

Acts 5:17-42 Dangerous Courage For Christ

I. Delivered To Return To Danger (17-21a)

A. The Apostles are Imprisoned (17-18)

1. The Rulers Were Filled With Jealousy (17)

- a. The Apostles' following is steadily growing
- b. The Rulers of Israel probably feel like they are losing their prestige and their traditions
- c. The Rulers could be faced with a mob if this continued

2. The Rulers Imprisoned the Apostles in the Public Jail (18)

- a. This time all the apostles are arrested, not just Peter and John
- b. This time they are placed in the public jail, not just held in the Temple courts
- c. They are being treated as common criminals

B. The Apostles Are Delivered to Preach Again (19-20)

1. An Angel Releases Them From Prison (19)

- a. An angel opens the doors and lets them out
- b. Remember that this is not always the case
 - i. Paul is not miraculously released from jail in Acts 23:10-11; 23:35; or 28:16
 - ii. God sovereignly decides when He miraculously intervenes

2. The Angel Commands Them to Go Back and Preach in the Temple (20)

- a. They were not freed to go hide in a safe place until the persecution blows over
- b. They were not freed to be comfortable and free from their suffering
- c. They were freed to go right back to where they were arrested and start preaching again

3. The Angel Commands Them to Preach "All" the Words of This Life

- a. They were not to alter the message in order to escape persecution
- b. They were not to leave any part of the gospel out
- c. They were to continue the convicting preaching that got them arrested in the first place

C. The Apostles Immediately Obey the Command (21a)

- 1. They waste no time in returning to the Temple to preach
- 2. They ignored the Sanhedrin's command to stop preaching and obeyed God's command to continue preaching publically

II. Boldly Defying Ungodly Commands (21b-33)

A. The Apostles are Returned to Their Trial (21b-26)

1. The Apostles Are Discovered Missing (21b-23)

- a. The Sanhedrin Convened and Sent for the Prisoners (21b)
 - i. The High Priest and Elders enter the Temple at dawn to begin their business
 - ii. They were probably 1000-1500 feet away from where the Apostles were teaching
 - b. The Officers Could Not Find the Prisoners (22)
 - i. The Guards are sent to collect the prisoners
 - ii. The doors of the jail are still locked
 - Did the angel re-lock the cell?
 - Did the angel blind the guards or make them fall asleep?
 - iii. The guards outside the doors are still at their posts
 - iv. They would have believed the prisoners had just disappeared
 - c. The Officers Reported the Missing Prisoners to the council (23)
 - i. Possibly the first time they ever “lost” prisoners
 - ii. It would have been hard to go and report this to the Sanhedrin
2. The Apostles Are Brought Back For Questioning (24-26)
 - a. The Rulers Fear The Effect of Their Escape (24)
 - i. The Rulers were stunned
 - ii. The Rulers seem to be more worried about the effect their escape would have on the people than whether or not God was with them
 - iii. The Rulers are still holding onto their position and traditions rather than seeking truth
 - b. The Prisoners are Found Teaching in the Temple (25)
 - i. What a comical scene – they were 1500 feet away preaching just like the day before
 - ii. They were indeed boldly defying the command to stop teaching in Jesus’ name
 - c. The Apostles are Politely brought Back to the Council (26)
 - i. This time the guards are sent to arrest them but they don’t use force
 - ii. They are no doubt worried that the people would riot against them
 - iii. Perhaps the guards also had heard about the death of Ananias and Saphira and were a little afraid
- B. The Apostles Offer Their Defense (27-33)
 1. The Apostles Are Charged (27-28)
 - a. They are Charged with Disobedience 27-28a)

- i. The Rulers want to know why they disobeyed the command to stop preaching
 - Did you notice that the high priest refuses to pronounce the name “Jesus?”
 - ii. Strange that they don’t ask how they escaped the prison
 - iii. Their authority has been directly challenged by the Apostles’ disobedience.
 - iv. Notice here that they are actually being accused of a crime with a penalty of death
 - b. They are Charged with Accusing the Rulers of Murder (28b)
 - i. The High Priest asserts that the Apostles are seeking revenge for Jesus’ death
 - He believes the Apostles are inciting the crowds to rebel and punish the rulers for killing Jesus
 - The irony is that Jesus’ blood was most certainly on their hands – in Matt. 27:25 they Jews said, “Let his blood be on us and our children”
 - ii. The High Priest is certainly mistaken
 - The apostles would offer them forgiveness
 - They did not want revenge
- 2. The Apostles Present Their Case (29-33)
 - a. We Obey God Rather Than Man (29)
 - i. When men’s laws command us to disobey God – we have a duty to disobey
 - ii. Peter asserts that their command was in direct defiance of God’s Word
 - b. They Accuse The Rulers of Murdering the Messiah (30)
 - i. By saying “The God of our Fathers” Peter is letting them know that the gospel is not something new – it is the fulfillment of all God’s promises to Israel
 - ii. God fulfilled His word through the prophets and the Jews murdered the Messiah sent to save them
 - iii. NOTICE: Peter does not back off his message even in the face of the most powerful rulers – He gives the same convicting message
 - iv. Peter not only says they murdered Jesus but hanged Him on a tree
 - This is a reference to Deut. 21:22-23

- Those stoned to death in ancient Israel were hanged on a tree demonstrating the curse they were under
 - The cross is often called a tree in the NT because Jesus took the curse of sin upon himself
 - Peter's point here is that they treated the Holy one of God as one who is cursed (in a sense he was but that does not remove their culpability)
- c. God Exalted Jesus and Offers Forgiveness (31)
- i. Peter asserts that God vindicated Jesus as Messiah by raising Him from the dead
 - ii. Peter says Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God
 - Make sure you remember that Jesus is God – the second person of the trinity
 - When Peter says God (the Father) exalted him to his right hand – he means that Jesus (after taking on human flesh and humbling himself) is exalted to sit on the throne as the God-man
 - iii. Jesus is “Prince” (leader) and Savior of Israel – He is the true ruler not the Sanhedrin
 - iv. Through Jesus God is offering even the Sanhedrin forgiveness rather than vengeance
 - How amazing that God would offer forgiveness even to them
 - Jesus came not to condemn but to save
- d. The Apostles and the Spirit are Witnesses (32)
- i. Peter claims that God's fulfillment of the Promises to Israel only comes through their preaching and teaching
 - ii. The Apostles and the Holy Spirit have borne witness that the Jews did murder Jesus, Jesus has been exalted, and forgiveness is available
 - The Holy Spirit has testified by filling those who have trusted Jesus
 - The Holy Spirit has testified by miraculously working through the believers
 - iii. The Sanhedrin cannot refute the charges – the Apostles stand before them as witnesses
 - iv. The Sanhedrin does not have the authority to supersede God's commands to the Apostles
3. The Apostles Defense Infuriates the Sanhedrin (33)

- a. The Sanhedrin is visibly angered by Peter's sermon
 - b. The Sanhedrin decides that these men will be executed
- III. Delivered to Joyfully Suffer (34-42)
 - A. Gamaliel Suggests A Pragmatic Course (34-39)
 - 1. Gamaliel Counsels Caution (34-35)
 - a. Gamaliel Orders the Apostles Outside (34)
 - b. Gamaliel Cautions the Sanhedrin
 - i. He literally says they should watch themselves concerning these men
 - ii. He attempts to calm down the entire situation by being pragmatic
 - c. Gamaliel is a well respected Pharisee who is the teacher of a man named Saul of Tarsus who would later become the Apostle Paul
 - 2. Gamaliel's Argument (36-39)
 - a. Previous Rebellions Accomplished Nothing (36-37)
 - i. Theudas Failed in His Messianic Movement (36)
 - Theudas was a man claiming to be Messiah and led a large crowd to the Jordan saying he could divide the river by his word.
 - He was killed and the people dispersed by the Romans
 - ii. Judas the Galilean Failed in His Messianic Movement (37)
 - Judas led a revolt against paying tribute to Caesar.
 - His revolt was also crushed by Rome
 - iii. Gamaliel may be suggesting that if they would just leave these men alone, the Romans would take care of their rebellion
 - b. This Movement Will Fail If Not of God (38)
 - i. Keep Away From Them (38a)
 - ii. Their Efforts will fail if they are of man (38b)
 - c. This Movement Can't be Stopped if it is of God (39)
 - i. You won't be able to stop them (39a)
 - ii. You will be fighting against God (39b)
 - d. This may seem like sound advice, but it falls short of being biblical
 - i. Yes, those not of God will not prevail but that judgment may not come until the end
 - Muslims, mormons, and others are growing rapidly but are not of God
 - There will come a day when they will be destroyed – but it may be on the last day

- ii. Gamaliel was not defending the Apostles, he was defending the Sanhedrin. He didn't want them to get involved and face the wrath of the people. Let the Romans do that.
- iii. Just because a movement grows does not mean it is from God and just because a movement is composed of just a remnant doesn't mean it is not from God

B. The Apostles Continue Unhindered After Persecution (40-42)

1. The Apostles Receive Punishment With Joy (40-41)

- a. They Lashed Them and Set them free (40)
 - i. They were probably whipped with 39 lashes each – 13 on the front and 26 on the back
 - ii. They would have been whipped with calfskin whips
 - iii. These lashes would leave permanent scarring which would mark them in Jerusalem as law-breakers
 - iv. They would forever bear the marks of being criminals
- b. They Apostles Rejoiced being Worthy to Suffer (41)
 - i. They rejoiced that they were marked for Christ
 - ii. They wore their scars with pride that God counted them worthy to suffer
 - iii. They now bore marks on their body that showed their commitment to Christ

2. The Apostles Continue to Preach Publically (42)

- a. Notice that they kept preaching in the Temple
 - i. How much boldness would this take
 - ii. At any time they could be arrested again
- b. They also preached from house to house
 - i. Even after persecution, threats, and beatings, they continued in public
 - ii. They did no covert missions – they were openly and boldly preaching