

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part V: The Ministry Of The First Local And Universal Church, Acts 3:1-8:3

D. Christ's Work To Restrain Sinful Spiritual Opposition Outside The Body (Acts 5:12-42)

I. Introduction

- A. I hear many expressing concern over the spiritual opposition the Christian Church faces from the world.
- B. However, when Christ ascended to heaven, He was enthroned over all authorities, even evil ones (Eph. 1:20-23) so Christ will build His Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, Matt. 16:18.
- C. Evidence of such sovereignty of our Lord is recorded for our encouragement in Acts 5:12-42 (as follows):

II. Christ's Work To Restrain Sinful Spiritual Opposition Outside The Body, Acts 5:12-42.

- A. We read in Acts 1:1-2 that Christ **began** to minister in His early life, implying He **continued** to minister through His followers in the Spirit's power after His ascension to heaven, cf. Acts 1:8 with John 14:16-17.
- B. As such, He continues to restrain sinful opposition to the Church so that His promise to build it, the gates of hell notwithstanding (Matthew 16:18), can be fulfilled, and Acts 5:12-42 illustrates how He does this:
 - 1. Under the Holy Spirit's control (Acts 1:8; 2:1-3; 4:31), the Apostles performed many miracles at Solomon's porch in the temple where the lame man had been healed in Acts 3, cf. Acts 5:12, 15-16.
 - 2. This occurred under the threat of persecution from Israel's religious leaders (Acts 4:17-18), so many onlookers admired the believers from afar while others trusted in Christ and joined them, Acts 5:13-14.
 - 3. The Sadducees eventually discovered the apostles disobeying their call not to teach in Christ's name, so they imprisoned the apostles for examination the next day by the Sanhedrin, Acts 5:17-18, 21.
 - 4. However, Christ sent His angel by night to open the prison doors for the apostles, and he brought them out, telling them to return to the temple, to stand and speak all the words of this Gospel of life, 5:19-20.
 - 5. The apostles thus returned to the temple early the next morning to teach, and the Sanhedrin met to call the apostles to be brought out of the prison only to learn that they were no longer there, but that they had somehow left that prison intact and were back teaching in the temple, Acts 5:21a, 21b-25.
 - 6. As the people who admired the Christians were present, the rulers were unable to punish the apostles, so they brought them to the Sanhedrin without violence lest they themselves be stoned, Acts 5:26-27a.
 - 7. In the meeting, the leaders questioned why the apostles had not heeded their initial order not to teach in Jesus' name, for their preaching would eventually convict them as guilty of Jesus' death, Acts 5:27b-28.
 - 8. Peter and the apostles replied they were obliged to heed God over men, a belief he implied in his initial appearance before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:18-19), but one that since had been confirmed by God's angel in Acts 5:19-20, cf. Acts 5:29. Thus, Peter repeated His Christian Gospel, revealing the Holy Spirit had been given to those who obey God, and this message convicted the Sanhedrin, Acts 5:30-33a.
 - 9. The leaders were angry at being convicted of sin, so they took counsel to slay the apostles, Acts 5:33b.
 - 10. However, from heaven once again, Christ moved an influential leader in their midst, Gamaliel, to be cautious about executing the death sentence: he argued that if the apostles were promoting a false belief, like many others before them, the movement would come to nothing; however, if they killed upright men, they would be fighting against God, so it was best to leave the men alone, Acts 5:34-39.
 - 11. The apostles were beaten and then set free, so they kept ministering in joy that they had been counted worthy by the Lord to be allowed to suffer shame for Christ's name in keeping with Jesus' Matthew 5:11-12 teaching on that subject, cf. Acts 5:40-42!

Lesson: Christ wanted the apostles to **KEEP MINISTERING** the Gospel, so, in great **SOVEREIGNTY**, He (1) sent His angel to **RELEASE** them from prison (2) that the crowds might shield them from being slain by their leaders, and (3) to **MOVE** an **INFLUENTIAL LEADER** to release them!

Application: (1) As in the Early Church, may we trust Christ sovereignly to open doors to minister against the will of strong foes, to **KEEP** them open and to **SHIELD** us so we can keep doing His will! (2) God may allow us to be persecuted as He allowed the apostles (Acts 5:40), but if so, it should be cause for rejoicing in God's counting us worthy to suffer shame for His name, Matthew 5:11-12!