

**April 14, 2024**

**God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing**

***The Book of Acts Pt 8 - Acts 5:12-42***

***Commitment to God's Truth  
Rather Than Man's Tradition***

Our theme for 2024 is God's Good News Story, Continued... "***The Church Alive & Growing***". For the past few weeks, we have been looking at the basic descriptions and the **true call & purpose of the Church**... ***To be powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit.***

As I have indicated before the Book of Acts gives us a great introduction and description of what Jesus intended for His Church to be. So far, we have had two summary statements given to help us to understand the early Church.

➤ **Acts 2:42-47**... Continuous Devotion & Worship  
***<sup>42</sup> They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>46</sup> Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.***

Second summary statement is found in

➤ **Acts 4:32-33**... Common Care & Concern  
***<sup>32</sup> And the congregation of those who believed were of***

***one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.***

Today we find a third Summary Statement in **Acts 5:42** ... Courageous Obedience & Faithfulness  
***And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ.***

**Continuous Devotion & Worship**  
**Common Care & Concern**  
**Courageous Obedience & Faithfulness**

My hope is that through this study of Acts and the other New Testament books, we will be as impactful to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century world around us today as the early Christian Church was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century world!

**The early church and it's leaders modeled  
Courageous Obedience & Faithfulness!**

They truly exemplified and lived out the true call & purpose of the Church... ***To Be Powerful Witnesses Of God's Good News Story, Motivated By Love, Empowered By The Holy Spirit.***

**In the passage** today we see a key element that is necessary to this calling is a...

***Commitment to God's Truth  
Rather Than Man's Tradition***

**As we work through this passage look for these four practical outcomes of commitment to God's Truth in Jesus...It...**

- 1. Produces Growth**
- 2. Provides Protection**
- 3. Promotes Obedience**
- 4. Propels Witnessing**

I am not going to expand much more on those 4 points as I choose to focus on the way the different individuals and groups in this passage responded to the presentation of God's **TRUTH** that Jesus Christ is Savior, Lord and Messiah

*The following is partially adapted*

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 424).

Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

*and from Chris Noland*

<https://chrisnoland.org/2019/02/05/battle-for-the-truth-acts-512-42/>

### **1<sup>st</sup> Group:**

#### **The Multitudes: Received the Truth**

In verses 14-16...

*<sup>14</sup> And increasingly believers in the Lord, large numbers of men and women, were being added to their number, <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 of them. <sup>16</sup> The people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together as well, bringing people who were sick or tormented with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.*

Vast numbers of the people heard the message and saw the miracles and received the truth and were added to the church. Not everyone, of course, received the truth, but this does show us that when presented with the truth of God's Good News Story of Redemption and Hope, many people will receive the truth of God's Good News in Jesus Christ. We just must be ready and willing to share that Good News.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Group:**

#### **The Religious Leaders: Attacked The Truth**

*<sup>17</sup> But the high priest stood up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. <sup>18</sup> They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public prison. <sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and leading them out, he said, <sup>20</sup> "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple area the whole message of this Life." <sup>21</sup> Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple area about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, that is, all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison 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, <sup>23</sup> saying, "We found the prison locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, 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 area and teaching the people!”<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).<sup>27</sup> When they had brought them, they had them stand before the Council. The high priest interrogated 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.”*

It is sad that these “Religious Leaders” who were supposed to be God’s ministers rejecting God’s genuine truth revealed by Jesus and instead, choosing to follow their man-made traditions and practices. These leaders were so blinded by their own interpretation and opinions on faith that they missed the genuine truth when it was literally presented to their very own eyes...first by Jesus, and then by the Apostles and their testimony of words and miracles. There were several different groups that comprised the general term ‘religious leaders’. Some of these include Pharisees, Sadducees, High Priests, Scribes, Essenes and a senate like body called ‘The Sanhedrin’ which was mainly composed of **Pharisees & Sadducees**.

The Sadducees	The Pharisees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonged to the privileged minority and had the power of the law on their side.</li> <li>• Ruled in the Temple.</li> <li>• Recognized the authority of the five books of Moses only.</li> <li>• Did not believe in the resurrection. (Acts 23:8 as well as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represented the working-class and had the power of the people on their side.</li> <li>• Ruled in the synagogues.</li> <li>• Recognized all the writings of the Old Testament, plus oral tradition.</li> <li>• Believed in the resurrection.</li> </ul>

These “religious leaders” were more interested in maintaining the ‘status quo’ and of course their roles of power, that they missed the hand of God. It was the Sadducees that had the most power and thus the most to lose. I guess that is why they were called Sadducees... because they missed **God’s plan, they were “Sad-u-see”** LOL Oh Well! Moving along...

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Group:**

#### **The Apostles: Defended the Truth**

**In Verses 29-32...**<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 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.”*



In this passage we hear Peter utter these famous and motivational words... ***“We must obey God rather than men”*** (vs. 29)

Peter showed true courage, bravery and commitment when he faced off against the powers of his day. They literally had the power to destroy him socially, financially, and yes even physically. Peter was a bold, courageous witness who was unafraid of public opinion. He sets an example for us, like Barnabas did last week, on how we are to respond when ‘truth’ is being attacked.

Since the time of Peter, millions of believers have stood up and defended the Truth and have paid for it socially, emotionally, financially, and yes, with their very life. We must choose God and His truth, NO MATTER THE CONSEQUENCES!

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Group/Individual:**

##### **Gamaliel, The Pharisee: Avoided The Truth**

***Verses 33-40...<sup>33</sup> But when they heard this, they became infuriated and nearly decided to execute 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, be careful as to what you are about to do with these men. <sup>36</sup> For, some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined 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 appeared in***

***the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he also perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and leave them alone, for if the source of this plan or movement is men, it will be overthrown; <sup>39</sup> but if the source is God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”<sup>40</sup> They followed 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.***

Gamaliel is one of those people who you don’t know exactly what he was thinking or what was his true motivation. But the practical outcome was that he avoided the truth. Some may try and say that he was seeking to be a peacemaker and maybe had some level of concern or support for Peter and the early church. But it really seems to be that Gamaliel was more of a “*spiritual politician and diplomat*”, rather than a “*True Ambassador or Statesman of Faith*”.

He does state that **IF** this is of God, they should not attack them, but then he seems to emphasize that this is more likely just another group of misguided religious fanatics (then he list a couple of examples) that will just fade away if we leave them alone. Though this was the way God protected Peter and others from the death that the leaders were hoping for, it was in the end, just a way of avoiding the hard truth that they were wrong and needed to change. It was a lack of action that led to their eternal separation from God’s presence.

### **5<sup>th</sup> Group: The Church: Proclaimed the Truth**

**v. 41-42...**<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.* <sup>42</sup> *And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ.*

Peter and the others with him responded to their persecution the way that is proper and biblical. Peter even included this in his later book we find in the New Testament. **I Peter 1:6-7**... *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,”*

This attitude that we must face persecution, of any type, with the right attitude is not just isolated to Peter...

**Listen to these verses from Paul and James...**

**Romans 3:18**...*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*

**James 1:2-4**...<sup>2</sup> *Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials,* <sup>3</sup> *knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.* <sup>4</sup> *But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.*

### **In this chapter we see 5 ways we can respond to truth**

The Multitudes: Received the Truth  
The Religious Leaders: Attacked the Truth  
The Apostles: Defended the Truth  
Gamaliel, The Pharisee: Avoided the Truth  
The Church: Proclaimed the Truth

May we accept the challenge to respond with  
No. 1, 3, & 5  
Receive, Defend & Proclaim.

### **The 1st Century Church modeled for us...**

**Continuous Devotion & Worship**  
**Common Care & Concern**  
**Courageous Obedience & Faithfulness**

So, I am asking you as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church to **Choose this Day to Become** Part of God's Good News Story Team. Will you choose to ***Be Like Barnabas*** and ***Be Like Peter***?

*If you do SAY IT WITH ME...*

*We Choose To be powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit.*