

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 8TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

IMPRISONED, THEN SET FREE (ACTS 5:17–26) OPPOSITION... AGAIN!

What did the apostles do to create such outrage among the religious leaders? They healed people. They loved people. They shared the gospel with people.

- Opposition often follows those who do good (1 Peter 4:12–19). **We need to make sure that our suffering is for righteousness, not recklessness.**

FILLED WITH JEALOUSY

The high priest and the Sadducees loved power. So, as the apostles gain popularity and influence, this group gets “filled with jealousy,” arrests the apostles, and puts them in prison.

- **Whatever fills our hearts will drive our decisions.** Unchecked jealousy and insecurity will cause us to feel threatened when others succeed.

SET FREE FOR A PURPOSE

God sends an angel, not only to free the apostles from prison but also to send them straight back to the temple courts with a clear command: keep preaching the gospel.

- **Christ didn't set us free so we can live comfortable, self-centered lives. He set us free for a purpose: go tell others where to find freedom.**

“WE FOUND NO ONE INSIDE”

The Sanhedrin intended to stop the apostles, yet they were gone—and courageously back in the temple preaching. The leaders were “baffled” and “wonder[ed] what would come of this.” It was obvious God was in control.

- **Instead of humbling themselves before God, their pride led them to push Him aside and grasp for control.**

ARRESTED... BUT WITHOUT FORCE

Fearing that the crowd might stone them, the temple police chose not to use force. The people were embracing the apostles' message, and the religious leaders sensed their influence weakening.

- **Public approval is fragile. If our identity is in worldly things, it will crumble. Only what is rooted in God lasts.**

OBEDIENCE TO GOD (ACTS 5:27–32)

“THEY SET THEM BEFORE THE COUNCIL” (V. 27, ESV)

This was another effort to silence the apostles through intimidation. But, knowing how God protected them, they were probably not intimidated or impressed.

- **Our confidence grows from remembering God's faithfulness. Also, when our identity is rooted in Christ, threats and pressure lose their grip on us.**

“FILLED JERUSALEM WITH YOUR TEACHING”

The leaders commanded Peter and John to stop teaching in Jesus' name (Acts 4:17–18). But Peter and John boldly said they would continue, obeying God rather than men (Acts 4:19–20). The result? The name of Jesus spread throughout Jerusalem.

- **Living faithfully for God can influence many around us.**

“WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN PEOPLE”

The Bible consistently teaches that we must recognize authorities as being established by God (Romans 13:1–2; Titus 3:1). Peter himself would write, “Honor the emperor” (1 Peter 2:17). We honor authorities **unless they contradict God and force Christians to compromise.**

- When leaders contradict God's Word, we obey God first.

GOSPEL OPPORTUNITY

Peter and the apostles didn't retaliate but turned every situation into a gospel opportunity. Even facing the council, their focus was on making Jesus known.

- **When God gives us opportunities to bear witness, take them (Colossians 4:2–6).** Look for opportunities in daily life to share the hope of Christ.

GOD'S PLANS PREVAIL (ACTS 5:29–42)

ENRAGED AND WANTED TO KILL

Peter and the apostles once again explained who Jesus is, what He did on the cross, and how people should respond. The leaders' response? Furious rage and a desire to kill them.

- **Speaking God's truth may upset or anger others, but our responsibility is faithfulness, not popularity.**

GAMALIEL

Gamaliel was a Pharisee and the grandson of Hillel, the founder of Israel's most influential school of religion. He held the title *Rabban* (“our teacher”), a rank higher than *Rab* (“teacher”) or *Rabbi* (“my teacher”). He was also known for mentoring Saul, who later became Paul.

GAMALIEL'S ADVICE

God used a respected rabbi to calm the leaders. Gamaliel pointed out that previous messianic movements faded quickly and suggested leaving the apostles alone, not realizing they were truly sent by God.

- **Opposition cannot stop God's plans; His purposes will prevail. Christ will never fade away.**

THE WAYS OF MAN WILL ALWAYS FAIL

Gamaliel said, “if this plan or work is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may be even found fighting against God.”

- **Anything that we do on our own strength, without God's wisdom, will fail. But if we depend on Jesus and follow His ways, we will have success.**

PERSECUTION ENERGIZES THE APOSTLES

Despite Gamaliel's advice, they still attacked the apostles. How did the apostles respond? They rejoiced, seeing it as a privilege to suffer for Jesus' name, and they continued preaching the gospel.

- **Trials and opposition should deepen our faith and motivate us to serve God more boldly.**

FREEDOM OR IMPRISONED?

- It is for freedom, not slavery, that Christ has set us free. **Our prison doors are wide open because of Jesus.** Will we walk out or remain imprisoned? We all have a choice.

- If we've experienced the freedom of Christ, **why do we return to our prison cells?**

- **We are set free NOT to live self-centered lives** but to tell others about Christ.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD OR FEAR OF MEN?

- The religious leaders had many chances to surrender to God. They found their identity in power and control. They lived for the applause of men rather than God.

- **Only an identity in Christ will last.** We must choose to obey Christ. We can't compromise the truth for the sake of acceptance.

DO WE REJOICE OR DO WE COMPLAIN?

- Christ followers will experience trials and suffering. When we suffer and experience trials, will we rejoice or will we complain?

- Trials and opposition should deepen our faith. If we depend on Christ and rejoice, it will produce endurance. But we must **“let endurance have its full effect” (James 1:2–4), so we can grow and rejoice more.**

- **“Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving.** At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ... **Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt,** so that you may know how you should answer each person.” (Colossians 4:2–6)