

## **The Early Church Pattern for Evangelism, Part 2**

Acts 5:17-32

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Now we have been in our study of Acts considering in Chapter 5 the early church pattern for effective evangelism. And we began last time with a section that really runs from Chapter 5 verse 12-42. That entire section deals with the explosive evangelism of the early church. Now we've already begun to see some of it. We've seen the church grow 3,000 the first day, within a few days 5,000 men and continue to multiply and so forth, but I believe finally in Chapter 5 verses 12-42 we get a kind of composite picture of some of the keys to that kind of evangelism.

Now there's a lot of evangelism, some of it very ineffective, some of it the kind of evangelism that results in a bigger loss factor than a gain factor, in the sense that I mean of the 100% of people that are introduced to Christ maybe less than 50% really are sincere. There are many efforts at evangelism, but I believe that here we have some of the basic things dealing with evangelism. This is not exhaustive, it is not extensive, and it is not all-inclusive, it is merely part of the picture.

But here we have, I think, five progressive keys to effective evangelism and we began last time by looking at the first two and we'll take the second two this morning and leave the last one for next time.

Now I think we who love Jesus Christ and who have committed our lives to Him, care about evangelism. By that I mean communicating the gospel to the world. We have been accused of proselytizing and we do, in fact proselyte. We do everything that we can do becoming all things to all men that by any means we may win someone to Christ within the realms of fidelity and veracity and honesty and sincerity we want to win people to Jesus Christ. We don't want to win them by underhanded methods. We don't want to abort the new birth, but we do want to be engaged in winning people to Jesus Christ. That's what we're all about. Otherwise the Lord would have saved us and taken us to heaven.

We are here, Chapter 1 of Acts says, to finish the work that Jesus both began to do and teach. We are here to do His unfinished work, the work of reaching men with the gospel. Now we know, first of all, that this is our task. Jesus said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And He commissioned us to take it where He left it. And He said, "You go into all the world and you preach the gospel to every creature." And He said, "You shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth."

So we are here to do His work, as it were, to finish His unfinished work of evangelism, reaching the world with the truth of Jesus Christ. And we're not only doing it here, I trust in our little local area, but we're supporting, as you noted and was mentioned earlier in your bulletin, missionaries all over the world and we praise God for many right here in our own congregation who are working with various ministries: Campus Crusade, and how we praise God for their effective and dynamic ministry. And

we have some folks with Inter Varsity, and others with Young Life who are right now on the campuses reaching people for Christ. There's some of you involved in Jewish evangelism. There are others of you involved in Christian organizations of all different kinds ministering to people here in this country and, of course, those that we add to that about the world.

And I believe that honestly in our own hearts we really want to win people to Christ. I think if I asked any of you, who know Christ, do you care about the salvation of people you'd say, "Of course, we want to win people to Christ." And yet we recognize that there are degrees of commitment at that very level.

Some people want it so bad they do it. Other people want it bad enough to pray about it. Other people hope it happens. And the commitment level determines just about where you are on that scale. And as the man said the other night, some people make things happen, some people know they happen and some people are asking what's happening? But I believe that in all of our hearts if we're really honest we do have a desire for people to come to Christ. The level of our commitment determines how intense that desire is activated in our life. But that is our goal. We must be with Christ after the lost.

Now in order to do this effectively in Acts 5 we have these five keys that are unveiled before us. And we saw, let's review; first of all we saw last time the first key to effective evangelism is purity. Purity. And we saw that in the parenthesis in the middle of verse 12 and running through verse 14. Let's review it. Verse 12 at the parenthesis, "They were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch." Now that's a very important statement because back in the first 11 verses of Chapter 5 they were not with one accord because they had sinning members. Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Spirit and polluted the fellowship. So God just took their lives instantly right on the spot they dropped dead. And God purified the church by a very supernatural intervention.

And so when you come to verse 12 and it says, "They were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch," that's exactly true. The sin had been rooted out and you'd better believe that when the other Christians who may have been on the border of sin saw what happened to Ananias and Sapphira there was some kind of purification going on in that place.

And so when it says they were with one accord in one place it means that. There was a pure church again. It had been restored to the purity that it enjoyed before Ananias and Sapphira had polluted it and God had said again in very dramatic letters, he had sky written if you will, across the face of their life, "Do not do this it results in severe punishment." And so they were pure and that's where evangelism begins. It springs out of the purity of the church, the church that deals with sin. The church that is alive and sensitive to God and the purity of holiness is the effective church.

Now we saw a next step in that when we came to verse 13. It says, "Of the rest dared no man join himself to them." There they were on Solomon's Porch and nobody jumped on their bandwagon because they knew that you don't get into that deal unless you're willing to have your life exposed. People who aren't for real in that organization die. And so nobody joined up who wasn't ready for that kind of commitment. You see? So that's why I continue to say to you that the church must be pure, it must deal with sin, it must operate with spiritual discipline in the lives of believers not only for the purity of itself, but in order that the world may know that you cannot infiltrate the church and be undiscovered.

In the impure church that never deals with sin, like so many local churches are, the tares are sewn in there so easily because there's never any exposure going on, you see. But in the early church the public had seen this. Verse 11 says, "Great fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things." I mean the world was aware that that church dealt with sin and you didn't join up unless you were for real or you're liable to die.

And so you see the church was not only pure to begin with but because it continued to deal with sin it stayed pure and you find that in verse 13 the people didn't jump on. They said the people magnified them, verse 14, "And believers were the more added to the Lord." Multitudes of men and women, you know who got added to that church? Who did? Not wheat and tares, just wheat, believers because it was a church that was pure and its purity was manifest in the world. And the world knew it was pure, and the world knew that God dealt with sin, and the world knew that sin was exposed, and the world didn't join up on that basis unless they really meant it. And so its purity was maintained. You say, "Well if you get too worried about that, maybe nobody will come." Look at it again, verse 14, "Multitudes. Multitudes." The pure church is the church that reaches the world.

The second thing we saw about evangelism in its basic ingredients is not only purity but power. The pure church is a powerful church. And that's why its evangelism is effective. It has a power that is from God. It surges with power. We saw in verse 12, a part from the parenthesis, "And by the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were wrought among the people." In order to confirm their preaching miracles began to happen. Verse 15 says, "They brought the sick into the streets, they laid them on beds and couches hoping the shadow of Peter might pass over them." That's how much they believed in the power that these people had. "There came a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem bringing sick folks and those who were vexed with unclean spirits," or demon possessed, "And they were healed, every one." Total. Power.

And what drew people to this church was the power that was so evident because they were pure. God was moving in this church. And that's how it is today and as I told you last time we're not to assume necessarily that God operates on the same principles in terms of the sign gifts or the miracles to confirm the Word, but I still believe the pure church is a powerful church and I believe that God is still doing miracles through the pure church mostly the miracle of the new birth bringing people into the kingdom. And so the pure church is powerful.

Now let's come to the third one. The third in these five progressive steps is persecution. Now a pure powerful church is really going to make waves in the system. Now to begin with let me just give you, for you that might not be familiar with this, the world at this particular time in history, in the economy of God, is controlled by Satan. Satan at one time was an angel by the name of Lucifer who thought he'd like to be equal with God or better and so he pulled off a rebellion in heaven. He got one-third of the demons to go with him, one-third of the angels, they became called demons because they fell, he got one-third of the angels, according to Revelation 12, and he started a rebellion against God. God said, "Sorry," and threw him out. Then he was the antagonist of God and still is. He became Satan, the devil, the adversary, and his demons and himself are working against God.

Now Satan fell. Satan came to earth and tempted Eve. She fell. Adam fell. We all fell with them. The earth at the present time is in the hands of Satan. The system is controlled by Satan. He is the prince of the power of the air who governs the world. The Bible calls him the ruler of this world. And anybody who lives in this world apart from Jesus Christ is one of Satan's people at one level or

another because he's a part of the system.

And the system operates basically on three basis: materialism, humanism and sex and that's just about what goes on. And so the system being run by Satan then would naturally be in horrible antagonism to the truth of God. As Satan was against God from the very start, the demons against the holy angels, holy men against evil men, the same kind of war is going on all the time. And so when a pure church comes along with great power and starts ripping off people from Satan, then Satan gets irritated. You see because he's trying to salvage something here. He's trying to salvage his authority and hang on to his rebellion at some level. He's already been booted out of the original rebellion and the earth is his domain and he's trying to capture the earth and he's trying to hang on to everybody he can and in moves the powerful church. And people keep getting saved and they keep saved and things keep happening and Satan begins to get irritated and you're going to have persecution. You can't miss it. It has to happen and when you irate the system, the system reacts. And it's exciting to make waves. This is a terrific thing.

And it's interesting too that the only Christians who really make waves and the only churches that really make waves are the successful ones. Failures don't make even ripples. Now if you're going to make waves in the world and irritate Satan, you can count on one thing: persecution. Satan's going to come after you. The problem is he never knows what he's doing and everything he tries to do God undoes and turns to God's glory. So let Satan do what he may, take it willingly and watch God work out of it some fantastic thing. But persecution will come.

Now I've said this to you but I'll say it again. The principle on which this really comes down to our level is II Timothy 3:12, which says this: "All," simple word but it's inclusive, "all that will live godly in this world shall suffer persecution." If you're going to live for God in this world, a godly life, a pure life, you're going to be bumping into the system, and you're going to irritate the system, and you're going to get persecuted. People are going to avoid you. Here comes that Bible beating character again. Let's get out of here, you see. And it may not be the hostility of shooting you or whatever, although it may be. We had one young man in our congregation witnessing in Los Angeles on one occasion who was attacked and killed about a year ago. It may be that. It may be some kind of defamation of character. It may be more than that, that subtle kind of thing that plays on your ego. You don't want to be thought of as a religious freak. I mean you're making yourself obnoxious. Nobody wants to hear that. I mean you are the biggest drag that ever arrived in this office.

Well there's a certain sense you can be very irritating needlessly, but I do believe that if you really live a godly life it's not only what you say it's just the pattern of your life that irritates the world because unholy people don't really like holy company. And that's why I say that all who will live godly will suffer persecution. It's just that if you're not suffering persecution guess what? You're not living godly. You have to get a reaction from the system because Satan reacts to the purity of God.

And that's what we're saying here. When the church is pure and powerful and it moves out among the world there's going to be a reaction. Praise God for that reaction because that sets it up for God to do wonderful things. In fact, you all respect this: I Peter and certainly Peter knew about persecution. He really took it through the book of Acts and he's reflecting back on it, finally wound up getting crucified upside down. But listen to what he says in I Peter 2:20, "But if you do well and suffer for it, take it patiently. This is acceptable with God. God planned it this way. You should suffer." 3:17, "It is better if the will of God be so that you suffer."

Chapter 4:14, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ happy are you." Say speak for yourself, Peter. No happy are you, "For the Spirit of glory in God rests upon you." It's terrific. Verse 12, "Just commit your soul to Him who is the Creator because it's His will that you suffer." That's what it says three times in Peter. It's God's will for you to suffer. Did you know that?

I've taught many times on how to know the will of God for your life. God's will for your life is you be saved, I Timothy 2:4, Spirit filled, Ephesians 5:15, sanctified I Thessalonians 4, suffering I Peter. That's God's will. Not that you be a flagellant and get a whip with glass in it and beat yourself on the back and say I'm suffering for the Lord. No, no no. Not like the man in the Philippines who ever year crucifies himself because he feels like that pleases God. No not that kind of suffering. The kind of suffering that comes from irritating the world. The kind of suffering that is the response of the system to your godliness. It's not self-imposed.

As I said a couple of weeks ago you can't say my suffering is my wife or my husband or my boss is my cross. It's not that. The only thing that Jesus is talking about when he's talking about suffering and bearing His reproach is confronting the world so much and with such effect that the system reacts violently and you get some flack back. And that's exciting. And you ought to be happy about that.

In the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, don't turn to it, I'll just read it to you, it says this: And the word blessed means happy. I'll read it that way. "Happy are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Listen to this one: "Happy are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake." That's some of the most devastating persecution. "And happy are you." In the next verse He says, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad," isn't it wonderful, why? "For great is your reward in heaven. In Romans 8 Paul says, "We shall be glorified with Him if we're willing to suffer with Him." I believe there are special rewards in heaven for the ones who are willing to be bold in this world and confront the world with a holy life and a powerful life and take what comes. And it's joyous. It's joyous.

Scars are the price that every godly believer pays for his loyalty to Jesus Christ. You say, "Well maybe it'll get easier toward the coming of Christ." No, I Timothy 3:13 says, "Evil men shall wax worse and worse." And that's not talking about the local car wash. What it means is evil men will grow worse and worse. Evil men may wax and wax, I haven't been there for a while, but anyway, the idea is it isn't getting any better. It's going to get worse as men become more antagonistic towards the gospel.

So persecution is predictable and it begins in verse 17. That's enough review and introduction. Verse 17 here comes the persecution. I want you to remember that this time they must have been getting excited about it because the first time they got persecuted everything good happened. People got saved, they got united, their prayers got answered, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and Jesus was glorified and you can't get any better things than that. And so here came persecution again. As always it's a plus, verse 17.

Now all these miracles go on, all this preaching going on really upsets the leaders. "Then the High Priest rose up," and it doesn't mean he got out of his chair. It means he flamed. Whoo. "He rose up and all they that were with him." And he had his cohorts, the sect of the Sadducees. The word sect is the word from which we get our word heresy. "And they were filled with indignation." The word indignation is zelu, which means jealousy. They were mad because they were jealous. If there's

anything a religious organization can't stand is the success of another religious organization.

Now the Sadducees were the collaborationist leaders. They were the ones who were a very small minority, very wealthy and very influential Jews. They had this particular designation, Sadducees, which distinguished their party from the Pharisees, who were the legalists. The Sadducees were the theological liberals of their day and they were the ones who collaborated with Rome and were kind of Rome's puppets in keeping peach in Israel. They were the ruling party in Israel as it were. And they were really uptight. This thing was going like wildfire. They thought they stamped out this Jesus movement when they executed Jesus, but they only seemed to speed it up. And now thousands upon thousands of people were naming the name of Jesus Christ. Miracles were happening under their nose all over the city of Jerusalem. There was no way to deny it when everybody that came into town that was sick got healed. You can't handle that many miracles by just explaining them away. And they were really shook.

Now Palestine was always inflammable and the Jews were always ready to start something at the drop of a hat, especially when they hated the dominance of Rome anyway, and the Sadducees could see that their place was threatened because if an insurrection started they would really be the losers. Earlier in Chapter 4, they said to them in verse 18, "They commanded them not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus." We don't want any more of that. Stop it, you're not allowed to do it. And to which Peter and John said, "I'm sorry, they've already told us not to do it so we have to do it. Now you judge whether we ought to obey you or God," which is a good question.

So they were really upset. They were filled with a jealous rage. So they took some action, verse 18. "They laid their hands on the apostles and they put them in a common prison." Now the idea of laying their hands on them was seizure. They snatched them and threw them in jail and they probably dusted off their hands and, "Boys that'll hold them for a while." How foolish. Were they going to think that bars would restrict the power of God? They threw them and the word is public ward, a common prison, which means just a plain old place where all the criminals went. They just tanked them, you know. Had them in jail.

Now jail has never been a big problem for God. He does pretty well in getting people out and He always has kind of unique methods. And you know what happens whenever Satan does something like this God overrules it for good. For example look at Acts 16. That's a wonderful story there about Paul and Silas who were up there in Philippi having a great time and people got saved and there was this certain girl who was possessed with demons. She was a medium. She was making a lot of money for her masters by telling people's fortunes. And so Paul says to her, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ come out of her," and the demon came out and, of course, that stopped the business. And so her masters were really upset because Paul had messed up their business. So they caught Paul and Silas in verse 19, and later on they put them in prison and they charged the jailer in verse 23, to keep them safely. They made their feet fast in the stocks, so they lock their feet in besides putting them in a cell. Say, oh those poor Christians. I imagine they were groaning, no look at verse 25. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God." They're just having a ball in there, see, singing away and the prisoners are hearing them. Those guys must be out of their minds. They're just singing, and suddenly there was a great earthquake.

Now God is about to get them out. "So that the foundations of the prison were shaking and immediately all the doors were open and everyone's bands were loosed." Now that's a very direct response to an earthquake. No normal earthquake is going to release everybody's chains and open

every door in the jail. That was a very guided earthquake. And, of course, the keeper of the prison had to pay with his life for anybody who escaped. That was part of the job. So, verse 27, "The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open drew out his sword and would have killed himself supposing that the prisoners had fled. Paul cried with a loud voice saying, 'Do thyself no harm. We're all here.'" Now that's shock number two. Can you imagine every jail cell in the place open and everybody's still sitting in it? "And he called for a light and sprang in and came running in and he came trembling and he fell down before Paul and he says, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" Now those little smart men in Philippi thought we'll get these guys in jail and fix them. Put them in jail and the jailer and his whole family got saved. You can't do that and get away with it. God will always over rule it. You see, it's terrific!

Now you go back and you see the same thing in Chapter 5. We'll put them in jail that'll hold them. See stick them in jail. Then you come to verse 19. This is really beautiful because you see Satan again had given God a wonderful opportunity to display His power. Satan just keeps doing this. He must be awfully frustrated.

Verse 19, "But an angel of the Lord, by night, opened the prison doors and brought them forth." See this angel, God sends His angel down, he says, now you get down and you let those guys out and this is exciting. This is the most defiant kind of miracle. You see God didn't use an earthquake and I'll tell you why. The Sadducees had two theological doctrines that set them apart. Number one they believe in no resurrection, or they didn't believe in a resurrection. They did not believe in a resurrection. What was it that the disciples were preaching all over everywhere? The resurrection. That's what burned them so much see. There was a second thing they didn't believe in and that was angels. They had always taught that there were no angels, so God very defiantly says okay, "Angel, show them." So this angel comes down and opens up the place and lets them out. And so the very being they denied God defiantly used to release to preach the very doctrine they didn't believe. Now that's what's known as defiance. And so the angel lets them out.

Well watch what happens. Verse 20, "Go, stand, and speak." Now that's a good sermon outline. Go, stand firm and speak in the temple? Is He kidding? We just got out of there. They threw us in jail. Go back there? They don't get any argument. It just says, "Go, stand, speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

Verse 21, "When they heard the, they entered into that temple." Oh I like that. But you say, "That's not smart." Well you see nobody ever said in the Word of God that we're supposed to figure out what's smart. All we're supposed to do is be obedient, right? I think God knows what's smart. He's got it all planned out.

So the angel says, "Go, stand, speak." That's solid, forceful and God wants that kind of defiant courage, that kind of boldness that really confronts. The command sounds incredible. You'd think that the angel said, "Now you guys here's a map and there's a little cave up in the boonies up there and I'm going to bring you manna under special dispensation for the next few weeks until it cools down. No. You go right back. Have you ever had a \_\_\_\_\_ in the swimming pool and try to put a volley ball under the water and it just keeps bobbing up again, or a cork? This is the way they are. They keep trying to submerge them and they keep popping up in the same spot.

I remember a little birthday cake at one of our little kid's parties and the candles wouldn't blow out. Have you ever seen those? You blow them and they go out and they come back on again. Well they

were just a whole lot of those little candles. They kept blowing at them and the more they blew the faster they flamed. You couldn't put them out. And the more you tried the worse it got, because everything Satan tried to do to put them out only added fuel to the fire, 'cause another miracle happened.

Now look at the end of verse 20. "Now go and speak all the words of this life." That little phrase is a beautiful thing. Our gospel is the gospel concerning the words of life. Paul said to the Philippians, "Holding forth the word of life." You know that the message that we preach is the message of life? Jesus has come into this world to give life to dead men, spiritually dead men. The world is spiritually dead, right? Men are dead spiritually. They are insensitive to God. They can't sense His presence. To be spiritually dead means that you can't sense God. You can't sense Him.

I went down the street one time on Saturday morning and a little kid took me down there and there was a little baby that had just died lying on the bed in a house down the street and the mother tried to revive the little baby by kissing it and loving it. Of course, I touched it and it was dead. Nothing you could do to revive it. It was physically dead. Well spiritual death is the same thing. It doesn't matter what the stimulus is you can't respond. Men are dead. And they're groping in this kind of deadness to find reality and it isn't there and the only thing they really need is life and there's only one who can give life and that's Jesus, who said, "I am the way, the truth and," what? "The life." Of whom John said, "He that hath the Son," what? "Hath life." And to come alive is what it is to be saved. All of a sudden you sense God and you're alive to His world and you're a part of what He is and what He's doing. And this is life. And it doesn't say tell the people all the words that add to their life. Christianity is not a part of life, it is life and apart from it you're dead.

I love that phrase: "All the words of this life." This is life, isn't it? This is everything. I heard a man say Christ is the center of my life. I said, "Wrong. Christ is the circumference of your life or He's nothing." Everything is on the inside. He's not in the middle of everything. Everything is inside Him. He is your life. He that hath the Son hath what? Life.

So this is what you declare. You go in there and you tell them how they can all have life. Get in there and preach and the key to life was the resurrection. Jesus said, "I'm the resurrection and the life. Because I live ye shall live." So the key to the message of life was preach the resurrection. So back they went like little corks bobbing up again, right into the temple and away they go on the resurrection again. We find that in verse 21.

"And when they had heard that they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught." Here they go again. This is absolutely terrific. And what is so interesting is the Sadducees and the Chief Priests and everybody don't know where they are yet. So meanwhile back at the High Priest's, or whatever, verse 21 in the middle, "But the high priest came," and you can see the austerity of this occasion. They're getting ready now to deal with these upstarts. "The high priest came, and they that were with him," he had this little gang that trailed around, that were kind of attached to him theologically, "And they called the council together," that's the Sanhedrin, the ruling elders of Israel, and then they got in addition to that, which is the senate," which is grusia, which has to do probably with all of the elder, older Jews, the wise older men who in years past had served in many capacities and they called together this kind of a Senate of wise men made up of many Pharisees.

So they had all of the brain trust of Israel meeting together to dispense with these guys and then they sent to the prison to have them brought. You go and you bring the prisoners. We'll deal with them.

So it gets kind of humorous here. I don't think they were laughing, but it's somewhat humorous. Verse 22, "When the officers came, and found them not in the prison," it's the great escape. Nobody's home. Verse 23, "They return and told saying, 'The prison truly found we shut with all safety.'" I mean that place is locked up like it's always been, all the padlocks in the right spot. The bars are all there. The hinges are all there. That place is shut up like it's always been. And we found the keeper standing outside before the doors. The guards are on duty. They've secured that place. The only thing we didn't find was the prisoners. We looked in there but they're gone.

Now you can imagine the shock of this moment. I mean they've had enough miracles already to gag them and they're not about to believe. They never thought of that option. Too hardened were they in their unbelief. One of my professors in seminary said that they had probably all by this time committed the unpardonable sin of apostasy so they were beyond the possibility of belief and these evidences were for the people, not for them. But whatever, they were so cold and so hard and so indifferent that rather than believing the miracle they just kind of filed it away in their minds and didn't even want to know anything about it.

And here was another one they had to face in addition to the thousands of miracles that had been going on all through the city. So their reactions in verse 24: "Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple," that's the temple police chief, "and the chief priest heard these things they were perplexed." Now that is mild. The Greek means they were at their wit's end. They were on the verge of going bananas in the vernacular. They were in a state of sort of semi-panic. They were really stirred up. They were really messed up. They were scared to death and they couldn't stop this thing and they knew they couldn't stop it. And they knew that their authority was being disregarded, heresy was being preached. God was opposing them by miracles.

Every effort to stop had failed and great success was following them and more and more were believing and they were trying this last thing and they were gone out of there and there was not way to explain it because it was all locked up and the guards were still standing in front. And they were on the edge of panic. They were probably thinking to themselves where did they go? We'll get them where did they go? And they were probably thinking about how they would plot their escape.

And then comes the final defiance, verse 25. "And then came one and said unto them, 'Behold,'" that's a very strong word. You will never believe this. "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple teaching the people." They're right back in there doing it. Now that is defiance. I mean they're not stashed away in the hills anywhere. They're right back there going at it again and I'm sure they were so excited. I mean I would have stuck around just to keep seeing the stuff that God was doing in their lives. They were probably, at this point thinking, "Boy, I wonder what's going to happen when we get arrested this time." I mean these things are so exciting. And the people were listening to them and people were believing and people were being won to Christ. So there they were.

I like that kind of defiance, don't you? I like that kind of boldness. God does too. That kind that always bobs up and comes back for more. Then look what happened in verse 26. Apparently cooler heads prevailed for the moment, "And the captain with the officers went out and brought them without violence."

Now I imagine, it says without violence because the violence was in them. They were ready to rip them limb from limb, but they restrained the violence. Oh you say, "That was nice of them." Not so nice. Look at the end of verse 26. "They feared the people lest they should have been stoned." The

only reason they weren't violent was 'cause they knew the people were listening to them and the Jews would stone somebody almost on the drop of a hat when emotions were ripe. And so they said, "Boys play it cool. Fellows, we'd like to speak with you for a few moments if we might."

And the disciples could have said, "Forget it, we're staying right here," and then they could have made a violent move and the disciples said, "All right everybody, stones out." No, there's none of that. There's none of that violence on the part of the disciples either. They're very content to go because they know that whatever they get into God's got some fantastic plan in mind.

And I mean just think of the thrill of going through a jail cell when it was locked. Not too many have that opportunity for several reasons. They don't usually get in, hopefully, but nevertheless there was no resistance. They could have resisted at that point very easily, but they went so willingly. And probably on the way Peter is plotting out his sermon outline because he knows that the Lord is going to give him a second, this is the second service that they'll be holding in the Sanhedrin. He's probably getting it all outlined, of course, and figuring out the order of worship, or whatever.

But anyway they're taken captive again and the non-resistance is beautiful. You know this kind of non-resistance is what opens up opportunities. Remember the apostle Paul in Chapter 25 of Acts? That's really a great section there. He's under trial by Festus and the Jews have accused him of all these things and he says, "I haven't done anything against the Jews. I'm a Roman citizen. If you're going to try me you'd better try me before Caesar." And then he says this in 25:11, "If I be an offender or committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die." In other words I'm going to do whatever you want me to do. I just obey the Lord and if the consequences are die, I'll die. You see that's the right attitude.

Now we're to obey the government but when the government contradicts the command of the Lord we're to obey the Lord. But then when the government says you die, we die. But that's alright too, because Paul says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is," what? "Gain." So that's only a promotion. And he even said it's nice to be here but I'd rather be there. I like you people, you're wonderful, but I'd rather be with the Lord anyway.

And so Paul is simply saying, "If I've done anything wrong that's fine. I'm willing to take the penalty for it." So they had disobeyed so they said okay guys we have to go now and off they went. Do you remember what happened to Paul in Acts after they said, all right you're going to Rome and you're going to get it? What did he do all the way to Rome? Preached Christ. They had a big shipwreck and he was holding forth the word of life. They were all worried about drowning in the ocean Paul managed to rescue everybody. They got on Malta and the snakebite thing and then he got a chance to declare God's power again. And pretty soon he got to Rome and he got into Rome and at the end of the book of Acts he was having a great time a prisoner in Rome. It says in verse 23, it says, here's what he was doing, listen to this: "He expounded and testified the kingdom of God persuading them concerning Jesus and he did it from morning to evening." Paul did it all the time he was in Rome as a prisoner. "And some believed." He was winning converts.

And then in verse 30 it says, "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house." Remember he was a prisoner in his own house chained to a Roman soldier. And what did he do for those two years? He preached the kingdom of God teaching those things, which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ. Did he have any results? Listen to this: Philippians 4:22, he writes to the Philippians. He says, "All the saints greet you." Listen to this: "Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." See God said,

Paul you're going to get in trouble here so we'll just use it for My glory and all these people kept getting saved because Paul didn't resist. And he said I'm willing to be offered remember? I'm going to go Rome and I'm willing to be offered. So you see that's the right attitude in the situation of persecution.

Now look at verse 27. "And when they had brought them they set them before the council and the high priest asked them," here they are right back and the stage is set for sermon number two to the Sanhedrin, and the attendance has grown because now the senate is there. This is even better. And they said, "Did we not strictly command that you should not teach in this name?" That's the first indictment. You've disobeyed us, and they had, but then they told them they would. Chapter 4:18 they said, "We command you not to speak and Peter says you judge whether we ought to obey you or God. We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard. We will speak." So they did. And so when they came to arrest them for disobeying, they went.

So the first indictment was disobedience. The second charge they made against them was that they had accused them of the death of Christ. Notice it at the end of the verse: "And you intend to bring this man's blood on us." You're saying all over the place that we are guilty. That's right. That's exactly what we've been saying. You guys have really gotten it right. Your charges are totally accurate. We've been disobedient and we've been indicting you.

I mean all the way through his messages Chapter 2:23 he says, "You have taken and by wicked hands crucified." Chapter 2: 36 he says, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, Lord and Christ." Chapter 3:15, "You killed the Prince of life." Chapter 4: verse, I think it's 10 and 11, "Be it known unto you all, all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified." Sure, we've been saying that all along. You did it. But have you forgotten Matthew 27:25? Jesus was to be crucified and they all screamed crucify Him, crucify Him and then they said this, "His blood be," where, "On us." They wanted it. Peter is not accusing them of anything that they didn't desire to be accused of.

They had the indictment right. They were disobedient and in fact they were accusing them of crucifying Christ. Then this wonderful commendation in the middle of the verse: "And behold you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Praise the Lord! That's what we've been trying to do. Mission accomplished! Saturation evangelism! What a commendation. But notice in this verse as I noticed it, there's no question about the miracle of the escape. You know what? They don't dare to ask them about it because they don't want to hear about it. They're so sick of hearing about miracles they're already so messed up in their minds that another miracle would just really be too much to handle. So in all of that conversation they don't even ask them how in the world they got out of jail. You know, my mind is made up. Don't confuse me with facts.

So you see the effective evangelism of the early church was built on purity, power, and persecution. Let me give you a fourth one and then we'll wrap it up. And I changed it while I was sitting here. The fourth one in your outline is preaching. Put down persistence. That's a better word for it. That reflects what it's really saying.

Persistence! And this again is the idea of the cork that keeps popping back up. They just never quit. Now you'd think this time after this malediction that was fired at them in verse 28, they'd kind of say, "Well that's so true. We've kind of, sorry about that." No, they're just persistent. Verse 29, "Then Peter and the other apostles," Peter answering for them said, "We ought to obey God rather than

men." And you see there he sets them against God. Boldness, fearlessness. We're not in the business of obeying you folks, we're in the business of obeying God, if you don't mind. And then he takes off in his sermon.

Now listen to this, verse 30: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." Yikes Peter. That's just what they accused of doing, was indicting them. Why don't you relax for a few minutes? No. Persistence. Absolute persistence in evangelism. Aggressiveness. You've been shot down once? Don't ask for an honorable discharge. Go out again. Pack up your purple heart and retire? Get in the battle. Bob up a little bit. Well I tried that endeavor and oh my, I put in my effort. Let somebody else do it for a while. So we all droop after one little skirmish we ask for our honorable discharge. Not them! Peter got right back in that Sanhedrin and said, "Right. That's exactly what you did, you slew Him and hanged Him on a tree." The one that God raised up as your Messiah, you hanged on a tree. Oh man is that powerful stuff. It puts them at odds with God. That word slew is an interesting word that's used only one other time in the New Testament, very unusual word. It means to murder with your own hands. And Peter had never used that word before. Instead of backing down he gets more aggressive.

Before he had said, "You by use of the Gentiles have killed." And then he just kind of generally said, "You killed the Prince of life." Now he says, "You killed Him, not only had Him killed, you did it with your own hands." Now that is persistence, friends. And if people want to say that the Jews are not guilty of the execution of Jesus Christ they'll have to argue with the Greek text. And let me hasten to say this: I have a love for Jewish people and I don't think that the Jewish people, as a population, did the execution. I think what the New Testament is indicating is that the indictment belongs against the leaders of Israel. But nonetheless it is very obvious that they were held guilty by God and even had cried, even the people cried His blood be upon us.

So he says, "You not only slew Him but you hanged Him on a tree." Why does he say that? Well He was crucified. He could have said that, but to say hanged on a tree ties it in with Deuteronomy 21:23. The Old Testament said, "Cursed is anybody who hangs on a tree." That was the most shameful, despicable, cursed death a man could die, and they chose that one for the Son of God. So boy does he ever indict them. He really does.

And then he takes step two in his sermon. After indictment there is always exaltation of Christ as Messiah, verse 31. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand." Right hand means power. God by power ripped Christ out of the grave and exalted Him and made Him a Prince and a Savior. Now you thought He was nothing. You thought He was something to be trampled, but God lifted Him up and made Him better than a Prince. The word is archigas, which means King, Pioneer. It's got so many meanings I can't even tell you all of them. Creator, Originator, Author. All of those words, archigas, has so many concepts. Peter was a fisherman. Maybe one concept that we haven't talked about that Peter may have had in mind is this: on each ship there was a strong swimmer, who was called the archigas. Whenever the ship got into trouble, his job was with a rope around his waist to dive in, swim to shore, secure the rope and then everybody else could get to shore on the rope. But the archigas was the guy who had to make his way there and secure the rope.

He says Jesus Christ is the one who having been killed on this earth when the ship wrecked God lifted Him up, took Him to heaven, He left the rope there and all of us are able to reach it on the basis of His provision. And so Jesus Christ is the archigas, the strong swimmer who secured the anchor to God and then the Savior who gathers us and takes us into God's presence. And He offered you, he

says at the end of verse 31, "He offered you repentance and forgiveness and beloved there's no forgiveness for a man apart from repentance.

That's the missing ingredient so much in the message of salvation. People always talk about salvation and they leave out repentance. You'll never be saved until you've turned from your sin. That doesn't mean you become sinless. That means you're sorry for your sin and you say, "God help me and make me different." Forgive me, and He does. So He was Prince and Savior.

And verse 32, he closes by saying this: "And we are his witnesses of these things." We know He is. We knew Him. We lived with Him. We saw Him. Not only that, so also is the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them that obey Him. They said, were not just telling you what we know, we're telling you what the Spirit inside of us is saying through us.

In John 14:26, Jesus said, "I'll send you the Comforter. He shall lead you into all truth. He shall bring all things to your remembrance." In Matthew 10:19, the Bible says this: "But when they deliver you up, in front of those who hate you, don't be anxious how or what you shall speak for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak." And who gave it? The Holy Spirit. Peter says, we haven't been shooting off our own mouths about our own opinions. We've been talking about the things that the Holy Spirit is saying within us. Persistent. They were persistent and as long as they yield to the Spirit's power in their life they were absolutely victorious.

What did the apostle Paul say? "Be strong in the Lord and in," what? "The power of His might." Listen we can reach this world for Jesus Christ but we've got to keep both of our feet planted upon the Spirit of God so that His power flows through us and we only can do that as we are pure.

Father thank you for again sharing with us, this morning, these principles. How our hearts rejoice that you have given us what we need in terms of instruction and power to reach this world for You. God, may we do that. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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