

Readings

Scripture

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸ they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." ²¹ 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. ²² But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, ²³ "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." ²⁶ Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

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.

- Acts 5:17-42 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

Progress and Opposition
Acts 5:17-42

The Acts of the Apostles
Brad Anderson

Jesus was raised from the dead to give repentance and forgiveness to God's people... (Acts 5:30-31)

How do these two gifts come together in both the message and the messengers?

As we speak the whole message... (Acts 5:17-26)

As we speak the message when it is especially costly to do so... (Acts 5:27-33)

As we speak the message continually... (Acts 5:34-42)

- Publicly...
- Privately...

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- What is the most intimidating group of people you have ever had to face? What happened?
- Read Acts 5:17-42. The pattern of gospel progress and opposition seems to be the norm for the church as Luke captures it. Where have you seen this in your own life? Why does it seem that each step taken in faith is contested?
- How do you account for the jealousy of the Sadducees?
- Of what do they accuse the apostles in Acts 5:28? How is this different from what bothered them in Acts 4:2? How could they miss the impact of these miracles?
- Prior to Jesus, there were Jewish zealots who led rebellions against Rome. What is Gamaliel's point in recalling two such leaders? Do you think he might be one of the secret believers mentioned in John 12:42? Or a political opportunist not wanting to rouse the public? Why? How do you think Peter's statement in Acts 5:29 (and Acts 4:19) may have influenced Gamaliel?
- What is the ultimate authority in your life? When does this create problems for you?
- How do you explain why God sometimes delivers you out of hardships, but at other times he allows you to go through them?