

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 20

I. Exposition of Chapter Five (continued).

A. The Apostles are found Teaching, and are Arrested again by the Jewish rulers.

1. **Verse 21** – **“And when they 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.”**

a. After having been supernaturally set free from jail by the angel, there seems to have been no hesitancy on the part of the Apostles to obey the command to go and speak. Dr. Stanley Horton adds:

“They were full of the boldness they had prayed for (4:29). This must have astonished the people who had seen them arrested and thrown in jail the night before. It must also have helped them to see that God was still with the apostles and behind their message.”¹

b. Some may wonder why God delivered them from jail, only to be arrested again, threatened and beaten. It’s important to remember that God always sees the big picture. Perhaps the people needed to be reassured that just because they had been arrested, it didn’t mean that they were not in line with what God wanted. A lesson for us is, just because we’re obeying God, does not mean we won’t have any problems or trials. In fact, obeying God could very well bring on trials but, as we trust Him, He will bring us through.

c. We see here the high priest (either Annas or Caiaphas), the **“council”** which refers to the Sanhedrin (The senate and supreme court of the Jews), and the **“...elders of the children of Israel”** which might have consisted of the Pharisees, noting that later, a member of the Pharisees, Gamaliel, gives admonition to the council.²

2. **Verses 22-23** **“But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 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!’”**

a. What a shock this must have been for the religious leaders! Up until now they may have had the attitude that they were in charge and they were going to handle these trouble makers, but now, God is making it real clear that He is in charge!!

b. Notice the doors of the prison were still locked, the guards were still posted at the doors, completely unaware of anything having happened! In verse 19 however, the Scripture says that the angel opened the prison doors and brought the disciples out! It seems that the Lord supernaturally blinded the guards, caused them to be unaware of their surroundings, and deafened their ears to the angel speaking and the apostles leaving. What an amazing miracle!

3. **Verses 24-26** – **The Apostles found and Arrested again.**

a. **Verse 24** – When they **“...heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.”** - The word **“wondered”** here means, **“to be thoroughly perplexed—‘to be very perplexed, to not know what to do, to be very confused.’”³**

“Now when the military leader of the temple area and the chief priests heard these facts, they were much perplexed and thoroughly at a loss about them, wondering into what this might grow.”

Acts 5:24 – Amplified Bible

b. **Verses 25- 26** – The religious leaders are told the men have been spotted, teaching in the temple once again! So, the temple police (**“captain”** and his **“officers”**) went to bring them in. Concerning this, Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“The apostles were so popular with the people that the captain and his temple police had to be very careful not to create the impression that they were going to harm the apostles. The apostles had become local heroes, as Jesus recently had been in the eyes of many. Earlier when Israel’s leaders had wanted to arrest Jesus, they were careful about how they did so, because they feared the reaction of the people (Luke 20:19; 22:2).”⁴

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 124.

²Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 116.

³Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 380.

⁴Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 139.

4. Verses 27-28 – The Sanhedrin confront the Apostles.

- a. **Verse 27** – “...they set them before the council...” – In another lesson we mentioned that the seating arrangement of the Sanhedrin was in the form of a semi-circle and the members were on elevated chairs. Those on trial would stand in the middle. The atmosphere was designed to intimidate anyone who had to appear before them. These Apostles, however, were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with courage (boldness).
- b. **Verse 28** – “...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.”

1) The command was given previously to Peter and John as is recorded in **Acts 4:17-18**. Dr. Constable asserts:

“The leaders earlier had instructed Peter and John not to teach ‘in the name of Jesus’ (4:18, 21), but Peter had said they would continue to do so because of Jesus’ authority (4:19-20). Moreover Peter had charged Israel’s leaders with Jesus’ death (4:10-11). These rulers had rationalized away their guilt for Jesus’ death, probably blaming it on Jesus Himself and the Romans (cf. 3:15). The Jewish leaders felt the disciples were unfairly heaping guilt on them for having shed Jesus’ blood. However, only a few weeks earlier they had said to Pilate, ‘His blood be on us and on our children’ (Matt. 27:25; cf. Matt. 23:35).”⁵

2) “...command you not to teach in this name...” – Several expositors point out that the lack of mentioning the Name of Jesus reveals their hatred (and maybe fear) of that Name. Dr. Robert Utley states:

This shows the contempt of the Jewish leaders. They never mention Jesus’ name. The Talmud even calls Him “so and so” (cf. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 1, p. 234).⁶

3) “...you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine...” - This is a powerful testimony of the effectiveness of the Apostle’s ministry.

4) “...and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us.” - In several recorded messages in Scripture, the Apostles do point out the Jews hand in Jesus’ death. This, no doubt, brought conviction of sin upon them. Grant Osborne states:

“In other words, they are accusing the believers of seeking revenge for the death of Jesus, wanting God and others to hold them accountable. It is true that at Jesus’ trial the people had cried out, ‘His blood is on us and on our children’ (Matt 27:25), and Peter’s sermons stressed the Jewish guilt for the cross (2:23; 3:15; 4:10). However, the apostles’ desire was for the conversion of the Jews, not divine retribution. Still, the leaders are forced to face their guilt for one of the ultimate sins, the execution of Jesus.”⁷

5. Verses 29-32 – Peter and the other Apostle’s Response.

- a. **Verse 29** – “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’”
 - 1) This is essentially what Peter and John said in **4:19-20**. This is extremely bold under these circumstances where their very lives could be taken. This statement also stands in contrast to the attitude of the Sanhedrin who were more concerned with what people thought than God.
- b. **Verse 30** – “...God...raised up Jesus...whom you murdered...” – Remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is essential for salvation (cf. **Romans 10:9-10**). **Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection are all one work of redemption**. Also, regarding the fact that Peter points out their guilt, this is essential for the Gospel to be preached. The true Gospel cannot be fully preached without mentioning man’s guilt.
- c. **Verse 31** – “...exalted to His right hand...” is an expression of authority. (**Mark 14:62; 16:19; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 10:12; 12:2; I Peter 3:22.**)
- d. **Verse 32** – “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” - The apostles thought of themselves, not just as proclaimers of the Gospel, but as eyewitnesses of that to which they now testified (cf. **I John 1:1-3**). The witness of “the Holy Spirit,” is also mentioned which probably refers to Him speaking through those who obey Him.

⁵Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 140.

⁶Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003),

⁷Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 112–113.