

<sup>40</sup> His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

1. The Pharisees were polar opposites of the Sadducees. They believed in God's sovereignty, held a miraculous world view, believed in angels, and the resurrection of the dead. How do these convictions explain Gamaliel's caution in dismissing what the apostles are doing and teaching?
2. Interestingly enough, one of Gamaliel's star pupils was Saul of Tarsus (who would later become the apostle Paul). How do Gamaliel's views differ from Saul's views?
3. How should the Sadducees have processed what they were seeing and hearing from the apostles?
4. How should Gamaliel have processed what he was seeing and hearing from the apostles?

### **HONOR IN SHAME (vv. 41-42)**

<sup>41</sup> The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. <sup>42</sup> Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

1. What can we learn from the apostles attitude toward shame and suffering?
2. What can we learn from the apostles determination to "proclaim the good news" in the face of persecution and suffering?



Circumstance can be a cruel taskmaster. If you allow your circumstances to determine how you feel about yourself or life, you better be ready for some mercurial highs and lows. It is easy to feel good about ourselves when things are going our way, and to become a bit despondent when they are not. And how often do things really go our way?

Think of the highs and lows you might have experienced if you had been one of the early followers of Jesus. Nothing would have been more exciting than the invitation to follow Jesus, but the initial invitation would soon give way to the reality that you would have to leave everything behind to follow him. It must have been fun to hear him teach and watch the crowds respond, but somewhat puzzling to see him challenge their motives and watch them slowly peel away. You would have been on the edge of your seat as he rode into Jerusalem to the cheers of an adoring public, but it would only be a matter of days before the adoring public morphed into an angry mob. The resurrection would have been a moment of both joy and grief. The joy of seeing Jesus would give way to the grief knowing you were more interested in saving your own skin than standing with him when your friendship would have mattered most. Then there was Pentecost—the powerful presence of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit, thousands responding to the gospel. The success of the gospel, however, is met with brutal opposition. There would be threats, beatings, and even public executions.

By the end of Acts 5, we find the disciples rejoicing—not because things were going their way, but because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Jesus. Somehow the gospel had lifted them above their circumstances and created indescribable joy in spite of bitter disappointment and suffering.

## **A SHORT NIGHT JAIL (vv. 17-21a)**

*17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.”*

*21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.*

1. There is a bit of irony here. The Sadducees did not believe in God’s sovereignty, miracles, angels or the resurrection of the dead. How is God challenging their world view in this passage?
2. What is the primary motivation of the Jewish ruling class?
3. What is their jealousy keeping them from seeing?
4. The angel not only frees the apostles, he also commands them to go back to the temple and continue to “tell the people all about this new life.” Why is “new life” a perfect description of what we receive through faith in Christ?

## **LOCKED DOORS AND AN EMPTY CELL (vv. 21b-26)**

*When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. 22 But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, 23 “We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” 24 On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.*

*25 Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” 26 At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.*

1. How had God defied the Sanhedrin?
2. How had the apostles defied the Sanhedrin?
3. What does the fact that “They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them,” tell you about the precarious position they found themselves in?

## **GUILTY AS CHARGED (vv. 27-32)**

*27 The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”*

*29 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! 30 The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

1. What two charges do the Sanhedrin bring against the apostles?
2. How do the apostles respond to the charge, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name?”
3. How do the apostles respond to the charge, “You are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood?”
4. The Ruling Council expressed their opinion of Jesus by “hanging him on a cross.” God expressed his opinion by exalting “him to his own right hand and as Prince and Savior.” Compare and contrast the two.
5. How does knowing that “God exalted [Jesus] to his own right hand as Prince and Savior,” make a difference in our lives?
6. How does the Holy Spirit bear witness to the truth of the Gospel?

## **WISE COUNSEL FROM AN UNLIKELY SOURCE (vv. 33-40)**

*33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”*