

ACTS 5:17–42

Thursday Morning Bible Study

“The Kingdom Cannot Be Stopped”

Context:

- Unity, Koinonia, Growth, Excitement
- Ananias and Sapphira – Judgement and purity
- Exponential Multiplication, witness (outsiders held them in high esteem)
- Power

Acts 5:17–18

“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.”

Discussion Questions

- What motivates the High Priest and Sadducees in this passage?
- Why do you think the apostles had become such a threat to the religious leaders?
- What does this reveal about the difference between earthly authority and the kingdom of God?

Notes

- The Sadducees were wealthy and politically connected religious leaders.
- They had authority, influence, and control over the temple system.
- Yet despite all of their power, they could not stop the spread of the Gospel.
- Acts keeps showing us that Christ’s kingdom advances differently than earthly kingdoms.

Acts 5:19–21 (Read Together)

“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.”

Discussion Questions

- What stands out to you about the angel’s command to the apostles?

- Why is it significant that God sends them right back into the temple?
- Why do you think the angel calls the Gospel: ***“all the words of this Life”?***

Notes

- The angel does not tell them to hide or escape.
- He tells them to return publicly and continue preaching.
- The temple was the center of the Sadducees’ authority.
- Christianity is not merely a moral system or religious identity.
- Acts presents the Gospel as LIFE - the life of Christ given through the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:21–26 (Read Together)

“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.” Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.”

Discussion Questions

- What emotions do you imagine the religious leaders felt when they discovered the prison was still locked, but the apostles were gone?
- What is Luke showing us through this scene?

Notes

- The Sadducees denied resurrection and angels.
- Yet angels are opening prisons while the apostles preach resurrection.
- Luke fills this section with irony.
- The rulers think they are in control, but God continually exposes how limited their power actually is.

Acts 5:27–32 (Read Together)

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, “We strictly charged 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.” 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.”

Discussion Questions

- What stands out to you about the apostles’ response to the authorities?
- What do you think Peter means when he says:

“We must obey God rather than men”?

- What kinds of things compete for our allegiance today?

Notes

- The apostles are respectful, but unwavering.
- Their ultimate allegiance belongs to Christ.
- They are not driven by politics or rebellion.
- They are people who have become convinced that Jesus truly reigns.

Acts 5:32 (Read Together)

“And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Discussion Questions

- What do you think it means that:

“the Holy Spirit is a witness”?

- How do we see the Holy Spirit bearing witness throughout Acts?

Notes

The Holy Spirit bears witness through:

- boldness
- transformed lives
- conviction
- healings
- signs and wonders
- the ongoing spread of the Gospel

The Spirit is publicly testifying that Jesus truly reigns.

Acts 5:33–39 (Read Together)

“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 men outside for a little while. And he said to them, ‘Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, 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,”

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Gamaliel urges caution?
- What makes Gamaliel’s statement so fascinating in hindsight?

“If this is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.”

Notes

- Gamaliel references other failed movements that disappeared over time.
- But Christianity did not disappear.
- Kingdoms and empires have come and gone, yet Christ continues building His Church.
- History itself has become evidence that the Gospel cannot be stopped.

Acts 5:40–42 (Read Together)

“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.”

Discussion Questions

- Why were the apostles able to rejoice after being beaten?
- What stands out to you about the final verse?

“They did not cease...”

- What do you think this passage teaches us about the kingdom of Christ?

Final Reflection

Acts keeps showing us:

- earthly powers rise and fall
- rulers believe they are in control
- opposition comes against the Church

Yet:

- the Gospel continues spreading
- the Church continues growing
- Christ continues reigning

The apostles are slowly learning: they no longer need to fear the powers of this world because they belong to a greater King.