

Have you dared to join “them”?

Acts 5:12-16

1 Nov 2015

CONTEXT

Before we engage the text we need to have in our minds the two immediate preceding events that Luke brought to our attention. **The first event** is the introduction to us of Barnabas. Son of encouragement - this faithful servant of the Lord goes out and sells a property and brings the proceeds and lays them at the feet of the Apostles for them to manage...

Barnabas is also the Christian exemplar who gives not only of his wealth but also of himself, in that he encourages those around him. I said a couple of weeks ago, **this is the man I aspire to be...** to be generous and encouraging IN Christ, for Christ's people, to the honour of His Name.

But then...then, Barnabas is contrasted with Ananias and Sapphira. They sell a piece of property, but instead of giving it all to God, they conspire behind the scenes and agree **to lie to the Apostles** about how much they sold the property so then they can make themselves look good with their giving....

they want to use their offering **as a way of praising themselves, rather than praising God...**

The Lord is quick with His judgment and immediately when their lie is exposed they fall dead.

- Barnabas is the exemplar of the Christian...Ananias and Sapphira the opposite, the contrast to the example...**And God** demonstrates His Holiness by showing that the penalty of sin is death...

And not even the people in the church are exempt from the penalty of sin!

MAIN POINT

I want to know what this verse means. What does it mean when it says;

1. The rest dared not join them?

There are two ways of understanding verse 13.

1. **One way** is to understand that **the believers** were so afraid of what would happen to them if they stood alongside the apostles as they carried out their ministry – that they dared not join them!

- After all, the apostles have already been **arrested once** and had to stand before the religious and political council which then threw in jail. **And so if the believers of the time** would associate with the apostles they too could be thrown in jail.
- What's more...we have heard from the previous 11 verses, that God took the lives of Ananias and Sapphira for lying to God the Holy Spirit,
- It is a display of how God takes sin seriously...So that even as a believer your actions and the state of your heart is examined God and your very life depends upon it.

You can see why many believers may have not dared join the apostles...

And the second way of understanding this verse;

2. Is that Luke is **pointing us back to Ananias and Sapphira** and how the Lord dealt severely with them, and **so unbelievers** were too afraid to commit to the Lord. For the same reasons I just gave - they too would come under the strict judgment of God.

Both understandings are acceptable. I on the other hand don't want to take one interpretation over the other. Because **I think what we see is both;**

I believe that the holiness of God and His holy presence with His **perfect justice** and the **threat of imprisonment** would have

repelled many believers and unbelievers from **joining** with the apostles.

I also lean this way that this verse applies to **both believers and unbelievers** because of verses 5 and 11 in our chapter, we read;

Acts 5:5

5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and **great fear** came over all who heard of it.

Therefore the death of Ananias and Sapphira brought fear on all who heard of it. There is no distinction there...and in verse 11...we see a combination;

Acts 5:11

11 And **great fear** came over the whole church, **AND** over all who heard of these things.

Thus the fear of God came upon both the church...AND...anyone who heard of these things.

So there is fear in the hearts of everyone who heard of what is required in the presence of God; whether you were a believer or unbeliever its says that **fear would have come upon you!**

There is another reason why I think that this verse applies to both unbelievers and believers...and because of the use of the word “join”.

Acts 5:13

13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem

THE WORD JOIN

This word “join” is not usually used to describe the conversion experience.

But it denotes;

- 1.** to be united **to** or **with** someone...
- 2.** It means to stay near...
- 3.** to cling to....
- 4.** Its meaning refers to geographical and personal proximity....

In other words...it means **to be associated** with...Its why the NASB translates it this way;

Acts 5:13

13 But none of the rest dared to associate with them;

So whether we think it is unbelievers or believers Luke is talking about...there were many that just did **not dare associate with the apostles** because they were afraid that their lives would be turned inside out by God!

But what does it say about these people...about the people that didn't want to;

- join,
- cling
- associate with the apostles...?

Acts 5:13

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

These people didn't want to associate with or join the apostles but they regardless thought highly of them.

Acts 5:15

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.

These people didn't **want to associate with or join the apostles** but they believed in the power coming through the apostles, so much so they superstitiously believed in the power of Peter's shadow! They dared not join them, **but they were sure that they wanted to receive from the power of God!**

They dared not join them... **and yet God** still displayed His sovereignty with the growth of the church!

Acts 5:14

14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord,
multitudes of both men and women,

But why? Why do some dare join and others just will not even dare?
What is it within us that we shrink back?... we dare not commit in
these troubling times...we see brothers and sisters who buck to the
face of secular adversity and ...**WE DARE NOT JOIN THEM**....

What is it with **unbelievers** who will not come to the Lord? They see
His great signs and wonders, **they even chase shadows**, and they
will still not dare join? Why?

3 REASONS

1. We are too concerned what the world will think of us and how we will be treated.
2. The second... we are afraid that God will make us do something radical or something we don't want to do – we just won't enjoy life then.

The third reason is what feeds these other 2.
We dare not join with others in Christ...

When we fear God in the wrong way and our sin paralyses us.

Verses 5 and 11 says...**great fear came upon the church** and anyone
that heard what God had done!!!

We should fear God...But the fear of God does not stop us joining His
people...that's why verse 14 is so liberating...that even though many
dared not join.... even though they feared the Lord!

MORE than ever believers were added to the Lord!

They feared the Lord but they still came to Him!

THIS IS FEAR

Fear of the Lord is a **knee shaking reverence**, but it is NOT a **terror**
or **dread** of your King! It is a fear that compels you to bend the knee

in prayer, but it does not make you **cower from your** heavenly Father!

REASON

And the reason I believe we fear God wrongly is because of our overhyped up sin! We give sin too much power.

We have talked up sin so much we have smothered the gospel!

Yes sin is deplorable, but you have forgotten the One who conquered that sin for you and His power...?

You think your sin bad? Well you should meet the one, who calls himself the dread warrior who conquered that sin for you. You think your sin **heinous**? Well according to God, it is **forever removed** from you! –

when you battle sin – when you think your sin too much – you come here..

Psalm 103:10-13

10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

You know why God doesn't deal with you according to your sin because **my Lord has victory** over of that sin of yours....

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those **who fear him**;

This is not a terror of Him...He has just told us he doesn't deal with us according to our sin... and now it says that He loves those who fear Him. You revere God? Well then He loves you.

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Did you catch that?

12 as far as the east is from the west, **so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**

This means that God takes our sin away from ourselves. You know why? Because our first verse said He doesn't deal with us according to our sin...because Jesus has taken that already...and God knows that the only remaining obstacle to our joy in Him, is ourselves...

In Christ we are no longer under condemnation...

Romans 8:1

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

But you see the one that keeps punishing us is ourselves, **NOT GOD!** thus God needs to grab that **confessed sin** that is taken in Jesus and throw it as far as the east is from the west from our own lives so **that we will no longer fear God wrongly** – by thinking He still aims to punish us for our sins - nor will we be paralysed by our sin...

But we will dare join with others in Christ as forgiven and righteous ambassadors called to fight the good fight!

You preach the gospel to yourself!!!!

Look how Paul did it!!

Romans 7:22-25

22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,
23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.
24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Here comes the gospel!!! The power!!

25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

And you know what the very next verse is???

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus – ROM 8:1

- This is how you preach to yourself!!!