

Acts 5

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Tape #8094
By Chuck Smith

Chapter five as we continue our journey through the Bible. Now we saw that in the early church there was tremendous enthusiasm and sometimes enthusiasm can get misdirected. Paul said I testify concerning the Jews that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. It's good to be zealously affected in a good thing. In the early church, because of their excitement and their zeal and because they were expecting the Lord to return at any time, they would come into the fellowship and would sell everything. They would bring the money and lay it at the apostles' feet. So there was sort of a community that was formed. So that everyone received then from the church according to their needs. It was a form of communism that they sought to practice in the early church. There is no indication that God directed it. It would seem that it was something that just grew out of the enthusiasm because of how God was working and the mighty things that were being done. Everyone was excited. It was not something that was required. It was something that was just freely done by the people in their excitement and zeal for God. As I said possibly because they were expecting the Lord to return at any time. We're not going to need it anyhow so let's just pool everything. But there were problems that developed from this. In chapter five we come now across the first problem. In the fourth chapter at the end of the chapter, it tells how no one lacked anything for those that possessed land or houses, they sold them and they brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Distribution was made to every one according to his need. It tells how Barnabas sold his land and brought the money in.

¹*But a certain man* (Now this is in contrast to Barnabas and others) *named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.* Now Ananias and Sapphira were probably the kind of a couple that every pastor is looking for. Well dressed, probably had that Amway type of handshake, you know, impressive kind of people. If they would come into the church, the pastor would say, now that is a nice looking couple. I would like to see them become a part of the fellowship here. ²*And he kept back part of the proceeds,* (That is Ananias and his wife was privy to it) *his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

³*But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"* Now notice what Peter says here, it's important. ⁴*While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."* So that it's important to note that he wasn't required to sell his land. It wasn't a requirement in the early church. It wasn't something that you had to do. And if you sold your land it wasn't a requirement that you had to bring everything in. That was not the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, not bringing everything in. The sin was hypocrisy. Pretending to bring in everything, yet holding back for themselves. That's wanting the applause and wanting the plaudits by the sham of we're giving everything to God when really they were holding back from God.

Sometimes we hear people say, Oh, we would love to have the power of the early church. I would concur with that. But it's important to realize that that kind of power is costly. If we had the power of the early church and we would stand and sing, *Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee* I wonder how many would be standing after the third verse where we say *take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold*. There would probably be a lot of people slain in the spirit or by the Spirit after that verse.

Hypocrisy, a horrible evil that has plagued the church through the years. Pretending to be something that you are not. God dealt very severely with hypocrisy here with the birth of the church. Here they were making a pretense of giving everything and yet holding back, obviously by agreement between themselves. So the result was, Peter, exercising the *gift of the word of knowledge*, perhaps discernment, called him. He challenged him. Why he would do this thing of pretending to give everything to God when he was actually holding something back. Notice Peter said you are lying to the Holy Spirit. Then later he said you've not

lied to man but to God. So that lying to the Holy Spirit is equivalent to lying to God, which indicates that the Holy Spirit *is* God, one of the three persons of the divine Trinity.

⁵*Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.* I can imagine how quickly you would examine your own heart at that point. Now it's interesting describing his death (in the King James), he gave up the ghost or the spirit. This is one Biblical definition for death. Giving up the spirit. When the consciousness departs from the body or is separated from the body. It's called death. It is interesting that even today that is a medical definition for death. When there is a separation from the body. When your brain is no longer functioning. So when a person is in a coma and they connect to that person a life support system. They connect the EEG probe. They watch the little graph as the needle bounces indicating that the brain is still functioning though the person may be in a coma and is only breathing through the artificial method. They keep the person on the life support system until the line goes flat. Once the line has gone flat on the EEG graph then they disconnect the life support systems and they inform the family that their loved one is no longer with them. They are clinically dead because the brain is no longer functioning.

The Bible also has, however, a second definition for death. That is the separation of your consciousness from God. If you are living without consciousness of God, no thought of God, then the Bible declares that you are dead! Paul said if a person is living purely for pleasure, they are dead while they are still alive. So you can be having all of the body functions, breathing, thinking, singing, the whole bit, but if your conscience is separated from God, no thought of God, no place for God in your life, then you're dead as far as God is concerned and as far as the Bible is concerned from a spiritual death. Spiritual death is really worse than physical death. It is much more to be feared than physical death. (Luke 12:5) Don't fear those who can kill your body and after that have no more power, but fear him who after the body is killed is able to cast you into hell, yes I say, fear him, Jesus said. And it speaks of those who will be cast into the lake burning with fire, it says this is the second death. So you He has made alive who were dead in your trespasses and sins. The wages of sin is death, separation from God. God's hand is not short that He cannot save neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear, but your sins have separated you from God. God said to Adam, in the day that you eat you will surely die! It was that spiritual death, that separation from the consciousness of God's presence that he experienced when he disobeyed the command of God.

So he gave up the ghost. There was that physical death. ⁶*And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.* Now they didn't practice embalming in Israel. They buried people the day they died. This practice is even current in the present time. They bury the person the day they die. They don't have embalming services and so forth, and wakes or whatever. When a person dies they bury him the same day. So interesting here, actually they didn't try to find the family, notify the family or whatever. He died. They just took him out and buried him.

So ⁷*Now it was about three hours later when his wife (Sapphira) came in, not knowing what had happened.* She didn't know that her husband had died. ⁸*And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."* ⁹*Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."* ¹⁰*Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.* ¹¹*So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.* It doesn't really need to tell you. I mean that really sobered everybody up! Now this was the purity and this is the result of power.

¹²*And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.* So the church was sort of meeting in the temple precinct. They were having services there in Solomon's Porch. It was a large public area. So they would gather there

in Solomon's Porch. ¹³*Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.* I mean after that the people said after that, well, that's pretty nice but, you know, I don't want to join that church. So it was sort of the end of the communal kind of people selling and bringing in the money. They were still though distributing the money that had already been brought in, but other problems developed as we will find as we read chapter six next week. This was really a problem. That is why I question whether or not it was really directed by the Spirit or just by zealous people who were so excited over what the Lord was doing, they were ready to respond that way. A lot of times when God has touched a person's life, God has healed a loved one, or God has really worked in a family, people are touched and because of that they want to respond to God.

There was a fellow at Calvary Chapel whose son was heavy into drugs and really "out to lunch" so to speak. He came and he accepted the Lord. His life was transformed, in fact, today he is a Calvary Chapel pastor, but his life was transformed. His father was very wealthy. He called for an appointment. He came in. He took out his check book and said how much do you want? I said, nothing. He said, well how much do you need? I said, nothing. He said, well, I want to give something to the church. How much do you want? I said, look, you pray and ask God, don't ask me. We don't need anything. If God lays on your heart to give, but you know, I'm not going to tell you any amount. But people get excited when God has worked. The man saw the transformation in his son and he was so thrilled over that. He wanted to show his appreciation in a tangible way.

That is what happened in the early church. People wanted to show their appreciation in a tangible way. But it wasn't really something that was required or directed by God. It was just a movement. But because it wasn't directed by God, it really didn't work out well. Ultimately Paul had to take up offerings for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. I mean, it turned out to be a financial disaster in the long run.

But in the early church there was power, ¹⁴*And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,* This thing was like a wildfire. It was really growing! There was a lot of excitement. Multitudes, both men and women. ¹⁵*so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.* So it is quite interesting. They were coming from all over, bringing their sick. And Peter would walk down the street, they would try to position them so that when he walked by, his shadow would fall on them.

I believe that there is a principal of faith that needs many times to be activated. I know that we all have faith. But so often our faith is quite passive rather than active. The difference between passive faith and active faith is passive faith say, well, I believe God can do it. I believe that God might do it some day. Active faith is that I believe that God is going to do it now! But many times we need something to more or less trigger our faith so to speak. So that the Lord commanded to lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. Not that there is any healing virtue by laying your hands on the person or any transference of healing power. *I've got the healing hands*, you know. But, as you anoint with oil, as you lay hands on them, it gives them a point of releasing their faith. So that as the hands are laid on them, they think, now Lord, yes. It's a thing of activating the faith to receive now the promise of God. It's no longer, God is going to do it someday. God is going to do it now as they lay hands on me.

When Paul (we'll get into it a little later on) was in Ephesus working there as a tent maker and they would take his sweat bands. Paul would get off work and they would take off his sweat band and lay it down, someone would rip it off. And they would take the sweat bands of Paul and lay them on the sick. And they were healed!

Here, Peter as his shadow, as the people were sitting they as they would watch him come up the street, looking at where the sun was and making sure that, you know, when he walks past here, his shadow is going to fall on me. As his shadow on them, I believe that it was a point of contact where they release their faith.

Just like the woman (Luke 8:41-48), when Jesus was on his way to the house of Jairus, whose daughter had died and the woman grabbed hold of the hem of His garment. Jesus said who touched Me? Peter said, Lord, are You kidding? I mean people are shoving and pushing all around. What do You mean, who touched You? I mean everybody is shoving. And the Lord said, no, I perceived that power had gone out from Me. And the woman, trembling, came and knelt and she confessed. This twelve years of hemorrhaging. She said I knew if I could just touch the hem of Your garment, I would be whole. And Jesus said, woman, go in peace, your faith has made you whole. Because the moment she touched, the hemorrhaging stopped. But it was having set a point of contact to release the faith. *I know the moment I touch Him...*, you know. And the faith was activated. And the faith being activated, she was healed. Now she could have said many different things. She could have said in her mind, the moment He looks at me. The moment I can catch His eye, I know I'll be healed. She could have been walking around, you know, trying to catch the eye of Jesus, you know. She could have said many different things, but it was the idea of a point where faith was to be released.

And this shadow of Peter had created that point where faith was released. The moment his shadow fell, there, wow, I'm healed. So not that there was something spiritual or all about Peter's shadow. It was just a matter of faith. I think that that is true today in many cases. People's faith is built up by these faith healers to believe that the moment that "brother healer" lays his hands on me. And they build this up. Now, I'm not saying right or wrong. I'm just saying that faith does work. It works. It brings salvation. By grace you are saved through faith. It brings healing. The prayer of faith shall save the sick. The Lord shall raise them up.

When I was living in Tucson in the very early years of my ministry, I was in his my early twenties, I moved into this subdivision. Next door lived a captain in the Air Force with his wife, Jan, a very personable couple. Our driveways were side by side. According to the psychological studies, if your driveways are side by side with your neighbor, you are going to get acquainted with them. It's interesting, they have had psychological studies, where you live, where your driveway is and all. They can tell which neighbors you are going to be friendly with and which ones, you know, you won't really know too well. It all depends on where your driveway is. But we did get acquainted, whether or not is was driveways. Jim had been a professor at Cornell. He was in the reserves and had been called to active duty. They had three beautiful little blond daughters. At the time Kay and I had three children. So you know, what do you do? Well I'm a pastor, you know. Oh, you know, and all of the questions that go with it. So one evening, Chuck Jr. was not well. He was having blood in his stool. I went off to church. It was a Sunday evening. Kay stayed home with the children. Jan came over and said you need to call the doctor. Kay said no, we have prayed for him and all, you know. Oh, but that is pushing it, you know, you should take him to a doctor. Kay said no, we believe that the Lord can heal him. So we just trust the Lord. The next morning Chuck Jr. was out playing with the kids. Jan was amazed that he was well and fine and all. So she called me over and said, tell me more. So we shared with Jan and she accepted the Lord. She said well, I want to give my life to Jesus. She accepted the Lord. Well her husband was an agnostic. So she wanted to wait for the right timing to share with him the fact that she had received Christ. She just wanted to wait for the right time and right mood and all. When her husband Jim came home from the air base that evening, the daughters came in and they were jumping around, Mama are you going to tell Daddy what happened when Chuck came over this afternoon, you know? So Jim said to her, what the h___ goes on when I'm not home, you know? So she had to share with him. So Jim started talking with me and Kay. We gave him a book, "That Ye might Believe" by Henry Morris that had just been published. The result of it was Jim started reading it. He couldn't put it down. He called me the next morning. He said I finished the book at two o'clock and I know you'll be interested, I was on my knees when I finished. Jim accepted the Lord.

Later I got the most beautiful letter from him after he was transferred to Alaska. He said Chuck, you don't know what receiving Jesus Christ has meant to me. I used to say that children were the scourge of the

earth, I hated my own little daughters. But I can't wait for them to come on up. I just miss them so dreadfully! Oh, Christ has just changed my life so completely. It was just beautiful to see what God had done.

But, Jan, most people in Tucson in those days, you only lived in Tucson because you had to because of your health. They didn't have air conditioning perfected. If you had asthma or something. Most people had asthma who were living in Tucson. And so Jan very outgoing kind of a person, the lady over the back fence, Jan would talk to her all the time. The lady had asthma. She would get out her little atomizer and so forth. So Jan said look you don't have to do that. This guy next door here, he's a preacher and he prays for people and people are healed. You don't have to have that anymore. You know, come on over to the house. I'll call him over and he'll pray for you. So Jan called me and told me the story. I went over and prayed for her and God healed her. So Jan started bringing all the asthmatic neighbors in and God was healing them. She called me up and said Chuck, I just got a call from my girlfriend. She's on the way to the hospital to have an operation. I told her don't go to the hospital, come to my house. Let my neighbor pray for you. So the gal came by and Jan called him over. We went over and prayed and the Lord healed her. She went to the doctor. They looked at her, gave her another examination. They said well you are all right. You don't need the operation. I mean it was exciting. I had never seen anything like that before. I was certain it was not my faith. It was Jan's faith. I mean she had seen the work of God and just had that tremendous faith that if Chuck just prays for you, you are going to be healed. She would build the people up, you know. She would tell them that all of the neighbors had been healed of asthma and it was exciting because God was honoring the faith of this woman. They were trying to give me the credit, but I knew that it wasn't my faith, but God had just really given Jan tremendous faith.

So here was this anticipation, this expectation, the releasing of faith as the shadow of Peter would fall on the people. ¹⁶*Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.* I mean this is powerful stuff that is going on!

¹⁷*Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees)* The Sadducees were the materialists. They did not believe in spirits, angels or the resurrection. They were purely materialists. *and they were filled with indignation,* In the King James it is translated as jealousy when they saw all of the people that were receiving the Lord and all. They were jealous, angry, too. ¹⁸*and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.* ¹⁹*But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,* ²⁰*"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."* It's interesting how the angels assisted in jail breaks. This happened to Peter on another occasion, we'll find it a little further on in Acts when Herod stretched forth his hand against the church and killed James the brother of John. When he saw it pleased the Jews, he imprisoned Peter intending to bring him forth and kill him also. And how that in the night the angel of the Lord came to Peter and said to fasten his sandals. We're getting out of here. The angel led Peter out. The gates opened of their own accord and let Peter out.

Then with Paul it worked a little differently. God isn't bound to one particular pattern. With Paul He shook the prison and shook the walls down. This led to the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

Pastor Chuck has very interesting story on this subject. His father was a tremendous witness for Jesus Christ. He was a sales engineer for the Southern Counties Gas Company when they lived in Ventura. He later got into real estate. His dad was sort of considered to be the chaplain of the Ventura County Jail because he would go up every Sunday and have services for the prisoners there. One Sunday his dad was teaching about how God got Peter out of jail, you know, so the following Sunday morning, when they pulled up to church, there was a guy dressed quite smartly. He came up to the car and opened the door for the family. They had never seen him before. He said, you're Mr. Smith? He said, yes. Do you go up to the

jail? He said, yes. I came to church this morning. I wanted to go to church with you this morning. His dad also had the gift of hospitality, so he invited him home after church for dinner. The guy began to tell his stories. They were pretty exciting stories for little kids, robbing banks and all this kind of stuff, jail breaks out of some of the major prison. They were sitting there wide eyed, listening to the stories of this man. So his dad fixed him a room in the garage. He lived with them for a while. The man then went on up to San Jose where, anyhow after he left. Pastor Chuck's dad went to the sheriff because the man had escaped so many different jails in so many states. He asked the sheriff, I'm curious about this fellow Jimmy Reynolds, why is it that you released him? He said, Mr. Smith that was a mistake. The trustees type up the cards. On the upper right hand side when we have a prisoner that we need to hold, we type "hold" up there. The trustee thought it didn't look neat up there so he typed it further down. As we were going through the cards we didn't notice that there was a "hold" down lower. We didn't see it in the corner, so we released him.

But Jimmy told his dad that he had been sitting in the back when he came to the prison the last Sunday when he was there. I didn't come out but I heard you talking. So he said, after you left, I had been listening. I asked the cell mate there next to me, did you hear what this guy said? He said that Jesus got these guys out of jail. He said, now I've done a lot of prison breaks but this is a new one. He said let's make a deal. Let's ask God to get us out of here. And if God gets us out of here, we'll go down to that guy's church next Sunday. And the other fellow, his name was Hertz, he was the town drunk, the judge decided to throw the book at him, but on Wednesday the judge relented and so they came in Wednesday and told Hertz that the judge had commuted his sentence and that he was free. Then it was Sunday morning. They had roll call, Jimmy Reynolds? Yep. Report to the office. You are a free man. It was a mistake. It was one of those things, I mean, God has different ways.

With Paul, He shook the prison down. With Peter they just let him out. So the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth. Then he said go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all of the words of this life. Oh, this is a glorious life! The life in Christ, unequalled! Share it with the people. All the words of this life.

²¹*And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.* ²²*But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,* ²³*saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"* ²⁴*Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.* They were wondering just how far this was going to go. How many are going to hear about this one.

²⁵*So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"* ²⁶*Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.* ²⁷*And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,* ²⁸*saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"* Notice the things that he said. First of all you filled Jerusalem with your doctrine. Jesus said you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in Judea. They have now witnessed in Jerusalem. According to the testimony of the high priest, they filled the city with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Isn't that a tremendous accusation? Don't you wish we could be charged with that? You know, brought before the judge and what's the charge? You've filled the city of Santa Ana or you've filled Orange County with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. All right, you know!

The second thing is that you bring this Man's blood on us. Back in Matthew 26:25 we are told that when Pilate was being pressured by the Jews to a judgment that he knew was not fair, his Roman sense of justice was being violated because he knew that Jesus was innocent. So he finally ordered a basin to be brought and publicly, ceremonially, he washed his hands. He said, look, I am washing my hands of this case. I am innocent of the blood of this just person. I want you to see to that. And they cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children." Now they're upset because the Apostles are declaring that they were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. Now you intend to bring this Man's blood on us. Well, they had said that. They said His blood be upon us and our children.

Peter is not going to back down. ²⁹*But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought (the word ought there is actually must) to obey God rather than men. There is no choice. We must.*

³⁰*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.* ³¹*Him God has exalted to His right hand* Peter had told them that earlier. In the last chapter at the first arrest and arraignment, but Jesus said to his disciples that you are going to be brought before the judges, before the magistrates. Don't make any forethought what you are going to say. You will be brought before kings and all. Don't take any forethought. In that hour the Holy Spirit will give you the words. And it will turn to you for a testimony. Or it will give you an opportunity to testify. So every time they were brought before the judge, man, they would just give a testimony. They would preach the gospel to them. Look at Paul. How he did that too when he was in court. Every time, man, he would just tell the story of his own conversion and what God has done, you know, for him. Transformed him. Turned him around, you know. So they used it as an opportunity to share the gospel. Jesus had said it will turn to you for a testimony. It will give you the opportunity to testify. *to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*

³²*And we are His witnesses to these things, (This is what God has done and we are witnesses of it.) and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."* So we are bearing witness through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit with the miracles that are being done. The healings, all of these are the Holy Spirit's witness that Jesus is alive. That God raised him from the dead. Now remember that they didn't believe in resurrection.

So ³³*When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.* (They actually decided these guys have got to go.) ³⁴*Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law (a doctor of the law, a noted Hebrew rabbi, famous. Paul was a part of his credits, declared that he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, in his schooling there in Jerusalem. Paul was a student of Gamaliel.) held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.* ³⁵*And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. As far as these men are concerned. They were talking about killing them.* ³⁶*For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.* ³⁷*After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.* ³⁸*And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;* ³⁹*but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God."* Now in spite of this, Saul who was there in the counsel because he was one of the voting members of the Sanhedrin, hearing his professor giving this sagacious advice, still determined to stamp out the church and to fight against the church. Persecuting those that called on the name of Jesus, forcing them to blaspheme and yet fighting against God. When the Lord finally stopped him on the road to Damascus, He said it's been hard for you to kick against the goads.

⁴⁰*And they agreed with him* (to the saying of Gamaliel, it made sense) *and when they had called for the apostles* (you see, they sent them outside when Gamaliel said I want to talk to you) *and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.* ⁴¹*So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.* Isn't that something? They rejoiced! Now if you were beaten because you were witnessing for Jesus Christ, what would you do? You would probably go, well, that's the end of that, man. I never do that again. But they were rejoicing! They said, Oh, Lord, man, you counted us worthy to suffer shame for You! Lord, You are so good! How do you stop those kind of men? Well, you don't. You can't. Threats, beatings, you can't stop these kind of men.

⁴²*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.* Unstoppable! Next week as we move into chapter six, as I said, we will get into some of the problems that arose over the communal attempts of the early church.

Father, we give thanks to You now for Your Word. Lord, teach us. Let our hearts be open. Father, we pray that You will grant to us greater faith. God, keep us from any kind of hypocrisy, pretense, trying to appear to be something we're not. Lord, we do pray that You will give us the boldness that we need to proclaim Your truth. And Lord, help us that we won't be guilty of the folly of fighting against You. But when You speak to our hearts on issues, help us obey. Help us to surrender. These things Father, we desire and we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.