you something?

Gamaliel warned the council that if the apostles' mission was from God, no human power could stop it -- how does this principle affect the way you think about the challenges and opposition that the church faces today?

The sermon closes with the question of whether we are more concerned with how our faith looks to people or with being faithful to God -- what is one concrete area of your life where those two concerns are currently in tension, and what would genuine faithfulness require of you there?