

Acts 5 Supplement #4

Chapter Five – First Church Discipline, 2nd Arrest.

ACTS 5:33-42:

In our previous lesson, we witnessed the defense from the Apostles of Jesus Christ to the accusations from the council, that they had violated the edict from them to not preach in the Name of Jesus, and have filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, and that they intended to bring His blood upon them.

The Apostles responded, once again, that they will obey God rather than men (see: **4:19**). In addition, they would give a short synopsis of the message they had been actively preaching to the people.

God had raised up Jesus, exalting Him to His right hand (a position of authority) and has made Him a ruler and Savior. In fact, it is God who has proclaimed that you have killed His Son of promise. The Apostles and the Holy Spirit have now testified (eyewitnesses and miraculous testimony), establishing this as truth; and establishing that there can only be salvation in His Name (see: **4:12**).

In this lesson, we will now see the reaction of the council and the sage advice of Gamaliel towards averting another tragic crime by the council.

Text #1:

Acts 5:33-34 “When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them.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.”

Furious: Many of us have translator notes in our Bibles that correspond to this statement, offering an alternative phrase, “**Cut to the quick**”, which comes from the original Greek understanding. In either case, it accurately describes the pure hatred and burning anger of the council towards these uneducated Galileans, who have accused them (see: **4:13**).

So filled with wrath, the council is in a blind rage, and if something is not done, they are once again going to have blood on their hands.

Gamaliel: Enter a voice of reason, and one that will be able to gain the ear of the council to avert their course. Gamaliel (his name means, “Reward of God”), as tradition would bear out was a Pharisee and a well-known doctor of the Law. Additionally, he would be one of seven Rabbis who would receive first, the distinguished title of Rabban (a term that means, “Master Teacher”).

Although Gamaliel is a popular Jewish name, tradition also bears out that this is the teacher that Paul sites in **Acts 22:3**, as his instructor in the Law.

The first act of wisdom that he will demonstrate will be to remove the visual object of the council's rage.

Text #2:

Acts 5:35-37 “And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ³⁶ For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.”

Take Heed to Yourselves: Gamaliel makes it perfectly clear what the intent of the council truly was. In order to stop them from committing yet another crime in hatred, having removed the Apostles, he attempts to draw their attention to reason.

Theudas: It is historically accurate to know that this period in Judean history would be full of tumult and periodic uprisings. The greatest of them all, would come from the Jewish zealots against Rome. It is also evident by the information given by Gamaliel, that many of the leaders of these tumults would use known information concerning the coming of the Messiah in order to claim to be something.

Nothing can be distinguished in history concerning this specific incident, other than what Gamaliel has revealed and Luke records. Theudas is unknown in terms of details; however, here he is an illustration of previous types of uprisings, which went away on their own by the hand of the people, when they became wise to their deceit.

Judas of Galilee: Gamaliel introduces a second insurrectionist for the purpose of illustration. There is similarity offered to the present Apostolic teaching to Jesus (days of the census, drew away many followers). In the fashion of Theudas, he perished, and his followers were dispersed.

These two examples will allow Gamaliel to make his final argument for the council not to act in haste and rage.

Note: As Jesus rendered to His chosen the events that would occur so that they would recognize the coming of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem; He claimed that they would see many who would “**Come in My name, saying, ‘I am he’**” – **Luke 21:8**. It is evident that this was not something that would just happen later, but the fact of the matter is that it had already happened.

Another sign from the same teaching that is already being fulfilled is found in **Luke 21:12-15**, which is transpiring right now, as the Apostles face the council.

Text #3:

Acts 5:38-39 “And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”

Gamaliel’s Advice: As the two evidentiary cases indicate clearly, the imposters to the Messiah were destroyed naturally, and not by the council committing crimes of their own.

His advice is to allow the same to happen here (“**For if this plan or work is of men, it will come to nothing**”), which he knows that the council believes. Additionally, he offers the understanding of the universal recognition of the miracles being performed by the Apostles and their standing with the people (“**If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it**” – something the modern-day teachers of premillennialism should pay attention to -pragmatically, when they state that Christ failed to establish His kingdom because the Jews killed Him).

There are those who have stated in teaching this passage, that Gamaliel was predisposed to the Apostle’s doctrine and a supporter; and that his words were even inspired.

Friends, it is evident in this passage that Gamaliel is not a believer in Jesus as the Christ, nor a supporter of the Apostle’s teaching at all (there is no recorded protest to their having the Apostle’s beaten, or any evidence offered internally or historically to him believing).

All we have here is a wise man giving pragmatic advice to a council of hot heads, ready to kill again. The only thing inspired about this recorded presentation of Gamaliel’s advice to the council is Luke’s accurate knowledge of it.

Text #4:

Acts 5:40-42 “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. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as the Christ*.”

Agreed with Him: Gamaliel’s efforts did truly avert a crime from the council. They will still satiate their desire to punish the Apostles for breaking the first order to not preach in the name of Jesus.

Beat Them: The Jews had a much different practice than that of the Romans when it came to beating as a civil punishment. The Romans made a science out of beating, the administrator knowing when to stop it just before the recipient was dead. The Jews: however, practiced beating after the commands in the Law of Moses (see: **Deuteronomy 25:3**). The Law permitted only forty stripes to be given, which would also lead to the iconic statement of, “**You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain**” – **Deuteronomy 25:4**; which Paul would quote in **1 Corinthians 9:9**. This statement was given to demonstrate that this punishment was not to be used to cripple a man, so that he could not provide for his family.

By the time of Jesus on earth, the Jews had developed the tradition of 39 strips, in order to be safe not to violate this, Law. Even though 39 stripes sound better than almost beaten to death, we should not be deceived into thinking that it was joyful or easy to endure, by any stretch.

Departed Rejoicing: The Apostles of Jesus Christ demonstrate after their release a paradox that only those who have known the love of God, demonstrated in Jesus Christ, can truly know – joy in the face of persecution. This passage is an illustration of the words of James, note:

James 1:2-4 “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

And of Peter, note:

1 Peter 4:12-16 “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. ¹⁶ Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”

Did Not Cease: In addition to considering themselves privileged to suffer for the name of Christ, they continued in the face of the council warnings to preach the Name of Jesus as the Christ, in spite of the warning, once again illustrating the words of Paul, note:

Romans 13:3 “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.”