

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 21

### I. Exposition of Chapter Five (continued).

#### A. Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin.

1. **Verse 33** – “When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.” – The word “furious” is often translated “cut to the heart.” Marvin Vincent says it means; “to saw asunder”. A strong figure for exasperation.<sup>1</sup> Another reference adds; “...used metaphorically meaning to be enraged, moved with anger, to be cut or torn emotionally.”<sup>2</sup>

“But instead of accepting the offer of repentance, they were furious (Gk. *dieprionto*, ‘sawn through,’ and so, cut the heart, cut to the quick with anger, indignation, and jealousy). Immediately they started proceedings to kill the apostles. (The same word for ‘put to death’ is used of killing Jesus in Acts 2:23.)”<sup>3</sup>

2. **Verse 34** – “Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.”

- a. “...a Pharisee named Gamaliel...” – Remember the Pharisees were more conservative than the Sadducees. They believed in the coming of the Messiah, a resurrection, angels and believed in the authority of the Old Testament. They were amongst the minority in the Sanhedrin.<sup>4</sup> Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, the founder of Israel’s prominent schools for religious training (more liberal school). He was also one of the best-known rabbis in the land, the first one in history to be called *rabban* (“our rabbi”). He appears again in 22:3, where Paul mentions he was trained under Gamaliel.

3. **Verses 35-37** – Gamaliel gives two previous examples of Revolutionaries.

- a. **Verse 35** – “...Men of Israel take heed to yourselves...” – Gamaliel warns the Sanhedrin to be very careful concerning what they were considering doing to the apostles.

“Gamaliel is not so much concerned about the apostles as he is about the reputation of the Sanhedrin and warns them to “consider carefully what you intend to do to these men” (5:35). In light of their growing popularity, a hasty decision to take their lives could have serious consequences.”<sup>5</sup>

- b. **Verse 36** – “...Theudas rose up...” – Not much is known about this individual. Dr. Stanley Horton explains:

“The first example was Theudas who said of himself that he was ‘somebody.’ Theudas was a common name, and he was probably one of the rebels who arose after Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. (Josephus speaks of a later Theudas...) About four hundred men attached themselves to this Theudas. He was murdered, and all who had ‘rallied to him’...were dispersed and ‘came to nothing.’ Gamaliel implies that with Jesus crucified, His followers will also come to nothing. He also implies that Jesus was no different from those previous false leaders, who failed.”<sup>6</sup>

- c. **Verse 37** – “After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census...” - Grant Osborne explains:

“The second incident concerns a certain Judas the Galilean who revolted ‘in the days of the census,’ probably the one of Quirinus, governor of Syria (Luke 2:1-2) in AD 6. Likely this revolt was against the Roman taxation, which was the purpose of the census.”<sup>7</sup>

4. **Verses 38-39** – Gamaliel’s Counsel.

- a. **Verse 38** – “...keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing.” – The words, “...keep away from...and let them alone” mean, “to shun, to avoid, to keep away from, to have nothing to do with.”<sup>8</sup>
- b. “...for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing.” – This may have been true in the previous illustrations given, but historically it’s not always true.
- c. **Verse 39** – “[B]ut if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.” – This part of Gamaliel’s counsel was very true and very wise. Dr. Robert Utley makes an

<sup>1</sup>Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 471.

<sup>2</sup>Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

<sup>3</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 128.

<sup>4</sup>Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 118.

<sup>5</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 115.

<sup>6</sup>Horton, 129.

<sup>7</sup>Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, 115-116.

<sup>8</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 450.

interesting statement pertaining to this:

**“It must be remembered that these religious leaders think they are acting on God’s behalf. The very fact that Gamaliel speaks the possibility of their being sincerely wrong is a shocking statement (cf. 11:17).”<sup>9</sup>**

1) Sometimes people have speculated that Gamaliel was a secret believer or eventually became one but there is not historical proof of that. In fact there is more proof otherwise.

**“The Talmud distinctly affirms that he died a Jew, and, if he had betrayed his faith, we cannot understand the honour which Jewish tradition attaches to his name...”<sup>10</sup>**

B. The Apostles threatened, beaten and Released.

1. **Verse 40 – “And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”**

a. The word “agreed” means “persuaded” or “convinced.”<sup>11</sup>

b. **“...and beaten them...”** – By reading these simple and brief words, we really don’t get the full impact of what happened here. The word “beaten” means, “to strike, to beat, to whip.”<sup>12</sup>

**“When the apostles were recalled before the court, they were again admonished not to speak in the name of Jesus and the admonition was emphasized by a beating. This was the Jewish punishment of ‘forty lashes less one’ which could be inflicted by the Sanhedrin or the officials of a synagogue for offences against the Jewish law.... It was no soft option; people were known to die from it...”<sup>13</sup>**

c. **“...commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus...”** – This, of course was the same basic command they had given Peter and John (4:17-18) and all the apostles before (5:28).

2. **Verse 41 – “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”** – They went away from there “rejoicing”! Many Christians today may wonder how can that be. The apostles may have remembered what Jesus said in **John 16:33** which reads;

**“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

**(cf. I Peter 4:12-17)**

3. **Verse 42 – “And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”** – Just like before when they were threatened, they would not stop obeying God’s command over man’s command.

## II. Exposition of Chapter Six.

A. The appointment of Deacons.

1. **Verse 1 – “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.”**

a. **“...the number...was multiplying...”** - As the apostles continued preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there were more and more people coming to Christ. The word “multiplying” means, **to increase greatly in number or extent—to grow, to increase greatly, to multiply.** ‘the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger’<sup>14</sup>

b. **“...there arose a complaint...by the Hellenists...”** – The “Hellenists” were the Greek speaking Jews, as opposed to Hebrew speaking, who had come from other countries. They probably were still amongst the Jews from other lands who had been converted at Pentecost.

**“When we read the descriptions of the early church – the miracles, the sharing and generosity, the fellowship – we may wish we could have been a part of this ‘perfect’ church. In reality, the early church had problems just as we do today. No church has ever been or will ever be perfect until Christ and His followers are united at His second coming. All churches have problems. If your church’s shortcomings distress you, ask yourself: Would a perfect church allow me to be a member? Then do what you can to make your church better. A church does not have to be perfect to advance the cause of Christ.”<sup>15</sup>**

<sup>9</sup>Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 88.

<sup>10</sup>R.J. Knowling, *The Acts of the Apostles*, In *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*. 2 (1912):1-554. 4th ed. Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll. London: 5 vols. Hodder and Stoughton, 1900-12. (As quoted by Thomas Constable, *Acts Commentary*, 145.)

<sup>11</sup>Louw and Nida, 422.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>13</sup>I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 123-124.

<sup>14</sup>Louw and Nida 601.

<sup>15</sup>Life Application Study Bible, (Wheaton, IL, Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 1699.