

Obey God Rather Than Men

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 5 verses 12 to 42. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word.

Heavenly Father, we confess that we find ourselves sometimes in our sinfulness, vying for supremacy with you.

Instead of seeking to be conformed to your will, we want you to consecrate and put a stamp of approval on our will.

We, even when ostensibly seeking to do your service, often promote ourselves, seek to preserve ourselves.

But Lord, we want to be aligned more closely with your purposes. We want to be on your side.

[1 : 33] To obey you at all costs. So teach us, Lord.

Speak to us in your Word. That we might do so more and more. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Let's read Acts chapter 5, 12 to 42. Now many signs and wonders were regularly 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 esteem. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, 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. But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

[2 : 57] But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now, when the high priest came and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported. We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.

Now, when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. And someone came and told them, Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.

And the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council, and the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charge you not to teach in this name, and yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

[4 : 25] But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things.

And so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the man outside for a little while.

And he said to them, Men of Israel, take care of what you are about to do with these men. For before these days, Theodos rose up, claiming to be somebody.

[5 : 23] And a number of men, about 400, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him.

He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone. For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail. But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God. So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. In Joshua 5, 13 to 15, just before God's miraculous conquest of the heavily fortified Jericho, there is this interesting dialogue between Joshua and the commander of the Lord's army.

[6 : 46] He says, When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, Are you for us or for our adversaries?

And he said, No, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, What does my Lord say to his servant? And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, Take off your sandals from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy. It's a fascinating dialogue because Joshua asks, Are you for us or against us?

But the angel responds, No, for I am the commander of the army of the Lord. He doesn't say, Well, I'm for you.

He says, No, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. We live in a very partisan world. And us versus them attitude pervades our culture, our society.

[7 : 55] And people are eager to co-opt God for their own agendas. But the Lord of heaven's armies will not be reduced to a pawn in our own battles.

He has his own purposes and priorities that he is sovereignly working out. So it is said that during the American Civil War when someone asked President Abraham Lincoln if he believed that God was on his side, Lincoln replied, Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side.

My greatest concern is to be on God's side for God is always right. Instead of asking ourselves, how can I use the Bible to support my opinion, we should ask, is my opinion biblical?

Instead of asking, is God on our side, we should ask, are we on God's side? In Acts 5, we see a struggle between two Jewish factions, the Jews, led by the high priest and the Sanhedrin, and then the Jewish Christians, led by the twelve apostles.

There is a struggle for authority and jurisdiction, for the right to speak and teach the Jews in Jerusalem, but Luke makes it very clear in this passage that while the Christians are on God's side, that the Jews find themselves in opposition to God.

[9 : 21] And the main point of this passage is that even when opposed by men, we must obey God and preach Christ. That's the main point. We are going to explore that main point by looking at profiles of three different groups of people.

First, the odd people. Second, the jealous leaders. And third, finally, the joyful witnesses of Jesus. So let's look at the odd people. In the preceding passage, we saw God's judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, and that struck great fear into people's hearts so that they learned that God was not a person to trifle with.

And verses 12 to 16 is Luke's summary of the aftermath of that event, how the church continued to grow. He says in verses 12 to 13, Now many signs and wonders were regularly 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 esteem. So the gathered believers earlier prayed in chapter 4 for boldness, and they asked God to continue to stretch out His mighty hand to heal and to perform signs and wonders.

And so we're seeing an answer to that prayer here, because many signs were done regularly among the people by the hands of the apostles. And these signs and wonders included healings and exorcisms.

[10 : 42] And even to non-Christian onlookers, it was obvious that something supernatural and spiritual was happening among the Christians. And so that, it says, none of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.

People were awed by the Spirit-filled church. They took the Christians seriously and respected them. They didn't treat the church with snarky condescension or casual dismissiveness. They couldn't because the hand of God worked so powerfully among the church. So many of them did not dare to join the gathering of believers.

Verses 14 to 16 continue this summary of the church's growth. It says, And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats.

That as Peter came by it, that as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them. And the people who, people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

[11 : 53] So we see here an explosive growth of the church. We were told that the church grew to 3,000 in chapter 2, verse 41, and then to 5,000 in chapter 4, verse 4. And so thousands of people have been coming to faith, but now it says in verse 14, even more than that, more than ever, believers were added to the Lord.

And because the gathering of the believers at Solomon's portico had ballooned to such a size, it was increasingly difficult for people to get a personal audience from Peter and the apostles.

So some people resorted to superstitious practices of laying out the sick on the street, on cots and mats, so that as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them.

Since this passage distinguishes people, which refers to the general population, from believers, and Luke typically uses the word people to refer to the general public and not specifically to believers, it's likely that the people who are bringing the sick out to the streets for Peter's shadows to pass by are not believers, but sympathizers who are interested in what's going on among the Christians and want a piece of the miracles that are taking place.

It's clear that God was doing extraordinary miracles through the apostles. Later in Acts 19, we see sick people get healed by just touching even the handkerchiefs and aprons that Paul had touched.

[13 : 20] But in this instance, Luke doesn't tell us whether or not people were actually healed by Peter's shadow. But the fact that people went to such an extent as to hope that even Peter's shadow might fall on them to heal the sick shows that their expectation for powerful miracles of God was at a fever pitch.

Luke is demonstrating the extraordinary growth and popularity of the church during those days. And not only did people put out the sick out on the streets, people from outside of Jerusalem, from the surrounding towns, the countryside of Judea were now also bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits and they were all healed.

The word is now spreading beyond Jerusalem so people are making long treks to get there in hopes, in faith, that God will heal them.

This is a period of great revival for the church and God did heal all those who came in those ways in faith. So that's the odd people.

Now, but whenever the Spirit of God is powerfully at work, Satan always tries to undermine and discredit that work. Whether it's through internal discord like we saw with Ananias and Sapphira or in this case with external pressure.

[14 : 43] So goodwill and favor among people and ill will and persecution from people are not mutually exclusive. And often they occur side by side.

In this case, the persecution is driven by the leaders of the Jewish community. It says in verses 17 to 18, But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

We were introduced to the Sadducees early in chapter 4. They were a Jewish sect much like the Pharisees, but there were key differences between them. Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead as the Pharisees did.

And the Sadducees, it appears, were more powerful in Jerusalem itself. It seems like they were the dominant party within the Sanhedrin.

And it says that they were filled with jealousy. John 11, 47 to 48, in there, the Jewish council discuss among themselves what to do with Jesus.

[15 : 53] And they say, What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

So a similar dynamic is at work here. The apostles declared the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which contradicted the Sadducees' doctrinal belief that there is no resurrection of the dead. The apostles were gaining a following. The Church of Christ was growing like never before, which means, especially at this point when most of the converts are Jewish converts, they're siphoning adherents away from the Jewish leaders, from the Sanhedrin, from the Sadducees.

And if the Jewish leaders lose their clout among the Jewish people, then they are at risk of having their political power, authority taken away by the Romans as well.

And so they are filled with jealousy because they are more concerned with self-preservation than God glorification. They resent the popularity of the apostles.

[17 : 01] And because of that, they miss out on the powerful work of God because they're too preoccupied with themselves. So out of envy, the Sadducees arrest the apostles and put them in the public prison.

But it says in verses 19 to 20, during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. So God intervenes directly by sending his angel as a representative to bring the apostles out of prison.

And then he directly contradicts the Jewish leaders strict charge to not to speak in the name of Jesus. God gives the apostles three commands. Go, stand in the temple, and speak to the people. Just the day before, the apostles had been arrested for speaking to the people about Jesus in the temple. But God tells them to go back to that very same public setting to stand up and speak to the people.

This might seem foolhardy to us. If our personal welfare is the highest good that we are seeking to preserve, this command makes no sense to us.

[18 : 16] But if we understand obedience to God as our highest good, if honoring God is our higher priority than preserving ourselves, then this command makes sense.

This is not to say that every Christian should deliberately put themselves in dangerous situations, in persecuted places. In Matthew 10, 23, Jesus says, when they persecute you in one town, flee to the next.

So later, it says in Acts chapter 14, 5 to 6, that when both Gentiles and Jews with their rulers were seeking to stone Paul and Barnabas, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe.

However, still later, in Acts 21, when a prophet warns Paul that he will be bound and imprisoned if he goes to Jerusalem and the Christians in Caesarea urge him not to go to Jerusalem, Paul answers, I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

And he goes there anyway. So there isn't a one-size-fits-all biblical answer to whether or not Christians should flee persecution and continue to proclaim the gospel where they are.

[19 : 26] It seems that in certain specific situations, God calls some Christians to stay in spite of persecution to continue to proclaim the gospel, even at great personal risk to themselves.

And that's what God does here in Acts chapter 5. And the apostles are not permitted to sugarcoat the message or to speak only of the things that were acceptable to their persecutors because the angel of the Lord says clearly in verse 20, speak to the people all the words of this life.

The words of this life refer to the words of Jesus. Earlier in chapter 3, verse 15, Jesus was described as the author of life, meaning Jesus is the founder or the pioneer of life.

He is the first born from the dead, the first to rise from the dead, as it says in Acts 26, 23. He's the one through whom God gives eternal life to His people. So He's the author of life.

And the words of this life is that word about Jesus. Just because the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection of the dead and oppose anyone who teaches the resurrection of the dead, the apostles do not get to leave that part of the gospel out.

[20 : 42] Likewise, just because people nowadays disbelieve in the resurrection, we don't get to modify or leave out that part of Jesus' physical resurrection from the dead.

Just because people nowadays cherish their autonomy and don't want to submit to the lordship of Christ does not mean that we can leave out that part about dying to ourselves and carrying the cross and following Jesus.

We too must speak to the people all the words of this life. And that's exactly what the apostles do. It says in verse 21, when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. At the earliest opportunity, the disciples, the apostles returned to the temple that they were arrested in on the previous day and began to teach. It says in verse 21, now when the high priest came and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to them to have them brought.

So the high priest arrives and uses his authority to summon the council, which is the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish religious political and legal council. And this council is also called all the senate of the people of Israel.

[21 : 58] The word senate is a translation of the word that means the elders of Israel, which reveals how the Sanhedrin viewed themselves. They viewed themselves as representatives of the entire Jewish people everywhere.

And so after this dignified introduction of the high priest and the elders of Israel, the Sanhedrin, what happens next is like something out of a comedy sketch.

It exposes the powerlessness of the Sanhedrin. It says in 22 to 26, but when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported.

We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside. Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to.

And someone came and told them, look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people. Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

[23 : 05] It appears that the miraculous prison break happened without the guards even knowing. The officers sent by the Sanhedrin to bring the apostles found the prison still locked and the guards still standing in their station, and yet the prison was empty.

They thought they were fully in control of the situation with the apostles safely guarded behind bars, but they were powerless before God. And as they're wondering what had happened to them and what's going to happen next, they hear this news from someone who had observed them in the temple coming and reporting that they are back in the temple preaching, doing exactly what they had told them not to do.

And so they send their officers to grab them, but not by force because they were afraid of being stoned by the people. Ironically, this forcible arrest looks more like an escort service.

the Sanhedrin, all the Senate of the people of Israel, afraid of being stoned by the very people that they believe themselves to have authority over.

This entire episode is highlighting the powerlessness of the Sanhedrin before Christ and his apostles, and Luke's making the point that the mantle of leadership among God's people has passed on from the Sanhedrin to the twelve apostles.

[24 : 33] You know, given that the public sentiment was in their favor, the apostles probably could have resisted arrest at this point. I mean, they were afraid of being stoned, so the officers probably would not have been able to do anything about it if the apostles just refused to go.

But the apostles go willingly, just as Jesus went willingly to the cross. The apostles disobeyed the civil authorities when their directives clearly contradicted God's commands, but in doing so, they were willing to suffer and be punished for their disobedience by the same civil authorities.

That's what Christian civil disobedience looks like. They never resorted to violent protest or forceful resistance. repentance. This is because they were following Jesus' teaching.

In Matthew chapter 10, verses 16 to 33, Jesus said to his disciples, Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. So be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves.

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

[26 : 01] The apostles knew they were called to bear suffering witness for Christ. Jesus did not send his people to be lions in the midst of wolves. He sent them out to be sheep in the midst of wolves.

And everyone knows what happens to sheep in the midst of wolves. So let's see what happens as they enter the wolves den.

In verses 27 to 28, the Sanhedrin begins their interrogation of the apostles. It says, And when they had brought them, they set them before the council, and the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charge you not to teach in this name.

Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. It's curious that the high priest doesn't ask.

I think my first question would have been, how did you get out of the prison? But they're not asking that question, probably because it's really irrelevant for Luke's purposes, because we already know how they got out.

[27 : 06] The readers already know. The main issue at hand is the conflict between the apostles and the Sanhedrin, namely the issue of teaching in the name of Jesus.

So first, the Jewish leaders object to the apostles, continue to teach in the name of Jesus, despite their prohibition in chapter 4. And then second, they don't like the fact that this teaching that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior implicates them in his death, makes them look really bad.

They don't want Jesus' blood on their hands, especially as the church continues to grow and enjoy the favor of the populace. This is similar to how, Pontius Pilate, before ordering Jesus to be crucified, washes his hands, saying that he is not going to have Jesus' blood on his hands.

Because in Genesis 9, 5-6, God had decreed concerning mankind, for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning. From every beast I will require it and from man.

And from his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man, whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image. Because a human being is created in the image of God, his or her life is sacred, and because the life of the flesh is in the blood, as it says in Leviticus 17, 11, when a life is taken and when blood is shed, Scripture tells us that the blood of the deceased cries out for vengeance.

[28 : 45] God most famously after Cain murders his brother Abel in Genesis 4, God says to Cain, the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground, and now you are cursed from the ground.

If the apostles continue to speak of how Jesus was killed, in part by the Jewish authorities, and how Jesus that they killed is the Son of God who was sent to save us, then the Jewish leaders fear that the people will make them pay for the blood on their hands.

But Peter and the apostles give an unflinching response in verses 29 to 32, we must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree, and God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

And we are witnesses to these things. Notice that the apostles do the two exact things that the Sanhedrin had told them not to do. First, they once again speak in the name of Jesus, and then two, they tell him, you killed him.

But it's important to note that apostles are not out for vengeance. Their goal isn't to stir up the mob against the Jewish leaders. Instead, as they have done in the preceding chapters, they speak of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

[30 : 22] The Sanhedrin, the leaders of the Jewish nation, also belong to that nation for which Jesus came and died. They, too, can repent of their sins and receive forgiveness for sins.

And Jesus' blood, instead of crying out for their vengeance, vengeance, for the vengeance against his killers, instead cries out for their vindication, their forgiveness.

This is why it says in Hebrews 12, 24, the sprinkled blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel cried out for justice, but the blood of Jesus cries out for mercy.

The blood of Abel cried out for condemnation, but the blood of Jesus cries out for forgiveness. The blood of Abel cried out for retribution, but the blood of Jesus cries out for repentance.

Instead of death, Jesus' blood brings life to his murderers. And this is because Jesus' death and resurrection was part of God's plan to bring salvation for sinners.

[31 : 37] Jesus. Peter uses an interesting phrase to describe Jesus' death in verse 30. Instead of saying that Jesus was crucified, he says, you killed him by hanging him on a tree.

During that period, Jews used the expression hang on a tree to refer to the crucifixion. And this was an intentional allusion to Deuteronomy 21, 22 to 23, which says that a person who is killed by being hanged on a tree is cursed by God.

Paul cites that verse and makes an explicit connection to Jesus. In Galatians 3, 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

This is why Jesus offers his forgiveness and mercy rather than vengeance and justice. This is why the blood of Jesus does not cry out for vengeance, because he was dying for our sins and bearing our curse on the cross.

Modern people living in the West don't understand the concept of a curse, but it's a fearful thing for people who live in cultures that understand and experience and live in the midst of curses.

[32 : 58] curse. When someone curses you for a wrong that you do, it follows you, it haunts you, it inflicts harm and injury on you, and you can't get away from it until you make atonement and that curse is lifted.

in those cultures where the curse is a common experience of life, people pay exorbitant prices to buy talismans and amulets and charms to protect themselves from it because they dread it and fear it.

In Genesis 3.19, the curse of death came upon humanity because of Adam's sin. If you have lost loved ones to death, you have experienced the painful toll of this curse.

Every generation of humanity has died ever since, and every man and woman is surrounded and hounded by death every single day.

Do we try all kinds of remedies, medicines, dietary supplements and exercises to stave off death? every human being dies. That's the curse.

[34 : 24] But Jesus is the one person who is not subject to that curse. He was born of the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit.

If you look at the way, if you look at the Old Testament, it's the sins of the fathers that are visited upon their children. that's the way God designed it, the man's headship in marriage to work.

So in Romans 5, we find that even though it was Eve who sinned first, it's Adam's sin that brings the curse to all of humanity. God's sin.

God's sin. God's sin. God's sin. And because Jesus didn't have a human father, he's the first and only human being in which that line, that curse, is broken.

sin. And yet, Jesus who alone does not have a sin nature and who alone does not sin in his life, bears our curse.

[35 : 37] So if we repent of our sins and trust in him, we can be forgiven. forgiven. The curse can be lifted. And we can be forgiven of every last sin, not in part, but the whole.

All your guilt gone. All your shame gone. All condemnation gone. We don't have to figure things out on our own because Jesus is the leader who has already paved the way for us.

we don't have to feel like we have to save ourselves, to redeem ourselves, to justify ourselves because in Christ we have a Savior. And if you entrust yourself to him, you repent of your sins and follow him, you have forgiveness and the Holy Spirit indwells you and gives you assurance of these truths.

But the Sanhedrin unfortunately does not turn to Jesus for mercy. It says in verse 33, when they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. Notice the contrast between their response and the apostles' response to the word of the Lord in verse 21.

And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. But in verse 33, when they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. When the apostles hear the word of the Lord, they promptly obey, even at the risk of being killed.

[37 : 07] But these Jewish leaders, when they hear the word of the Lord, instead of obeying, they try to kill the messengers of God. But thankfully, there is a somewhat sensible man named Gamaliel.

Most of the members of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees, but Gamaliel is distinguished here as a Pharisee. And Luke notes that he was a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people. Gamaliel was a revered figure at the time.

He was either the son or a grandson of the renowned Rabbi Hillel, and he was the teacher of Paul, according to Acts 22, verse 3. Gamaliel was so prominent that in the Mishnah, which is the official collection of rabbinic commentary on the Jewish Torah, he says, when Rabban Gamaliel the elder died, the glory of the law seized, and purity and abstinence died.

This is quite the hyperbole, but it shows how highly regarded this man was. Gamaliel says in verses 35 to 39, men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.

For before these days, Deodas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him.

[38 : 23] He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone. For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail.

But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God. We don't know Gamaliel's motives.

We know that he's not a believer because he doesn't know whether Jesus' movement is of God or not. It's possible that he's simply playing politics, trying to protect the Sanhedrin from acting rashly and drawing the ire of the public.

It's also possible that as a Pharisee who believes in the resurrection of the dead, he's trying to undermine the rival Sadducees by letting the apostles go on speaking about the resurrection. We can't ascertain his motives, but the main point he makes is largely true.

While it's not true that every religious movement that is not of God fails, consider heresies like Islam or Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormonism, but it is true that every true movement of God is unstoppable.

[39 : 39] And therefore, it is futile to oppose God. As Jesus said in Matthew 16, 18, And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Theodos and Judas the Galilean were both Jewish religious revolutionaries, and they had failed. And using their examples, Gamaliel argues for a wait-and-see approach.

He's saying, well, Jesus, their leader, was killed not long ago, so let's just wait and see. This Jesus movement, like the movements of the past, might just fizzle away. For if this plan or undertaking is of man, it will fail, but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.

The phrase opposing God is literally God fighters. It's fatal and foolish to fight against God. This contrast between what is of man and what is of God and this idea of opposing God highlight the recurring contrast between God and man in this passage.

The Jewish leaders put the apostles in prison, but God breaks them out of prison. The Jewish leaders strictly charge the apostles not to teach in the name of Jesus, but God commands them to teach in the name of Jesus.

[41 : 00] The Jewish leaders kill Jesus by hanging him on a tree, but God raised Jesus and exalted him at the right hand as leader and savior. And in verse 29, all of that contrast comes to a climactic declaration when Peter says, we must obey God rather than men.

Are you obeying God or men in your life? If we are seeking the approval of men, if we are trying to please men, we are not servants of Christ.

Are you afraid to speak in the name of Jesus because you're afraid of what your peers might think or say? Are you ashamed of the word of God because it goes against the grain of our culture and you want to be accepted?

Are you living primarily to please yourself? To do what you want in life? To have what you want in life?

A comfortable retirement? Wealth and luxury? A successful career? A long life? A healthy family?

[42 : 21] If you are concerned with pleasing yourself, if you are concerned with obeying men, you cannot obey God because often God commands the very things that sinful humans don't want to do.

And don't want you to do. Jesus said that if they persecuted him, they'll persecute us also.

Are you ready to suffer and die for Christ? The Sanhedrin is persuaded by Gamaliel and decided to let the apostles go, but not before they beat them and charge them not to speak in the name of

Jesus.

Isn't this interesting? Just yesterday, God delivered the apostles miraculously from prison. Couldn't he deliver them this time? Of course he could, but he didn't.

Two more times, in Acts 12 and Acts 16, God will deliver his people from prison, but in other times, in his sovereign will, God does not deliver his people from prison. When Paul is imprisoned in Jerusalem in chapter 23, when he's imprisoned in Caesarea in chapter 23, when he's imprisoned in Rome in chapter 28, God does not miraculously deliver Paul from prison.

[43 : 44] God could have delivered the apostles from the Sanhedrin's beating, but he didn't. So they were whipped. And not only is being whipped like this painful, it's also humiliating.

Verse 41 describes it as suffering dishonor. And humiliation is especially grievous in an honor and shame culture like Israel. The Sanhedrin, the highest authority, just declared me a religious deviant and a rabble rouser and beat me in public and now I have to work up the nerves to go back and preach the same message to the same people who saw me get humiliated.

But look at the apostles' response in verses 41 and 42. Then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

And every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. It's a counterintuitive response.

They count the dishonor that they suffered in honor, saying that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Instead of crying about what happened to them and complaining, they leave rejoicing.

[45 : 22] Because as Jesus said to them in Luke 6, when we are persecuted for Jesus' name's sake, we have great reward in heaven and we are heirs to the prophets that preceded us who are also persecuted in the same way.

We endure suffering all for the sake of the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is repeated three times in verses 40 to 42.

The disciples go back to the same precinct, the temple precinct that they were arrested and beaten in on. Yes, the day before. They go there every day to preach the name of Jesus.

To preach literally means to preach the good news. Because there is salvation for no one else but in the name of Jesus.

Because it's that good news. Because Jesus suffered for their sake. Because Jesus gave up his heavenly glory and died for them.

[46 : 29] Because Jesus faced rejection and suffering for their sake. Because Jesus carried his cross for their sake. Will we also bear our own cross daily to follow Jesus?

Rejoice in suffering for his sake. Let's pray for that. God.

We wish sometimes that you would deliver us from all suffering. From all sickness. From all persecution. From all hardship.

But Lord. Lord. We understand that we do not understand. Your sovereign will. There are aspects of your sovereign will that are mysterious to us.

But we surrender ourselves. To your will. in your sovereign will.

[47 : 54] You ordain suffering and persecution for your beloved people. And you have ordained that the blood of the martyrs would be the seeds of the church.

So Lord help us not to oppose God.

Not to oppose you. Not to seek to make you. To join our side. To fight our battles.

But Lord instead make us surrender submitted to you. To be suffering witnesses of the name of Jesus.

It's in his precious name we pray. Amen. Amen.