

## Acts 5 -- How to stand during persecution

5 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." 9 Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. There has always been a mixed multitude. The church is composed of the called out ones, the assembly of the redeemed, but it is also the assembly of those who pretend to be redeemed. The church is likened to sheep, so naturally there are wolves who sneak in to devour the flock. I suspect that although in this case Peter exposed the deceit and Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, that in many other cases the assemblies of believers have been populated by many deceivers. But, just like Acts 1 said, [This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven. v.11](#) The end of this age is not simply a time to reap as thousands turn to the Lord, but it will also be a time to deal with the corruption in the church. The Lord has allowed the wheat and the tares to grow together, but at the end of the age the tares will be gathered up and cast into the fire. 12 The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. 14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. 15 As a result, people brought the sick into the

streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. 16 Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed. The signs, the wonders and the healings will be a protection to the church from the deceitful workers, from the false prophets. When Satan is cast to the Earth he will be enraged against the church because he knows he only has a little time left. At this time the church will need divine protection and covering like never before. My understanding is that the man child is caught up to the throne, the first rapture, the army that kicks Satan out of heaven. But then the weaker members are left behind and will suffer the great tribulation. They will need the two witnesses, just like the early church had the apostles. 17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. What a great picture. They are jealous because this little group is "highly regarded by the people". They are jealous because people are taking their sick to them to be healed. What we are seeing is the collapse of the major institutions of society: government and religion. While that ship is sinking, the church is rising. People are questioning "is it right to listen to these rulers" who are so clearly not one with God. They are filled with jealousy because the word of God is with the church and not with the Jewish leaders. The same will be true when the Lord returns. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life." This is the game plan for this coming tribulation. Be bold, speak the word, share what the Lord has shown you. Do not fear them, it will be a strong testimony to them of their impending judgement. 21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. 22 But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, 23 "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." 24 On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to. 25 Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." 26 At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the

people would stone them. This is a strong testimony that these rulers have become powerless. God is mocking them. They despised His Son, now God despises them. 27 The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." The recurring nightmare to all those in authority, you gave strict orders and no one listened, no one cares less what you say. The ultimate authority is God, any authority they have comes from God, they violated their head, as a result God is bringing shame on their heads. 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! 30 The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." 33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. We are witnesses of this. We must obey God rather than man. When the human rulers deviate from God's rule and you have to choose between the two, you must choose to obey God. You will be faced with the choice, listen to those who killed Jesus and are threatening to kill you if you don't listen, or listen to the God who raised Jesus from the dead and will raise you as well. Seems like a very easy choice. If you obey God He gives you His Holy Spirit. The reason these rulers are jealous and powerless is because they didn't obey God and they do not have His Holy Spirit. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." I have two different feelings about this word from Gamaliel. On the one hand it is a powerful confirmation that this is from God. There have been many, many revolts

against injustice in human history and a great many of them have come to nothing. Nobody would even remember Theudas name if it weren't written here. Today we are here, 2,000 years later, and it is very clear that the church has not come to nothing but rather has grown, prospered, and spread throughout the entire earth. On the other hand it is embarrassing that a highly respected teacher of the law is incapable of determining that Jesus is the Messiah. I was trained as a Geologist and we are taught how to identify gold, silver, and precious stones. The Bible is filled with the criteria for identifying the Messiah. To use the "time will tell" as your litmus test is a valid test, but a poor excuse for someone who is supposed to be well trained in the word. It will be just like this when the Lord returns. There will be many who should have recognized His coming yet don't. 40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. First of all I like the fact that "they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah". So much for the "orders of the Sanhedrin". Second, I really like this mindset that they "rejoiced because they had been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the Name". If the church is going to have a backbone and stand straight in the coming storm, we need that mindset.