

Sunday, July 27, 2025 | Filled

Week 17 | Acts 5:27-42 | "Reputation, Pt. 2"

Last week, we delved into the first half of this passage. The apostles were fervently preaching, the church was flourishing, and the Sadducees were in a state of agitation. Their frustration led them to imprison the disciples once again (cf. Ac. 4:3). However, in a display of divine intervention, the Lord set them free and directed them back to the temple to proclaim the gospel. The religious leaders, seemingly unwilling to acknowledge their error, then chose to imprison the apostles for a *third time*!

Now, let's see how this scene ends.

READ: Acts 5:27-42 (ESV)

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ 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." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

³³ When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ 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. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ 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; ³⁹ 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, ⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor

for the name.⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

I want you to notice six things:

i. Vs. 12-16 – The Growing Church

So, what's the takeaway?

The early church was a place of recovery.

ii. Vs. 17-21a – The Teaching Church

So, what's the takeaway?

The early church was committed to teaching "the words of this Life."

iii. Vs. 21b-26 – The Perplexing Church

So, what's the takeaway?

The early church was Christ-like, not warlike.

iv. Vs. 27-32 – The Uncompromising Church

Vs. 27-28 – When the apostles finally stood before the Supreme Court of Israel, the "high priest" was clear that the apostles were in big trouble. He reminded them that they had been "strictly charged...not to teach in this name." Notice that, rather than say, "Jesus," he said, "this name." But, even more surprising, they make no mention of their escape!¹

In clear violation of the Sanhedrin's directions, according to the high priest, the apostles have "filled Jerusalem with [their] teaching." Why didn't they like that? Because the Sanhedrin thought the apostles "intend[ed] to bring this man's blood upon us." They perceived the gospel as an act of aggression towards the Jewish leadership. They thought the only thing the apostles cared about was ruining the Sanhedrin.

Vs. 29-32 – The Sanhedrin thought the apostles were out to get them. However, Peter's response reveals that their motivation was far more complex than mere vengeance.

Three principles make up the apostles' response:

- (1) **A Submission to God's Command** – Peter says, "We must obey God rather than men." In the immediate context, this is a reference to the angel's message when he released the

¹ Bock Darrell L., *Acts, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 245.

apostles from prison (cf. 5:20). But the broader context, this was reference to the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:29). The apostles' allegiance was not to the Jewish leaders but to the Lord.

To be clear, this is not **anarchy** but **piety**. Christians weren't trying to overthrow the government. They were trying to obey Christ. The faithful follower of God says, “It matters not what the world says. What does God say?”

- (2) **The Execution, Resurrection, and Exaltation of Jesus Christ** – Peter says, “The God of our fathers **raised** Jesus, whom **you killed** by hanging him on a tree.” The death of Jesus at the hands of the Sanhedrin could not be overlooked. The truth was that the Sanhedrin had blood on their hands. But Jesus did not stay dead. The resurrection is a powerful motivational tool. In most circumstances, it would be wise for someone to listen to whoever killed and crucified their master. But if said master rose from the grave, reversing the effects of death, it would be better to listen to the Resurrected One, no? It just makes sense. Why fear those who can only kill the body? It would be better to obey the one who has custody over the soul after death.

But God didn't only raise Jesus from the dead, he also “**exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.**” The Lord was enthroned at the “right hand” of God. As such, he alone is *the* “Leader” and *the* “Savior” of the world. And through him, everyone, even those who crucified him, is given “repentance” and “forgiveness of sins.” The mistakes of yesterday no longer have bearing in the face of an exalted Jesus, so long as you turn from your sin. All the Sanhedrin heard was, “You killed Jesus.” What they should've heard was, “You killed Jesus, but if you repent, the Lord will forgive you.”

- (3) **The Authentication of the Apostles and the Holy Spirit** – Peter says, “And we are **witnesses** to these things, and so is the **Holy Spirit.**” They have been given a directive that they cannot ignore. The apostles, along with the Holy Spirit, are the primary “witnesses” to Jesus' execution, resurrection, and exaltation (cf. Ac. 1:18). They cannot remain silent.

But God only gives the Holy Spirit “to those who **obey him.**” Disobedience to God's command **keeps the Holy Spirit away**, while obedience to God's word as expressed through his Son, Jesus Christ, **makes the Holy Spirit feel right at home.** Peter begins and ends his message with the topic of obedience.

So, what's the takeaway?

Unapologetic obedience to God is one of the markings of an **authentic** disciple of Jesus Christ.

READ: Joshua 24:15 (ESV)

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Never underestimate the power and benefits of obeying God. Or, as the old hymnwriter, John H. Sammis, put it,

[Verse 1]

When we walk with the Lord

in the light of his word,

What a glory he sheds on our way!

While we do his goodwill,

He abides with us still,

and with all who will trust and obey.

[Refrain]

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.²

v. Vs. 33-39 – The Unfailing Church

Vs. 33-34 – Needless to say, the Sanhedrin didn't respond well to Peter's words. They were so "**enraged**" they "**wanted to kill them.**" The Greek term translated as "enraged" literally means "saw through, saw asunder."³ When it is used figuratively, as here, it means the Sanhedrin were "split open in rage."⁴ For some, the truth of the gospel **humbles**, but for others, it **humiliates**. Jesus said the world hates truth because it testifies about it "**that its works are evil**" (Jn. 7:7). To be so blatantly confronted by their sin, the Sanhedrin would rather murder a bunch of innocent

² Sammis, John H., *Trust and Obey*, 1887

³ Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *In A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), (<https://ref.ly/res/LLS:46.30.18/2024-08-01T21:04:24Z/2145626?len=75>), p. 235.

⁴ Bock (2007), p. 249.

men than confront the truth. The world has changed very little since then; it still wants to kill the truth.

And if not for a “Pharisee” named “Gamaliel,” they would have succeeded. How ironic that a Pharisee—the Jewish sect which most frequently opposed Jesus—stopped mob violence against some of Jesus’ followers. But considering what the council does before releasing the apostles, it’s safe to say Gamaliel wasn’t being benevolent. He was just shrewd.

Vs. 35-37 – After he got the apostles out of the room, Gamaliel said, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.” The famous rabbi wanted his colleagues to think rationally, not emotionally.

He provides two examples as to why they should be cautious: “Theudas” and “Judas the Galilean,” who, at different times, attempted to start revolutions. The former example is not mentioned outside the Bible, but his movement likely took place around the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC. The latter example is attested by Josephus. Judas the Galilean led a revolt shortly after Theudas in 6 AD, and he was likely the precursor to the Zealots, a common movement during the first century.⁵ Yet, despite their influence and popularity, both men eventually died and, with their deaths, their followers “dispersed” and “scattered,” rendering their movements pointless and forgettable.

Vs. 38-39 – How do these two examples apply here? Gamaliel advises his fellow leaders to “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.” Either this gospel movement was “of man” and, as such, “will fail.” Or it is “of God” and, as such, will not fail. If it’s the former, they need not worry; things will take care of themselves. But if it is the latter, they will have great cause for worry since opposing the apostles and the church is equivalent to “opposing God” himself.

Notice, Gamaliel is not taking a side; he’s merely advising caution. Admittedly, he was open to the possibility that the Apostles’ mission was from God. But he wasn’t willing to make such a claim. For him, it was possible but improbable. How sad to come so close to the truth but still miss it completely (cf. Ac. 26:28).

So, what’s the takeaway?

When the church opposes the enemies of the Lord, the Lord opposes the enemies of the church.

⁵

Bock, (2007), p. 250.

READ: Jeremiah 1:17-19 (ESV)

¹⁷ But you, dress yourself for work; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them.¹⁸ And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the LORD, to deliver you.

Jeremiah would only have God's support so long as he did "everything that [God] commanded." But should he obey, God promised that "they shall not prevail against you."

When we walk with the Lord in obedience to His commandments, He goes with us. His enemies are our enemies, and our enemies are His enemies. And with God by our side, we cannot fail (cf. Rom. 8:31-34).

vi. Vs. 40-42 – The Celebrating Church

Vs. 40 – Thankfully, the Sanhedrin listened to Gamaliel. But they just couldn't let them go without some punishment. So they "beat" the apostles and "charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus," and then they "let them go." This beating is a direct fulfillment of Jesus' words (cf. Matt. 10:19; Mk. 13:9). Though Luke does not use the technical term for flogging here, this likely is what he meant (cf. 22:19; 2 Cor. 11:24). In accordance with the Mishnah Makkot 3:10-15a, the apostles were whipped thirty-nine times (cf. Deut. 25:2-13).⁶ Bock explains this was anything but pleasant,

"The whipping would have been on the back and chest with a three-stranded strap of calf hide (Polhill 1992: 174). This could leave one close to death, if not dead from loss of blood (Marshall 1980: 124). The hope is that by intensifying the punishment, a deterrent will be established. They were wrong."⁷

Sometimes, civil disobedience is warranted. Given the circumstances, a Christian ought to obey God rather than man. However, just because a believer does what is right, it does not mean they will not suffer. The world punishes those who stand for the truth. Paul says, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:12-13). There are only

⁶ Peterson, David G., *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), p. 227; Bock (2007), p. 252.

⁷ Bock, (2007), p. 252.

two roads: **temporary cluelessness** leading to eternal damnation or **temporary painfulness** leading to eternal jubilation. We must make our choice.

Vs. 41 – How did the apostle respond to such a mixed release? Luke says, “Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing** that they were counted **worthy to suffer** dishonor for the name.” Such a statement is an oxymoron. It’s like saying, they were happy that they were hurt. Was it because they enjoyed pain? Were the apostles masochists? No. **They did not seek out persecution; it came to them.** They were rejoicing because they suffered “**for the name**,” that is, for the name of the Lord. They considered their pain as an honor because they were hurt for their devotion to God’s reputation.

Vs. 42 – Did they stop doing what got them in trouble? No. Luke says, “And **every day**, in the temple and from house to house, **they did not cease** teaching and preaching that **the Christ is Jesus**.” This is the first time that the verb “preaching,” **εὐαγγελίζω** (*euangelizō*), has “the Christ is Jesus” as the object.⁸

So, what’s the takeaway? Celebrated are the **scars** borne for Christ’s **sake**.

READ: 1 Peter 4:12-14 (ESV)

¹² Beloved, do **not** be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though **something strange** were happening to you. ¹³ But **rejoice** insofar as you **share** Christ’s **sufferings**, that you may also **rejoice** and **be glad** when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted **for the name of Christ**, you are **blessed**, because the Spirit of glory and of God **rests** upon you.

Video Description:

Filled | Week 17 | “Arrested Again, Pt. 2” (Acts 5:27-42)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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