

The Gospel Can't Be Stopped (Acts 5:17-42)

People were coming from all around Judea to Jerusalem to be healed. They were bringing friends and family members. They were bringing their needs to this ragamuffin group from Galilee who were healing and casting out evil spirits.

This bothered the high priest and council that had been jealous of Jesus. And we know how that turned out. It's amazing that the council members actually think they can stop the spread of the gospel through intimidation. The gospel is unstoppable. (Acts 5:17-21)

1. Prison doors are no match for the power of God.

A. A spiritually powerless religious council is no match for the Lord's angel.

1. The disciples go right back to what they were arrested for. They are speaking "all the words of this life." Notice that "Life" is capitalized. This life is Christ.

2. Who are the religious leaders to tell them to be silent when the angel of the Lord tells them to speak the very words that bring life to those who are spiritually dead?

B. The council comes back in the morning.

1. They ask for the prisoners only to be told they are back at the temple teaching. (5:26)

2. The council is not giving up on intimidating them into silence, but they ask politely out of fear of what might happen to them. When the apostles are back in front of the court the high priest says,

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

3. This council had paid blood money to Judas in their plot to kill Jesus. They incited the people to call for Jesus' crucifixion.

C. But, the apostles cannot be silenced. ("We must obey God rather than men") (29)

1. They can't be intimidated into disobeying the command of the Lord.

Verses 30-32 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you put to death by hanging Him on a cross. 31 "He is the One whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

2. "You killed him." "God exalted him." Peter points the finger at the council.

3. Peter also holds out grace to them. He tells them Jesus can be their Savior. Grace and forgiveness are available to those who killed Jesus.

Verse 33 "But when they heard this, they became infuriated and nearly decided to execute them." (33)

4. In chapter 4 the council was annoyed when the apostles healed a man. Now they want to kill the apostles.

2. There is one cool head in the room.

A. Gamaliel reminds the council of previous trouble makers.

1. Most who came before and seemed to be a threat died and their followers scattered.

Veres 38-40 "And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and leave them alone, for if the source of this plan or movement is men, it will be overthrown; 39 but if the source is God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God. They followed 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."

2. Gamaliel senses something different in this group from Galilee.

3. Maybe what they are preaching is true? Maybe the life they are offering is real?

B. This time the council did not send them off merely with threats.

1. They sent them away bruised and bloodied and maybe with some broken bones.
2. They ordered the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus.

3. How might this end?

A. What will the apostles do?

1. Will they go home, nurse their wounds and keep quiet for awhile?
2. Will they take time to reconsider if risking their lives for a Messiah they could no longer see with their eyes, was going to be worth what it was going to cost them?
3. Will they beg God to exercise the same kind of instantaneous judgment on these cold religious leaders that we saw with Ananias and Sapphira?

B. Instead, the apostles rejoiced.

Veres 41-42 "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ."

1. What great faithfulness in the face of persecution and intimidation. They're not depressed about violence against them. They're rejoicing!

2. They're not wondering if the sacrifice is worth the cost. They are happy to be counted worthy.

3. They continue to preach and teach. They are following the leading of the Spirit.

C. We must ask ourselves.

1. Have we been intimidated into backing down? Are we afraid of being cancelled? of being oppressed?

2. If so, there is a joy we are missing out on as well. The joy of being counted worthy.

3. Perhaps we need to ask the Spirit to fill us with the same kind of tenacity, courage and joy the apostles had.

4. We can be bold and unashamed in our witness. We can be generous in our giving. We can joyfully share the word of Life.

