

What Obedience Can Do

Acts 5:1–16

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are with the growing community in Jerusalem. The first Christian community remains a model, as they prayed, followed the apostles' teaching, served the poor, and celebrated in their homes. We are seeking to enter into the experience of the resurrection with them and to join in their mission as witnesses.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from the Book of Acts

But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Listen, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole Church, and upon all who heard of these things.

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high honor. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Reflection

God does not want a part of our lives. He wants the whole thing.

In our last reading, we were introduced to Joseph, whom the apostles named Barnabas, meaning son of the Father. A true son is obedient to his Father, as Jesus showed us in his life and death. Joseph came and put everything at God's feet and followed him completely. We can contrast this with Ananias and Sapphira, who provide us with a cautionary tale. The early community was not socialist, as Christians did not have to sell their goods and entrust them to the Church. That was a voluntary choice. Ananias and Sapphira, for some reason, wanted to appear as if they had given God everything. However, they were holding their material possessions back for themselves, and they lied about it to the apostles.

This shows us the danger of disobedience, which is truly deadly to the soul. God does not ask all of us to sell all our possessions, even if some people do so for God. He does ask us to obey the commandments, which gives us life and shows that we are willing to follow God as our creator and Lord. We do not deserve heaven, although God gives it to his sons, who obey him and give him their love, living and dying in communion with him.

The apostles do truly amazing things in Acts of the Apostles. They are not able to do these things on their own. We see in the Gospels what they are like on their own: they don't understand, they vie over who is the greatest, and they run in fear when their master is arrested. They are different in Acts, because they are living in obedience to God, allowing the gift of the Holy Spirit to transform them and to act through them.

What could your life be like if you opened it up completely to God in obedience and love? In your prayer today, ask the Lord to help you place your life completely before him as a gift—with no restrictions.

Week 2 Action Items

Build your new prayer routine.

Try a Trappist or monastic beer for celebration.

Keep your fraternity strong.