SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 5

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God protects His young church from a lie inside and from persecution outside, and He does it by His holiness and His power. The apostles answer the rulers with one rule — obey God rather than men — and go home flogged and rejoicing, still preaching Jesus as the Christ.

00 The Text

ACTS 5 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,

2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?

4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

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

6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."

9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well."

10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

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

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

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

14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,

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.

16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and △ they were all being healed.

17 But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and ⚠ they were filled with jealousy.

18 They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.

19 But during the night △ an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,

20 "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."

21 Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought.

22 But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back,

23 saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside."

24 Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.

25 But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

26 Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).

27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,

28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

30 "△ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.

31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand △ as a Prince and a Savior, ☆ to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, ☆ whom God has given to those who obey Him."

33 But when they heard this, they were ⚠ cut to the quick and intended to kill them.

34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.

35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men.

36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.

38 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;

39 but △ if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found ⚠ fighting against God."

40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, ☆ rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “kept back some of the price” — Sin / warning
- **v3** “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” — Sin / warning
- **v4** “You have not lied to men but to God” — God — His character & actions
- **v9** “put the Spirit of the Lord to the test” — Sin / warning
- **v12** “many signs and wonders” — God — His character & actions
- **v12** “with one accord in Solomon’s portico” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “multitudes of men and women” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “they were all being healed” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “they were filled with jealousy” — Sin / warning
- **v19** “an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison” — God — His character & actions
- **v20** “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “we found no one inside” — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** “you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching” — Time / place / contrast
- **v29** “We must obey God rather than men” — Command / instruction
- **v30** “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “as a Prince and a Savior” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” — Promise / blessing
- **v32** “whom God has given to those who obey Him” — Promise / blessing
- **v33** “cut to the quick” — Sin / warning
- **v39** “if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them” — God — His character & actions
- **v39** “fighting against God” — Sin / warning
- **v41** “rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” — Promise / blessing
- **v42** “they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “great fear” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v18** “prison” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v28** “name” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

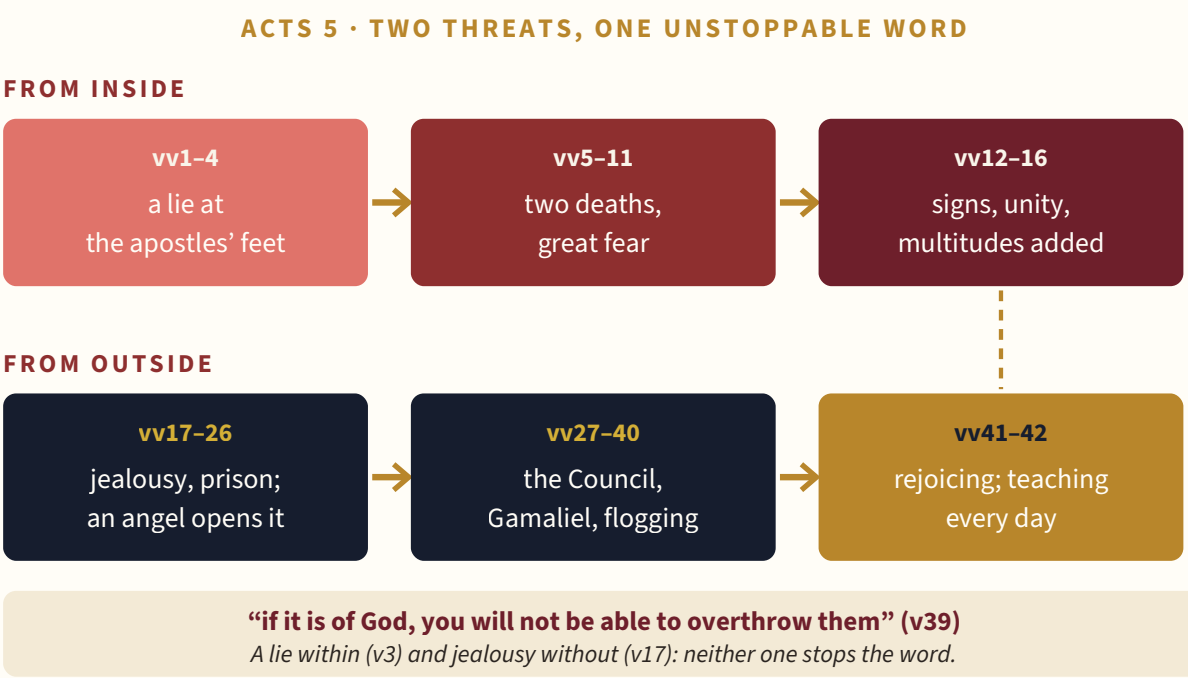
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:11

"And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things."

FIGURE · TWO THREATS, ONE WORD



Read the top row (trouble inside the church) and the bottom row (trouble from the rulers): each threat ends with the church growing and the word still preached.

Setting. Jerusalem, soon after Pentecost. The believers share their goods and lay the money at the apostles' feet (4:32–37); Barnabas has just sold a field. Ananias and Sapphira sell property and keep back part of the price (vv1–2). Later the apostles meet in Solomon's portico in the temple (v12), are jailed by the high priest and the Sadducees (vv17–18), are freed by an angel (v19), and stand before the Council, the Sanhedrin (vv21, 27).

Structure:

- vv1–11 — **the lie:** Ananias and Sapphira keep back some of the price (vv1–2); "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (v3); "You have not lied to men but to God" (v4); Ananias dies — great fear (vv5–6); three hours later Sapphira repeats the lie and dies (vv7–10); great fear on the whole church (v11).
- vv12–16 — **the signs:** many signs and wonders; all with one accord in Solomon's portico (v12); outsiders keep their distance but hold them in high esteem (v13); multitudes added (v14); the sick laid in the streets for Peter's shadow; all healed (vv15–16).

- vv17–26 — **the prison:** the high priest and the Sadducees, filled with jealousy, jail the apostles (vv17–18); an angel opens the gates — "Go, stand and speak" (vv19–20); they teach at daybreak (v21); the officers find the prison locked, the guards at the doors, and no one inside (vv22–24); "The men … are standing in the temple" (v25); brought back without violence (v26).
- vv27–32 — **the Council:** "We gave you strict orders" (v28); "We must obey God rather than men" (v29); God raised Jesus, exalted Him as Prince and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness (vv30–31); we are witnesses, and so is the Holy Spirit (v32).
- vv33–42 — **the counsel:** cut to the quick, they intend to kill them (v33); Gamaliel: Theudas, Judas of Galilee — "if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (vv34–39); flogged and released (v40); rejoicing to suffer shame for His name (v41); every day, temple and house to house, preaching Jesus as the Christ (v42).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "men" ×12 — vv4, 6, 10, 14, 25, 29, 34, 35 (×2), 36, 38 (×2).
- "people" ×9 — vv12, 13, 16 (×2), 20, 25, 26, 34, 37.
- "God" ×7 — vv4, 29, 30, 31, 32, 39 (×2).
- "price / land / property" ×7 — vv1, 2, 3 (×2), 8 (×3).
- "death / dead / breathed his (her) last / killed / perished" ×7 — vv5, 10 (×2), 30, 33, 36, 37.
- "prison / jail / prison house" ×6 — vv18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25.
- "teach / teaching / teacher" ×6 — vv21, 25, 28 (×2), 34, 42.
- "hear / heard / hearing" ×6 — vv5 (×2), 11, 21, 24, 33.
- "temple" ×5 — vv20, 21, 24, 25, 42; "apostles" ×5 — vv2, 12, 18, 29, 40.
- "found / find" ×5 — vv10, 22, 23 (×2), 39; "stand / standing / stood" ×5 — vv20, 23, 25, 27, 34.
- "Council" ×4 — vv21, 27, 34, 41.
- "fear / afraid" ×3 — vv5, 11, 26 ("great fear" ×2 — vv5, 11).
- "filled" ×3 — vv3, 17, 28; "rose up" ×3 — vv17, 36, 37.
- "Spirit" ×3 — vv3, 9, 32; "name" ×3 — vv28, 40, 41; "feet" ×3 — vv2, 9, 10; "buried" ×3 — vv6, 9, 10.
- "obey" ×2 — vv29, 32; "lie / lied" ×2 — vv3, 4; "overthrow(n)" ×2 — vv38, 39.

Contrasts: Barnabas's gift ⟷ Ananias's gift (4:36–37; 5:1–2). Your own ⟷ lied to God (v4). Men ⟷ God (vv4, 29). None dared associate ⟷ multitudes added (vv13–14). A locked, guarded prison ⟷ no one inside (v23). "Strict orders" ⟷ "we must obey God" (vv28–29). You put Him to death ⟷ God raised Him up and exalted Him (vv30–31). Of men, overthrown ⟷ of God, unstoppable (vv38–39). Flogged and shamed ⟷ rejoicing and worthy (vv40–41).

Shape of the chapter: two attacks and two outcomes. A lie from inside is judged (1–11) and the church grows (12–16); a fist from outside closes in (17–40) and the apostles leave rejoicing and keep preaching (41–42). Peter's short sermon (29–32) sits at the center.

Chapter theme (my words): God guards His church with holiness inside and power outside. The Spirit cannot be lied to, the prison cannot hold the word, and the Council cannot overthrow what is of God — so the church fears Him, obeys Him rather than men, and counts it joy to suffer for His name.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:31

"He is the one whom △ God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, ☆ to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

FIGURE · GAMALIEL'S TEST

GAMALIEL'S TEST · ACTS 5:35–39

THEUDAS v36	**claim** "claiming to be somebody" **following** about 400 men **end** killed · dispersed · "came to nothing"
JUDAS OF GALILEE v37	**claim** "in the days of the census" **following** "drew away some people" **end** perished · "scattered"
JESUS' APOSTLES vv30–32	**claim** "God raised up Jesus" **following** "multitudes of men and women" (v14) **end** "you will not be able to overthrow them"

Henry approves the counsel; Guzik calls it fence-sitting that ignores the evidence;

Sproul: "That was good advice but not perfect advice."

Gamaliel sets the apostles beside two failed movements; notice that only the third has a risen leader, and that our teachers weigh his counsel differently.

What exactly was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? Not keeping money — Peter says the land and the price were under their control (v4). The sin was the pretense: passing off part as the whole to gain a reputation like Barnabas's. Sproul calls it a conspiracy and says they lied "not only to the Apostles and the church but … to the Holy Spirit." Guzik: "Pride corrupts the church more quickly than anything else." Henry: "Satan filled his heart."

Why such a severe judgment? Guzik with Bruce compares Achan (Joshua 7): at the threshold of a new work, God shows His holiness. Luke's verb "kept back" (*nosphizomai*) is the Greek Old Testament's verb for Achan's theft. Guzik adds that the greater wonder is how often God delays judgment. And Peter pronounced no sentence — "Peter did not pronounce a death sentence on Ananias" (Guzik); God acted.

Were they saved? Our teachers will not say. Guzik: "It is impossible to say for certain, for only God knows," and he cites the "sin leading to death" (1 John 5:16) and Boice: "True Christians do not lose their salvation by sinning." Henry treats the deaths as a warning to all who profess more than they possess. I leave their souls with God and take the warning for mine.

Is the Holy Spirit God? Verses 3 and 4 settle it: lie to the Holy Spirit = lie to God. He is a Person who can be lied to (v3) and put to the test (v9).

What about Peter's shadow? Luke reports what the people hoped (v15), not that the shadow healed. Guzik: "there was no power in Peter's shadow itself"; the healing in v16 was the Lord's. Henry: "Peter comes between them and the sun, and so heals them" — but he gives God the credit.

When may a believer disobey authority? The same word "obey" (*peitharcheō*) commands obedience to rulers in Titus 3:1. Guzik: "submission on the human level is never absolute." Sproul reads v29 less as civil disobedience than as bold preaching of Christ. The line is narrow: when men forbid what God commands — here, preaching Jesus — we obey God and take the consequences, as the apostles took the lash without resisting.

"A Prince and a Savior … to grant repentance to Israel" (v31). Christ rules and rescues (*archēgos*, *sōtēr*). Repentance is His gift (Spurgeon: "the Saviour can give thee this by his Spirit"), offered first to the nation that crucified Him. I believe that offer to Israel stands, and that "all Israel will be saved" when the Deliverer comes from Zion (Rom 11:26).

Was Gamaliel right? Here our teachers differ. Henry praises the counsel. Sproul: "That was good advice but not perfect advice" — what is of God cannot be overthrown, but "It is not true that if something is not of God, it fails." Guzik calls it fence-sitting: "Success is not the ultimate measure of truth." The evidence was already before them; neutrality toward Christ is not safe ground.

Why rejoice after a flogging? Because shame for His name is an honor (v41). Henry: "Reproach for Christ is true preferment." Sproul: "The only glory we have is the glory of the cross." Jesus had said it first (Matt 5:11–12).

Word study (Greek):

- **kept back — *nosphizomai* (G3557):** embezzle, pilfer; Acts 5:2, 3; Titus 2:10; LXX Joshua 7:1 (Achan).
- **lie — *pseudomai* (G5574):** to the Holy Spirit (v3) = to God (v4).
- **fear — *phobos* (G5401):** "great fear" vv5, 11.
- **church — *ekklēsia* (G1577):** first named in Acts at 5:11.
- **shadow — *skia* (G4639):** the people's hope, not the power (v15).
- **jealousy — *zēlos* (G2205):** "filled with jealousy" (v17).
- **obey — *peitharcheō* (G3980):** Acts 5:29, 32; 27:21; Titus 3:1.
- **Prince — *archēgos* (G747):** pioneer, founder; Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2.
- **Savior — *sōtēr* (G4990):** He rescues as He rules.
- **cross — *xylon* (G3586):** "tree"; Deut 21:22–23; Gal 3:13.
- **repentance — *metanoia* (G3341):** a change of mind, given by the exalted Christ.
- **cut to the quick — *diapriō* (G1282):** sawn through; 5:33; 7:54.
- **fighting against God — *theomachos* (G2314):** only here.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The first named church learns God is holy** — *ekklēsia* and "great fear" (v11).
2. **The sin was the pretense, not the price** (v4).
3. **Achan's verb** — *nosphizomai* (Josh 7:1).
4. **Lying to the Spirit is lying to God** (vv3–4).

5. **Pride corrupts fastest** (Guzik).
6. **Every heart is full of something** — vv3, 17, 28.
7. **The genuine exposes the counterfeit** (Sproul).
8. **Obedience to men is real but not absolute** (*peitharcheō*).
9. **No Saviour without the Prince** (Henry; Spurgeon).
10. **Joy under the lash** — counted worthy (v41).

Cross-references: Lev 10:1–3; Josh 7:1–26; Deut 21:22–23; Ps 2:1–3; Matt 5:11–12; Luke 12:1–2; John 10:23; Acts 2:37; 3:11, 15; 4:18–20, 32–37; 7:54; 22:3; 23:8; 26:14; Rom 11:26; 13:1; 1 Cor 11:31–32; Gal 3:13; Eph 4:25, 30; Phil 2:9–10; Titus 2:10; 3:1; Heb 2:10; 12:2, 28–29; 1 Pet 4:14; 1 John 5:16.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:41

"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, ☆rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

FIGURE · TWO GIFTS AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

TWO GIFTS LAID AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

	BARNABAS · 4:36–37	ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA · 5:1–10
sold	"a tract of land"	"a piece of property"
brought	"the money"	"a portion of it"
kept back	nothing claimed as his own	"some of the price" (v2)
laid it	"at the apostles' feet"	"at the apostles' feet"
known as	"Son of Encouragement"	"lie to the Holy Spirit" (v3)
the end	trusted, sent, used (9:27; 11:22)	carried out, buried (vv6, 10)

The land was theirs to keep (v4). The sin was the pretense: "You have not lied to men but to God."

Compare the two columns: the outward act is the same; what differs is what was kept back and what was pretended.

Sin to confess — wanting the image without the reality. Ananias wanted Barnabas's reputation. I know that pull: to look like the man who has it together, to tell my story in group a little better than it was, to let people think I gave or prayed or stayed clean more than I did. Guzik is right: "It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality." I name that before God this week, because it is Him I would be lying to (v4).

Truth to face — God is holy, and He is near. "Great fear came over the whole church" (v11). I don't want a God I can manage. The fear of the Lord is not terror of a God who hates me; it is the awe of a man who knows who is in the room. That fear is what made the church safe, and strangely, attractive (v14).

Command to obey — obey God rather than men. Most days obeying God and obeying my boss, my parole officer or the law are the same thing, and I should be the most respectful man in the room (Titus 3:1). But when men tell me to be silent about Jesus or to do what God forbids, my answer is Peter's. I will settle that now so I don't have to decide it under pressure.

Promise to trust — a Prince and a Savior who gives repentance. I can't produce repentance by trying harder. Jesus is exalted to give it (v31). Spurgeon: "the Saviour can give thee this by his Spirit." So I ask Him for it, and I take Him as Prince too — not just the One who rescues me, but the One who runs my life.

Example to follow — rejoicing under the lash. The apostles went home bleeding and rejoicing, and they were back the next morning (vv41–42). For the men I serve, the shame might be a cellmate's mockery or a family that doesn't believe they've changed. That shame, carried for Jesus' name, is an honor. Keep teaching. Keep preaching. Every day.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Ananias wanted the reputation Barnabas had without paying what Barnabas paid. Where am I tempted to look more spiritual than I am? (5:1–4; 4:36–37) *It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality (Guzik).*
2. Peter says the land was Ananias's to keep (v4). Why is a lie about a good deed so serious to God — and what lie of mine needs to come into the light? (5:3–4; Luke 12:1–2) *You have not lied to men but to God.*
3. "Great fear" came on the church (vv5, 11), and yet the church grew (v14). How can the fear of God make a church more attractive instead of less? (5:11–14; Heb 12:28–29) *A pure church is a powerful church.*
4. Where in my life — work, family, the yard, the unit — does obeying God put me against what men expect of me? How do I tell real conflict from mere stubbornness? (5:29; Titus 3:1; Rom 13:1) *Submission on the human level is never absolute (Guzik).*
5. Jesus is "a Prince and a Savior" (v31). Do I want Him as Savior but resist Him as Prince? Where? (5:30–32; Phil 2:9–10) *No having Christ as Saviour unless we take Him for our Prince (Henry).*
6. The apostles went home bleeding and rejoicing (v41) and were back at it the next day (v42). What shame for Christ have I been avoiding, and what would "every day" faithfulness look like for me? (5:40–42; Matt 5:11–12) *Reproach for Christ is true preferment (Henry).*

Worship. The Holy Spirit is God, and He sees the heart. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom men hanged on a tree, and exalted Him to His right hand as Prince and Savior. Locked doors are nothing to Him. No council can overthrow His work. He gives repentance and forgiveness, and He counts flogged men worthy to suffer for His name.

Prayer. Holy Spirit, You know everything I have kept back. Forgive me for wanting to look better than I am, and make me honest all the way down. Lord Jesus, You are my Prince and my Savior; give me repentance, and rule what You have rescued. When men tell me to be quiet about You, give me Peter's answer, and give me the apostles' joy if it costs me. Keep me teaching and telling about You every day. Amen.

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