

Acts 033  
Sage Advice  
Acts 5:17-42  
December 6, 2023  
Dr. Andy Woods

Go ahead and open our Bibles to Acts 5:34. I would love to finish Acts chapter 5 tonight. And if the Lord allows us to do that, we can start fresh in January, beginning in Acts 6. Acts chapter 5, you have the apostles' power demonstrated verses 12 through 16. And as we have studied, this led to their persecution. Acts 5:17 through the end of the chapter. So, in that second section there we've seen the apostles arrested, verses 17 through 26. The apostles examined, verses 27 through 33. And this is where Peter had an opportunity there as arrested before the Sanhedrin, to give a bold description of who Jesus is.

- I. Apostles' Power (5:12-16)
- II. **Apostles' Persecution (5:17-42)**
  - A. Apostles' arrest (17-26)
  - B. Apostles' examination (27-33)
  - C. Gamaliel's interruption & advice (34-39)**
    - 1. Gamaliel's background (34)
    - 2. Gamaliel's address (35-39)
  - D. Results (40-42)

I decided to entitle this sermon "Sage Advice." Right in the middle of this, you have this wise Pharisee, part of this Sanhedrin, who speaks up. And his name is Gamaliel. And he interrupts, 'What's going on here?' And he gives this advice, which to some extent, I think is timeless. So that happens in verses 34 through 39. And then after that presentation is over, we'll have the results of the Sanhedrin ruling. But first, notice Gamaliel's background. You see that there in verse 34. We have an introduction to Gamaliel. Now remember the temple area was dominated by the Sadducees, but there was a Pharisee in the mix, and verse 34 says: *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--* that's the apostles-- *outside for a short time.*

So, first, notice who this man Gamaliel is. A Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people. So, this guy is like-- it's hard to really place a greater emphasis on him. He's like a Pharisee amongst the Pharisees. And in fact, as you probably know, the Apostle Paul, before he was saved, was a Pharisee, when he was Saul. And Gamaliel was Saul's (who became Paul) teacher. Paul, when he gives his testimony in Acts 22:3 says, *I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel.* So, Gamaliel is sort of like Nicodemus. Remember, Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. I call it the "Nick at Night Discourse." And it says of Nicodemus. [John 3:10] *Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel? And you do not understand these things?"* So, Nicodemus wasn't just a teacher, he was **the** teacher. And Gamaliel is sort of in that category. If you look at verse 34, he's called: *a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law.* Some of your translations may say a doctor of the law.

So, he had, like, the highest education you could get in terms of his knowledge of the Old Testament law. So, there are doctors out there that understand God's Revelation. My daughter used to call me a Sunday school doctor because I'm not a medical doctor. 'My daddy's a Sunday school doctor.' But this concept of "one of the teachers of the law" is used by Luke elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke. Remember Jesus when He was 12 years old? That's a good story to think about around Christmas. It says in Luke 2:46, *Then after three days they found Him (Jesus) in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.* And they were blown away by His level of understanding. And then over in Luke 5:17 it says, *One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem;* So, that's basically who Gamaliel was. I mean, he was like one of the top Pharisees. He was one of the top teachers of the law. He was extremely well respected. It's at this point, as the apostles are being examined by the Sanhedrin, that this man speaks up and he gives a command, second part of verse 34:

*[He] stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.* He basically wants to talk to his fellow religious leaders. He doesn't want the apostles to overhear what he's going to say. So, he just he gives a command to get the apostles out of the vicinity. I mean, they were under arrest, as you know. So, get them

out. Get them somewhere else, another room somewhere where they're not privy to the conversation.

A. Apostles' arrest (17-26)

B. Apostles' examination (27-33)

**C. Gamaliel's interruption & advice (34-39)**

1. Gamaliel's background (34)

a. Introduction (34a)

b. Command (34b)

**2. Gamaliel's address (35-39)**

a. Need for caution (35)

b. Two parallel illustrations (36-37)

c. Application (38-39)

And so, after introducing this background, now you have Gamaliel's address to his fellow Sanhedrin members. And that's recorded in verses 35 through 39. And the first thing he starts off with is a word of caution. Because remember, going back to verse 33, which we covered last time, when the Sanhedrin members heard Peter's testimony about Jesus, they were *"cut to the quick, and they intended to kill them."* So, the Sanhedrin wants to basically get rid of these guys, execute them. And this is where Gamaliel kind of stops them. And he advises caution. In other words, they have sort of this angry rush to judgment mentality. And Gamaliel, this well-respected teacher is saying 'slow down.'

So, what does he say there in verse 35? It says: And he said to them, *"Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men."* So, what they were proposing to do is kill the apostles. And Gamaliel says, 'Stop, don't act so rashly.' And that's always pretty good advice for us, isn't it, when we get upset about something? The book of James says we ought to be quick to hear and slow to speak. As all our moms taught us. At least my mom did. I'm sure yours did also. You know, God gave us two ears and one mouth. We should use them in proportion, because we have a tendency to put our mouth in motion before our brain gets in motion. And sometimes we need to just take a deep breath and just calm down. Particularly when you get an email that you're upset about. You might want to just give it 24 hours. Because the problem with email is you'll

fire back something rash, and you'll look at it the next day and say, 'You know, I wish I hadn't quite said it that way.'

So that's what this guy Gamaliel is doing. He's just saying, let's just calm down for a minute. And after giving this word of caution, he gives two parallel illustrations. He reaches into recent history. And that's in verses 36 and 37. Verse 36, he talks about a man named Theudas. And then in verse 37, he talks about someone else named Judas of Galilee. This Judas here is not to be confused with the Judas that betrayed Jesus. Judas was a common name in the land of Israel at this time. But these are two historical examples that they would know something about. So, what does he say about Theudas? That's in verse 36. He says, *"For some time ago rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing."* So other than this reference to this man Theudas in verse 36, we don't really have any other extra biblical information about him other than what we read here. But apparently, he was a rebel, and he gathered about four hundred men. And he, as a Jew, led a revolt against Rome. The Jews hated the Romans because the Romans were the occupiers. The Romans had come to power beginning about 63 BC under General Pompey, into the Land of Israel, had subjugated Israel, and had taken away the right of the Jews to execute their own criminals. That's why they had to turn Jesus over to Rome for execution; because Rome had taken away from them their sovereignty as a nation. And so, Rome, you know, was always hated. And so, there were always revolts going on against Rome. And Gamaliel says, 'You remember what Theudas did? He gathered four hundred people against Rome. But that effort was quickly defeated and came to nothing. That's his first historical example.

And I do appreciate what it says here. He doesn't say he gathered up four hundred. It says he gathered up about *"about four hundred."* So, the Bible, when it wants to be understood exactly, literally, will tell you. You know, there were 12 apostles. You know, not 15 or 11. There were 12. But other times when it just uses round numbers, it'll throw in this word "about." The word "about" indicates that Gamaliel is not giving a math lesson here. He's just going from memory. There were about 400 that were involved in that particular revolt. The same thing is said about Peter and his opening sermon on the day of Pentecost in the Church Age. And it talks about how 3000 were saved. But it says in Acts 2:41, *So then, those who had received his word*

*were baptized; that day there were added about three thousand souls.* So, when the Bible wants to be understood with mathematical precision, it will tell you. And when it wants to be understood as someone just sort of summarizing in generic terms, you know what happened, it'll throw in this little word "about." It's kind of interesting how the Bible itself will tell you when it wants to be understood with mathematical precision and when it's just summarizing something.

And so, that's what Gamaliel is recalling here "about four hundred." You know, they rose up, they led a revolt against Rome. We Jews don't like Rome. So, these kinds of things happened all the time. And this revolt was quickly put down and it came to nothing. And then Gamaliel goes on as he's addressing his fellow Sanhedrin members with the apostles out of earshot, and he gives his second example. And this was Judas of Galilee. And if you look there at verse 37, it says, *After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census--* so remember Rome required the Jews to take a census. That kind of thing was going on with the birth of Christ, you'll remember, as Luke records it in his gospel. And a lot of people just didn't like Rome demanding these things from the people. It's kind of like how we feel, for example, when the World Health Organization gives us a bunch of mandates and we say, 'Well we never voted on these.' And they say, 'We don't care.' You know, it kind of stirs up this rebellion in us. That's the same kind of thing that was going on here in Israel. It says: *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.* So, the second guy caused a rebellion. We're not told the number at all, even in general terms. But Judas instigated a revolt by proclaiming God alone is the king and not Rome.

Now, unlike the first man, the second man, we do know something about him from the writings of Josephus, who was a first century Jewish historian. So, Josephus tells us that this man's rebellion was crushed by the Roman procurator, whose name was Crispus Fadus. And he came five thousand horses and took this guy, Judas of Galilee, and his rebellion and crushed it. And Josephus tells us that Judas of Galilee was beheaded. And this movement, that Judas of Galilee started here, became known in Jewish history. He kind of planted the seeds for what was called the zealot party. One of the disciples was a zealot, right? Simon the Zealot. He was a member of this political persuasion. It was a movement that became the zealot party that ultimately led to the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66 to 70. And they're the ones that made their final stand

against Rome at a place called Masada in A.D. 73. Masada is an interesting place. I've been there. We've been there twice-- at least that I can think of. It was a vacation home for Herod. And when the Romans came in and wiped out the Jewish nation in A.D. 70, a bunch of zealots went and took over this Herodian fortress, and they took their last stand there against Rome. And when it looked like they were going to lose to Rome, that Rome was going to conquer Masada around 8073, they engaged in a mass suicide. They felt it'd be better to just commit suicide than to live under Roman rule. And I've been up there and there's a synagogue there; and found in the pavement of the synagogue, archeologically, is the final verses that they were reading from before they committed suicide. And what they found up there were scraps of Ezekiel 36 and Ezekiel 37. And what's Ezekiel 36 and 37 about? Prophetically, it's about the gathering of the nation of Israel in the last days, where God is going to make them an independent nation and save them politically and spiritually. So that's what they were thinking about these zealots just before they engaged in mass suicide. So, this guy, Judas of Galilee is looked at as sort of the progenitor of the political party that ultimately led to Masada. So, he was a hardcore radical. I mean, these are people that didn't mess around. It's like, we're going to rebel against Rome. And if Rome is going to win, I'd rather commit suicide than live under Roman rule. That's the zealot party.

So, Gamaliel says, Theudas gave it a shot and he failed. Judas of Galilee gave it a shot, and in his lifetime he failed. And ultimately the political party that came out of Judas of Galilee failed as well. And it's at this point now, Gamaliel, this wise sage gives the application. I mean, why bring up this stuff from their known history? And he gives the application in verses 38 and 39. You have a command. And then you have the reason for the command. Look at verse 38. "So in the present case, I say to you, stay *away from these men and let them alone*," So the command is, don't kill these apostles. Leave them alone basically. Let them do their thing. Why is that Gamaliel? He gives the reason in the second part of verse 38 and 39 "*...for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;*" just like Theudas and Judas. They did acts of zealotry that weren't of God and they fizzled out. In other words, if these apostles are just acting out of the flesh with the birth of the church, then whatever they're doing is going to fizzle out, just like Theudas' and Judas's work fizzled out. "*...for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.*" So just let them do their thing. If their action is of men, it will fizzle out just like these other historical examples. On the other hand, if this

new church that we're seeing is of God, then it doesn't really do you a lot of good to fight against it either. Because if it's of God, you're going to find yourself fighting against God. If this is of God, you couldn't stop it anyway. Because how can you stop God? It reminds me of Acts 26:14, where Paul is giving his testimony and how he was persecuting the early church before he got saved and became the Apostle Paul. And the Lord appeared to him in a vision and said, *"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* God said this to Paul [Acts 26:14], *"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'"* In other words, you're kicking against something that you can't defeat. You're kicking against the goads because you're coming against God himself. So, the point of Gamaliel's speech here is movements typically do not outlast their founders. Most movements will die off after the leadership dies off. On the other hand, if you're dealing with a situation where a movement is being sustained, even though the founders are dead, what you're dealing with is something that God started. And it would be just absolute foolishness to fight against it because you're fighting against God himself. That's the point.

I think to really understand this, you have to put yourself in the position of the person who's reading this book for the very first time. We covered this in the introduction of the book. The man's name is Theophilus. The purpose of the Book of Acts and its prequel, Luke, is to present Theophilus with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church, to affirm him in what he has believed. In other words, Theophilus, as we've described it, is a Gentile who happened to be a believer and was having doubts about his Christianity. Probably where he lived in Rome. He's probably thinking to himself, 'This whole Christianity thing, it started off so Jewish, you know, and I'm a Gentile. I mean, is this Christianity thing really for me?' So Luke is putting together this orderly account to affirm to Theophilus in the fact that, yes, Christianity is for you. It's a supernatural work of God, and it outlasted its founders. And it made its way all the way to Rome. And Gamaliel, the wisest of the wise, said, if this movement outlasts its founders, it's of God. Well, Theophilus, it is of God. And this is how God moved heaven and earth to get the gospel to you. So, to really understand the rhetorical impact of what Gamaliel is saying here, you have to put yourself in the shoes of Theophilus. And once you see that, you understand why Luke, the historian, chose to include this speech by Gamaliel.

## **Purpose of Acts**

- To present Theophilus with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church so as to affirm him in what he has believed.

So, the purpose of the book of Acts is the birth and growth of the church numerically, ethnically, and geographically to affirm Theophilus, that this gospel that got to you is a work of God. And Luke accomplishes that by giving us progress reports on how the church was growing numerically. Ethnic reports-- how the church was transitioning from being an offshoot of Judaism to a predominantly Gentile body. And geographically-- how it made its way all the way from Jerusalem to Rome. And, you know, we took that voyage ourselves on the cruise ship. Not this time around, because we didn't get to Jerusalem because of the war. But that's not a short trip. I mean even going in luxury, it's not a short trip. You can put yourself back in the first century world, and you can see how nearly impossible it would be for Christianity to move its way all the way to Rome. So, Theophilus, you're in Rome and you're reading this and look at how much God loves you to get you the gospel. And don't forget what Gamaliel said. This thing should have fizzled out a long time ago if the supernatural hand of God was not in it. So, you can look at yourself in North America in the year 2023, a totally different continent 2000 years later and Christianity is still alive and well. And God kept it going long enough to get you saved and to get me saved. And so, once you understand that, you start to understand how much God loves us, how much God cares about us. And we shouldn't second guess whether Christianity is true or whether we're contemplated in the mind of God for salvation. Obviously, we are. Because the birth and growth of the church is miraculous. This thing should have fizzled out 2000 years ago when the apostles died. But here it is, you know, alive and well today.

Now I want to, if I can, caution you a little bit about Gamaliel's statement. Because a lot of people will take it and they'll build a theology from it. Anything that works must be of God. And that's a doctrine called pragmatism. Arnold Fruchtenbaum on Gamaliel's statement, says:

"Some have taken Gamaliel's words and turned them into divine truth. However, Luke simply recorded what Gamaliel said without confirming the validity of the words. This was Gamaliel's personal opinion; it was not a biblical truth. Many things that are not of



God (such as false religions and cults) have prospered. One must be careful not to use someone's opinion as biblical truth."

In other words, Gamaliel just made a general statement. He's not dealing with an ironclad 100% rule here. It was true in this context, but you can't develop from it some kind of universal law. So, if it works, it must be of God. Well, then we'd have to approve of Mormonism, which has grown exponentially. We would have to approve of Islam which has grown exponentially. Gamaliel was just giving his personal opinion here. He wasn't painting some kind of 100% biblical truth. Inerrancy only guarantees that what Gamaliel said is recorded here. This is what he said, but you shouldn't develop from it some kind of universal principle, or else you'd have to applaud Islam. Because Islam came about in the seventh century A.D. And it's still alive and well, even though Muhammad died a long time ago. Of course, Islam has a little bit of an advantage. They can go around and convert people by the sword. We as Christians don't do that. There have been Christians in history that have done that, but they're outside of biblical parameters.

So not everything that works is necessarily of God. But in this case, Gamaliel says, it is true. Don't kill these apostles. Why not? Because if what they're doing has no divine power in it, it's just going to fizzle out, just like Theudas and Judas. On the other hand, if what these apostles are really doing is true, you're going to be fighting against God Himself. Because God is going to outlive the movement after its leaders disappear. So, we have the apostles' arrest, the apostles' examination. You have there Gamaliel's interruption and advice. As I said before, I think Gamaliel's words are recorded for the benefit of Theophilus, who was second guessing whether Christianity was true. And after all of this is said and done, now you have the results.

- I. Apostles' Power (5:12-16)
- II. Apostles' Persecution (5:17-42)
  - A. Apostles' arrest (17-26)
  - B. Apostles' examination (27-33)
  - C. Gamaliel's interruption & advice (34-39)
  - D. Results (40-42)**
    - 1. Sanhedrin (40)
    - 2. Results (41-42)

What's the Sanhedrin going to do with these apostles? So, the results are recorded, first of all, for the Sanhedrin and then the general results as they affected the apostles. The results for the Sanhedrin, verse 40. The results for the apostles, verses 41 and 42. So notice what the Sanhedrin does. It's there in verse 40: *They took his advice--* I mean, why wouldn't they take his advice? He's the wisest of the wise. They decided not to kill the apostles. *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.* So, the first thing the Sanhedrin does, verse 40, is they agree with Gamaliel. Okay, let's not be rash. Let's not kill the apostles. And then all this conversation between Gamaliel and the Sanhedrin is taking place outside of the apostles' earshot.

So then in verse 40, they bring the apostles back into the chamber. If you look at verse 34, they were told under Gamaliel's command to get them outside the chamber. But now the apostles are brought back into the chamber. And what does the Sanhedrin do? They punish the apostles. They don't kill them, but they punish them. It's right there in verse 40. *They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them.* Now why would they flog them? They flogged them because the apostles had disobeyed the command of Acts 4:17-18, where they were told directly by the Sanhedrin to not teach or speak anymore in the name of Yeshua, Jesus Christ. Acts 4:17-18 says, *"But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.* Now the apostles had disobeyed that command, and so they were deserving of a flogging. And this is important because this is now the first time anybody in the church age has suffered physically, you know, for their faith.

The worst thing that's happened thus far is they were given a gag order. But now the persecution has ramped up to the point where they not only had hands laid on them, but they were flogged. And most likely the way they were flogged is 40 lashes minus one. It doesn't say that here, but that was just a tradition. If you disobey the Sanhedrin's command, you are in trouble because the 40th lash it was said, killed you. And so, you were beaten to the point where you were almost dead, but not completely dead. And you'll find that practice at work in Deuteronomy 25:2-3, which says, *then it shall be if the*

*wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down, and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.* So, it could have been this beating was that intense. Forty lashes minus one. Thirty-nine lashes. Which is what they did with Jesus, as you know. Paul the Apostle suffered this punishment regularly. This happened to Paul the Apostle five times. It says in Second Corinthians 11:24, *"Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes."* Paul says, as he's comparing his apostleship to a group of people that are trying to attract attention to themselves instead of Paul. He says, do they really think they're apostles? Look at what I've gone through.

*"Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes."* So, think about those five times in your life, thirty-nine lashes. Beaten within an inch of your life. And that could very well be what happened to these apostles. So, things have obviously escalated from a gag order to number two, laying hands on them to arrest them, to number three, now there's actual physical persecution. So, after punishing the apostles, then the Sanhedrin charges the apostles, verse 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.* So, they re-emphasized what they had said earlier. Repeated in Acts what was said in Acts 4:17-18. In Acts 4 there was no beating. There was just a gag order. This is now the first time the church has suffered physically for its cause. And the Sanhedrin after doing this, after punishing them, after charging them, releases the apostles. Right there at the end of verse 40 it says, *and then released them.* So, these are the results of what Peter said and how Gamaliel intervened and why the apostles weren't killed on the spot. The apostles probably would have been killed, all things considered, from the human perspective, had Gamaliel, you know, not stepped up to the plate. So those are the results in terms of the Sanhedrin.

What are the results in terms of the apostles? How do they react to this? I mean, how would you react if someone lays hands on you and gives you thirty-nine lashes? -- For doing nothing more than testifying about how wonderful Jesus is, and He rose from the dead. This is a stunning thing to me, anyway, in terms of the reaction of the apostles, you see their joy in verse 41. *So they went on their way from the presence of the Council--* you know, feeling sorry for themselves. And getting on email and petitioning government. Oh, I'm sorry, it didn't say that. *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.* You know, when you're beaten within an inch of your life, it's a shameful thing. The passage I gave in Deuteronomy said, don't give them forty lashes because your brother will be degraded in your eyes. Give him thirty-nine lashes. It was humiliating. So, these apostles go away, verse 41, rejoicing. *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.* Now this verb "to deem worthy--" Because they were rejoicing, because they considered themselves worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ-- is used only three times in the Bible. It's used here and it's used in Second Thessalonians 1:5. And it's used in the prequel Luke 20:35.

Second Thessalonians 1:5 says, *This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment, so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.* It's also used in Luke 20:35. It says, *but those who are considered worthy to attain that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.* And here it's used to yet again where they consider themselves worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ. It reminds me very much of something that's going to happen to Paul later in the book of Acts, in Philippi. It says over there in Acts 16:22-25, *The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows--* not a few blows. This is how the people in Philippi treated Paul's and Silas's message. *When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.* It's one thing to be beaten up-- I mean, it says here many blows, beaten with rods-- and then you add on top of it, being put in basically hand and foot handcuffs where you're immobile.

Acts 16:25 then records the reaction of Paul and Silas, the victims of persecution. It says in verse 25, *But about midnight--* so they're being sleep deprived on top of everything else. *But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.* Wow, are you kidding me? *And the prisoners--* that's the rest of the prisoners-- *were listening to them.* What's wrong with these guys? You know? They're praising the Lord. They're singing hymns amid persecution. So that that's the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what the Holy Spirit allows people to do that are yielded to Him. A

wonderful book on this that Paul's going to author later on is the book of Philippians, which is the book of joy. And it's how to have joy in the midst of adverse circumstances. And you're seeing this right here in the book of Acts. These apostles are flogged, and they're rejoicing that they were worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ. Paul and Silas are mistreated and abused, and there they are in the middle of the night, praising God and singing hymns. So, I would just say this. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, don't we? Because a self-motivational class can't give you the ability to do this. This is something that's supernatural.

By the way, this is how the Philippian jailer, who's going to get saved later on in that chapter, got saved; because he saw this and it made no sense to him. It was supernatural. And I think he wanted what they had. That's why he was open to the gospel. So that becomes one of the reasons why you lose your job. You get a negative report from the doctor. And you just say, Lord, just help me through this. And you walk through it with peace and joy. And the world watches you and says, that doesn't make any sense, that they're reacting that way doesn't make any sense. They've obviously have something that I don't. So, it's actually evangelistic as to why God allows these things to happen. So, they're reacting with joy. And then verse 42, they're reacting with zeal. *And every day--* what does every day mean? It means every day, right? *And every day in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.* You see what is happening here? They're engaging in civil disobedience. They're telling the governing authorities: No, we're going to follow God. We're not going to stop talking and teaching anymore about Jesus. Because at the beginning of the book, Jesus said to the apostles, you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the end of the earth. So, if we just fold the tent every time a governing authority tells us to do otherwise, we're missing our purpose for being here on the earth.

So, this chapter, among many other chapters in the Bible-- but this one particularly-- becomes a great textbook on civil disobedience. Didn't we see it back in verse 29? *But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."* So, there's a there's a belief out there in Christianity that says-- and I really saw this during the whole pandemic thing, and even leaders within evangelical Christianity were saying this-- whatever the government tells you to do, you just got to do it. And I'm here to tell you folks that that is not the biblical position. Yeah, but, pastor, it does say we're

to submit to the government. Yes, we are, until the government goes too far and starts telling you to do things God says don't do; or start stopping you from doing things that God says to do. As we've talked about, you have two chapters in your Bible, in the book of Daniel that deal with this. Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image. And then Daniel 6; Daniel was told don't pray publicly anymore. He went ahead and did it and got thrown into the lion's den.

So, the Bible, even though Romans 13 says what it says, that we're to submit to the laws of the land, the biblical position is not: you obey the government no matter what the government says. That's not the biblical position any more than we would interpret Ephesians 2:22-33 that the wife is to submit to the husband. We would never interpret that as the wife is to submit to the husband, no matter what the husband does. If the husband is physically abusing the wife, the wife is not to submit to the husband. If the husband tells the wife not to study the Bible anymore, we would never tell a wife to submit to her husband. So, it's a general rule that you submit to authority. But the moment those in authority cross the line is the moment you, as a Christian, have a right to tell the authorities no. I have four criteria that I use on this. And I've given you these before. (1) There's got to be a clear contradiction between God's law and man's law. Clearly, you have it here. Because they said, 'Don't be witnesses.' And they said, 'No, Jesus said, we are witnesses.' (2) You have to try to exhaust all creative legal remedies. Meaning you have to-- I mean, civil disobedience should not be a first resort, but a last resort. You try as hard as you can to, as Paul says, live at peace with all men. (3) When you engage in civil disobedience, you have to remain respectful to the authorities.

There's no disrespect here. The apostles aren't calling the Sanhedrin names. Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as they're rebelling against authorities, are still reverently referring to the authorities as "Oh King." Not 'oh, you loser' and 'you're going to hell' or whatever. And then (4) when you step out and disobey the authorities, you have to be willing to pay the price. Because that's what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said in Daniel 3:18. They said, look, God can rescue us, but even if He doesn't-- meaning we might get incinerated in this fiery furnace. Even if He doesn't, we're still not going to obey. So as long as those four criteria are met, the Biblical position is not: you just submit to government no matter what government says. When the mandates were coming down, I mean, they were telling churches to shut down. You can't go to church anymore. Well, I'm sorry. My Bible says, [Heb 10:25] do

not forsake our own assembling together, as is the habit of some. As the mandates and things were coming down, they were saying, 'Okay, you can sing, but you can't sing in a group' and 'You can only sing at certain, I don't know, sound levels because we don't want to spread the virus.' Well, I'm sorry. My Bible says God inhabits the praises of His people. So even here in the late, great United States, we're having to think for the very first time, at least in my lifetime, about telling the government no. I could go on and on talking about this, but I think you guys kind of kind of catch my drift.

So, they just went right on ahead. And started preaching that Yeshua is the Messiah. Notice they did it in public. You know, they were out there, up front in your face. I don't think they were being obnoxious about it, but they went right back to the temple where the authorities could see them. And they were preaching Yeshua, the Hebrew name for Jesus. And then you'll notice in verse 42, they were doing it from house to house. So, they were doing it privately. What a testimony. So, in conclusion, we see the apostle's power, verses 12 through 16. And the apostles' persecution.

### **Acts 5:12-42 Church's Second Persecution**

- I. Apostles' Power (5:12-16)
- II. Apostles' Persecution (5:17-42)

And the church in the midst of all of this is going to keep thriving, and it's going to keep growing to the point where when we get to Acts 6-- I believe January 10th is when we reconvene-- it's going to create an internal problem because the church is growing so fast that it's creating service needs within the church, that if the apostles had plunged into addressing all of these service needs, they would have gotten off their message, their main task, which is prayer and the word. So that's why it's at that point that God is going to raise up a brand-new office within the church called the deacons, who are going to handle these service projects. So, I just want you to see what's happening here as we're documenting the birth and growth of the church. Acts 4, external attack by the governing authorities. Acts 5:1-11, internal attack; Satan using Ananias and Sapphira. The rest of Acts 5, external attack; dealing again with the governing authorities. Acts 6:1-7, internal attack; we've got service project issues. And then you get to Acts 6:8 all the way through the end of chapter 7, the first martyrdom, Stephen; external attack. So, you see what Satan is always doing. He's attacking the church from without. He's attacking the church from within. And I'm not here to give Satan advice, but I think his

internal attacks are far more effective. Because every time you try to attack the church from the outside, the church always grows. Be careful about praying for church growth because persecution is always a tool that leads to church growth. The church today is thriving in the parts of the world that have the most despotic regimes. Iran, the church is thriving underground. China, the church is thriving underground. Every time Satan attacks the church from the outside, it always grows. I think Satan is far more effective when he works on the inside, and he applies for church membership, for example, and wants to teach Sunday school and wants to sing in the choir. He's far more effective internally than he is externally.