

**Your Arms are too Short**  
**The Disciples - Appeaser, compromiser, straddler, or sold out**

**Introduction:**

1. Turn your Bibles to **Acts 5:12** – **today we will look at the rest of Chapter 5.**
2. Sometime ago, I came across a sermon from the 19th century entitled, “*Your Arms Are Too Short to Box with God.*”
3. That phrase captivated me.
4. I picture human beings trying to fight God.
5. When we consider the immeasurable power of Almighty God, by which He spoke the world into existence, it always amazes me that anyone will try to fight God.
6. When we consider the immeasurable power of Almighty God, by which He spoke the world into existence, it always amazes me that anyone will try to fight God.
7. Then evil entered when Satan thought that he could fight God and win.
8. Satan and a third of the angels rebelled against God – they lost that battle and were thrown from heaven to earth.
9. Tragically, Adam, representing the entire human race, joined Satan in his rebellion against God as he sought to oppose God.
10. Thankfully, God was not done with the human race and so in His mercy sent His son into the world to redeem us and restore us into a love relationship with Him, like what He had purposed for Adam and Eve.
11. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commissioned His followers to make disciples of all nations by the preaching of this gospel message
12. But Satan does not easily give up ground.
13. In **Acts 5**, we see the Sanhedrin is assembled to fight against Jesus’ followers who are spreading the gospel in Jerusalem and beyond
14. The Book of Acts is given to us so that we’ll be faithful in our generation and, in a similar way, that we will have a spirit-empowered audacity and a love of souls, a love of other people, a willingness to suffer.

**The Spirit’s Power in Audacity:**

1. **Acts 5** is a demonstration of the Spirit’s power given to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost - **Acts 1:8** “***You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses ....***”
2. Throughout the **Acts 5** account, we’re going to see how bold and audacious the apostles really were.
3. ***It reminds me of the proverb that says the wicked flee, though no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.***
4. Wouldn’t you love that to be true of you - that you, through Spirit-empowered boldness, have the chance to lead someone to Christ, perhaps even this week

**II. The Spirit’s Power in Miracles:**

1. **Verse 12**, “***The apostles perform many miraculous signs and wonders among the people, and all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade.***”
2. A few verses later, **verses 15 and 16**, it says, “***People brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats, so at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he***

***passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed."***

3. The Spirit is at work in the apostles doing extraordinary things, signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit.

4. The miracles also display, as they did in Christ's time, God's saving intention toward a sinful and sorrowing human race.

5. The miraculous deaths of Ananias and Sapphira are an aberration.

6. Jesus came into the world to save sinners, not to kill them.

7. ***John 3:17*****"For God did not send a son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."**

8. Jesus said, **"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."** **Matt 9:12.**

9. They performed many miraculous signs and wonders, and they did it in Solomon's Colonnade in the Temple area.

10. The sick were brought into the streets and laid on beds and mats, and it says so that perhaps Peter's shadow might fall in some of them as he passed by, which is remarkable.

11. **Verse 16** says that huge crowds of people were healed and demons were driven out.

12. Jesus had the power to drive out demons, and now the apostles are doing the same thing

13. We don't really think about demons or angels, but demons and angels are every bit as active now as they ever were in Jesus' day.

### **III. The Spirit's Power in Holiness:**

1. We also see the Spirit's power in holiness.

2. We're told in **Acts 5** that great fear seized all who heard what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

3. Terrible fear came on because they knew the sins of their own hearts.

4. They hear the story about Ananias and Sapphira, and people were afraid to join them.

5. **Verse 14**, **"Nevertheless, more and more people, or men and women, believed in the Lord and were added to their number."**

6. It seems like an open contradiction. **Verse 13**, **"no one dared to join them."** **Verse 14**, **"more and more were joining them."**

7. I believe that if the church is committed to holiness in the fear of the Lord, that church has evangelistic power.

8. The clearest example of this is Mount Sinai, when God descends in fire from heaven to the top of the mountain and gives them the law, the Ten Commandments, and the ground is shaking, and there's terror and fear in all the hearts of the people.

9. We're made to be near God, and the truth is God is a consuming fire, and a holy church is an awesome weapon in the hands of God, and the Holy Spirit is given to work that in us.

10. I think maybe one of the most important prayers there is in the Bible is **Psalm 139:23-24**, **"Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there's any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."**

### **IV. The Spirit's Power in Overcoming Persecution:**

1. The rest of Acts 5 is the Spirit's power in overcoming persecution.

2. A great measure of the Spirit's power in making us witnesses, "***you receive power when the Holy Spirit comes to you***", is our ability to overcome our fear of persecution and to overcome our fear of reprisals in sharing the gospel.
3. It begins with the jealousy of the Jewish leaders in **verse 17**, "***Then the high priest and all his associates who are members of the party of the Sadducees were filled with jealousy.***"
4. **Verse 18 says they were arrested.**
5. Likewise. Paul himself was imprisoned again and again for the gospel.
6. He says in his final epistle in **2 Timothy 2**, "***I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal, but God's word is not chained.***"
7. There's no way they're going to be able to stop the Word from spreading.
8. God's word continues to spread for twenty-plus centuries, as it transforms lives, God's word does. It saves souls. It cannot be chained.
9. Peter and John are in prison, but God dispatches an angel during the night who opens the doors of the jail and brings them out.
10. The angel then instructs them to "***Go stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life.***"
11. What a morning that must have been because **verses 21-26** describes what happened
12. **Look at 27-28**, "***Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' the high priest said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.'***"
13. Again, we see the amazing boldness of the apostles here.

#### **V. The Spirit's Power in Proclamation:**

1. **Verse 29-32**, "***Peter and the other Apostles replied, 'We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior, that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.'***"
2. Do you realize how utterly fearless these men are at this point?
3. Look at what they said, "***We must obey God rather than men.***"
4. And as the angel said, "***Go stand in the courts and tell the people the full message of this new life. Don't hold anything back. Enable your servants – Acts 4:29 to speak your word with great boldness.***"
5. The word "***boldness***", the Greek word "***pareisia***", means "***all the words.***"
6. As Paul says in **Acts 20:27**, "***I have not shrunk back from proclaiming anything to you that would be helpful or the whole counsel of God.***"
7. As Paul says in **Acts 20:27**, "***I have not shrunk back from proclaiming anything to you that would be helpful or the whole counsel of God.***"
8. Not holding anything back – we tell it like it is – the unvarnished truth
9. **Verse 33** explains the reaction of the Sanhedrin: "***When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.***"
10. One thing I've learned is that there are two categories of anger, righteous and unrighteous.
11. Now this man, Gamaliel, speaks up - **Verse 34-39**, "***But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law who is honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered***

*that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the men of Israel, 'Consider carefully what you intend to do to these men.' Some time ago, Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about 400 men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 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 are scattered. 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, but if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men, you'll only find yourselves fighting against God."*

12. Look at **verse 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."*

13. *"We might be fighting against God."*

14. Look at how the account ends and their reaction to the flogging.

15. **Verse 41-42**, *"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering, disgrace for the name. Day after day and the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."*

16. This is the relentless courage, the perseverance, the love that the Spirit worked in these men.

17. Sermon of the Mount, *"Blessed to you and people insult you, persecute you falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

#### **VI. Applications:**

1. The first application is clearest as always: come to Christ.
2. My final application is to ask God to give you this kind of boldness.
3. Ask God to make you bold this week.