

Acts 5:27-42

## **The Impossible Overthrow**

October 13, 2024

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This is a confidence building passage – The life-giving message of who Jesus is and what He has accomplished for all who will trust in Him will bring persecution. And this is worthy of suffering b/c of His grace to save us.

We pick up in the middle of the story, so we're going to read 5:17 ff.

### **Intro:**

He's 26 years old, and he's a ninth-year senior. Yep, sounds fun to say if you're a college football TV announcer, right? Cam McCormick, the old man on the field today, the Rip Van Winkle of the 2024 season. Tight end for the Miami Hurricanes, one injury after another, red-shirted, played, transferred, another injury and 2 years out, came back, scored 2 TD's so far this season.

One reason so many of us watch college football and sports in general – we know deep down how hard it is to win at almost any level of sports, and especially this high of a level. We all want to know – how? How did this happen? The tenacity, the sacrifice, the inspiration. How did he make it to being a 9<sup>th</sup> year senior?

That's the question I hope we will answer through this passage – How did the apostles do this? How did they endure? Not give up? What inspiration – awe even – is there for us?

Key verse is 41 – rejoicing b/c they suffered dishonor for the Name.

Evil will heap attacks on the Truth. Those who abide in the Truth will suffer from the attacks of evil, but God. God's kingdom purposes cannot be overthrown. God uses all things to further His kingdom.

That's what I hope we will all see - How God Uses All Things – repeat this 3 times... why? B/c it is so mysterious to us. Not how we would do it. Strange. Requires faith and trust. Jesus says (Matt 18:3)

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Requires child-like faith and trust. Vulnerability. Willingness to give up control. Requires openness. Deliberately turning away from hardness and self-protection. How did they get there?

### **1 See The Apostles’ Love for their Enemies and How God Uses All Things to Further His Kingdom (vs. 27-32)**

Before the Sanhedrin – the Jewish High Court – A theocracy – controlled the behavior and the beliefs of the Jewish community

“We strictly charged you...” – you are guilty of disobeying our authority, and you are blaming us...

What happens when someone blames us for something we did and we try to disown it. Step into the shoes of the Sanhedrin. Vigorous defense of our reputation, vigorous punching back to silence the accusation, to assuage our guilt.

The very natural human desire to want to be right. To want to be right is a God-given desire b/c it is a desire to be free from wrong, free from judgement, free from punishment for being wrong. We all love to be right, we all love to win and hate to lose.

The Sanhedrin thought they were doing the right thing by opposing Jesus and the apostles – thought they were protecting the status quo, their position and leadership of the people – thought they were in the right – “you’re never in danger of being more wrong than when you are most right” B. Flayhart – You think you are advancing the kingdom of God... Gamaliel – listen to the Gamaliel’s in your life – ask for Gamaliel’s in your life – is this really advancing the kingdom of God or is it opposing the kingdom of God?

This is an often minimized aspect of the gospel – Jesus was right. Perfect. Right about everything, even in the womb. And you are right, in Him. In Him. So then, you can be wrong and it not undo you. Your position – right in Christ – and your condition – wrong about so and so – don’t have to be the same for you to be secure in your name and reputation.

I had a roommate once who claimed to be a Christian but then persecutes you and makes you suffer b/c your lifestyle is a Christian one, and theirs isn’t. Christian ‘friends’ that aren’t. The ease of acknowledging Christ but not bowing the knee to Him. We saw this in Ananias and Sapphira – don’t let this be you! Trust and obey God, rather than men!

v. 29 - now full on defense – “we must obey God rather than men!” Don’t you see, Sanhedrin? Appeal to their conscience! Don’t give up on an appeal to the conscience! This is love for your enemies, especially when they are about to do something drastic like kill you.

\*John Stott – the apostles laid down the principle of civil and ecclesiastical disobedience (116). So, for example, the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s was started by Christians, the non-violent movement was propelled by Christians who loved their enemies and resisted through peaceful protest.

The apostles:

You guys are fellow Jews with us. You’re not our enemies. Look again at who Jesus claimed to be and the Scriptures that point to a suffering Messiah. Boldness! Courage! From love... from love and from grace –

31 – they again repeat the same message -why Jesus came – “to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” An invitation, a welcome, an offer of rescue.

33 – they were enraged and wanted to kill them – all 12 apostles – why were they enraged? B/c the apostles were accusing them of being wrong, wrong, wrong, and wrong – wrong about arresting them, about the definition of obedience to God, about resurrection, about who Jesus was and is, about what faith in God really means, about who the Messiah is

Has this ever happened to you? Someone accused you of being wrong, wrong, and wrong... wrong thinking, wrong motivations, wrong about your deepest held fundamentals? How did you react? Enraged and wanted to kill them? We are getting at what repentance is and why it is so hard. They were convinced at their deepest level that they were right! Right enough to kill those who opposed them.

And religious right-ness may be the hardest to repent of. Why? B/c it calls us to turn away from our core reason for thinking we are ok – that we are on God’s side and under His favor. This is the appeal from v. 29 – and the same message they shared in 4:10-12 - The Messiah had to be killed and resurrected so that God could give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins!

This is what it means to have Jesus save you! When this gets a hold of us, this is what brings revival – real heart level change that demonstrates itself in deep repentance and rejoicing in forgiveness. This is supernatural. This is mysterious – the love the apostles’ show. This is not how we would do it! This is divine, of God alone.

See the Apostles' love for their enemies and how God Uses All Things to Further His Kingdom –

## **2 See Gamaliel and How God Uses All Things to Further His Kingdom (vs. 33-39)**

Gamaliel is a well-respected Pharisee, grandson of Hillel, leader of the Pharisees – minority – teacher of Paul.

God used him and his words to save the apostles lives... They were under a death sentence (v. 35 !) from the Sanhedrin and they had the power to carry this out with the help of the Romans (like they did with Jesus).

Will this movement be crushed? Will this sect within Judaism be wiped out?

Luke uses this story as a foreshadowing device—nothing could overthrow the Christian message. And still today. The whole Bible is fortifying us to see that yes, evil is real, evil is constantly threatening, but the transformative power of the love of God in Christ overcomes. And that means that you can overcome. And you can respond with love when evil attacks you.

1 Peter 2:19-25 ILLUS – Peter later would write – and he knows what he is talking about from his own experience – “For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly...” It is gift – it is unnatural – the natural, fleshly, worldly response is to punch back harder, to advocate for yourself. To entrust ourselves to God's justice and vengeance in His time and way – that is supernatural.

This account of Gamaliel here is ... fodder for loving our enemies instead of destroying them b/c God will use them (like Gollum)... For us, don't be too quick to deal out death and judgement...

Is God preparing the true church for persecution? I don't know, but if persecution comes, this is a fortifying, guiding passage for us. How? They were forced to submit to the decision of the Sanhedrin to beat them. Was it unjust? Yes. Was it enflamed by their own jealousy? Yes. Was it a determination to make them stop doing what they were doing – teaching about Jesus being the Messiah – yes.

How do we respond? Entrust ourselves to the one who judges justly – 1 Peter – who sees everything and who rewards the Christ-righteous who are right in Him. Who accept and receive the maddeningly unfair grace of Jesus that causes others to be enraged. This leads us to 3 –

See the apostles' love for their enemies, see Gamaliel, and 3

### **3 See The Apostles' Experience of The Grace of Jesus and How God Uses All Things to Further His Kingdom (vs. 40-42)**

They passed another test – The test of love –

40 – beat them – all 12 apostles – flogged – Deut. 25:3

41 – rejoicing – ‘counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.’

Power – this is Resurrection power at work – supernatural b/c this is very unnatural – remember how they got there – by being witnesses to what Jesus accomplished – remind us of the apostles' experiences of Jesus and 40 days after His Resurrection learning the Scriptures (OT) how they attested to the Messiah.

42 – Look at their fearlessness! Zeal from love. Rejoicing during suffering. Loving their enemies, turning enemies into friends.

Christians must lead the way in this, or else we turn into Halloween horror movies – what is supposed to be safe and pleasant, peacemakers, lovers of all people – especially our enemies – Christians – can turn into horrific enablers and participants in evil.

42- every day kept teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ – Jesus is the Messiah – Luke's theme over and over is focus on Jesus – more of Jesus – what does this mean? This can become glib, trite, overused and underheard. It is asking the question – what is the main thing in your life? Something in your life drives you above all else.

Is Jesus the animating, captivating, overwhelming Person/King/Driver in your life? If He is the biggest thing in your life, then everything else will fall into place. If He is not, then you will be filled with all kinds of jealousy, rage, anger, deceit, conniving, covering, and efforts to rid the world of everything in your way except what you want. Look at the Sanhedrin (minus Gamaliel). They are driven to eliminate the world of the followers of Christ.

Nowadays (as always) the world is eager to subjugate Christians to the world's priorities, to control the Church for the world's own uses, especially the advance of earthly power and control. That's ok, they can't win. Keep Jesus on the scoreboard. Rise above it.

\*42 - There is hope for the world – there is a Messiah, a Rescuer, a Savior. What does this mean? Why does it matter? How do we get into the marketplace, the gathering places and house to house? What step can you take? One step.

What have you seen and heard?

How have you suffered for Him?

How has Jesus proved to you that He is real and alive?

Engage with the people around you, get to know their pain, and speak into their lives of what Jesus has done for you.

**Conc:** The advancement of the kingdom of God cannot be **overthrown**... the Sanhedrin were sowing seeds that wouldn't grow until the year AD70 when Jerusalem is destroyed by the Romans and the Temple torn down. Gamaliel was prophetic...

Back to Cam McCormick – what keeps you in the fight? What keeps you trusting, persevering, enduring the attacks of evil? What keeps you going out into your everyday world to talk about Jesus the Messiah?

The same as the apostles – v. 42 – Jesus is the Christ – If Jesus is the Messiah, and He is, there is nothing you cannot endure. B/c the Holy Spirit is in your heart and in the heart of the true church to assure you again and again that he uses all things to further His kingdom. It is impossible to overthrow.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have any (short, brief) stories of personal persecution?
2. What is hard about believing that God uses all things to further His kingdom purposes?
3. What is it like to put ourselves in the shoes of the Sanhedrin? Have you ever been so sure that you were right and someone else wrong that you wanted to kill them?
4. How did the apostles' love their enemies and appeal to their consciences with their answer in vs. 29-32?
5. How could God lead you and fellow Christians and our church to a deeper repentance and a deeper appreciation of forgiveness?
6. Read 1 Peter 2:19-25. How is it 'a gracious thing' to entrust ourselves to the One who judges justly when we experience hatred for our faith in Jesus the Christ?
7. What is one thing you could do, one step you could take to draw you closer to the people God has put in your life who have not surrendered to Jesus as the Christ?