

THE SECOND PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH (PART I): A PICTURE OF ABUSE ACTS 05:12–25

Introduction

This experience of Peter and John gives a clear picture of persecution.

- I. The reasons for persecution (vv. 12-16).
- II. The persecution (vv. 17-18).
- III. The miraculous deliverance through and from persecution (vv. 19-21).
- IV. The failure of persecution: utter perplexity and frustration (vv. 21-25).

I. Acts 05:12–16 *Reasons for Persecution*

The reasons for persecution are pictured in these verses. Wherever and whenever these things take place among believers, there will be persecution of one sort or another.

1. Signs and wonders and miracles cause persecution. Note: there were *many* miraculous signs and wonders, not just a few. God works miraculous *signs and wonders* among His people to demonstrate clearly and without question. ..
 - “That He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).
 - that His Son, Jesus Christ, is alive and still actively at work upon the earth, saving and meeting the needs of men.
 - that it is the people who trust God that God looks after and that possess His authority and power upon earth.

The world does not experience nor understand *miraculous signs and wonders*. The world does not understand how a life can be totally changed by the saving grace of Christ or how a miraculous healing of the body can take place. And what the world does not experience and understand, it often rejects, mocks, abuses and persecutes. Why?

=> Because miracles show the ignorance and inability of man.

=> Because miracles show that there is a Being higher than man — a God to whom man must surrender and obey.

=> Because it disturbs men and reminds them of their great need.

2. The great unity among believers causes persecution. The world fears the unity and binding force of believers who join together. They fear the force, the strength...
 - of their doctrine, worship and discipline
 - of their purpose and mission
-

- of what so great a body bound together can do

John 17:21 *“That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

Phil 1:27 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.*

Eph 2:14 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

3. The holding of public worship by *true* believers causes persecution. The worship and praise of God is the foundational belief of believers. The world often fears...
 - the attraction and pull of sincere and committed worship.
 - the *loyalty and commitment* of sincere worship.
4. Separation from the world and being different causes persecution. The believers of the early church were different: their lifestyle, their commitment to God, their giving all they were and had above their necessities, their fear of God. Their commitment caused them to walk completely separate from the world and from the enjoyable pleasures it offered. The believers were radically different.

Acts 5:13 *No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

Eph 5:11 *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

5. The commitment to reach out and evangelize the world causes persecution. The world believes there are many ways to reach God. So long as the world’s religions allow men to live as they wish and still give them a sense of security, they are acceptable and considered to be of value. Therefore, the commitment and mission of true believers,

that there is only one way to God, is considered narrow by the world. The world mocks and opposes the idea that Christ is the only Saviour of the world. The world rejects and does its best to erase the message of Christ from off the earth.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 6:68 *Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

Acts 4:12 *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*

1 Cor 2:2 *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

1 Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

6. The reaching out and mobilizing of large crowds causes persecution. The world fears large crowds who are different and separated from it. Even if the crowds mean no harm, even if the crowd is out to help the world, the world fears it. Believers are different in a way the world does not want, that is, different in morality and righteousness, giving and sacrificing — sacrificing even to the point of giving all one is and has.

Acts 4:4 *But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

Acts 11:21 *The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.*

Mark 4:31-32 *“It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.”*

Isa 9:7 *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*

7. The meeting of man’s needs causes persecution. True believers see the world as being in desperate need, both physically and spiritually. Therefore, they give all they *are* and *have* above their own necessities to meet those needs. The world...
 - mocks and ridicules a commitment that demands *all* a person has, feeling that giving some is enough, even if millions of people are still left suffering.

- fears the example of a commitment so deeply made, lest their own consciences (salved by giving some) be convicted.
- dislikes being reminded and told they are *sinful* in their *storing up* and *hoarding*.

Therefore, the world approves of some needs being met by some commitment and some giving. But they reject the demand of Christ, the demand that insists upon total commitment and sacrifice.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Mark 10:28 *Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!"*

Luke 14:33 *"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

Note that the people were clamouring to get to Peter, believing if they could just fall under his shadow they would be healed. Note: there is no mention that anyone was actually healed this way. However, the implication is that some people were. If so, the same two ingredients that bring about healing miracles were at work: the Lord's power and the faith of the sick. We must always remember that God cares and loves so much that He always honours a person's faith. If a person had a faith so great that he really believed that Peter's shadow carried the *virtue* and *power* of God, God would most likely heal the person. How wonderful the love and care of God!

Mat 17:20 *He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

Mat 18:19 *"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."*

Mark 9:23 *"'If you can'?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."*

Luke 11:9 *"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."*

II. Acts 05:17–18 The Persecution

The persecution itself. Note two points.

1. The persecutors were the religionists and secular leaders of the world (see *Priests*, Acts 4:1; *Temple Guard*, Acts 4:1; *Pharisees*, Acts 23:8; *Sadducees*, Acts 23:8). They were *jealous* (zelou), which means a boiling zeal and envy. They were consumed with a boiling anger and jealousy or envy over the preaching of Jesus. (See Acts 4:2-4. See *Religionists*, Mt. 12:10 for reasons the religionists feared and opposed Jesus so much.)

2. There was the persecution itself. They were arrested and jailed. This was an attempt to silence them through...

- restraint
- fright
- shame

Being opposed, actually arrested and jailed by the authorities, would be enough to restrain, frighten and shame many preachers and believers.

Thought 1. The believer knows and has been forewarned that he will suffer persecution.

John 15:20 “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”

John 16:1-4 “All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.”

Phil 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.

2 Tim 3:12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 John 3:13 “Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.”

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.

III. Acts 05: 19–21 *Deliverance from Persecution*

The miraculous deliverance through and from persecution. Peter and John’s situation was serious.

=> It was night.

=> They were behind prison doors.

=> They were doubly imprisoned: guards were also stationed outside the prison doors (v. 23).

=> They were to stand trial the next morning, a trial that could threaten their lives (v. 33).

Note three points.

1. God’s deliverance in this situation was through the miraculous working of an angel. Scripture definitely says angels are “ministering spirits, sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14. See *Angels*, Heb. 1:4-14.) The point is this: God cares. He always cares about the troubling situations of His dear children. Therefore, He will do whatever is necessary to deliver His child through trouble (Rom. 8:28).

- a. God sometimes delivers by giving His presence of love, joy, peace and security so the believer can endure and minister while in the trial. Paul is a dynamic example. He spent years in prison, but while there he was always witnessing and ministering (see Ph. 1:12-14).

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Heb 2:17-18 *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Heb 13:6 *So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

- b. God sometimes delivers believers unto Himself, taking them on home to heaven when their ministry on earth is done. Sometimes the believer is to remain in the trial and die as a martyr or as a sufferer in the name of the Lord Jesus. Sometimes there is a need to reach some observer standing there witnessing the trial of the believer. The believer's hope and faithfulness to the end is used by God to preach volumes to the observers. Through suffering, God proves His glorious love and power for His dear servant.

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

- c. God sometimes delivers believers out and away from trouble. They can best serve the Lord by being free of the trial.

2 Cor 1:10 *He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

Psa 91:3 *Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.*

Jer 1:8 *"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.*

2. God's purpose for Peter and John was for them to "go, stand and...tell the people the full message." The Greek is strong, demanding boldness and courage.

=> "Go": go now, immediately.

=> "Stand": take your stand; stand forth without reservation or hesitation.

=> "Tell": proclaim, preach, teach — courageously, boldly, without fear.

=> "The full message of this new life"; the whole gospel of salvation; the glorious message of the death and resurrection of Christ; not watering down or changing anything; not holding back; not trying to soften the message to make it more acceptable.

Note a significant fact: difficult assignments usually follow miracles. A heavy responsibility falls upon the man for whom God works a miracle. God frees His servant in order to perform a great work. Miracles perplex the world. God sees to it because He wants them to lead to the conviction and conversion of men.

Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 4:20 *"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

2 Tim 1:8 *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

3. The disciples obeyed, and they obeyed fully and completely, without hesitation. They obeyed as soon as they could. They arose "at daybreak" and entered the temple and taught.

John 15:10 *"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."*

2 Tim 1:7-8 *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

IV. Acts 05: 21–25 *The Failure of Persecution*

The failure of persecution resulted in utter perplexity and frustration. The story of what happened next is an excellent picture of persecution whenever it is launched against Christ and His followers.

1. The persecutors (worldly court) convened to try the disciples.
2. The guards found them missing: they had been delivered out of the persecution. (As pointed out in the previous point, God always delivers His dear child out of the *suffering* of persecution, either *through* or *away* from it.)
3. The persecutors were *puzzled* (*dieporoun*): were perplexed; completely baffled; wondering; questioning; at a loss; thoroughly puzzled. They could not understand how the disciples could be delivered from “the jail securely locked.” They were apprehensive about the growth of the *new movement*.

In the present situation, the authorities probably thought some of the guards had either wilfully released the prisoners or else been careless while on duty.

4. The persecutors made an unbelievable discovery. The disciples had not fled for their lives like other escaped convicts would. They were “standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” They were demonstrating unbelievable behaviour, not acting like other men. They were like a blazing fire on a rampage through a forest, unstoppable. The persecutors had never seen a conviction and hope like the disciples’, a conviction and hope totally different from that of any other man, a conviction and hope...
 - that the resurrection of Jesus Christ had actually happened.
 - that men must believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ and repent to know God and to be saved.
 - that they must proclaim the gospel no matter the persecution.

Thought 1. The behaviour of true believers in persecution will always perplex and dumbfound the persecutors. The true believer’s trust and message of the living Lord cannot be stamped out. The believer has to proclaim and live for his Lord even in the face of persecution.

1 Pet 4:16-19 *However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

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.*

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.* ■

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.)

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...
 - *furious (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.* ■