

# Acts #5: Reality of the Holy Spirit in the Church

by Stephen Kaung

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*The Holy Spirit's presence and authority are essential for the church to be a living organism, and submitting to Him is crucial for individual believers to experience His discipline and correction.*

**Duration:** 52:32

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Church Unity"

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## Description

In this sermon on Acts chapter 4, verse 32, the preacher emphasizes the unity and selflessness of the early believers. They shared everything they had and lived as one family, guided by the grace of God. The preacher highlights the contrast between a genuine desire to serve and the desire for praise and recognition from others. He warns against being motivated by the praise of man rather than the leading of the Holy Spirit. The sermon also mentions the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit in the church, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and submitting to His guidance.

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## Transcript

O Lord, we do desire to see thyself in thy temple, like thy servant Isaiah. Lord, if we see thee, we will cry out, we are undone. We will experience thy cleansing, we will hear thy voice, we will see thy holiness.

Lord, we just place our desire before thee, and ask thee to reveal thyself to us afresh this morning through thy word. Lord, we do desire to worship thee, seeing who thou art and what thou art. We come at this time into thy hands.

We ask thee to anoint us with thy spirit, that whether we talk or we hear, we may be quickened by the same spirit. Thy spirit, holy spirit, in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Will you please turn to the book of Acts? Acts chapter 4. We'll read from verse 32 and go on to Acts chapter 5. Acts chapter 4 verse 32. And the heart and soul of the multitude of those that had believed were one. And not one said that anything of what he possessed was his own.

But all things were common to them. And with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

For neither was there anyone in want among them. For as many as were the owners of lands or houses, telling them, bought the price of what was sold, and laid it at the feet of the apostles. And distribution was made to each according as anyone might have need.

And Joseph, who had been surnamed Barnabas by the apostles, which is being interpreted son of consolation, a Levite, sacred by birth, being possessed of land, having sold it, bought the money and laid it at the feet of the apostles. But a certain man, Ananias by name, the sephara, his wife, sold a possession and put aside for himself part of the price, his wife being also being privy to it, and having brought a certain part, laid it at the feet of the apostles. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled thy heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Spirit, and put aside for thyself a part of the price of the estate? What it remained, did it not remain to thee? And sold, was it not in thine own power? Why is it that thou hast purposed this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied to man, but to God.

And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and expired. And great fear came upon all who heard it. And a young man, rising up, swapped him up for burial.

And having carried him out, buried him. And it came to pass about three hours afterwards that his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. And Peter answered her, Tell me if ye gave the estate for so much? And she said, Yes, for so much.

And Peter said to her, Why is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Lo, the feet of those who have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. And she fell down immediately at his feet and expired. And when a young man came in, they found her dead.

And having carried her out, they buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon all who heard these things. That's all we'll read for this morning.

Last night we mentioned how the early church was in full possession of this wonderful name of our Lord Jesus. That name was very real, living, powerful in their midst. Even though they did not have other things, yet they did have the name of the Lord Jesus.

And in that name, great things were done. But in order that this name might be used rightly and backed up by the one who had that name, there needed to be a committal on their part. They were a people fully committed to that name.

They had no other name. They owned no other name but that one name. And because of that, when they used that name, the one behind that name honored it.

So brothers and sisters, in a sense, this is the real meaning of the church. What is the church? The church is a people who are gathered together unto that name. Who have put them under that name.

Under the authority of that name. And the Lord says, there am I in the midst of them. Now this morning we would like to go on and see another aspect of life in the early church.

And that is the reality of the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit in the early church. In a sense, you know, on the day of resurrection, when our Lord Jesus met his disciples, as we call it in John chapter 20, the Lord breathed into them and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. For the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit is given.

And those who believe in him, they receive the Holy Spirit into them. The Holy Spirit comes into them to dwell in them. He is the comforter within them.

Now brothers and sisters, everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus has the Holy Spirit in him or in her. The Holy Spirit has come and dwelt in us. He is the permanent resident in us.

He is the comforter, the guardian, the patron, the one who is fully responsible for us to bring us into God's full purpose. We each have the Holy Spirit dwelt in us. And he is in us forever.

He never leaves us nor forsakes us. But on the day of Pentecost, something more happened. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came.

And they were all baptized into one body. In other words, on the day of resurrection, the Holy Spirit came and dwelt in each believer. But on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and dwelt in the body.

I hope you can see the difference here. The Holy Spirit not only dwells in each one of us as the comforter, as the guardian, but the Holy Spirit dwells in the midst of us, representing the head. Now this happened on the day of Pentecost.

In typology, as you look back, you find that after Moses had built the tabernacle, in Exodus chapter 40 you remember, everything was made and he set up the tabernacle. He placed all the pieces of furniture according to God's order in that tabernacle. Everything was finished.

And then the cloud of God filled the tabernacle that even Moses could not remain there. In other words, God came in and took possession of that tabernacle. The presence of God was there.

And after Solomon finished the temple, you remember he prayed. And after he finished his prayer, the glory of the Lord came and filled the temple. And even the priests could not remain there.

They had to beat the retreat. Why? Because the glory of the Lord filled that house. In other words, God came and took possession of that temple.

And the same happened on the day of Pentecost. Here you find that living house was formed. The spiritual house, that temple, that living temple of God was formed on the day of Pentecost.

And immediately after that was formed, the Holy Spirit came and filled the house. He took possession of that spiritual house. What? If the house was there, the tabernacle was ready, or the temple was built and there was no cloud, there was no glory.

And you know this happened. In Ezekiel you will find, Ezekiel saw in a vision, the glory of the Lord gradually left the temple. How the glory of the Lord came out of the holiest place and rested on the threshold of the temple, as if he lingered.

And then he left, went out of the east gate and stayed on the mountain opposite. The glory of the Lord left the house. And when the glory of the Lord left the house, that house was emptied and finally destroyed.

Brothers and sisters, what is the church? The house of God. It is the dwelling place of God in spirit. As you read Ephesians chapter 2, you will find that the house is built as a habitation for God in spirit.

This is the real meaning of the church. The Holy Spirit dwells in the church. Not only in each member of the body individually, but in the body as a whole.

He comes in to take possession of the body and he is the body. The authority of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, that makes the church.

Whether it is the church of God, it depends mainly on this. Is there the presence and the authority of the Holy Spirit? If the Holy Spirit is not present, if his authority is not respected, if it is a matter of human opinion, if it is a matter of human decision, human activity, everything arranged by man, it becomes an organization and no longer a living organism. How we need to go back to the early days and try to see what is the real meaning of the church of God.

What makes this different from all the other groups or associations is the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit. And this is demonstrated very vividly in the fifth chapter of the book of Acts. You know sometimes when we read the Bible, when we come to the book of Acts chapter 5, our feeling is, what a tragedy.

It was a tragedy. And probably our whole mind will be occupied with that tragedy. And we wonder why.

This particular incident was recorded. For what purpose? There is a positive lesson in it. Because the whole thing illustrates one point and that is the presence and the authority of the Holy Spirit in the church.

You know when the Holy Spirit is present and when his authority is known, things will happen one way or the other. And when things are not happening, something is happening. So let's go into this incident and try to look at it positively, not negatively.

You know and try to learn some lessons through it. You know in those days the Bible said the heart and the soul of the believers were one. The grace of God was such that they were all delivered from that native, natural instinct of self-possessiveness.

As we mentioned before, you know, within us there is an instinct. And it is the natural instinct of self-possessiveness. We like to possess something.

We like to say that this is mine. That makes us somebody, important, secure. But the grace of God was such that they were totally delivered from this native instinct of self-possessiveness.

No one says this is mine. They shared all things in common. They really lived as members of one body.

It was not a communal life. It was a community life. They lived as one family.

They lived as members of one body. But, of course, you do not see in it they lived a communal life. Why? One brother said because God emphasized very much on family life.

In a communal life you do not have family life anymore. The family life is broken. But family is a unit before God.

So even in the life of the church, the family life is not broken. The family life supports the church life, but does not in any way get rid of by the church life. So we say it is not a communal life.

It is a community life. They really live as one community. They love one another.

They share everything. Nobody says that you don't. They really live in the resurrection life of our Lord Jesus.

No wonder the apostles were so mighty in testifying to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. You know, when you are speaking of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, where is the power behind your speech? You look at these brothers and sisters. They literally live in resurrection ground.

On resurrection ground. This was humanly impossible. They were delivered from self-possessiveness.

They share everything. They love one another. They were on resurrection ground.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was demonstrated by the life of these people. So no wonder the apostles were mighty in testifying to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. And some people who had land, houses, they saw the need of the other members.

They sold their land and their houses and laid the money at the feet of apostles to be distributed to each according to need. And there was one man, a Levite, a serpent by birth, Joseph. He came.

He was selling barnabas. And he sold his land, his possessions, laid it at the feet of apostles just as an example of what had happened. He was moved by the love of Christ.

He was willing to share everything with his brothers and sisters. But after he did that, he seemed as if the apostles commanded him for what he did. Everybody said, well, look, this brother, a good brother, who really loved the Lord and loved the church.

So another brother heard about it, Ananias. He saw Barnabas, what Barnabas did. And he saw the reaction of the people towards Barnabas.

And secretly he desired to receive the same praise, glory from man. He was not moved by the Spirit of God. He was just attracted by the praise of man.

He wanted to have a place in the church. He wanted to show off himself. And people would say, now this is a marvelous brother.

And in order to do that, he sold a possession. Now I wonder, I do not have the time to look into it, into the original manuscript. I notice in my version it says he sold a possession.

And I wonder if he had more than one possession. So he sold a piece, a piece of his possession. No.

You see, he was not ready to part with all his possessions. But in his desire to have the praise of man, he was willing to sell a possession, a piece of his property. And his wife was with him.

He planned it with his wife. He sold it. He put aside a part of the purchase of the money.

And he brought the rest to the feet of the apostles. He thought he was just dealing with them. He didn't know that he was dealing with the Holy Spirit.

All he saw was man. So he came, laid the money at the feet of the apostles, waiting to be praised by all the brothers and sisters. And got that praise that he was such a marvelous brother.

But Peter, not because he had the sixth sense. No. Peter as used as a vessel of the Holy Spirit.

Ask him, is that all? Is that what you get when you sold your land? Peter said, why do you deceive the Holy Spirit? You are not deceiving man. You are deceiving the Holy Spirit. When the land is in your hands,

the property is in your hands, it's yours.

Nobody forced you to sell your land, to sell your property. It's all voluntary. As moved by the Holy Spirit.

When the property is yours, it's yours. Rightfully yours. There is nothing wrong to hold it.

And even after you have sold it, the money is yours. You don't need to give any. If you keep all, nothing wrong with it.

Now why is it you want to deceive? Peter said, you are lying to the Holy Spirit. You are lying to God, not to man. And when Peter finished his word, Ananias fell down and died.

The reality of the Holy Spirit was such that Ananias met the Holy Spirit, not just meeting man. So the young man came, got him up and buried him. Now someone asked the question, why did they not notify his wife first? It seems humanly something was missing, you know.

When they bury their husband, surely they should notify the wife first. They just bury him, that's all. I don't know.

I don't know why. But after three hours, the wife came, Sepharoth came. And Peter asked, is this the money, all the money for that property? And Sepharoth, he didn't know what had happened.

So he said yes. This is all. So Peter said, why do you play together with your husband? You are deceiving the Holy Spirit.

And the result was, she collapsed and died. So the young man came back and saw the wife was dead, set her right here up and buried her with her husband. And when the whole church heard about it, there was fear among them.

Now brothers and sisters, not looking at this incident negatively, but try to look at it positively. When the presence of the Holy Spirit is very real, when His authority is really manifest in the church. You know, we are all dealing with the Holy Spirit and not with man.

Today, people can do anything, almost anything they like in the church and nothing happens. Is it that the time has changed? No. The real reason is, today the Holy Spirit is not so manifest in the church.

If He is here, if His presence is living, if His authority is respected, you will find. He will manifest Himself in many ways. We are not dealing with man.

We are dealing with God, with the Holy Spirit in the church. There will be His discipline. He will make Himself known to us in many ways.

But today, just, just, just look. People seem to be able to get by with everything in the so-called church. And nothing happens.

That doesn't mean that we have done everything right. That only means that even though we have the Holy Spirit in us, yet the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church is missing. It is almost like the scene in Ezekiel.

The glory of the Lord gradually left the temple. It has become an endowment and man takes over. Brothers and sisters, I feel there is a very deep lesson for us to learn here.

As we are approaching the end, this is the time that we should look back and see the real meaning of the church. Why should there be a gathering of God's people? Why should this be an assembly? Why? It is the house of God. It is for God to dwell by His Spirit.

It is that the Holy Spirit may make His presence known, that His authority may be. Brothers and sisters, the more we come together and learn to submit ourselves to the name of the Lord Jesus, you will find the more manifest will be the Holy Spirit. Many things you can get by before.

Many things you can do before. And nothing happens. But when the Holy Spirit is very real and living in the body, anything that touches that body touches the Holy Spirit.

So whenever we see the Holy Spirit begins to discipline, we should bow our heads and worship the Lord. This is not something bad. This is something good.

If the Holy Spirit were not there that day, Ananias and Sapphira will not die. Nothing will happen. And they will be looked upon by the other brothers and sisters as marvelous brother and sister who love the church so much.

You will have a completely different picture. And this is what you see today. A completely different, but we thank God, the Holy Spirit was present.

And He manifested Himself on that day. That kept the church living. That gave the meaning to the church.

There was a holy fear because they were in the presence of God, in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Dear brothers and sisters, is the Holy Spirit so real and so living today with us? Maybe as individuals. More or less, if you live before God, you know how real He is.

You know He draws in you. You know that if you say anything, if you do anything wrong, how He checks you, how He restrains you. And if you continue to do that and you are stubborn, He disciplines you.

You know that. You know that the Holy Spirit is very real in your individual life. What if the Holy Spirit is not real in your individual life? Your whole Christian life is ruined.

Is ruined. If we live our life on this earth, you know, just do things that we think is right or good or beneficial to us, profitable to us, and we can just get by and do things, you know. You think that that's good, but we know that's tragic.

A lot of people complain and say, why is it that other people can and I cannot? Look at other Christians. They can do many things. Has nothing happened to them.

They can get by very easily. But if I do the same thing, God can come upon me. Why is it that God is so strict with me? Oh, if His hand would just go back and leave me, that I can do what others do.

Brothers and sisters, you do not know what we are talking about. Other people may, but you cannot. Because you are specially loved by Him.

The closer you live with the Lord, the stricter He will be with you. He will manifest Himself to you. He will not let you go your way.

He holds you to Himself. He will transform you. He will discipline you.

He will chasten you. Now, if this is true individually, how much more it ought to be true completely. The Holy Spirit is not less present in the church than in individual believers.

The authority of the Holy Spirit should not be less manifest in the church than in individual believers. If this is true with us individually, how much more truly it will be accomplished. But do you see it today? You may see the working of the Holy Spirit in individual lives.

Thank God for that. But how much do you see the presence and the authority of the Holy Spirit in the church completely? This is time, I believe, that we should really go back to the Word of God and see that this is real completely. When God's people come together, they dare not, they cannot do anything they like.

Why? Because the Holy Spirit is there. We are not dealing with man. We are not dealing with one another.

We are dealing with the Holy Spirit. He is in charge. He manifests Himself.

And if we do anything, we know. Now this is very manifest in the early church. And I do believe as God's people really come together, put themselves under the name of the Lord Jesus, the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit will be manifested.

That's a sign that the Lord is there. It is not a bad thing. And thank God for that.

Now this is the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit in the church. Everybody knows the Holy Spirit is here. They are afraid.

They dare not do anything. Now as you read on, you will find that the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit is not only known in the church, it is also known in the world through the church. You go early into the temple, to the temple area and preach the gospel.

So early in the morning they all went to the temple area and started preaching. And the next morning the whole council gathered. They sent men to get them out of the jail.

The door was closed, everything was secure, but there was no gospel there. And they were perplexed. And then someone came and said, these people, they were preaching in the temple.

So they tried to get them and said, did we not forbid you to preach in that name? They thought they were dealing with innocent people, unlearned, unlettered, never been to school, fishermen and so forth. And yet you'll find Peter answered, to obey you are to obey God. We must obey God.

What we have seen and heard we must preach. We are bearing witness and the Holy Spirit bears witness. The result was the council didn't know what to do with them.

They threatened them, but they couldn't do anything. It was the council against the Holy Spirit in the church. What if the Holy Spirit was not there? These fishermen were no match to the council.

The council were the highest authority. They could crush them easily, crush the church very easily, being innocent men. Certainly they would be frightened, but they didn't know they were dealing with the Holy Spirit in the church.

The authority of the Holy Spirit was very real in the lives of these people. On the one hand, they were submissive to the council. When they were arrested, they did not resist.

When they were put in prison, they went to the prison. They were submissive. They did not rise up and rebel, and revolt.

They were very submissive. Even when they talked to the council, their spirit was submissive, because the council was the authority on earth. And yet they obeyed God.

They obeyed God, because the Holy Spirit was in control of their lives. And when the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives, no man can believe it. The world does not know what to do with the church.

Not because the people there are clever or different. No. It is because of the Holy Spirit.

So brothers and sisters, I do hope that through this incident, in this chapter, God will show us something very real. Is the Holy Spirit real in our lives? Are we so live under His authority that even the world has to recognize it, and they find that they are no match to the Holy Spirit? We are now approaching the end, and you find history repeats itself. The world is trying to crush the church.

So it is not because of the Holy Spirit in the church. The church will, long ago, be eliminated. But no matter what the world does, you find a testimony.

On the one hand, there is submission to authority. On the other hand, there is obedience to God in the power of the Holy Spirit. So we do believe, no matter what happens, the church will live.

The testimony of Jesus will be maintained until He returns. So I hope this morning, just briefly, we fellowship on this point, and as a kind of encouragement to us, that we need to look to the Lord, that His Holy Spirit may be very, very real, and living in the midst of His people. Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, our hearts do rejoice, because Thy Holy Spirit lives not only in each of us individually, but Thy Holy Spirit lives in the church.

This is Thy habitation. Thou art able to manifest Thyself in many ways, proving that Thou art living, Thou art here. For our Father, we do pray that more and more Thy people will enter into this reality.

We pray that as we come together, it may not be just a formality, but we really put ourselves under Thy Name, and Thy Holy Spirit is in charge. We know that Thou will manifest Thyself in glory. We ask Thee that we may learn these lessons, and take these lessons to heart.

May this be. May the presence and authority of the Holy Spirit be known among Thy people everywhere. To Thee we give the praise and the glory, in the Name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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