**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sixteenth Week Since the Resurrection

 ***Acts 5:12-42***

***Right-On Preaching***

*Pastor ~ Matthew Diehl*

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

See pages for text of Acts 5:12-42

Since the 40-day Resurrection Ministry of God, as Jesus Christ, had ended, the book of Acts witnesses the biblical chronology of signs and wonders. Ten days after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit miracle at Pentecost gave the world notice that the Apostles were there to stay. God was not going away. In fact, God was going to increase His persistent witness. Before Peter and John were arrested by the Hight Priest, 3000 then 5000 people had surrendered to the Lord under the Holy Spirit preaching of Peter. All of this taking place in the City of Peace, Jerusalem, the City of David, Mount Moriah, the mount God provided a substitute sacrifice for Abraham. The location of the priesthood of Melchizedek. The site of the Cross of Christ and the empty tomb near the Temple of God containing His Holy of Holies. The site of daily sacrifice that can never provide the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 10 and 11). With these historical events on which to stand, Peter and John persisted with the Great Commission.

**Signs and Wonders**

 12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people;

**One Accord**

 and they were all with one accord in **Solomon's portico.**



**Some Jews Keep Distance**

 13 But none of the rest dared to associate with them;

however, the people held them in **high esteem.**

When the power of God moves in public, there is always a time of reflection about relationships. The Jewish population held an allegiance to the Temple religious leaders. The Temple guard and leadership were keeping a close eye on the Apostles and those that were being added to their number. Deciding to be counted with the disciples of Jesus, who had recently been crucified, was a major personal and cultural decision. Today, we know that in many parts of the world when Christian missionaries witness to indigenous people groups, particularly Muslim and Hindu, there is a ‘holding back’ by those that hear the Good News. This is due to neighbors’ watchful eyes from cultural religious windows. We know that if a Muslim converts to Christianity, there is a death sentence upon their head. All for major Muslims sects teach this death sentence. The Muslim’s conversion to Christianity also brings shame and condemnation upon their family. The missionaries themselves are at risk. In most Muslim countries, no other faith is allowed to be publicized.

Depending on the religious culture from which a person turns, there are varying degrees of condemnation. We do see thousands make the decision to surrender to the Gospel Message chronicled in the first few chapters of the book of Acts. We observe in this Jewish setting that the leap to follow Jesus is within the religious thought process of the people. They were looking for a Messiah. They believed in God. The more Peter and others preached, referring back to Old Testament (O.T.) prophets, the people could see a path to Jesus. This is evident in the genealogy list in Matthew and Luke’s letters. This is also seen in the numerous O.T. references Jesus quoted during His earthly ministry. The Disciples continued Jesus’ use of O.T. witnesses to present the truth in God’s Word.

**Application for Today**

Applying the use of what a person accepts and is familiar is a good witness practice today. We know that most people are spiritually minded. Most people believe there is “a” God. Most people do not believe they are products of evolution, meaning they evolved from a primordial soup, through millions of years, randomly, undirected processes leading to a life without meaning or purpose. This naturalistic religion leaves people isolated and alone on a cold spiritually void island. This is destructive and against the purpose for which we were created.

We witness that God created us in His image to have an eternal relationship with Him. We know that “created in His image” points to our spiritual capability to be joined with God. We know that we are not created to be alone without God guiding our lives. This is why we see people who do not have a relationship with God living destructive lives. This destruction is carried-out inside a person’s mind - often without any outward signs. When we see the outward signs manifest for others to see, we know that the evil spirit of God’s enemies is at work.

We need to point to our spiritual commonalities when we witness to people. Our commonalities start with the need for love and forgiveness and the need for meaningful trustworthy relationships. This leads to being accepted by others. This is not “flash evangelism”. This takes months or years. The Jews, to whom Peter and John preached, being Jews, had already received and accepted part of God’s message during their childhood years.

The people to whom Peter and John spoke could see that they were risking their lives by delivering the message to them. In our setting, we risk nothing to tell someone about God. Perhaps, a person to whom we witness does not speak to us again or makes fun of us, but there is so much more to gain by our witness.

**Continue in Acts 5**

14 And all the more believers in the Lord,

 **multitudes** of men and women, were constantly **added to their number,**

 15 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 one of them.**

 16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were **sick** or afflicted with **unclean spirits**, and they were **all being healed.**

What a commotion in the Temple. This brought the “jealous” attention of the High Priest.

**High Priest Takes Notice**

 17 But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.

 18 They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.

* Why was God not working through the High Priest the way He was working through Peter?
* Was the High Priest miraculously healing people? No.
* Were thousands flocking to the High Priest to listen to him? No.
* Was the High Priest speaking for God? No.

**Angel of the Lord Releases and Speaks to Peter and John**

 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,

**Strong’s 32a** **Greek** ἄγγελος aggelos Meaning: a messenger, angel

Origin: a prim. Word Usage: angel(86), angel's(2), angelic(1), angels(80), messenger(4), messengers(3).

Notes: Matthew 1:20,24, 2:13,19, 28:2; Luke 1:11, 2:9; Acts 8:26,10:3,12:7,23, 27:23

**Strong’s 04397 Hebrew** מַלְאָךְ malak Meaning: a messenger

Origin: from an unused word Usage: ambassadors(2), angel(101), angels(9), envoys(1), messenger(24), messengers(76).

Notes: Gen 19:1; 1 Kings 19:7; Daniel 3:24,25

 Another miracle takes place, and the leading Apostles are released to continue the work of God. An angel of the Lord? My thought is that this is a supernatural being sent by God to release Peter and John. Where else do we see this in the Bible, where an angel was involved? These “angels” or “messengers” of the Lord appear throughout the Bible. Here are just a few references. Note that the word in Hebrew and Greek means “messenger.”

 **Genesis 19:1ff** Two angels came to protect and assist Lot escaping Sodom.

**1 Kings 19** The angel/messenger of the God comes to assist Elijah against the evil King Ahab and the prophets of Baal.

**Daniel 3:24,25** An angel of God seen in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego protecting them from the flames.

**Matthew 28:2** An angel rolls the stone away from the entrance of Jesus’ tomb.

 In Genesis 18:2, 22, the account states that the Lord appeared to Abraham, and three “men” came to visit him. The text does not call them angels, but ‘men’ who come to Abraham as the Lord appeared to him. **Abraham washed the feet of the men and fed them**. These are physical aspects of being human. Most Bible scholars view these three men to be angels who have a supernatural message to give to Abraham. Specifically, that Abraham’s elderly wife Sara will have a child. The connection point to Peter and John being released from prison is that men/angels/messengers from God can interact physically with this world. In the appearance with Peter and John, the text clearly reports the **angel opened the gates** of the prison. The release came with instruction to continue in the proclamation of the Good News.

20 "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." 21a Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach.

**High Priest Council**

21b Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought.

**Release Discovered**

 22 But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back,

 23 saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside."

**Gates Still Locked – Greatly Perplexed**

 24 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.

 God did not release Peter and John for them to go into hiding. God released them to speak to the people. A normal person after being released from prison by an angel would flee and hide from the authorities. But Peter and John were not hiding. At God’s choosing, He does not want His message hidden. We have our freedom to carry-out the Lord’s will in witnessing His message. It is understood that not everyone is called to this kind of ministry. However, those of us who are, fully understand the mission.

 I grew-up across the street from a WW II infantry soldier who landed on Omaha Beach, June 12th, 1945, six days after the main invasion force. He said that after battling inland, most of the men in his unit were killed. He said that he was wounded in the upper thigh and sent to England to heal. After a few weeks of healing, the army sent him right back to the frontlines. He fought his way all the way to Germany. He then served in Korea and Vietnam. Uncle Sam utilized his whole working life. There wasn’t any retreat or stopping. Peter and John signed-up for the same tour of duty.

**Surprise – In the Temple Preaching in Jesus’ name**

 25 But someone came and reported to them,

"The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

2 Timothy 4:1,2 is a declarative for those who are called to pastor as Timothy was.Fallen man **c**an’t stop the witness of the Lord. In-season and out-of-season, we are to be that ready witness.

**Back in Front of High Priest**

 26 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).

 So, they were afraid of the people? The same people they whipped into a frenzy to say, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him!” Matthew 27:22,23. How the balance of power turns in the street. “The chickens have come home to roost.” The perpetrators, the High Priest, their counsel and Senate who coordinated the crucifixion of Jesus are now concerned about this same crowd. They had manipulated, lied and had broken their own legal code to “kangaroo-court” Jesus onto the Cross. God’s judgement will come to be before many of their lifetimes are complete. Thirty-three years after the crucifixion of Jesus (66 A.D.), the Jews revolted against the Romans. The Romans destroyed the Temple, not leaving one stone. This is what Jesus prophesied would happen (Matthew 24:2, Mark 13:2; Luke 19:44, 21:6).

**Matthew 27:20-25**

 20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death.

 21 But the governor said to them, "**Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"** And they said, "Barabbas."

 22 Pilate said to them, "**Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?"** They all said, "Crucify Him!"

 23 And he said, "**Why, what evil has He done**?"

 But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"

 24 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing,

but rather that a riot was starting,

he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying,

**"I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."**

 25 And all the people said,

**"His blood shall be on us and on our children!"**

 Throughout history, political and religious leaders have succumbed to the pressures of the mob. This is a lesson observed repeatedly. However, in Peter’s case, God used this turning of the crowd to his advantage. We Believers today, we in Christian America, need to take note of people “in the street”, as they say. This is not a violent presence, but a God-driven spiritual presence displaying unyielding fortitude. God gave people this ability to be used for His purpose as we see here in the Temple at Peter and John’s trial.

**The Charge**

 27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council.

The high priest questioned them,

28 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."**

 This is a true statement. The blood of Jesus was upon them. They did not like the public position in which they found themselves. They had lost face, and their Temple authority had been undermined. The people had turned from them. This has happened throughout history. The political and spiritual control of leaders can be overcome by popular backlash. By God’s people praying and publicly stating the truth. This is what Peter did.

**Peter Answers**

 29 But Peter and the apostles answered,

"We must obey God rather than men.

This one statement did two things. One, it indicted Peter and John guilty as charged, and, two, the statement advised the Temple leaders and the public that the message would not change. I see that they also saw that even if they executed Peter and John there would be others. So, why make them martyrs? They had already crucified Jesus, but that did not stop Peter and John. In their minds, there was going to be another way the message of Peter and John would be stopped.

 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus,

whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.

 31 "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.

 32 "**And we are witnesses of these things;**

 **and so is the Holy Spirit,**

**whom God has given to those who obey Him."**

**Cut to the Quick**

 33 But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.

When you tell someone that God’s Holy Spirit is a witness, and they respond with murder from their heart – this means that God has turned them over to their own desires (Romans 1:22ff), and God is no longer talking to them. This means they are making judgements on their own. God has stopped listening to their prayers (Jeremiah 11:14). These are the same people Jesus judged in Matthew 23. But, then, God has a remnant, someone who is that voice cautioning against evil. In this case, it’s one of their own. Remember, Nicodemus (John 3) belonged to a high religious order and was recognized by Jesus to be the teacher of Israel.

Who is Gamaliel who speaks at the trial of Peter and John? This is the same Gamaliel that Paul references in Acts 22:3 claiming to be a student of his brought-up at the feet of Gamaliel.

Britannica On-line: According to tradition—but not historic fact—Gamaliel succeeded his father, Simon, and his grandfather, the renowned sage Hillel (to whose school of thought he belonged), as nasi (president) of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. It is certain, though, that Gamaliel held a leading position in the Sanhedrin and that he enjoyed the highest repute as teacher of the Law; he was the first to be given the title rabban. Like his grandfather, Gamaliel also was given the title ha-Zaqen (the Elder).

Gamaliel is the renown “Rabban” an elite title only given to few a Jewish teachers of the Law throughout Jewish history. The Jewish Talmud does recognize this man with this quote: “When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, regard for the Torah [Jewish Law] ceased, and purity and piety died.”

**Gamaliel**

 34 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.

 35 And he said to them,

"Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men.

36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.

38 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;

39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

**Took His Advice**

 40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in,

**Flogging, Orders and Release**

they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

**Deuteronomy 25:1** "If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,

 2 then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt.

 3 "He may beat him forty times *but* no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.

Paul states in 2 Corinthians 11:24 “Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes.”

 41 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.

**Right-On Preaching**

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. **AMEN**