

# **“Truth or Consequences!”**

## **Acts 5:17-42**

**Intro.** – A judge was examining a southern gentleman. Unable to shake his testimony, the judge resorted to sarcasm. “They call you colonel. In what regiment are you a colonel?” “Well,” drawled the gentleman, “It’s like this. The ‘colonel’ in front of my name is like the ‘Honorable’ in front of your name. It doesn’t mean a thing.”

Another judge was talking to a prisoner. “Have you a lawyer?” The prisoner responded, “No, but I have some real good friends on the jury,”

Let me use the above to introduce the idea of *Truth or Consequences*. Do you remember a radio program that eventually became a television program entitled this? It ran from 1940 to 1988. Bob Barker hosted this before he went to *The Price is Right*. The premise of the show went something like this. Contestants received roughly two seconds to answer a trivia question correctly (usually an off-the-wall question that no one would be able to answer correctly, or a bad joke) before “Beulah the Buzzer” sounded. In the rare occasion that the contestant answered the question correctly before Beulah was heard, the question inevitably had two or even three parts. If the contestant could not complete the “Truth” portion, there would be “Consequence,” usually a zany and embarrassing stunt. It was good clean entertainment.

With all the above in mind, it was Otto von Bismarck who use to say, “When you want to fool the world, tell the truth.” Bernard Baruch use to say, “Every man has a right to his opinion, but, no man has a right to be wrong in his facts.” Jesus, said it the best as recorded in John 8:32 *“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* We live in times where the Truth of God is ignored and denied rather than embraced and lived. Back to the basics means not only embracing the Truth of God, but also defending and promoting it. Through our text today we will learn of those who chose to live the Truth and those who chose to die a lie = it is Truth or Consequences!

*Purpose: to better understand TRUTH does not cease to exist because it is ignored*

## **I The Council ATTACKS the Truth (5:17-28)**

- A. The Apostles Were Arrested (vv 17-18)
  - three reasons as to why they were arrested:
    1. They didn’t obey the “official orders” to stop preaching in the name of Jesus = guilty as charged...
    2. Apostles were refuting doctrines of Sadducees – preaching resurrected Christ and was alive...
    3. The religious leaders were filled with jealousy (doctrine and of popularity of apostles)...
- B. The Apostles Were Released (vv 19 – 21a)
  1. During the night “an angel” (Sadducees didn’t believe) released all twelve apostles...
  2. Instructed to go back to conspicuously public place (Temple) and told to “speak to the people... the whole message of this life” – i.e. instructed to speak the TRUTH!
  3. They did not hesitate = obeyed God rather than man and if arrested again be a very public matter.
- C. The Council Renews Its Attack (vv 21b – 28)
  1. Orders given to bring apostles before Sanhedrin – imagine looks/thoughts when discovered prisoners were not only out, but doing exactly what told not to do (i.e. back at scene of crime and doing crime itself!
  2. Council doing everything to deny miracles; yet, more miracles were resulting...
  3. High priest accuse apostles of defying law and stirring up trouble...
    - a. note: high priest wouldn’t even use name of Jesus – refer to Him as “this name” “this man’s blood upon us.”
    - b. remember trial of Jesus = “His blood be on us and our children...” (Matthew 27:25)
  4. All these threats, intimidations, beatings etc. = direct attacks on the Truth!

## **II The Apostles AFFIRM the Truth (5:29-32)**

- A. Didn’t Change Their Convictions

1. Obeyed God (did their duty) and trusted Him to take care of the results
2. They were “ambassadors” not diplomats i.e. political spin-masters who sought to please all at all \$.
3. “We must obey God rather than man...” = conviction of truth = feared man so little because feared Almighty God so much!

B. Didn't Change Their Message

1. “Raised up Jesus Whom you put to death...” Jesus “Prince and Savior” grants “repentance and forgiveness of sins” = opportunity the world doesn't and can't offer!
2. Apostles were eye witnesses to the Truth – they saw and testified to the Truth = message apostles!
3. William Penn – “Right is right, even if everyone is against it and wrong is wrong even if everyone is for it.” – again Jesus said it best in John 8:32 “*the truth shall make you free.*”
4. Such must be the stand we take if we too are to be faithful in affirming the Truth of God!

### III Gamaliel AVOIDS the Truth (5:33-39)

- “cut to the quick” is stronger than “pierced in the heart” (2:37) = ready to kill apostles
  - BUT certain Pharisee (Gamaliel) = teacher of Saul, 4<sup>th</sup> in dynasty of Jewish scholars, respected by all..
  - pay close attention to what he recommends/says concerning Jesus:
- A. Assumed History Repeats Itself
1. Theudas and Judas of Galilee rebelled and were subdued with the followers scattering...
  2. In essence saying, give these Galileans enough time, they too will disband and you will never again hear of Jesus the Nazarene...
  3. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus never happened before; therefore, it will never happen again = God has broken into history and Christ and His Church not cycle of history.
- B. Thought “Success” a Test of Truth
1. Is “success” a test of truth”...
  2. Pragmatists of today a carbon copy of Gamaliel = e.g. if numbers, interest, support there = proof of God's approval...! Is such the case...?
  3. Mark Twain “A lie runs around the world while truth is still putting on her shoes.”
    - i.e. in the end, Truth will triumph, but meanwhile Satan is alive and well.. false prophets and cults will outgrow Lord's Church (e.g. Islam teaching close to ¼ population of world)...
  4. What is the “test of Truth”? – ALWAYS God's Word (John 17:17 “*Your Word is Truth!*”)
  5. Gamaliel was saying avoid God's Word and said, “Let's wait and see”
- C. Urged Neutrality Concerning Christ
1. Sanhedrin knew words of Elijah (1 Kings 18:21) “*...How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people did not answer him a word.*”
  2. Christ made clear impossible to be neutral about Him and His message:
    - a. Matthew 12:30 “*He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.*”
    - b. hymn “*What Will You Do With Jesus?*”
 

Chorus: What will you do with Jesus?  
Neutral you cannot be;  
Someday your heart will be asking.  
“What will He do with me?”
  3. Point: if Gamaliel was really concerned about fighting against God and Truth he would have readily looked to Jesus...
  4. Daniel Defoe (Robinson Crusoe): “Truth makes a man courageous, but guilt makes a man a coward.”
  5. Apostles men of courage. Why? Embraced Truth – Gamaliel was coward! Why? Avoided Truth!

### IV The Church DEFENDS the Truth (5:40-42)

- though threatened and beaten = apostles were NOT intimidated:

- A. They Testified Daily
  1. Early Christians took advantage every opportunity no matter where or what circumstances...
  2. If you and I are sincerely looking for opportunities of service, God will give the open doors...
  3. Look and watch for open doors – every day we either draw others to Christ or we drive away...
- B. They Testified in the Temple
  1. Went to the exact place Sanhedrin would least expect them...
  2. It was public, as God intends for us to be with the Truth
  3. The Truth must always be PUBLIC – when we apologize and take Truth for granted = Truth is not being defended nor is it being promoted.
- C. They Testified from House to House
  1. Early church worshipped, fellowshipped and evangelized from house to house...
  2. Must not confine the worship and work of Christ's Church to four walls of a building...
  3. Note: not that first Christians' motives were to defy the law, but rather, to obey the Lord by defending/promoting the Truth. Brethren and friend – may that be what motivates us! TRUTH!

**Conclusion:** John Blanchard stood up to straighten his uniform, as he studied the crowd in Grand Central Station. He looked for a girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he had yet to see. She would be the girl with a rose in her lapel.

Thirteen months prior to this event, John was in a Florida library where he found a book with penciled in notes on the margins. The notes reflected a thoughtful soul with a deep mind. In front of this book was the name “Miss Hollis Maynell.”

With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote a letter to introduce himself inviting her to correspond. The next day John shipped out overseas for service in WW II. In the following twelve months this “couple” grew to know each other through mail. John requested a picture, but she refused. She said if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like.

The day finally came when they were to meet each other for the first time.—7 PM at Grand Central Station in New York. “You'll recognize me,” she wrote, “by the red rose I will be wearing on my lapel.”

A young, beautiful woman came toward John. Blonde hair, blue eyes and she was wearing a pale green suit. John said, “I started toward this ‘knockout’ forgetting to notice she was not wearing a rose. A small provocative smile curved her lips as she said, “Going my way soldier?” Almost uncontrollably I made a step toward this stunning young girl. But then I saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind this blond beauty. Hollis Maynell was a woman of 39ish, she had graying hair and thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away... I squared my shoulders, saluted and held out the book to the woman. ‘I am Lieutenant John Blanchard and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me, may I take you to dinner?’”

The woman's face broadened into a smile. “I don't know what this is about, son, but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, begged me to wear this rose on my lapel. She said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She is looking forward to getting to know you better and that this was some kind of a test.”

Here then is my closing point and summary. There will be times when we like John Blanchard must adjust our expectations and always commit to knowing, defending and promoting the Truth. Why? Because as we learned in this text it will either be Truth or Consequences!