

Jealous Persecution Overcome

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[0:00] Acts chapter 5, and we're going to begin reading at verse 12 and read through the end of the chapter. Acts chapter 5 and verse 12.

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people, and all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that 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. When the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. Go, stand in the temple courts, he said, and tell the people the full message of this new life.

[1:16] At daybreak, they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin, the full assembly of the elders of Israel, and sent to the jail for the apostles.

But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there, so they went back and reported, We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors.

But when we opened them, we found no one inside. On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what could come of this.

Then someone came and said, Look, the men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts, teaching the people. At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles.

They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. 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, he said.

[2:21] Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood. 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. When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was 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 them. Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men.

Some time ago, Thutis appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about 400 men rallied to him.

[3:26] 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 were 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 will only find yourselves fighting against God. 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. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing, because they had been

counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name.

Day after day in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

[4:29] Well, what are we seeing in the book of Acts? Well, we're seeing the Lord Jesus Christ building his church.

And every time a sinner is saved and joined to Christ, he is added to the church, the body of Christ, and the building project is going forward. But we've also seen that all hell is opposed to this building project.

We keep seeing Satan doing his utmost to stop the forward motion of the church. And we keep seeing the Savior and builder of his church thwarting the devil, overcoming his opposition, and continuing to build his church.

Through the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, through the believers. The building goes on. And today we'll even see that the Lord Jesus uses an angel, which may not be surprising to us, but that he also even uses a Pharisee to defend his church.

That is surprising. All the powers of heaven and of earth are at Christ's disposal. And he uses it for the building up of his church.

[5:53] Now, last week it was the devil's attack from within the church. Satan filled the hearts of two members of the church at Jerusalem to lie.

They lied to Peter and the church, but they also lied to the Holy Spirit. Satan was seeking to fill the early church with hypocrisy. Those who pretend to be what they weren't.

And the Lord Jesus rose up in defense of his church and struck the two of them dead. And so put the fear of God into the whole church and indeed into everyone's heart who heard about these things.

Now, in our text today, the attack on the church is renewed from outside the church. And we see Satan doing this. He hits inside and then he goes outside and then he'll be back inside.

He's bringing this offense to the church from within and then from without. He's back from without, the persecution from without.

[6:54] Indeed, we see it arising from the high priest himself of the Israelites, the supreme court of the Sanhedrin. But before we get there, Dr. Luke wants to give us another report on the health of the church.

Aren't doctors used to doing such? He keeps doing that in this letter and in this book. And we find another summary statement that tells us how the church was doing and what was going on.

These are verses 12 through 16. And as he does that, it provides an introduction into this next attack upon the church.

So what do we learn from this summary? Verses 12 to 16 of Acts chapter 5. Well, as for the apostles, they continued to perform many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.

Now, this was God's way of bearing witness that their word had the stamp of approval from heaven itself. These men were not doing these miracles on their own.

[8:00] They did them by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And God is saying, listen to the message of these men. They're bringing my message from heaven. That's what was going on with the apostles during this period of the church life.

What about all the believers? Well, we're told that they were meeting together. In the temple precincts, that area called Solomon's porch or Solomon's colonnade.

The word here for they were meeting together is literally they were meeting in one accord. And haven't we seen that in these summary statements that Luke likes to tell us that when the Holy Spirit comes in power, what he does is he brings the church into one accord, into oneness of heart and mind, as he said in the last summary.

And now he tells us again that we're meeting in one accord. And that's true in any age when the Spirit comes in power, he makes his people to walk in unity.

It's a unity that the Spirit provides. And therefore, we're to be very tender of that Spirit and to highly value it. Indeed, we're to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

[9:16] And when we don't, we grieve the Holy Spirit, whose work it is. And so all the believers were united as they met together in Solomon's colonnade.

Well, what about the outsiders, those not in the church, the general population? Well, he tells us that they continue to hold the people of the church in high regard.

They esteem them. And yet, they kept their distance too, not daring to join them. In other words, there was no bandwagon effect to join the followers of Jesus just because many were. We see that happening, don't we? Many people following Jesus. So people jump on the bandwagon when they're not sincere. They're not truly converted. No, there was no bandwagon effect.

They were held in check. Why? Why? Because of the news of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. They were seized with great fear at seeing what happens to pretenders.

[10:18] And so there's this mixed emotions toward the church people. And we can understand that. There was something alluring about these people. Their transformed lives.

Their uncommon unity. Their leaders' kindness in healing everybody that was sick. They were wonderful people.

And yet, there was something fearful about them too. Something to give them pause before insincerely joining them. Their God is holy. And he shows himself holy among them.

And we heard what he did to pretenders. Now, you might think that God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira would bring the church to a halt.

To a standstill. Nobody's going near them. But verse 14 tells us, Nevertheless, It's almost like Luke knew we would think that.

[11:18] Nevertheless, Nevertheless, Contrary to what you might expect, More than ever, Believers were added to the Lord. Multitudes of both men and women.

So the great fear that came upon the general population Did keep them from becoming false pretended converts. But it did nothing to hinder the Lord from making true converts. Multitudes were brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ. And were baptized and added to the church. So Satan's attempt to ruin the church from within by hypocrisy Was more than trumped by Jesus Christ.

Who purified his church. And then added multitudes more to it. Well, that was last week. But now Satan is not done attacking.

He's never done. He will never be done until Jesus throws him into that fiery pit Where he will be tormented forever and ever. No, he's back at it again.

[12:25] Each conversion is a life taken from his kingdom of darkness. And so he rages against Christ and his church. And he lashes back in fury.

Now he's back to the outside persecution. But it's ratcheted up a notch. Remember last time the persecution was just verbal threats. Don't you dare speak in the name of Jesus again.

And they threatened them and threatened them. Now, Satan adds physical persecution. And it's not just Peter and John.

Peter and John. But it's all twelve apostles now. And he's seeking to silence them all from talking about Jesus. So, how does Satan do this?

Well, he stirs up jealousy in the religious leaders of the Jews. And it's not hard to understand. Think of it from their perspective. The leaders of the Jews now.

[13:26] Here's this fantastic growth among the followers of Jesus. We've killed him thinking that that would end this Jesus movement.

But now look at them. At the last count back in chapter 4 and verse 4, there were 5,000 men alone. Let alone women and children that believed. And now multitudes more of men and women have joined them.

And so these religious leaders were losing lots of people to the other side as they viewed it. And then this growing group of followers of Jesus were no secret society.

They met publicly. Indeed, they met right under the nose of these religious leaders. In the temple courts themselves. Right there where the high priest and his associates were charged with maintaining the temple worship.

This was their domain. And every day they saw these swelling crowds right there in the temple precinct. As they were hanging on every word of the apostles.

[14:37] The high priest and his associates are losing influence with the people. And as if that were enough, then there was the hysteria of the masses, of the general population.

In response to the apostles' healing ministry. They came and laid their sick out in the streets. In the hope that even Peter's shadow might fall on them and heal them.

And even the surrounding towns brought their sick and demon possessed. And all of them were healed. Now how do you compete with that? They've got God on their side.

They've got supernatural powers. And we want to say, but Mr. High Priest and Sad Sadducees. That's the point. God is on their side.

And he's bearing witness to that. So stop opposing them. Stop competing with them. Lest you find yourself fighting against God himself. Why not rather recognize the hand of God upon them.

[15 : 37] And believe their God sent message about Jesus Christ. And so be saved from your unbelief. Well we know why they would not do that.

They were, that would mean humbling themselves. That would mean owning up that they had murdered God's long promised Messiah. And that they were unfit builders who had rejected the very cornerstone of this building of God.

And they were too proud for that. That would bring them down and lift up their enemy, Jesus. So instead the high priest and his Sadducee associates were filled with jealousy.

That's the language of Luke. They were filled with jealousy. Now Luke's told us a lot about people being filled, hasn't he, in this letter already. We see a pattern emerging of what fills people.

We saw the praying church in chapter 4. Filled with the Holy Spirit. So that they were enabled to boldly speak the word of God. In chapter 5 we saw last week.

[16 : 46] Ananias and Sapphira had Satan so fill their hearts with desire for the praises of men that they actually lied to the Holy Spirit. And now we see the high priest and his cronies are filled with jealousy.

Who or what is filling you? That's the question that arises from these phrases. Some people are filled with wine.

Do not be drunk with wine wherein is excess. But be filled with the Holy Spirit. Child of the kingdom. Be filled with the Spirit. Filled with his love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness.

And faithfulness and gentleness and self-control. And when we're not being filled with the Spirit. We are filled with other things.

A vacuum of the heart does not remain for long. But something will fill the heart. And here it was jealousy. A sinful envy.

[17 : 53] They were envious of the apostles growing influence and favor with the people. And they're being consistent with their character. You know, just months earlier when they crucified Jesus and brought them to Pilate to have him carry out the deed.

Even Pilate, that pagan man that he was, knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over. That same heart filled with jealousy, with envy.

They were jealous of Jesus. All the people were all excited when he raised Lazarus from the dead. They poured out of Jerusalem to welcome him as he came into Jerusalem.

Saying, this is the King of Israel. And these men were filled with jealousy. And wanted to kill both Jesus and Lazarus.

You know, when the crowds first were following John the Baptist. And one of John's disciples came to John all nervous and upset.

[19 : 01] And says, you know that man you talked about, Jesus over there on the other side of the Jordan. Well, he's baptizing over there and everybody's going over to him. As if John should be all upset about that.

And you remember John's response. He must increase. I must decrease. But when the high priest and his associates saw the people going over to Jesus.

They said, he must die that we might increase. They were filled with jealousy. And that jealousy will come out in murderous hatred.

That's the way they were with Jesus. They crucified him. Green with envy. And now that his disciples are preaching and receiving the praise of the people.

They're again filled with jealousy. What happens in your heart when you see someone getting more praise than you? What happens in your heart when someone's getting more honor than you get?

[20 : 07] When someone's more popular than you. More beautiful than you. More smart than you. More talented. More successful. Maybe it's somebody at work that was chosen for that advancement instead of you.

Someone at church that's blessed in ways that you aren't. A neighbor that gets a nicer car. Has a nicer house. Love rejoices with those who rejoice.

Love rejoices in the goodness of God that comes to other people. That's the way love is. But jealousy resents God's goodness landing upon other people.

Especially when it's more than what I have. Or it's something that I want and don't have. And that inward jealousy leads to other outward expressions of sin.

It cools relationships. We start viewing people as in competition with us. We start slandering and cutting them down. You know, somebody speaking highly of another.

[21:11] Oh yes, but did you know this about them? We just got to lower them down a notch. We're jealous. It's an inward heart attitude that must be dealt with.

So when you hear jealousy's inward voice, James says, Don't harbor it and don't deny it. Confess it for the ugly sin that it is and kill it.

James says, It's not from heaven. It's earthly, unspiritual, and devilish. You know the devil was jealous of God himself. And this is a bit of him that you have in your own heart when you are jealous of others who are blessed more than you.

Oh, where you have envy, there you find disorder and every evil practice. Where you find envy harbored in the heart, it will out in every evil practice.

James 3, 14 to 16. Unmortified jealousy ripens into all kinds of evil behavior. We saw it ripen into murder of the Son of God and it is now ripening quickly to the murder of these apostles.

[22:31] So they send the officials to arrest them. We're going to jerk them out of their pulpits and put them in prison so nobody can hear them there.

And we're going to hold them there until we can gather the Supreme Court and decide what to do with them. But during the night something happens.

The exalted Lord Jesus. He's risen. He's exalted. He's reigning on his throne. And he sees the foundation stones of his church, the apostles in prison.

And he says to one of his angels, Come here. You see those men down there? You go down on a mission of jailbreak and get them out. You know, the angels are good at that kind of thing.

We'll find one doing it in chapter 12. Getting Peter out of jail. And he did just that. He went down and he got all 12 out without being detected.

[23:36] And he gave them a message from their Savior. Go and tell. Go stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life. I want you back at your posts, man.

Go and tell them right back in the temple courts where you were and tell the people the full message of this new life. The full message. In other words, hold back nothing.

Tell them about sin. Tell them that sin will bring them to judgment. To hell. Tell them the full message. Tell them about me, the Lord Jesus.

Tell them about my incarnation. Tell them about my perfect life. My atoning death. My resurrection. My soon coming. My second coming. Tell them everything. Hold back nothing.

The full message of this new life. Christianity is more than a system of beliefs. It is that.

[24:32] But it's more than that. It's a whole new way of life. Tell them about the full message of this new life. It's new life. It's new life.

It's abundant life. It's eternal life. It's life and fellowship with God and with his son, Jesus Christ. And this life is in his son. And he who has the son has this life.

And he who has not the son has not life. Tell them that I am the way, the truth, and the life. And so at daybreak, what do they do? Right back into the temple courts.

Now, we need to understand the temple precinct was a huge, a massive area. And so at daybreak, at the very opening of the gates, they're there. These people are coming.

And they're teaching. They're teaching the people. They're going and telling, as Jesus had told them. Meanwhile, in another area of the temple precincts, there's another gathering.

[25:28] It's the gathering of the high priest and his associates. And he's called the whole Sanhedrin, the whole 70 rulers of Israel together. And they're there to decide what to do with their prisoners.

And they perhaps spoke a little while in this august meeting and then gave the order. Bring them in. Bring them in. And the officers go to the jail. And they came back empty-handed.

And they reported. We found the jail securely locked. And the guards were still standing at the doors. But when we opened the doors, there was no one inside.

Now, that's much like the sealed tomb in which Jesus was imprisoned for three days. But on the third day, an angel came down and rolled back the stone.

And when he rolled back the stone, there was no one inside. And this happens again. And it leaves the court puzzled.

[26:34] They're perplexed. They're scratching their heads. And they're wondering what this is all going to lead to. And I don't think they were expecting it would eventuate in anything good.

Where is this heading? And just as they're scratching their heads, someone runs into the group and says, Hey, look, they're right over there. They're standing in the temple and they're teaching the people again.

Go get them. So the captain and all of his officials go to collect their prisoners. But they did not use force. Why? Because they feared that the people would stone them if they did.

So highly were they regarded by the people. Now, there's humor here, isn't there? It's a strange arrest, you know?

You see these officials coming up to the apostles instead of jerking them out of their pulpits and throwing them into prison as they did the day before. Now it's, would you like to come with us to go talk to the Supreme Court?

[27:36] They did not use force. And evidently, the apostles offered no resistance and went with them. And so they're brought in before this Supreme Court.

Same court that Peter and John had appeared before in chapter 4. And the high priest is the spokesman and he's questioning them, making the charges.

We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, that you have so filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.

Did they forget that months ago they had said to Pilate, his blood be upon our heads and upon our children's heads? Oh, but now that they're being charged with that guilt, they're very uncomfortable with it.

Peter speaks for the 12 giving defense and he reminds us all of this eternal principle that must be our modus operandi.

[28:45] We must obey God rather than men. We have no option. The Greek word is a moral necessity.

We must obey God rather than men. We will obey you until your command conflicts with God's command. But then the matter is clear.

God must be obeyed. And he told us to go stand and teach. Now Peter takes the opportunity to preach the gospel once again to the Supreme Court.

And it's similar words that we heard before. He's contrasting the way God treated Jesus and the way that they had treated Jesus. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had killed. You're guilty of this man's blood. Again, we wonder who's trying who. Peter is laying a charge on them of being guilty of this man's blood, something they didn't want on their hands.

[29:47] And then he says, But God raised up the one you killed. And you killed him by hanging him on a tree. Now that was treatment reserved for the worst, for those who were viewed as being under God's curse.

But God exalted him to his own right hand as prince and savior. You said he deserves the greatest curse and disgrace of the cross. And God says he deserves the greatest honor of reigning with me right here on my throne as prince and savior.

You put him down, God lifted him up. They could not have treated him worse than they did. And yet, here is Peter holding out the gospel promise to these murderers of Jesus.

If only they will repent, even their sins of murdering the Messiah will be forgiven. If only they will repent. He offers them a pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood.

Notice Jesus has been exalted as the prince and savior. Now a prince is a ruler, a lord.

[31:03] He is lord and savior. He's on the throne as the lord and the savior. And the reason God has exalted him as prince and savior is so that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Well, not just to Israel. We'll see. He will issue a statement later on in Acts that he's giving it as well to the Gentiles. But here, isn't it not amazing that he gives forgiveness of sins to Israel?

To Christ rejecting Israel. To Christ killing Israel. To Israel who cried, crucify him. When Pilate was ready to let him go.

Even to Israel's Sanhedrin who voted thumbs down on Jesus. Crucify him. He's worthy of death. No, God exalted him to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Notice he never gives forgiveness of sins apart from repentance. These two are always found together. They're like Siamese twins. And wherever you find forgiveness of sins, you know that there is somebody who has repented and is repenting.

[32 : 22] And wherever someone repents, they always receive forgiveness of sins. These two are found together. That's why Peter said in his sermon at Pentecost to Israelites who had rejected Christ.

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Repent for the forgiveness of your sins.

You must renounce your previous thoughts about Jesus, your treatment of him and his word, and your sins will be forgiven. That was the same message of John the Baptist. He was preaching a message, a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

It's the message that Jesus himself preached and authorized and sent the twelve out to preach in Luke 24, 47. Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem.

Let's not miss the fact that forgiveness of sins is King Jesus's to give. It's a gift of Jesus to give.

[33 : 31] Forgiveness of sins. Nobody ever earns it. It's a gift he gives. And so is repentance. The very means that brings forgiveness.

That too is a gift. Do you see that? He has been exalted. Why? To give repentance and forgiveness of sins. The very grace to repent is found in Jesus.

The very ability and disposition of humility to acknowledge our sins and to turn from them. That is found in Jesus. He was exalted for this very purpose to give these rich gifts of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

True belief and true repentance. Every grace that brings us nigh without money, without money, come to Jesus Christ and buy.

So you must repent in order to be forgiven. But you say, I can't repent. And you're absolutely right. You are so in love with your sins and wedded to them. They will not let you go.

[34 : 35] Do what you might. But Jesus gives repentance along with forgiveness of sins. Go to him for both. Go to him and ask him to give what he has been exalted to give.

Repentance and forgiveness of sins. Peter closes his defense by saying, we are witnesses of these things.

And so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. Jesus chose the 12 to be witnesses to his resurrection.

They saw the resurrected Christ. But he also promised to send the Holy Spirit to also bear witness to these things. And that's what's happening here.

The apostles are telling what they've seen and heard. They're bearing witness. But the Holy Spirit is also bearing witness. How's he doing that? By the signs and miracles through these apostles.

[35 : 35] He's saying, listen, this is heaven's word to you. They're bearing witness that Christ has died and risen again, that repentance and forgiveness of sins might be given to you.

This is the God sent message, both from the apostles and the Holy Spirit. What a wonder. Salvation was offered. And yet it was flatly rejected.

In fact, when the court realized that from Peter's bold defense that he had no intention of complying with their strict orders, they flew into a rage. They were furious and they wanted to put them all to death and they planned to do so at once.

If they'll not stop their preaching about Jesus, we will. This was the fruit of their jealous hatred. They would stop them from witnessing by killing them.

Well, this time the Lord Jesus uses not an angel but a Pharisee to protect them. Strange instrument indeed. Reminds me of the time the Lord used the Philistines to save David from being killed by King Saul who was seeking him.

[36 : 55] God used the Philistines to save his King David. Now he uses a Pharisee to save the followers of his King Jesus.

Gamaliel. Strange instrument. The most prominent rabbi of the day, honored by all the people. And he stands up in the Sanhedrin and he orders that the apostles be put out for a while, that they might have a private session with the court.

And he warned them to consider carefully what they were intending to do to these men. That is, kill them. Rash decisions in the hurry of hate are rarely good ones.

Besides, a more patient tactic may win our purpose. And so he starts talking about recent events that have happened in the last 20, 30 years.

Other rebels who thought they were something and had gathered some followers around them seeking a revolt. And then what happened in each case? He was killed.

[38:05] All his followers were dispersed. And it all came to nothing. We've had a lot of these troublemakers. And they've all amounted to nothing. And from these examples, he comes to his present policy.

His hands-off policy. He says in verse 38, Therefore, in the present case, we've seen these other cases, they came to nothing. Therefore, in the present case, I advise, leave these men alone.

Let them go. For if their work is of human origin, it'll fail, just like the many before them. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men.

You will only find yourselves fighting against God. And even a Pharisee and Sadducees and high priests know that God fighters don't win. They all lose.

Now, it's hard to know what Gamaliel's motives were. What caused him to say this? I suppose I've read half a dozen ideas. He is no friend to the cause of Jesus Christ.

[39:09] He later will become the president of this wicked high court. Indeed, the Jewish history says that he devised a prayer for the extermination of the name of Jesus and his followers.

But you remember, he was the teacher of Saul of Tarsus. It was from him that Saul learned his legalistic righteousness. Was it just his mild manner?

He was a mild-mannered man. And he had an aversion to all rash decisions. Hands-off policy based on the premise that they'll just fizzle out. If you just let him.

Or as F.F. Bruce explains this one. That if you give him enough rope, they'll hang themselves. So just leave them alone. And watch them self-destruct. Or was he trying to score points for the Pharisees against the Sadducees?

These two parties had a long history of hurting or of hating each other. William Hendrickson cites an earlier Sadducean high priest who asked the Pharisees what he could do to please them.

[40:19] He's like he's exasperated. What can I ever do to please you Pharisees? And they said kill yourself. Well that gives you a little insight into the fact that there was no love lost between these two parties.

Rather than killing himself, he crucified 800 Pharisees. And while they were hanging on their crosses, he massacred their wives and children in front of them. We've seen massacre.

We've heard of it this week. It's of the devil. And that's what was in their hearts. And yet we find them strangely united.

Sadducees and Pharisees. To kill Jesus. And now his followers. Well regardless of whatever Gamaliel's motive was, the Lord Jesus was using him.

He was Jesus' instrument here to protect his apostles from being exterminated at this early hour of the church's growth. He had chosen them to be the foundation with himself as the chief cornerstone.

[41:36] And there must be this building up of the church with the living apostles. And so he protects them at this time. And so Gamaliel's speech persuaded them at least to refrain from putting them to death.

They gave up that decision. They gave up that decision. And yet it's like their jealous hatred was just boiling inside and they couldn't let it go. So they flogged them.

That's not completely letting them go, is it? They stripped them down to the waist. And they took their leather trifold strips and they applied on their bare backs the 40 minus 1.

Probably 39 stripes to each of the 12 apostles. They'd only threatened them before, but they're getting bolder now.

They were afraid what the crowd might do if they did more than that. But now they add to their threats the flogging. Just that they might know these are not empty threats.

[42:46] We've got more where they come from. And then they issue the same gag order not to speak in the name of Jesus. And then they let them go. There, that should teach them a lesson.

And if that was their expectation, they were in for a big surprise. Well, the chapter ends with the apostles' response. They were bloodied but not broken. There's a two-fold response revealed to us.

As they have received their first physical persecution. Number one, they left the council rejoicing. You didn't hear me wrong and you didn't read it wrong.

They were rejoicing. They were full of joy. Do you know Christians can find joy where nobody else can? And they left the Sanhedrin rejoicing.

Why? Why? Because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name. They considered it a privilege to suffer for the name that is above every name.

[43:49] The name of Jesus. Jesus. And they're rejoicing that they were counted worthy. There's a play on words here.

They rejoiced that they were honored to be dishonored for Jesus. They rejoiced that they were disgraced to, or that they were graced to be disgraced for the name.

And they considered their stripes for Jesus as a badge of honor for him who went to the painful and shameful death of the cross for them.

And by his stripes, they had been healed. Those stripes, that's a badge of honor. Not everybody gets to bleed for Jesus.

And they rejoiced. Is Jesus that precious to me? Is he that precious to you? That we would find joy in any suffering for him?

[44:50] Who suffered hell for us? They left rejoicing. That's their response to physical persecution. Secondly, they were undeterred.

Undetured. They did exactly what they were commanded not to do. Because God had commanded them otherwise. They were commanded to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. And they never stopped.

Day after day in the temple courts. Right back at the place where they had been before. And from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

In shorthand, it was every day, everywhere. And so the gospel chariot rolls on, conquering and still to conquer. Satan turned up the heat to shut them up with prison and the threat of stoning that they almost did.

And then with flogging. But the exalted Lord Jesus sends an angel and then a Pharisee. To keep the opportunity open. And they made the most of it.

[45:53] Every day. In every place. They never stopped talking about Jesus the Christ. Why? Because he said, go and tell.

Oh, church, arise. Hear the call of Christ, our captain. You know, his call is still go and tell. Go and tell the full message of this new life.

Church, this is our mission. Every day. Everywhere. They couldn't be stopped. And in this way, they had filled Jerusalem with the message. Will we fill our families with the message?

Our schools. Our neighborhoods. Our towns. With the message. Our world. They couldn't be stopped.

What does it take to stop me? To stop you? A smirk. On their face. A bit of inward fear of what they might think.

[46:56] If I. Mentioned the name. The name. We have not yet resisted to the point of shedding our blood.

We've not yet been threatened. Flogged. We know all of these, but John will later go on to be martyred for the name.

They're not about to stop. Must I be carried to the clouds and flowery beds of ease while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? Our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.

Are not stopping. They're going to prison. They're being beaten. They're being beaten. Their lives are being taken. Can we bear a little disgrace for him who was disgraced on the cursed cross for us?

[48:05] Let's renew our commitment this morning. Let's renew our commitment to our Lord Jesus to go and tell. The risen, exalted Lord is with us.

Let's not let anything stop us from telling others about Jesus Christ and the good news that their sins will be forgiven if they will but repent.

If they will but put their faith in the Lord Jesus and turn from their own wicked ways. He will forgive them and give them this new life in Christ.

Grace Fellowship Church, let's be encouraged from this chapter of church history. This is the ongoing unfinished business of Jesus. He's building his church.

He's not done yet. And it's not apostles now that he's using. It's you and me. Who've been rescued. Out of the kingdom of darkness. And brought into the kingdom.

[49:03] Jesus Christ. And the Lord Jesus is still with us. He is with us as much as he was with these apostles of old. He's still fighting for us. He still sits upon the throne that rules the universe.

And he still gives the Holy Spirit to help us. To do what we otherwise could not do. And so the unfinished work of the church will be finished. It will be done.

And Christ will have the prize for which he died. And inheritance of nations. Are you on the Lord's side? Come to him today by faith and repentance.

And if you are, let's give ourselves up to him. To be willing to endure shame for him. Who bore the shame for us.

Number nine in our grace hymns is, Oh, church arise. It's the call of Christ, our captain, to take this full message of this new way of life.

[50:01] Every day, everywhere. Yes, to the ends of the earth. That the nations might be his. Let's stand as we sing number nine and give ourselves up to our Savior afresh.

Let's talk to our Lord. We bow before you, Lord Jesus Christ, the one who died and was risen and is exalted at your Father's right hand to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

And we thank you that many of us here have tasted that repentance and forgiveness of sins. And we're ashamed when we think that we're ashamed to stand up for the name of Jesus.

Your name. So forgive us. And thank you for Acts chapter five and showing us other cowardly people like Peter and John and James and Andrew and Philip and Matthew and all the rest.

But to see what they became by the power of the Holy Spirit that you sent from heaven to make them bold witnesses, willing to suffer shame and physical harm, to shed their blood and even give their lives for the name of Christ.

[51:29] So encourage our hearts. Show us that you, Lord Jesus, are fighting for us. Show us that the enemy has been defeated. Show us that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.

Thank you for the privilege of being your people. Give us help to count ourselves worthy of suffering for the name, should that happen to us.

And even if it's just the fear of man, give us grace to bear that shame as a medal of honor. So help us, we pray.

And thank you for the promised Holy Spirit that you've given to those who obey you. Lord, we want to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world who are experiencing physical persecution and death.

remind them, Lord, that you said rejoice because your reward in heaven is great. And keep them rejoicing and keep them undeterred and keep them unsoured and fill them with love for their captors and their fellow prisoners and get glory to yourself through their lives.

[52:43] Relieve them, release them, and help their families, we pray. We don't want to leave without remembering the people of France and the display of depravity there this week.

And we think of the fact that you have your people there. And you have churches gathering this day to worship you as the Lord of heaven and earth.

And pray you would be with them and comfort them and bring the gospel in power to wake people up that this life is soon over and then it's eternity. Oh, save Lord Jesus.

Help our brother David, Vaughn, and Nikki, and Joel, and Ann, and Olivier, and Denise, and hundreds of other believers in that country.

Use these events to honor your name and to save poor and needy sinners. Thank you for your grace. Thank you for this time worshiping you together.

[53:46] We praise you. Amen.