

Text: Acts 5:17-42, Title: Recognizing the Enemy, Date/Place: The Road, 11/8/16, AM

- A. **Opening illustration:** Erika and I used to love to watch Law and Order (explain for those who may not know) and it's spinoffs. When it first began, you could guess at who did it for 25 minutes. At 25 min past the hour, they always arrested the person, and you moved into the trial part of the show (which was always the best in my opinion)...
- B. **Background to passage:** Acts moves along at a rapid pace in these early chapters. The passage that we are dealing with today comes on the heels of the miracles and growth of the church, which follows the death of Ananias and Sapphira, which followed the prayer for boldness from the church, which followed a previous, similar imprisonment. Must understand things in context. The last imprisonment was similar to this one in the aspects that it was due to the preaching of the apostles, trial before the Sanhedrin, declaration of the facts of the gospel, the firmness of Peter and the apostles, and their ultimate release. So, I want to look at this passage from a different angle. I don't think that we should go around looking for demons behind all poor circumstances, but we are commanded to be wary of our adversary, and taught about his ways by Jesus himself, and other parts of the NT. Satan, nor demons, are mentioned by name in this text, however, the fact that Jesus identified these men as children of their Father, the Devil, and the fact of Gamaliel's advice that these men were potentially fighting against God, it is reasonable to conclude Satan's direct involvement.
- C. **Main thought:** I want us to see some things about his opposition to the gospel.
- A. **He is incited by gospel ministry (v. 12, 25)**
1. Earlier in the gospels we have seen the efforts of Satan in the temptation of Christ, Judas, demonic possession, etc. However, as with many things, there is a shift in MO for the NT church. Where we see the opposition most clearly and forcefully, is where the gospel is being advanced. (Note the reference in previous acct). We will see this in later chapters of Acts, especially in the ministry of Paul, where it seems to be a regular occurrence. Here, the gospel was being preached, people were following Jesus, miracles were being done, and Jerusalem was being filled with it. And it brought about the attacks of the enemy.
 2. **Illustration:** Chip Ingram wrote one of the best books that I think is out there on spiritual warfare, and it describes the phenomenon that they experienced when moving from a bible-believing, religious community in the Midwest to inner city San Diego, *The Invisible War*. Erika and I saw this in Maine. New River saw this when we began to take the gospel to unreached areas in Peru,
 3. We should be doing the gospel ministry out of gratefulness to God for our redemption, but when we do, we should not be surprised if we experience opposition. There will not be much opposition to us if we are content with maintaining what we have or abdicating our role as S gospel heralds. When we take aim at lostness, when we evangelize your neighborhoods, when we actively pursue avenues into unreached parts of the globe, things may begin to get tough for you or us. Remember that all bad things are not the result of sin in our lives, nor of evangelism. But the principle here is that ministering the gospel faithfully will stir things up.
- B. **Motivated by jealousy and anger (v. 17, 33)**
1. This opposition was had a motivation, jealousy and anger, which continued on into rage and desire for murder. In fact, there was a chance they might have murdered the apostles, but the part of the Sanhedrin was not present. This was about control as it was about hatred. The people were flocking to the apostles, who thought they were teachers of the law, and that caused them so much fear, they had them arrested. Later the after their declaration of their intention of not stopping to teach in Jesus name, and the truth brought to bear that they killed their own messiah, enraged them to the point of murder. Peter said they killed him, but God exalted him as the head, the prince, the founder, the originator, and the chief!
 2. **Illustration:** Communist, or other extremist governments typically feel threatened by Christianity; thus, they try to stomp it out, you can see this scenario played out in abusive relationships. Biblical Cain, Joseph
 3. Satan doesn't like his control to be threatened. Attacks and opposition intensify when absolute, radical allegiance is professed, and lived out. Anytime that Satan begins to lose ground in our lives, in our city, in our world, expect opposition. When you break an addiction, when you begin to fight particular sins in your life. When you are clear with the gospel to your friends, family, and coworkers, attacks will come. Beware that in your own life, you are not used of Satan as a tool because of jealousy and/or anger. Things in our world seem to be spinning out of control sometimes. We feel entitled to control and are angry when we don't have it. If he used the apostle Peter, we are definitely not immune.

C. **Makes use of political manipulation (v. 34-39)**

1. We have probably heard more about politics than we can stand for a while, but you probably are not surprised that Satan uses them for distraction and to thwart the advance of the gospel. Now, Gamaliel gives some advice here, that is fairly common sense to a religious person. His examples are recent historical examples of how movements like this swelled then failed. He thought that this movement was like the others and would fail. So his rationale was this, don't be like CNN and WALB, ignore it, give it no attention, and draw no more attention, and that will further our cause the best.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration:** the classical example that is as old as the scripture is the picture of a seductress, or in the case of David, powerful men. Lobbyists exercise this means of gaining their desired goals. You see it in families where one member of the family will control the rest by means of angry fits, or maybe one member of the family plays the victim card to achieve their goals, guilt is a great manipulator within a family.
4. Manipulation is something that we see every day, and are very tempted to do, say, and use influence to get what we want. Satan is behind that. Whether in a church, a family, a government, a workplace, manipulative processes are hypocritical, and inauthentic, sometimes mean-spirited and conniving. In our own lives, there may be evidence of manipulation from guilt, anger, victimization, bullying, authoritarian power, or lust of the eyes. We must repent. We must constantly examine our motivation and methodology to hold ourselves accountable. And of course, when it is used against us, we are to remain true instead of responding back in a counter strike. The way you do this is the gospel. I am not preaching moral bootstrapping, but belief in the gospel of grace extended to you, that you may now extend to others. A conscience skewed by sin, now cleansed by the blood and empowered by the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body so that we may live.

D. **Continues with threats and beatings (v. 40)**

1. In the text, once the decision has been made not to kill them or harass them publicly, they order them not to speak in the name of Jesus anymore. Then, they beat them just for good measure, and to make sure they are understood. The beating probably would have been 39 lashes. The enemy doesn't always lash out with physical violence, but it is still a tool in his toolbelt.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration:** They gave them a code red, books could be written of the physical assaults that the saints have endured over the last 2000 years, 2015 was the deadliest year for Christians, over 70 million believers have died for their faith since Pentecost.
4. We are very much sheltered to this sort of persecution. The old adage "out of sight, out of mind" applies to us, because rarely pray for the persecuted church. We don't know the places in this world that are persecuting our brothers and sisters. We are told in Heb 13:3 to remember those are suffering for their faith. We may never know the work camps of China, or the electric batons that get shoved into believers' mouths there; we may never know the sound of militant Muslims moving through our towns, destroying homes, shooting men, and kidnapping women, with only minutes to grab what you can and run, never returning to your home; we may never know the executioner's sword or gun in North Korea, but know that someone does. Read biographies, read the Heavenly Man by Brother Yun, read Through the Gates of Splendor by Elizabeth Elliot, read The Insanity of God by Nik Ripken, read Hearts of Fire from Voice of the Martyrs, sign up for their prisoner alerts and updates. Satan still assaults the church with physical violence

A. **Closing illustration:**

- B. *We are not left without hope! We shall overcome with the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. We are called to stand firm, put on the entire armor of God to defend against the fiery darts of the wicked one, against his schemes. He is our rock, our sword, our shield, the one that fights our battles, and defends us from foes internal and external. He is the one that keeps our feet from stumbling and causes our smooth stones to fly true.*
- C. *Reaction of the Apostles: rejoicing, continuing to preach the gospel*
- D. *Invitation to commitment*

Manz was born and died in [Zürich](#), where his father was a canon of [Grossmünster](#) church. Though records of his education are scant, there is evidence that he had a liberal education, with a thorough knowledge of [Hebrew](#), [Greek](#) and [Latin](#). Manz became a follower of [Huldrych Zwingli](#) after he came to Zürich in 1519. When [Conrad Grebel](#) joined the group in 1521, he and Manz became friends. They questioned the mass, the nature of church and state connections, and infant baptism. After the [Second Disputation of Zürich](#)^[1] in 1523, they became dissatisfied, believing that Zwingli's plans for reform had been compromised with the city council.

Grebel, Manz and others made several attempts to plead their position. Several parents refused to have their children baptized. A public disputation was held with Zwingli on 17 January 1525. The council declared Zwingli the victor.

After the final rebuff by the city council on 18 January, in which they were ordered to desist from arguing and submit to the decision of the council, and have their children baptized within eight days, the brethren gathered at the home of Felix Manz and his mother on 21 January. Conrad Grebel baptized [George Blaurock](#), and Blaurock in turn baptized the others.^[2] This made complete the break with Zwingli and the council, and formed the first church of the Radical Reformation. The movement spread rapidly, and Manz was very active in it. He used his language skills to translate his texts into the language of the people, and worked enthusiastically as an evangelist. Manz was arrested on a number of occasions between 1525 and 1527. While he was preaching with George Blaurock in the Grüningen region, they were taken by surprise, arrested and imprisoned in Zürich at the Wellenburg prison.

Execution^[edit]

On 7 March 1526, the Zürich council had passed an edict that made adult [re-baptism](#) punishable by [drowning](#). On 5 January 1527, Manz became the first casualty of the edict, and the first Swiss [Anabaptist](#) to be martyred at the hands of other [Protestants](#). While Manz stated that he wished *"to bring together those who were willing to accept [Christ](#), obey the Word, and follow in His footsteps, to unite with these by baptism, and to purchase the rest in their present conviction"*, [Zwingli](#) and the council accused him of obstinately refusing *"to recede from his error and caprice"*. At 3:00 p.m., as he was led from the Wellenburg to a boat, he praised God and preached to the people.

A [Reformed](#) minister went along, seeking to silence him, and hoping to give him an opportunity to recant. Manz's brother and mother encouraged him to stand firm and suffer for Jesus' sake. He was taken by boat onto the River [Limmat](#). His hands were bound and pulled behind his knees and a pole was placed between them. He was executed by drowning in [Lake Zürich](#) on the Limmat. His alleged last words were, "Into thy hands, O God, I commend my spirit." His property was confiscated by government of Zürich, and he was buried in the St. Jakobs cemetery. Manz's execution predates the [Münster Rebellion](#) which officially began in 1534.

Manz left written testimony of his faith, an eighteen-stanza hymn, and was apparently the author of *Protestation und Schutzschrift* (a defense of Anabaptism presented to the Zürich council).^[3]