



Acts 5:28-42 | Session 15 | No Compromise

Acts 5:28-42

Verse 28—

Last week we left off with the high priest asking the apostles if they intended to bring **this man's** (that is, Jesus) **blood upon us**. The answer is in verse 30, and it is "yes." **The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.** But first, Peter and the other apostles voiced their loyalty in verse 29.

Verse 29—

The verse reads **Peter and the other apostles answered.** Here we discover that it is no longer only Peter and John, but **other apostles** (plural). It is most likely all twelve of the apostles at this time. Their answer to the high priest: **We ought to obey God rather than men.** Does this hold true today? What about Romans 13? Many Christians cite Romans 13 as a command to obey the government no matter what. Key points in Romans 13, 1) *Every soul* (person) is to be *subject unto the higher powers.* 2) *There is no power but of God: the powers...are ordained of God.* It is unclear whether the Romans passage is referring to *governmental higher powers, or angelic higher powers, or higher powers within the church.* Let's assume it refers to the government (although my personal speculation is this is not referring to *flesh and blood—see Ephesians 6.*) The mandate is to be subject unto them, not to obey, necessarily. To be subject means that if one disobeys then he must accept the outcome. That is precisely what we will see happen in this passage. While we may disobey anyone in the face of being forced to go against our God given rights, we are to pray for all *that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty* (1 Timothy 2:2). Yet the day may come when we will not lead that sort of life.

Verse 30—

Peter confirms the high priest's accusation that indeed, the apostles intended to bring the blood of Jesus upon Israel's religious rulers.

Verse 31—

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. More clearly the passage should read, **Him hath God exalted to his right hand.** Acts 2:33 clarifies where Jesus is now--He has been exalted from earth to heaven where he sits at the **right hand** of God (Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). God, the King eternal sits on His heavenly throne with Jesus, the **Prince and Savior.** The word **Prince** is the Greek word *archō*. Not *prince* like we think of a prince in a royal kingdom. Rather the word *archō* is probably better understood as authority or rank. Jesus is the One with Authority to bring Salvation. God, by exalting Jesus to his right hand assures Jesus's authority. His authority then is to **give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.** Although he was despised and rejected by men (Isaiah 53:3), and his own received him not (John 1:11), Peter makes it known to the high priest and the others that there is still a chance to believe in Jesus as Messiah.

Verse 32—

By what authority could Peter speak? By his own witness and by the witness of the **Holy Ghost.** If these religious leaders would have been obedient to God, they would have had the Holy Ghost and would have also been a witness to Jesus's exaltation. But, they did not obey, in fact they were in danger of the unpardonable sin, i.e., *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 12:31-32).



Verse 33—

They were cut to the heart. Notice italicization, *to the heart*. The Greek word is *diaprio*; *dia* is *through*, and *piro* is *to saw*. They were *sawn through*. This could be describing their bitterness and hatred (See Acts 7:54), or it could mean they were divided among themselves as to what to do with these men. In that they **took counsel to slay them**. In that they were split in their decision as to what to do with the apostles is seen in the next verse.

Verse 34—

Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel. We know from verse 17 that the high priest and the Sadducees are present, but now we find out there were also Pharisees (at least one) in the council. The Sadducees were of the wealthier elitist group of religious sects, and were perhaps lesser in number than the Pharisees. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead which put them at odds with the apostles on at least that account. Pharisees appear to be more prominent in the gospels and were the group Jesus often confronted for their hypocrisy. One such Pharisee was **Gamaliel** who was the apostle Paul's teacher (Acts 22:3). Like Paul, **Gamaliel** was one who taught perfectly, the manner of the law. That is all we know from the Bible about the man. We learn more about **Gamaliel** from the first century historian *Josephus*. His teaching and training emphasized *tradition above the law*. This is what Jesus often condemned (Mark 7:8). **Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had a reputation among all the people.** We may assume this was a good **reputation** as the Greek word can mean *honorable*, or *most precious*. He was a man people listened to. He **commanded to put the apostles forth a little space**, meaning he sent them out of the room for a *little while*, in order to discuss the issue privately.

Verses 35-37—

Knowing a consensus was building to kill all the apostles, Gamaliel warns them to **take heed** (beware)...**as touching** (concerning) **these men**. He gives two examples to prove his point of caution: **Theudas**, and **Judas of Galilee**. The historian *Josephus* dedicates a chapter (Antiquities, Book 20, Chapter 5; also Book 18, Chapter 1) titles *Concerning Theudas, and the sons of Judas the Galilean...* These are real historical events and the point **Gamaliel** is making is that in both cases, these messianic-like *revolutionaries* were in the end, **scattered, and brought to nought, and dispersed.**

Verses 38,39—

Let them alone: for if this counsel (or plan/purpose)...**be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it,** and if you try to you will simply be **fighting against God**. This is good advice given by Gamaliel.

Verse 40-41—

The council thought Gamaliel's words were of value, and perhaps he single-handedly prevented the entire council from committing the *blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*. But since threatening the apostles didn't seem to work (4:21), they order them **beaten**, told them to shut up about **Jesus, and let them go**. While they weren't under arrest, they did not have religious freedom. Tyrants, theocrats, and dictators are the ones who limit and prohibit religious freedoms.

They departed...rejoicing...counted worthy to suffer shame (insults, dishonor, contempt) **for his name**. And, they disobeyed the order; **in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ**. They did not compromise.

