

# SPEAK OUT / Sunday, September 20, 2015

## Unifying Topic: WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH

### Lesson Text

I. An Opposing Voice (Acts 5:27-29)

II. A Reasonable Voice (Acts 5:33-39)

III. A Rejoicing Voice (Acts 5:40-42)

**The Main Thought:** Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Sometimes people are so dedicated to a cause that they will go to any lengths, even enduring pain and suffering, to achieve their goals. What is the source of their commitment? As the apostles continued to teach about Jesus as the Messiah and to help many people become believers, they knew, even though the authorities tried to stop them, that they were obeying God's calling rather than any human authority.

**Lesson Aim:** To study the apostles' promotion of Jesus as the Messiah despite being ordered not to do so by the Sanhedrin.

**Life Aim:** To discuss and overcome barriers to evangelism efforts within the Church and the world at large.

### HISTORY:

**Acts 5:11-26** "*Keeping back*" caused great fear over the church and over many that heard about Ananias and Sapphira. So, they realized that they couldn't keep back from the Holy Spirit. Everyone recognized the great cost and seriousness of following Christ. Following the Lord meant denying self completely, surrendering to Christ all one is and one has. It meant walking the straight and narrow path, living righteously and godly in this present world and looking for the glorious return of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ (**vv.11**). After that, the apostles met at Solomon's porch on one accord; the place where the Sanhedrin arrested Peter and John. Many signs and wonders came from the hands of these apostles. Some people didn't want to mix with the believers, but the believers possessed great unity as they held public worship on the porch, reaching out and evangelizing; attracting huge crowds where multitudes of both men and women were added (**vv.12-14**). The sick were carried out into the streets and placed on beds and mats believing that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow; fall on some and heal them; and even those troubled by unclean spirits were healed. They were healed both physically and spiritually (**vv.15-16**).

The unity among believers caused persecution. The high priest and all those with him (the sect of the Sadducees) opposed them and began to be filled with anger and resentment to where they had the apostles arrested and placed in prison. But, God sent an angel! During the night the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and led them out. The message to them was to "*go stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life*" (Eternal Life to dying men). Four major words we are to remember:

- Go — go immediately.
- Stand — take your stand; stand forth without reservation or hesitation.
- Speak — proclaim, preach, teach courageously, boldly, and without fear.
- All the Words of this life — the whole gospel of salvation; the glorious message of the death and resurrection of Christ; not watering down or changing anything.

Note a significant fact: difficult assignments usually follow miracles (**vv.17-20**). After hearing the assignment, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and began to teach. Meanwhile, the high priest and all those with him and others sent men to the prison to have them brought forth, but upon returning, their report didn't sit well with the priests. The prison was found locked and secured; guards standing at the doors, but the apostles weren't found in the prison (**vv.21-23**). Now when the high priest and others heard this report, they were perplexed and wondered what to do and what would happen next. They assumed that if this story of the miraculous release of the

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apostles would get out, it would be yet another story that would grow, causing even greater popularity for the followers of the Lord Jesus. The apostles were not hiding. They were in the Temple again! They were teaching the people. Thus the officers were commanded to bring Peter and the others from the Temple; re-arrest them, but without violence for fear of the people's reaction, lest they would be stoned (**vv.24-26**).

## **LESSON:**

### **Acts 5:27-29 An Opposing Voice**

**5:27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,**— They brought them and made them stand in front of the Sanhedrin Council as the high priest asked questions.

**5:28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.** The high priest reminded them that they had been strictly warned before about preaching in this name. They didn't even want to say the name of Jesus. Now, they're saying look what you've done: filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, intending to bring this man's (Jesus) blood upon us, the Sanhedrin. Three charges were brought against the disciples:

1. They had broken this specific law: the name and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not to be preached (Acts 4:18). As believers, we are sometimes forbidden to speak the Lord's name in governments, businesses, to fellow workers, in schools, in institutions, and to neighbors.
2. They were thought to have taught a false doctrine that misled and stirred up people.
3. They were thought to have falsely accused the government of injustice and murder (killed Jesus).

**5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.** But Peter and the other apostles replied "*We must obey God rather than men.*" The apostles knew their priorities. They knew that there would be situations where you cannot obey both God and man; therefore, it would be necessary to obey God and trust His Word.

## **NOT APART OF THE LESSON VERSES 30-32**

**5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.** Peter continued to speak the message that they had killed the God of their ancestors; killed Jesus and hanged Him on the tree.

**5:31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.** As Peter spoke about Jesus, he let them know that it was God's power that has raised Jesus, whom the Jewish leaders murdered. God exalted the man Jesus, whom they had rejected, to be seated at His right hand (a place of all authority) to be Prince (Ruler) and Savior (Deliverer), to save God's chosen people, so that the people of Israel would have the opportunity to repent and have their sins forgiven. Note, in this verse, God had three purposes for raising Christ.

1. To make Him a Prince and a Savior.
2. To give repentance.
3. To give forgiveness of sins.

**5:32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.** And the reason they speak these things is because they are God's witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given. If a person believes, he obeys. And the disciples obeyed, for they had just been witnessing to the Will of God to the world.

- The Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ by giving supernatural power to the disciples to live righteously and proclaim Christ.

- The Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ by convicting of sin and righteousness and judgment.
- The Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ by working signs, wonders, and miracles through the believer.

## BACK TO THE LESSON

### Acts 5:33-39 A Reasonable Voice

**5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.** The Council's immediate reaction was that they were furious. They were cut to the heart not with conviction, but with anger, wrath, and rage. They plotted and set their minds to kill the apostles.

**5:34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;**— Gamaliel was one of the most outstanding teachers in Jewish history . His name means "*the reward of God.*"

- He was one in the Jewish Council, a Pharisee.
- He was a doctor of the law.
- He was so respected and loved and given the title "*Rabban*" (Master).
- He was a thinking man, extremely wise with a firm belief in God and His providence. He saw something the unthinking men of the world were missing. His thinking...
  - God's Will and plan can be seen in world events and revolution.
  - What is not of God will come to nothing. They will be frustrated and exposed by God Himself. God will not let any idea or work or movement stand forever that is not of Him, eventually it will dissolve.
  - What is of God cannot be overthrown. The world may try; and it may achieve what appears to be a temporary success; but God...
- And he was the famed teacher of Saul of Tarsus, later to become Paul, the apostle.

So, Gamaliel commanded that the apostles be sent outside the Council chamber for a little while, while he talked.

**5:35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.** So, Gamaliel's advice to the Council and others was to take heed to what they were planning or thinking of any harm to do.

**5:36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.** As Gamaliel speaks, he brings up two men. Little is known about Theudas. He was evidently a revolutionist, boasting of himself. The point is some time ago he led an uprising against the Romans; about 400 men joined him, and it came to a futile end. He was killed and all that obeyed him were scattered. It was not in God's plan for him to succeed, so his efforts came to nothing.

**5:37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.** Here is another example of one not following God's plan. Judas of Galilee rose up and many obeyed him, at a time of taxation; not in the Will of God, and he also died and those who obeyed him were scattered. He incited a nationalist revolt with a larger following against paying tribute to Caesar when God alone was Israel's true King.

**5:38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:**—Leave those who believe in Jesus alone. Let them go about doing the good they are doing. Reap the benefits of their ministry.

- If they are not of God, they will soon disappear from the scene.

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**5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.**

- If they are of God all the forces of the world cannot overthrow them.

Note this about the Will of God: a man who opposes Jesus and His servant are fighting against God Himself. Gamaliel's advice to the Council in these five verses gave the apostles some breathing room to continue their work.

## **Acts 5:40-42 A Rejoicing Voice**

**5:40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.** The Council hated the movement, but the reasoning of Gamaliel and his "*wait and see*" policy had to be adopted; they agreed. But, this time upon releasing the apostles and forbidding them not to preach in the name of Jesus, the Council went one step further, they had them beaten before letting them go.

**5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.** Well, well, upon departure, the apostles went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Increased persecution simply evoked increased dedication.

- God stirred within the persecuted heart a sense of joy and rejoicing.
- God stirred within the persecuted heart a sense of courage and mission.

**5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.** They continued daily in the temple and in every house teaching and preaching. Despite the opposition, they were compelled to share the glorious news of the gospel; their primary reason was teaching to build up believers.

### **SUMMARY:**

Peter and the apostles were questioned by the high priest. They were strictly forbidden to teach in that name, but there they were again in front of the temple teaching. The high priests accused them of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine and bringing blame of that man's blood (Jesus) upon them (the high priests). They didn't even want to say Jesus' name, but Peter and the apostles replied, that they rather obey God than men. The opposing voices stood out: The high priests opposed Peter and Peter and the apostles opposed the high priests and the Sanhedrin Council (**vv.27-29**).

The Council's immediate reaction cut them to the heart that they set their minds to killed the apostles. But a voice of reason by the name of Gamaliel who was a Pharisee of the Sanhedrin; one who had a good reputation commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while as they took heed to what they were about to do. He began to remind them of two revolutionist, Theudas and Judas the Galilean, who rose up on two separate occasions, persuading many followers, but, after a while, it came to nought. They were killed and their followers were scattered. The point is that, if they are not of God, they will soon disappear from the scene. And, if they are of God, all the forces of the world cannot overthrow them, and you can be found fighting against God Himself. It's one thing to listen to the voice of reasoning, but you also have to follow it (**vv.33-39**).

The Council agreed on the "*wait and see*" policy, but they still had the apostles beaten, charging them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. After being beaten, can you imagine the apostles went from the Council's presence rejoicing? Rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer shame; rejoicing because it was a real honor to be dishonored on behalf of the Name of the man the Sanhedrin dishonored; rejoicing in the Temple and from house to house while they held on to their faith teaching even more; announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ! (**vv.40-42**).