

## THE GOSPEL WILL PREVAIL

Acts 5:12-42

### Notes

**A man once had a pair of two setter pups that were amazing bird dogs. He kept them in the backyard, where he trained them. One morning, an ornery, little, vicious bulldog came shuffling and snorting down the alley. He crawled his way under the backyard fence and you could tell he was looking for a fight.**

**The man decided to teach the bulldog a lesson and allowed his setters to engage him. Those two setters went around and around with the bulldog and when he had enough, he limped his way back under the fence into the alley.**

**You could hear him on the other side of the fence whining about his bruises and sores. The next day that same bulldog came back into the yard and received the same whooping he got the day before.**

**The next day the man had to leave on business for two weeks. When he returned, he asked his wife if that bulldog stopped coming.**

**She said, "It was the strangest thing. You just won't believe it. Every day at the same time that little bulldog came in the backyard and fought our two dogs. He didn't miss a day.**

**And at some point, when those setters heard the bulldog coming down the alley they immediately started whining and would run to the basement.**

**As the man went to his backyard, he saw that bulldog strutting around the yard like he owned it.**

We often think of the gospel message of Jesus as this timid, lowly thing, as if it is a beggar on the street seeking someone to look upon it, to engage it, to show it attention.

We treat the gospel as something that needs to be protected, as if it not the power of God for salvation.

While we absolutely should stand for the gospel and proclaim the gospel, the power of the gospel comes from its central figure, Christ.

Jesus does not need us to protect him and he does not need us to treat his gospel as a soft puppy who will be hurt at the slightest offense.

The gospel has literally changed the world. The gospel has conquered the hearts of men, women, and children for centuries. The gospel has toppled kingdoms and transformed the hearts of the lowly and the achieved.

As we shall see in our text this morning, which I admit is a lengthy text, is that the gospel will prevail against all enemies.

Make no mistake about it; the world is and will continue to grow even more hostile to the gospel.

In light of this hostility, God has called his people to continue to rely on his power to do the miraculous-call sinners to salvation.

Will it be easy? Will it come without pain? Will every attempt be successful? No.

We will do well as individuals and as a church family to know full well that the world and its ruler, Satan, will use whatever means necessary to thwart the plans of Almighty God.

We will also do well to remember that no matter what plans the world concocts, what schemes the Devil employs, if we will remain obedient and faithful to the mission, he has given us, no matter what comes our way THE GOSPEL WILL PREVAIL.

In our text today, as we are continuing to follow the early church, we come to another scene where the gospel and the world clash.

As we walk through this story together, we will highlight important points and at the end of the message we will share some takeaways for us.

***<sup>12</sup> At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. <sup>13</sup> But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. <sup>14</sup> And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,***

### **Signs and wonders (12)**

The first thing we notice in our text following the episode with Ananias and Sapphira is that signs and wonders were being performed among the body.

They performed ministry and outreach.

They cared enough to reach out and try to heal their hurting world.

God has given us the same Spirit, so we have the same tools to step out on faith and obedience and reach our hurting world.

They used the power God gave them to make a difference in the world.

Here at FBCD we, as a church are trying to do the same:

- Actively sharing the gospel, soccer ministry, handing out Bibles at vaccine clinics, blessing our teachers at Christmas time, Sports Crusaders, VBS, and Upwards are some of the ways we are engaging our community to reach out and offer hope.

God has given us gifts to minister to and build up the church, but to also meet the needs of the hurting world around us.

It is shameful for a body of believers to have the gifts they have (spiritual, talents, finances, ability) and not use them for the glory of God.

God has called every church to minister in her own way and in her own context.

### **Increasing numbers (14)**

As they performed ministry in the community notice what the text says. *“And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number.”*

As the church intentionally engaged the community the community took notice, heard the message of Christ, and responded in faith.

I want to pause and make a statement: Ministry and outreach are not guaranteed to grow a church, but a church will not grow without ministry and outreach.

As we engage our community, we are given multiple opportunities to share the love of God and the gospel of Jesus.

Growth is good, it is not bad.

Is church growth scary? Sure. Growth brings people, people you may not know, people you may not fully understand, people that may look different than you, talk different than you, and even (gasp) have different opinions than you, but that is ok.

The church is made up of all types of people, all kinds of diversity. Will we all like the same things? No. Will we all have the same interests in all things? No. Is that scary? Yes. Is this ok? Absolutely.

The church is to mirror the kingdom of God and as we look forward to that blessed hope of our kingdom in heaven, we know we will stand beside brothers and sisters from every walk of life from every point in history.

We will sing hymns from the 50s, Gregorian chants from the middle ages, Doxologies of the early church, and modern praise hymns. We will hear voices from our brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia, and South America and all these voices will be centered on one thing and one thing only: THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

We like the angels will all shout with a loud voice, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty.”

The church is meant to reach out to all peoples and all people are all kinds of different, but we will do well to remember-as long as we are all centered on the main mission: Exalting God, Equipping Believers, and Engaging the World- all else is secondary.

*[<sup>15</sup> to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. <sup>16</sup> Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.]<sup>17</sup> **But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.***

### **Sadducees jealous (17)**

As the church began to grow and people began to take note of what was taking place, lives were changed and some people were not happy about it.

Again, we see the Sadducees not being happy with what the apostles and the church were doing.

They didn't like that the church was taking the attention off of them. They were afraid of what Rome was going to do. They were worried they might lose control.

In this world, individuals will be jealous, they will be scared, and they will very well be upset with you if you decide in your heart to live out the gospel message.

The gospel changes and challenges the worldview of the majority of people.

*<sup>18</sup> They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.*

### **Apostles arrested (18)**

Because they did not like what the apostles were doing, they arrested them.

Arrested for faithfully following the Lord's commands.

If we are truly following Christ and living a life of a disciple, Jesus promises that we will be hated and persecuted.

This may look like many things to many people.

- Shunned at work
- Cost a job or a promotion
- Having people cut you from their life
- Talked and gossiped about

We should not expect to be treated differently from the way Jesus was treated, from the way the early church was treated.

The gospel life is a threat, an affront to the world and for a person to hold firm to the gospel life, do not think the world will not attack you, try to take you down, and shut you up.

Which begs a few questions- if I never experience any pushback for my views, my stances, my discipleship, my evangelism, my motivations, and my life goals am I truly following Christ? Am I only surrounded by other believers? Am I engaging the lost world as Christ commanded?

*<sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, <sup>20</sup> "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." <sup>21</sup> Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach.*

### **Angel released them in the night (19)**

Notice what happens to the apostles when they are arrested

- God provides for them

They did not know how they would be provided for and I strongly guess it did not matter to them if they never got released.

They knew that no matter what happened, God would provide.

God will always provide for those who are living for his glory.

God may not release you from jail; he may not put your relationship back together; he may not bring your friends back to you; he may not allow everything to return to the old normal.

But you must know that if you are walking in the Spirit of the Lord and allowing God to strengthen you to walk in the gospel and be obedient to the call of God on your life then God will provide for you in your time of trial.

But many people don't think God will or can provide for their needs.

You don't think they can take the pushback from the world; you won't be able to take losing friends; you can't afford to tithe or give an offering to Christ; what will happen if they say this or do that, or take this biblical stance?

Is not the God we serve the same God who:

- Placed a baby in a 90-year-old mother's arms (Sarah)
- Took Joseph from a slave to Prime Minister of Egypt
- Led Moses out of Israel
- Provided manna from heaven for an entire nation in the desert
- Guided David's rock to Goliath's skull to defeat the giant
- Shut the mouth of the lion before Daniel
- Walk with 3 Hebrew boys in the fire
- Protected Elijah against a maniac King
- Rescued Israel from captivity
- Raised Lazarus from the dead
- Made a serial adulteress whole
- Made a 40-year-old cripple walk
- Ministered to Christ in the garden
- Raised Jesus from the dead
- Redeemed you from hell

Don't tell me God isn't there or can't rescue you from your situation.

We must not allow the maybes, what if's, the unknowns, or the world to dictate our obedience to the gospel.

We serve a God who has proven time and again that He is a faithful shield, a solid rock, a strong tower, and a solid refuge for all those who call upon his name.

When God calls us to do something, we must trust that he will provide the means, material, and method for us to do what he has called us to do. And when bars and walls get put up around what we are doing, we continue to trust him.

And when, by God's great grace, we are released from our trials, we don't mope, pout, or quit, we get back to doing what he called us to do in the first place.

*[Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought. <sup>22</sup> But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, <sup>23</sup> saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside." <sup>24</sup> Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. <sup>25</sup> **But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"***

### **Preaching again in the temple (25)**

I laugh when I think of what the faces on the chief priest and other leaders looked like when they found out the men they arrested and threw in jail the day before were not there.

I really get excited when I think about how mad they were and at the same time really puzzled as to how they escaped and then walk into the temple and there they are doing the very thing they were arrested for the day prior.

Isn't God good!

Many of us would use the opportunity at being released to go back to living a quiet life that would not cause a stir, but not these guys.

They knew their mission was too important to go back to the way things were before.

**<sup>26</sup> Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).**

### **Arrested again (26)**

Well, what happens when you escape prison? They put you back in prison.

When you make the world mad, challenge the status quo, the hedonistic worldview, and are living out the gospel, people will get after you.

They got after the apostles and rearrested them. The religious leaders placed them back in jail and once again they were on trial for sharing the gospel and allowing the Spirit of God to flow through them.

**<sup>27</sup> When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. <sup>31</sup> He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."**

## **On trial again (27)**

Notice some of the things they were saying in this trial:

- “guilty of this man’s blood” (28)
  - They would not even use Jesus’ name because they didn’t want to be accused of blasphemy.
  - They didn’t want to be associated with killing an innocent man, so they accused the apostles of making them “guilty of this man’s blood.”

It is amazing how when you begin living for the Lord and the gospel begins changing your life, your values, priorities, motivations, habits, and choices that people around you begin to make excuses and rationalize their own sin.

We have a knack for rationalizing our own sin

- “I didn’t lie, I just didn’t tell all the truth.”
- “It’s not stealing, the office is so big they won’t miss it.”
- “It’s just sex”
- “It’s ok because God wants me to be happy.”
- “I don’t have to go to church to be a Christian.”
- “I don’t have to tell about Jesus, I live for Jesus.”

The religious leaders didn’t want to paint themselves as guilty of any wrongdoing. They placed themselves on a pedestal and could not see their own sin.

They failed to see the truth: ALL OF US ARE GUILTY OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS!

## **- “Obey God rather than people” (29)**

The religious leaders asked if they were already told to not preach in the name of Jesus and the disciples plainly stated, “We will obey God rather than people.”

I think this is a statement we should all wrestle with.

We will easily agree with the statement, but when placed into our modern context let us put it like this, “Do we obey the gospel rather than social norms, societal expectations, selfish desires, laziness, complacency, sinful passions and temptations?”

- Do we obey God and forgive, or do we harbor resentment?
- Do we obey God and go straight to the person who offended us, or do we post passive-aggressive statements on social media?
- Do we obey God and give an offering, or do we follow flesh and not trust God to supply our needs?
- Do we obey God and serve, or do we simply leave it for others to do?
- Do we obey God and humble ourselves before one another or do we insist on our wants being met?

- Do we obey God and share the gospel with others, or do we watch as those around us walk right into the flames of hell?

Beloved, we will only make a difference in this life, in this world if we commit to follow God rather than the world.

And we will not commit to follow God without having an honest inventory of our hearts on a regular basis to allow him to sift through our hearts to remove that which is not following him.

### **“We are witnesses of these things” (32)**

*<sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”*

As they continued to talk, they shared the simple gospel message of Jesus’ death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins, saying, “We are witnesses of these things.”

It is that simple. Sharing the gospel is that simple. You don’t need a theology degree to say, “Jesus died and rose again for your sins; now let me tell you what I have witnessed him do in my life.”

Personal evangelism is the part of the lifeblood of a healthy growing church and if we fail to share the gospel in our personal lives, to pray for the lost, to ask God to give us opportunities, to be ready and willing to go where God tells us to go and say what God tells us to say, then the church will slowly die.

Often, we are more concerned about putting the commands of God aside to appease the lost world instead of holding the Lamb of God high to draw them to salvation.

*<sup>33</sup> But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.<sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. <sup>35</sup> And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. <sup>36</sup> For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; <sup>39</sup> **but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.**”*

### **“if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them” (39)**

Verse 33 says they were “cut to the quick.” Meaning the gospel convicted them. But they did not respond to the conviction with repentance, they responded with hostility.

Mark this, not everyone will be happy with your gospel life. Not everyone will be happy about hearing about how they are a sinner.

As they wanted to kill the apostles a leader, Gamaliel, Paul's mentor, stood up to give a piece of advice.

He said that if it was of man that it would fail, but that if what the apostles were doing was of God, then nothing they could do would stop them and their message.

Isn't that wonderful news?! The world may cuss, kick, scream, throw temper tantrums, lawsuits, protests; they may high jack the government, the education system, and other systems of operation, but nothing, and I mean nothing they do can stop the gospel from flourishing when the people of God are obedient in following God and sharing the lifesaving message of Jesus Christ.

***<sup>40</sup> They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. <sup>41</sup> So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.***

#### **Flogged and rejoice in persecution (40-41)**

Upon hearing Gamaliel's words, the Sanhedrin had the apostles flogged.

Do you know what their response was to this beating? They actually rejoiced and praised God because they were counted as worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus.

- "Oh, Bessie won't be my friend anymore because I am a Christian."
- "My coworkers' gossip about me because I read the Bible at lunch."
- We complain because someone unfriended us on Facebook because we posted a Bible verse

***<sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.***

#### **Continued to meet as often as possible every day (42)**

They did not allow the pressure of the world to keep them from being a church.

Now, notice what were marks of the church.

It was not a building, a program, or a person.

They:

- Taught the word
- Fellowshiped
- Evangelized
- This is the synthesis of what it means to be a New Testament church:
  - Teach the word, fellowship, equip believers and evangelize

What are the “so what’s” of this story?

- The Church is Called to Minister in the World
  - The World Will Not Be Kind to the Church
  - We are Called to Live for Christ Regardless of the Pressure
  - God Blesses a Church Who Honors Him Instead of the World
- This story has shown us the power of the gospel to prevail over the forces of the world, but more importantly over the forces of a heart filled with sin.