

## The Message Continues and Grows

Acts 5:12-42

There is no doubt that the birth and beginning of the Church was an amazing time. God was making Himself known through signs and wonders, through the boldness of preaching and powerful changes in the hearts and lives of individuals.

God granted the ability to scores of the disciples to proclaim “*the wonderful works of God*” in a multiple of languages they had never learned. And through that miracle, thousands heard and responded to the Gospel message.

And at that point, the Church was born. They were born and began the process of receiving continual, consistent, and correct spiritual nourishment, in order that they would begin to mature in their Christian faith

Acts 2

<sup>42</sup> *...they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

A community of Believers is formed. A closeness is developed and a commitment to the Lord Jesus and to each other was soon formed as the heart of that community.

Shortly after the beginning, through the bold step of faith by Peter and John, a man who had been lame from birth was completely, miraculously and immediately healed by the power of the name of Jesus Christ. And through that miracle, once again thousands heard the message of the Gospel and were *born again* into the Kingdom of God.

And because of the move of God's Holy Spirit, because of the growth of the Church, because people's lives were being dynamically changed by the power of God; guess what... persecution begins to come against the Church and her leadership –

Acts 4

<sup>1</sup> *Now as (the Disciples) spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came upon them..., <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.*

Yet, God's amazing hand and purpose was demonstrated **even in the persecution**. Because, with the persecution came the opportunity **to proclaim the Gospel message**; God used a couple of weak, uneducated and untrained fishermen, who were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to share the message of Jesus with the religious power brokers of Israel. To speak the truth of salvation being only found in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4

*<sup>12</sup> "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

It's at this point you need to realize, these *"religious men of Israel"* **didn't receive the message**, but *they did realize that (these guys) had been with Jesus*. There was nothing they could do except threaten them and telling them, *"Don't be speaking in the name of Jesus anymore!"*

Yet, once again we see the boldness of the Holy Spirit working as Peter tells them flat out,

*<sup>19</sup> "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. <sup>20</sup> "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

So, as the disciples went out and met with the other Believers, they had a powerful prayer meeting. And what were they praying for? They simply asked the Lord for boldness,

Acts 4

*<sup>29</sup> "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants **that with all boldness they may speak Your word,** <sup>30</sup> "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."*

*<sup>31</sup> And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, **and they spoke the word of God with boldness.***

*"...they spoke the word of God with boldness."* That was an amazing answer to prayer. That was an amazing work of the Holy Spirit in these new Believers lives. They **would not** be silenced by the threats of men, because they were **empowered**,

**strengthened, and moved - not by the work and words of some mortal man, but by the Holy Spirit of God.**

One of the other very tangible ways of seeing the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives was that the community of Believers continually expressed their love and commitment to each other. The closeness that was formed became a oneness that demonstrated through actual, visible, and physical care for one another.

Act 2

*<sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. <sup>46</sup> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. **And** (catch this) **the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.***

Acts 4

*<sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common... <sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid them at the Apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*

Yet with that powerful work of the Holy Spirit, once again, the enemy of our souls was hard at work. We find early on in the life of the Church that were **some within the Church who bought into the enemies lies:**

- They began to walk in deceit to gain quick glory,
- They began to live a lie, in order to gain the swift applause of man.

But God would have none of it – so this husband and wife (Ananias and Saphira) who had **connived together** “...fell down and breathed (their) last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things” (Acts 5:1-11).

But, we have to remember, our foe is a defeated foe. What Satan tried to destroy with **persecution from the outside** and **deceit from the inside**, **God strengthened and purified**; so now we find ourselves in chapter 5, beginning in verse 12 the following –

Acts 5

*<sup>12</sup> And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. <sup>13</sup> Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.*

At this point, the Church continued to meet on the Temple grounds, in the area of Solomon's Porch, a large covered area on the southern end of the Temple complex. As they met there, other Jews were no doubt curious, but were fearful to join them... probably due to the threats of their religious leaders.

Then God began doing things reminiscent of the days of the **Prophets of the Old Testament**, and the **ministry of Jesus** –

*<sup>14</sup> And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,*

I don't know about you, but to me that seems to be a pretty exciting, reoccurring theme in the book of Acts.

*<sup>15</sup> so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. <sup>16</sup> Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

There is a lot to be said about supernatural events going on here in the early Church, but we'll save that for a later date.

What I want to focus in on this morning is that, in the midst of all of the wonders and the signs, in the midst of all the new Believers coming to Christ; **Satan wouldn't let it go without a fight**. So, once again he tried using **the religious leaders** to step in and try to halt the work of God.

The words of Jesus continued to loudly ring true. Remember when He spoke **to these same religious rulers**? Earlier, Jesus told them straight up...

John 8

<sup>44</sup> "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me."

Now, once again these same men are rising up against the truth and even the power of the truth that was being **demonstrated right before their very eyes...**

<sup>17</sup> Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they **were filled with indignation,** <sup>18</sup> and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

**There is so much going on here  
and in the following passages.**

**It's powerful.**

**It IS the work of God.**

But before we get too far into the passage, let me share with you something I feel the Lord has shared with me as I studied this passage over the last few weeks.

**Look at what it says about the response of these religious rulers to the fact that:**

1. People were coming to a **saving faith in Jesus Christ,**
2. Their **spiritual lives were being ignited,**
3. Multitudes were **being healed** and
4. Many were being **delivered from demonic spirits.**

And what was the response of the religious leadership?

What does Luke tell us?

***"...they were filled with indignation."***

That word translated as **indignation** is the Greek word *zelos* (*dzay'-los, zelos*). It can be translated in many ways: *zeal, eager rivalry, jealousy* (as of a husband or an enemy), as even *malice*.<sup>1</sup>

Albert T. Barnes tells us –

*“They (the Saducees) were envious at the success of the Apostles; at the number of converts that were made to a doctrine that they hated; they were envious that the Pharisees were deriving such an accession of strength to their doctrine of the resurrection; and they were indignant that they regarded so little their authority, and disobeyed the solemn injunction of the Sanhedrin.*

Guys, we can look at this event and say in our hearts, **how blind and ignorant the religious rulers of Israel were at that point.**

But you know what: **any man, at any age, at any status of life, in any culture can be just as blind and ignorant.**

Any hatred blinds us from the truth.

All jealousy blinds us from the truth.

Prejudice of every sort blinds us from the truth.

As a matter of fact, **anything within our lives that is not of God, blinds us from the truth...** sin blinds us from the truth.

And these guys had been blind **for a long time**. Blindness had long become their norm and they had no desire to see the truth.

Jesus called them *“blind guides... straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”*  
He called them *“hypocrites! Who clean up the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.”*

You see, their indignation was the fact that what the Gospel was doing in these people's lives, was something that the Law, the rituals, and the customs of man had never been able to do.

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<sup>1</sup> James Strong, [A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 34.

## The Gospel brought life. The Law was death.

Warren Wiersbe reminds us...

It was the age-old conflict between living truth and dead tradition.<sup>2</sup>

But God has a way of getting our attention, doesn't He? He's not bound by our blindness, nor by our spiritual or physical limitations. The men don't stay in prison overnight this time. God is going to do something absolutely, powerfully, miraculously amazing – *the High Priest and the Sadducees had laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.*

*<sup>19</sup> But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup> "Go, ~~run and~~ hide stand in the Temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." <sup>21</sup> And when they (the Apostles) heard that, they entered the Temple early in the morning and taught.*

*But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. <sup>22</sup> But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, <sup>23</sup> saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" <sup>24</sup> Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.*

*<sup>25</sup> So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"*

*<sup>26</sup> Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. <sup>27</sup> And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, <sup>28</sup> saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"*

*<sup>29</sup> But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. <sup>31</sup> Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 424.

*And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

<sup>33</sup> *When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.*

There's a lot here that we don't have time to cover today. And this is where I want to pick it up next time. But, we read all this and realize, the Council did have a choice didn't they?

They had so many choices...

- Any single one of them could have chosen to accept the truth of Jesus Christ as the Promised Messiah – Oh, don't get me wrong, the persecution which would have come down upon him would have been near to death... but, his eternity would have been changed forever...
- They could have ignored the Apostles and their message... but their zealotry, their indignation got the best of them...
- Instead, *they were furious and plotted to kill them.*

But, that's not the end of the story... the disciples didn't let the threats stop them or even slow them down...

We will get there eventually as we continue through this chapter, but I want to jump down right now and end on verse 42 today –

<sup>42</sup> *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

The message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a message we are all called to receive, to live out, and to proclaim with our lives and our tongues... by the power of the Holy Spirit and for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord.

