

# THE SECOND PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH (PART II): REASONS FOR REMAINING LOYAL ACTS 05:26–42

## ***Introduction***

Believers must be loyal; they must obey God. The present passage is forceful in driving the point home to the human heart.

- I. The disciples were rearrested (vv. 26-29).
- II. Reason 1: God has raised up and exalted Christ (vv. 30-31).
- III. Reason 2: God has made us witnesses (v. 32).
- IV. Reason 3: God has a will that must be done (vv. 32-40).
- V. Reason 4: God is able to deliver through hardship (vv. 41-42).

## **I. Acts 05:26–29 *The Rearrest of the Disciples***

The disciples were rearrested. They were arrested without violence because the officers feared the reaction of the people. Apparently the officers had *roughed up* the disciples before, taking them by force (v. 18). The disciples were taken before the Sanhedrin Court, the ruling body of the government. (See *Sanhedrin*, Acts 4:5-6.) Three charges were brought against the disciples.

1. They had broken the specific law that the name and resurrection of Jesus Christ was not to be preached (see Acts 4:18).

***Thought 1.*** Believers are sometimes forbidden to speak for their Lord by governments, businesses, fellow workers, schools, institutions and neighbours. But note: this is in direct conflict with the Lord's command (Acts 1:4, 8).

2. They were thought to have taught a false doctrine, a doctrine that misled and stirred up people.
3. They were thought to have threatened insurrection, to have falsely accused the government of injustice and murder (Acts 4:10-12; see Acts 2:23, 36; 3:15). The leaders feared they would lose control of the people, their support and loyalty. They knew full well their position and livelihood were at stake.

***Thought 1.*** Note how the truth mattered little if any to the leaders. They had killed Jesus, fully accepting the responsibility for His death before Pilate (Mt. 27:25). What they needed was to confess their guilt and repent of their sins just as the people were doing.

Now note the striking response of the disciples: they must be loyal to God; they must obey God rather than men. (See Acts 4:19-20.)

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## II. Acts 05:30–31 Work of Jesus Christ

The disciple must be loyal; he must obey God, because God has raised up and exalted Christ. (See *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Acts 1:3; note, Acts 1:10-11; *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Acts 2:24; note, Acts 2:25-36.) God had three purposes for raising Christ.

1. To make Him a Prince and a Saviour (see *Prince*, Acts 5:31; *Saviour*, Acts 5:31).
2. To give repentance (see also *Repentance*, Acts 17:29-30).
3. To give forgiveness of sins (see *Baptism*, Acts 2:38; *Forgiveness*, Acts 2:38)

### ACTS 05:31 PRINCE (ARCHEGON)

*God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. Acts 05:31*

Author, Originator, Source, Leader, Pioneer, the Beginner and Finisher (Heb. 12:2). Jesus Christ is the Prince of life (Acts 3:5) and of salvation (Acts 5:31; Heb. 2:10 where *archegon* is translated captain or leader). Note the force of the point: Jesus is both the Giver and Saviour of life. (See *Life*, Jn. 1:4; note, Jn. 1:4-5; *Life in Jesus Christ*, Jn. 10:10; *Eternal Life*, Jn. 17:2-3.) □

### ACTS 05: 31 SAVIOUR (SOTERA)

Saviour means a Deliverer, a Preserver. It has the idea of a Deliverer or a Saviour who snatches a person from some terrible disaster that is going to end in their perishing (see Jn. 3:16). (See *Salvation*, Mt. 1:21.)

1. Jesus Christ is said to be the Saviour.

**Luke 2:11** “Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

**John 4:42** They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.”

**Acts 5:31** God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

**Acts 13:23** “From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised.”

**Eph 5:23** For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.

**Phil 3:20** *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**2 Tim 1:10** *But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

**Titus 1:4** *To Titus, my true son in our common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.*

**Titus 2:13** *While we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

**Titus 3:6** *Whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

**2 Pet 1:1** *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.*

**2 Pet 1:11** *And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

**2 Pet 2:20** *If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.*

**2 Pet 3:18** *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

**2 Pet 3:2** *I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.*

**1 John 4:14** *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

2. God is said to be the Saviour.

**Luke 1:47** *“And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.”*

**1 Tim 1:1** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Saviour and of Christ Jesus our hope.*

**1 Tim 2:3** *This is good, and pleases God our Saviour.*

**1 Tim 4:10** *(And for this we labour and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, and especially of those who believe.*

**Titus 1:3** *And at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.*

**Titus 2:10** *And not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.*

**Titus 3:4** *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared.*

**Jude 1:25** *To the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. □*

### III. Acts 05:32 Duty to Witness

The disciple must be loyal, must obey God because God has made him a witness of *these things* (rhēmaton) or sayings. What *things*, what *sayings*? The things just stated. The believer is a witness that Jesus Christ is the Prince and Saviour, the only Person who accepts repentance and can forgive sins. (See note *Witnessing*, Acts 1:8.)

Note the Holy Spirit is also said to be a witness to these things.

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

**John 15:26-27** *“When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”*

=> The Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ by convicting of sin and righteousness and judgment.

**John 16:7-11** *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

=> The Holy Spirit witnesses to Christ by working signs, wonders and miracles through the believer.

**Acts 2:16-21** *No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

**Acts 4:30** *“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

**Heb 2:3-4** *How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

Note something else of importance: the Holy Spirit is given “to those who obey Him.” His wonderful presence and power, guidance and care, purpose and mission can become anyone’s — anyone who will *obey* Him. (See *Obedience and Belief*, Acts 5:32.)

### ACTS 05:32 OBEDIENCE AND BELIEF

*“We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” Acts 05:32*

The Holy Spirit is given to “those who obey Him.” Note how the word *obedience* is used instead of *believe*. To believe is *to obey*. They are one and the same. If a person believes, he obeys. (See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24)

**Luke 11:13** *“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

**John 4:50** *Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.*

**Heb 5:9** *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. □*

#### IV. Acts 05:32–40 Obedience to God’s Plan

The disciple must be loyal; he must obey God because God has a will that must be done. God has a plan and a will to be done upon earth, and His providence and power work it out to see that it is done. This is the point of the story of these verses. The disciples had just been witnessing to the will of God for the world (vv. 30-31).

1. God’s will was rejected and opposed by the unthinking men of the world. Note that both evil and religious leaders were guilty of not thinking, of acting upon emotion and prejudice instead of reason. Apparently most of the civil and religious leaders were...
  - *furios* (die prionto); that is, their hearts were sawn in two, into two parts, through and through. The idea is they were cut to the heart — not with conviction but with anger, wrath, rage and reaction against the apostles.
  - *wanting to* (eboulonto); that is, they were minded, were intending; were set on killing the disciples.

2. God's will is recognized by thinking men of the world. Not all men in the world act upon emotion and personal desires. Some are rational, controlled and governed by higher purposes than self-interest. Gamaliel was such a man. He was one of the most famous Jewish teachers of all time, and he saw something the unthinking men of the world were missing.
  - a. God's will and plan can be seen in world events and revolution. Gamaliel gave two examples (see *Theudas and Judas*, Acts 5:36-37).
  - b. What is not of God's will will come to nothing. If the message and work of Jesus' movement are the idea...
    - of deceivers,                      • of revolutionaries,                      • of self-seekers,
    - of the insane,                      • of the foolish,                      • of the power-hungry,
    - of the politically motivated.

...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.

Note: Gamaliel's philosophy was correct. Everything that is not of God is doomed. But Gamaliel's philosophy had one flaw. Evil ideas and works, deceivers and self-seekers are not necessarily destroyed in the short run — eventually, yes, but not necessarily quickly. Evil is sometimes allowed to reign in order to awaken men to their need for God and His deliverance.

- c. What is of God cannot be stopped. This is an eternal maxim or rule. God's will and work cannot be stopped, not totally or finally. The world may try; it may achieve what appears to be temporary success. But God causes the spark and life of His Word to catch fire in the heart of someone else. His Word and life, the glorious message of His Son whom He has exalted as Prince and Saviour, cannot be extinguished. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the Lord's church no matter how great a force of evil is launched by the world against it.

***Mat 16:18*** “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

This was the advice of Gamaliel, the thinking man of the world, to the others on the counsel. 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 from God, they will soon disappear from the scene.

=> If they are from God, all the forces of the world cannot overthrow them. You will only *find yourself fighting against God*.

The council agreed and had the apostles flogged or scourged for preaching the name of Jesus (see note, Lk. 18:32-33). They then issued the law once again. The name of Jesus Christ was not to be preached.

**Thought 1.** Note this about the will of God: a man who opposes Jesus and His servant is fighting against God Himself.

**Mat 12:30** *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”*

**Acts 9:4** *He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”*

**Psa 32:9-10** *Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you. Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.*

**Rom 2:5** *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.*

**Prov 29:1** *A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed – without remedy.*

**Mal 2:2** *“If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honour my name,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honour me.”*

### ACTS 05:34 GAMALIEL

Gamaliel was one of the most outstanding teachers in Jewish history. His name means *the reward of God*.

1. He was a Pharisee (see *Pharisees*, Acts 23:8).
2. He was the grandson of Hillel, who was the famed founder of the liberal school of Jewish law (see *Marriage and Divorce*, Mt. 19:1-12).
3. He was a teacher of the law, having secured as much formal training in the law as possible.
4. He was so respected and loved he was given the title *Rabban* (Master). It is said he was the first of only seven men ever given the title.
5. He was a thinking man, an extremely wise man, a man with a firm belief in God and His providence. The present passage indicates this.
6. He was the famed teacher of Saul of Tarsus, later to become Paul the apostle (Acts 22:3). There is a chance that Paul was present at this particular discussion. He was probably a member of the Sanhedrin. □

**ACTS 05:35–37 THEUDAS AND JUDAS**

Little is really known about these two revolutionaries. The point of their being mentioned is that both led an uprising against the Romans that came to a futile end. It was not in God's plan for them to succeed, so their efforts came to nothing. □

**V. Acts 05:41–42 Obedience and Deliverance**

The disciple must be loyal; he must obey God because God is able to deliver the obedient through hardship. God delivered the disciples. They had been terribly beaten, but note God's marvellous deliverance.

1. God stirred within the persecuted heart a sense of privilege. They *counted* themselves privileged to suffer disgrace for the name of Christ.
2. God stirred within the persecuted heart a sense of joy and rejoicing.
3. God stirred within the persecuted heart a sense of courage and mission. They continued *day after day* in the temple, teaching and preaching — proclaiming the good news. Despite the opposition, they were compelled to share the glorious news of the gospel: God had sent His Son into the world to save men (see vv. 30-31).

**Mat 10:22** *“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”* (see Mt. 5:11; Heb. 11:25)

**Rom 8:17** *Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

**Phil 1:28** *Without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved — and that by God.* (see Jas. 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:20)

**James 1:2-4** *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**1 Pet 4:12-13** *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.* (see Acts 16:23)

**1 Pet 5:10** *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* ■