

Your Persecution Can't Stop Us
Acts 5:17-42 (June 15, 2025)



In the first three hundred years of church history – godly saints began to articulate the core teachings of the faith.

Several early creeds were written. One of the earliest was the Apostle's Creed. It begins by saying.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ **his only Son, our Lord.**

But that led to a debate about what it means that Jesus is God's son.

In 319 AD a deacon in Alexandria named Arius wrote a paper. He argued that you become a son by being born or created. And if Jesus is a son – then He cannot be God.

Two years later a synod was convened to find the truth.

The lot of opposing Arius fell to a 23-year-old named Athanasius.

You can read about what happened – but basically Athanasius spent the next 52 years of his life fighting for the truth that Jesus is God.

It is hard for us to comprehend how perilously close the church went to abandoning this core truth that would destroy the gospel.

Suffice it to say that right from the first Athanasius was persecuted, imprisoned, forced to flee multiple times and lived under the threat of death.

He had his reputation trashed. He was falsely accused of levying illegal taxes, using magic, treason and many other slanders.

One example is that his enemies bribed Arsenius, a bishop in Hypsele to disappear. Then witnesses appeared who testified that Athanasius had arranged to have his hand cut off to use for magic and then had him murdered.

At his trial many testified to having seen the hand being cut off and the murder being carried out – in fact the severed hand was produced and entered as evidence.

However, one of Athanasius's trusted deacons had tracked down Arsenius and produced him at the trial – alive and with both hands.

It didn't matter – Athanasius was **still** found guilty, condemned and forced to flee.

Later, they produced witnesses who said that he had tried to starve Constantine's capitol by blocking wheat shipments from Alexandria.

All of this led to Athanasius becoming known as "**Athanasius contra mundum.**" *Athanasius against the world* – because it almost seemed as if he were the only one fighting for this truth – and that the whole world was against him.

Emperors, governors, bishops, councils, the masses.

He was banished at least five times – constantly hunted, despised, hated and lived in fear for his life.

Think about this – church leaders – scholars, bishops – all say you are wrong.

Political leaders telling you – drop it or you have to die.

People fed up with turmoil saying – stop.

So, what kept him going for 52 years convinced he was right and the world was wrong?

He was absolutely convinced – and rightly so – that **the Bible** taught clearly that Jesus Christ is God and that the gospel – salvation itself was at stake.

And if that was the stakes – he would not be silenced – he would not be cowed into relenting.

Imprison me, banish me, lie about me – kill me if you have to – but I will never stop proclaiming the truth – Jesus is God and the only way of salvation.

In the providence of God – one of the banishments allowed him time to write.

He produced four works defending the deity of Christ.

These began to circulate widely. He made such a solid case from the Scriptures that the tide began to turn.

Church after church relented and said – yes Jesus is God.

The gospel was saved.

Jerome wrote that Athanasius “snatched the whole world from the jaws of Satan” – and that is no exaggeration.

This is not an outlier – this is the norm.

Jesus warned us – if you preach the gospel clearly you will face persecution, imprisonment and death.

But they can only kill our bodies and they cannot stop the spread of the gospel and the coming of the kingdom.

We are in the book of Acts and we have seen that the message in this book is:



We must strive to see His kingdom come, through the empowering of His Spirit, by witnessing to the nations, until He comes again.

In chapters 3-6, we see the kingdom growing and spreading throughout Jerusalem.



And the message that empowers this growing kingdom is simple.

Our King Has Come And He Alone Saves.

And:

His Kingdom Comes And It Is Unstoppable.

We have seen that there are dangers that seem poised to derail the growth of the kingdom.



4:13-31 Your Threats Can't Intimidate Us
4:32-5:16 Our Sin Won't Impede Him
5:17-42 Your Persecution Can't Stop Us
6:1-7 Our Division Won't Distract Us

These dangers are *both* **external** and **internal**.

This morning, we will see that:



5:17-42 Your Persecution Can't Stop Us

Here is what we will see in our passage:



Jesus tells us that preaching the gospel puts us on the wrong side of the world but the right side of eternity.

What do I mean by this?

Think for a moment how non-Christians in Australia view the church.

There was a time when they tolerated us. We build hospitals and schools, feed the poor, support the government and raise well-adjusted families.

They saw us as deluded – but not a detriment to society.

Those days have to a large extent passed.

Today, the church in Australia is now viewed the way most of the world views the church – as danger, an impediment to progress – a group to be opposed and if necessary – removed – for the good of society. Basically, we are now seen as a menace to the flourishing of society.

We are told we are on the wrong side of progress, justice and ultimately history. We are unloving and bigoted. We are inflexible because we proclaim that we alone have ultimate truth.

This is uncomfortable – but should not be a surprise.

This land is under the authority of the Prince of this world – and he brings the full power of every instrument – government, media, educational institutions, religion and courts of law.

However, God is clear – His gospel, His truth and His church will prevail.

Our task is to stay faithful.

Turn with me to Acts 5:17:

Then the high priest rose up. He and all who were with him, who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.

Why are the high priest and the members of the Sanhedrin filled with jealousy?

God's authority once rested in His Prophets and the word they wrote.

Over time men decided to move that authority to an assembly – the Sanhedrin.

There was no biblical justification for a group like this – it just developed.

They declared that the High Priest and this group had the right to decide the truth of Scripture and guide the spiritual direction of Israel.

Their authority was generally accepted until Jesus turned up.

He denied the legitimacy of their interpretations.

He denied they held the keys of the kingdom.

And He backed this up with power and authority that no one could deny.

But, even His miracles were not enough. He was a threat, so He had to go.

They declared He was not the Messiah and organised for His execution.

To their horror and great inconvenience – He rose from the dead.

His disciples then began to preach about His death and resurrection and that there is salvation in no other name.

They were clear – salvation was in Jesus **not** the Temple and the Priests.

And not just a few – but ever-growing thousands were professing Christ, being baptised and joining the church.

Jerusalem was in uproar – many turning from their authority.

In chapter 4 verse 18, the Sanhedrin had called for them and ordered them **not** to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

They said we listen to God not you and went out and filled the city with their preaching.

The result? – chapter 5 verse 14 – believers were being added to the Lord in increasing numbers.

OK – you are the Sanhedrin – you see this growing threat to your authority and power.

You honestly believe they are wrong and dangerous and defying your rightful biblical authority.

What do you do?

Or even – if you are worried they just might be right – but that would strip your authority and power.

What do you do?

If you look at history – before Jesus – in the days of Jesus – after Jesus – those in power have taken one of two routes to attack the true church and those preaching the gospel.



1. Rely on the authority of the state.

2. Rely on the authority of religion.

Use every mechanism that authority gives you to crush any opposition.

That is what we see here.

The Sanhedrin was an interesting group.

In their understanding – they had total religious authority and thought they should have full state authority. Israel was a theocracy – and because there were no kings – they thought they ruled for God.

But Rome had assumed that secular authority.

Rome did allow the Sanhedrin certain authority and they could suggest and ask Rome for other authority – but ultimately it was up to Rome.

We see this in the trial of Jesus – they had to ask Rome to crucify Jesus.

But, Rome did grant them certain liberties – if someone broke a religious rule they could punish in limited ways.

And that is what we see. Verse 18:

So they arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

They knew that eventually Rome would have to agree to any further punishment – but for now they used the authority of the state.

In world history – and in many if not most nations even today – religious liberty is near non-existent.

The King, the Emperor, the dictator, occasionally some group has power – and they are happy to use it to stop any perceived threat to that power.

China, North Korea, Russia, warlords – very happy to use the full power of the state to crush a threat.

And the church is often seen as a threat. If that means imprisonment, persecution, death – so be it.

This is nothing new – Rome saw the church as a threat to Caesar and mobilised pretty quickly. Wherever the gospel spread – it was seen as a threat to the existing powers and faced persecution.

Now – this caused an issue for Christians.

Romans 13 was clear – Christians are to submit to the governing authorities. God set up secular authority and gave them the sword – legal authority – to maintain order in society.

The church did not go into a land to overthrow the government. They were intent on setting up a spiritual kingdom not a political kingdom.

The point I want you to understand is that rulers would never have had an issue with the church if Christians understood Romans 13 to be absolute. You obey your rulers **in everything**.

But, the Bible is clear – obeying secular rulers is **not** absolute.

We do not obey unjust orders. And if authority is used unrighteously we are to oppose that.

Christians in Germany should not have bowed the knee to Hitler when he began to invade Europe and exterminate Jews.

Nor are we to obey if we are ordered to cease living as Christians – witnessing, worshipping, being salt and light. We must continue to live for Christ – even if that means the power of the state will persecute us.

And governments who feel at all threatened **will** persecute us because they cannot tolerate a group who refuse to tow the line, will call out their evil and call for righteousness.

That undermines their power.

So, the Sanhedrin put the Apostles in a public jail.

They made them an example – join them and you too may end up in prison.

As Christians, how are we to respond to such misuse of state authority?

We have to know God calls us to live as Christians regardless of the consequences.

Jesus made it clear:

The world will hate us – but remember they hated Jesus first (John 15:18).

They will ban us from the synagogues and when they kill us they will think they are offering service to God (John 16:1-2).

All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12)

We don't like it – it is unjust – but we understand that is the price of living for Christ.

The church is built on the blood of the martyrs.

The worst they can do is kill us – they have no authority over our souls.

Revelation 17-19 paints this picture of the kingdoms of the world attacking the church – but they cannot triumph – the Beast and Babylon will fall – and the Lamb and those who bear His mark will triumph.

It is all very well to know this in Brisbane in 2025 – sitting in a comfortable church.

It is another thing if you are locked in a prison in first century Jerusalem.

Prison today is like a luxury spa compared to those days.

It was brutal – cold, damp, dark – they didn't feed you. If you were to survive people on the outside had to bring you food.

They could beat you, put you in stocks, kill you.

You had limited rights.

I have never been in prison. I think it is much harder to remember we are on the right side of eternity when the lock clicks shut.

The Apostles needed to remember they were there for righteousness sake – and they must not allow the state to silence them.

So, what is our response to the *gameplan of the world*?



We will suffer but our gospel must not be silenced 19-26

We don't fight back with the sword – or raise an army.

I'm not saying we do nothing – in many – but not all societies there are avenues – rights that allow us to appeal.

Paul appealed to Caesar.

We live in a land with many avenues of appeal – but that is rare in history.

Regardless – we need to remember that our main response is to keep living, speaking and preaching the truth.

The Apostles needed to be encouraged to do this.

Acts 5:19–20:

But an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail during the night, brought them out, and said, "Go and stand in the temple, and tell the people all about this life."

God sends an angel – opens the doors and says – OK go back to doing exactly what you were doing – preaching the words that lead to life in the Temple.

Verse 21:

Hearing this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

God says preach – we preach – even with prison or worse hanging over our heads.

Verses 21-26:

When the high priest and those who were with him arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin—the full council of the Israelites—and sent orders to the jail to have them brought. But when the servants got there, they did not find them in the jail; so they returned and reported, "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing in front of the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside." As the captain of the temple police and the chief priests heard these things, they were baffled about them, wondering what would come of this. Someone came and reported to them, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple and teaching the people." Then the commander went with the servants and brought them in without force, because they were afraid the people might stone them.

This is Apostolic humour.

This is – how could the Sanhedrin ever think they could silence God?

The sword of man simply cannot silence the word of God.

Even if you could silence one voice – two more would rise up.

Notice this other bit of irony. The Sadducees didn't just deny the resurrection – they didn't believe angels even existed – so God shows His sense of humour by using this being they didn't believe in – to deliver His Apostles – and no one even notices it happen.

The next day the Sanhedrin get together – ready to call these men out and warn, sentence or punish them.

They send for them – unaware that these men are already out – back at the Temple and preaching.

So, the authorities go and lo and behold – the guards are at their posts – they open the doors and they are gone!

Same as Jesus – guards out the front – but no one inside.

There is confusion – they were in here – we are guarding the door – well where could they be?

We aren't told if the angel made them blind to all these Apostles slipping by or if they were petrified and lied or just how this happened.

But it happened and now these guards were in serious trouble and the Sanhedrin is in an uproar.

Then someone says – just to let you know – they didn't just vanish – they are in the Temple teaching.

OK – so they round them up – but they don't rough them up because they are worried about what the people think.

The point is not – every evangelist will be miraculously freed or escape danger if they are persecuted. No that is rare.

The point is – the gospel and the kingdom cannot ultimately be hindered. You can't stop God with prison bars.

Maybe God will free us – more likely we will languish in prison – maybe we die – but the gospel will keep going forth.

The gospel should not have survived Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin had every power to snuff it out.

The gospel should not have survived Rome. Rome had dealt with far worse.

The gospel should not have survived the Middle Ages, Catholicism, the Enlightenment, Evolution, Modernism.

It should not survive Islam, Communism, Capitalism.

But there are more churches and more Christians today than in any time in history. Persecution – hot. Attempts to snuff us out – relentless.

But they all fail miserably.

God said – My word will go forth – and it **has** and **does** and **will**.

Ours is to be faithful – whatever the cost.

Forces will try and silence us.

It is possible some of us will be imprisoned.

Almost certainly no angel will open doors and encourage us to keep preaching.

But we have the word of God, the command of God – to keep preaching.

Today and at times in history – the church has been persecuted by purely secular state authority.

But the more common scenario is an authority claiming **both** state **and** religious authority.

This might be Islam who claims absolute legal and spiritual authority – their aim is a caliphate – total religious and secular authority.

But a more common scenario has been for political leaders to claim the spiritual authority of the one true God.

When Constantine could not wipe the church out – he joined them – and usurped their authority.

This paved the way for not only the Catholic Church – but the Holy Roman Emperor to claim both political authority and religious authority – and do it all in the name of Jesus.

But it didn't stop there. In many lands when the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe the Kings saw an opportunity.

They pronounced themselves head of the church – and added religious authority to their existing secular authority.

And even if they were supposedly Protestant – it never ended well for religious liberty and the church.

In England the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 led to the *Act of Uniformity*. Only the Church of England – with the King as its head was permitted.

Soon after, any religious meeting where five or more people gathered outside the Church of England was punishable by imprisonment or worse.

You can read about the persecutions of the nonconformist churches, the Covenanters and the like.

We are Baptists – read the history of the Baptists at this time.

They refused to give up assembling for worship.

They would sneak out to a field – or gather slowly and quietly in a home.

They came in dribs and drabs over 4-6 hours to alerting spies that a church crowd was gathering.

They sang in a whisper.

The preacher spoke behind a curtain so no one could identify him. Often more than one man preached to make identifying preachers harder.

There was usually a trapdoor and an escape route ready in case a spy was in attendance.

Few preachers lasted long before prison or death.

The crown claimed full religious authority and in the name of Jesus persecuted anyone who defied them.

Remember, this is not Communist China we are talking about – this is post-Reformation England.

But this is nothing new. It has always been part of the Gameplan.

Claim the authority of religion and do whatever it takes.

This was what the Sanhedrin did. Verses 27-28:

After they brought them in, they had them stand before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest asked, “Didn’t we strictly order you not to teach in this name? Look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”

We speak for God.

We decided Jesus is not the Messiah and was dangerous enough to execute.

You are trying to twist truth – make Him a martyr – and paint us as the bad guys – guilty of his blood.

They don’t even mention the idea Jesus might be the Messiah – we spoke – He is not – He is just an insurrectionist and we rightly had Him killed.

We – the men who speak for God commanded you – do not teach in the name of Jesus – you have defied our authority.



The Gameplan Of The World

Rely on the authority of the state 17-18

We will suffer but our gospel must not be silenced 19-26

Rely on the authority of religion 27-28

We will suffer but our gospel must not be silenced 29-33

It doesn't matter if it is secular authority or religious – our response is the same:

We will suffer but our gospel must not be silenced 29-33

Verses 29–33:

Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than people. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had murdered by hanging him on a tree. God exalted this man to his right hand as ruler and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

We must obey God rather than people – literally– *Anthropos* – men.

You have authority – but God's authority is greater.

If it comes to who we obey – we choose God.

The Sanhedrin said – we speak for God – stop preaching.

The Apostles said no you do not – God – told us to keep preaching His gospel.

How can they be so sure?

They point to the resurrection of Jesus – the exaltation and ascension of Jesus – that prove He is the Messiah and the only source of forgiveness and life.

They declare – we are witnesses to these things – and the Holy Spirit is witnessing through us via miracles.

- The Father raised Jesus.
- The Son reigns at His side offering forgiveness.
- The Spirit testifies to the truth.

We speak for the **triune God**.

No wonder this sent them into a rage and they wanted to kill them.

When you look at history – it is hard to know how many who claim religious authority actually believe it and how many just use it to bolster their power.

Some actually believe it. Many in Islam, the cults, Catholicism – think they are serving God.

We say – they are not.

How can we be so certain?

Sola Scriptura.

The 66 books of the Bible speak for God – not the Koran, the book of Mormon, some prophet, nor tradition or Popes.

If you base your life on the word of God – and your message entirely on the Scriptures – Sola Scriptura – you can know you speak the truth and you are on the side of God and eternity.

The powers that be in the world won't like it. It will lead to opposition, persecution and condemnation.

But we obey God not man.

I remind you that the gospel has always faced these twin threats – political *and* religious power.

Read Revelation 13 – the two beasts – one clearly political – one clearly spiritual.

But when you get to chapter 19 it is the Word of God that triumphs and every beast – political and spiritual is vanquished to the lake of fire.

Look brothers and sisters, we are privileged to live in a land that grants a measure of religious freedom – something rare in history.

We usually do not face prison for speaking truth – let alone death.

But, frankly the sands are shifting – where will they settle? I don't know.

The political forces are bringing more of the apparatus of power to bear. The gospel is now deemed dangerous – hate speech.

Declaring the truth of gender, marriage, the roles of men and women – the forces that be are mobilizing to declare this a danger – a crime.

Already in some states a pastor, even a parent cannot speak gospel truth, gender truth, sexual truth without the threat of prison.

What will it mean in the workplace, schools, public forums? – I don't know.

Will it get worse? – I don't know.

Will old Craig be visiting older Rhoi in prison? – I don't know – but quite possible.

If that is where it leads – so be it – and Rhoi says he is fine if that is what happens.

God just says – be faithful – obey me – preach truth – I will usher in the kingdom – and yes you may suffer in the meantime – but God is with us.

If you dare to speak truth – you are going to be ridiculed, marginalized and threatened – in the workplace, over the back fence, by family members and friends.

You need to remember – we are on the right side of eternity.

The Lamb will triumph.

And He commands us – keep speaking truth.

Now – what happens next is fascinating.

From way out of left field – one of their number suggests another strategy – **Relying on the authority of truth 34-39**



God will bless truth and work against error.

Verses 34–39:

But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law who was respected by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered the men to be taken outside for a little while. He said to them, “Men of Israel, be careful about what you’re about to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, and all his followers were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and attracted a following. He also perished, and all his followers were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, stay away from these men and leave them alone. For if this plan or this work is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even be found fighting against God.” They were persuaded by him.

Gamaliel was probably the most celebrated teacher of the day. He was respected by all.

He was a Pharisee who was the successor to Hillel.

He was the man who taught Paul when he was a Pharisee.

He sounds a more reasonable voice – more thoughtful than all the angry men acting rashly.

He reasons that Jesus is not the first nor will He be the last figure to attract the attention of the masses.

Think Theudas – think Judas the Galilean. Flashes in the pan. Arrived – rose up – attracted a following – but died and it all fizzled out.

If we really believe we are on the side of God – this Jesus and His followers will walk the same path – flash in the pan then forgotten soon after.

We should just let this Christian stuff burn itself out.

OK – what do we think of this?



I think Gamaliel's suggestion is:

Partially – the Gameplan of the Church.

How are we to deal with error?

We – the church – are **not** to seek secular authority. That is for Caesar. We are to influence, appeal to and petition secular authorities – but not seek that authority.

And we preach and teach truth and allow God to work. God will bless His truth.

Basically, we don't try and get Anthony Albanese to lock up Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, communists, atheists – anyone who opposes the truth.

First – it is not happening.

Second – it is not how Jesus works.

His kingdom is not of this world.

He empowers His word, His gospel, His truth – and against every odd – we will triumph one heart, one saved soul at a time – but not through the power of the sword.

That is the strategy of Islam – not Jesus.

Don't get me wrong – it makes my blood boil to watch as error and false teachings are put out there and people believe it and go to hell.

Don't think I haven't fantasised about forming some Christian political party – and of course in my fantasy I sweep to power and outlaw every false teacher.

Well – I would never be elected – and if I was – it wouldn't work.

But even more – it is not how Jesus chooses to work. He chooses not to work through the apparatus of power – but in the hearts of sinners.

We believe we have the truth not Jehovah's Witnesses. We believe Jesus is God and the one way of salvation. We believe God will empower that truth to prevail.

And for 2000 years that is what has happened.

So – I do think Gamaliel speaks a degree of truth – if these men are of God – you can't stop them – you will end up fighting against God. God's truth will prevail.

But this is **not** how you decide truth.

Gamaliel should know seeing if something flourishes or not is not the final measure of truth.

In His sovereignty, God has allowed false teachers and teachings to rise up and flourish for many years.

Israel knows this. In the first century it was surrounded by very powerful nations and false teachings. Rome and its Emperor worship is a case in point. It has not faded away – and was very powerful.

False teachings can attract many followers and look true for many years.

At times and in places the true church was small and weak and false religions prospered.

But God preserved His church and His people and His gospel and ultimately that is what will triumph.

Catholicism, Islam, Mormonism – they **will** fail – but probably not until Jesus returns.

So, watching to see if a group rises or falls is not the measure of truth.

God testified to the truth by the resurrection of Jesus, the reign of Jesus and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. That declares truth – not whether the followers of these men fall away.

Now – what I find most remarkable about this whole speech is – **they were persuaded by him.**

Humanly speaking they should have said – fat chance Gamaliel – we are not giving these guys a chance.

I think that is a miracle of God as much as the angel who opened the door. God worked at this point.

I think God worked to produce this suggestion.

Gamaliel is respected – so they listened and didn't just kill them.

I cannot think of any religious group who has secular power that ever stood by and said – we won't use our power – we will see if God blesses them or us. If they flourish – we will just step aside.

It just doesn't happen.

And you know what – I don't think they were really persuaded by Gamaliel. They didn't really like this gameplan.

If they were – they would have called them in and said – OK guys it's a preach off.

You preach Jesus – we will preach Law and Temple – we will see who God blesses.

Good luck to you – but we think are right.

No.



The world won't do this 40

Look at verse 40:

After they called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them.

They didn't say – let's see who God blesses.

They flogged them and told them not to speak in the name of Jesus.

Likely this is the 39 lashes – this is a flogging that ripped them apart.

This is – we are letting you go – but know we can kill you – and if we don't like what happens next – we go back to the original gameplan.

Guess what happens next? They went straight back to the original gameplan.

Acts 6:7:

So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

You are winning – priests are leaving us. Forget this let the truth prevail stuff.

They murder Stephen and even Gamaliel's disciple Saul – says I like the first gameplan – so he organises the persecution of the church.

Acts 22:4 Paul says:

I persecuted this Way to the death, arresting and putting both men and women in jail.

The Apostles knew they would not sit back. It didn't matter. Their response is the same:



We will suffer but our gospel must not be silenced 41-42

Verses 41–42:

Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name. Every day in

the temple, and in various homes, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

OK – you have just been lashed. Back ripped to shreds.

Me – I stagger out and collapse.

They rejoiced?

Why?

They treated Jesus like this – thank you God that we are considered worthy to be treated like Him.

Chances are we won't face being lashed.

But likely you will be persecuted, shamed, ridiculed.

When you are – remember – so was Jesus. And don't cry – why God – why me? Cry – thank you God that I am worthy to be treated like Jesus was.

These men didn't say – give me a month to recover from the beating – they went right back to preaching. Hey everyone – let me tell you the good news of Jesus who is the Messiah.

The jail – the lashings – the treats – it will not stop us.

Brothers and sisters, if you live a long life and die – and Jesus does not come back – I don't know what you expect to happen in the world.

I have hopes – that frankly are likely to be far from realistic in my lifetime.

I hope the gospel makes inroads into Islam.

I hope that in Europe the gospel returns to these dead nations.

Probably more realistic:

I hope in Africa and Asia the church keeps growing.

I hope in lands like the US and Australia – more and more good churches are planted that may be salt and light.

But here is what is near certain.

Rob is much more likely to be on the pointy end of overt persecution in Africa.

We will likely be more shielded from outright persecution.

But – the sands in our nation will continue to shift and life will become tougher for you and for me to live as Christians.

Because for every step we take – Satan and the world will fight us tooth and nail. We will not see one convert – one new church planted – without **much** opposition.

Social, workplace, family.

We will see laws making it harder to preach truth.

And it is possible the state will reduce our remaining protections.

We expect this. We are prepared to suffer unjustly – because so did Jesus – and God works through suffering to advance the gospel.

Our task is continue to be godly salt and light who are never ashamed or afraid to preach Christ and Him crucified.

Because we know – His kingdom is coming and it will prevail.

We are to tell anyone who is not a Christian – regardless of what the world says – God is King and you are on the wrong side of eternity and that is not a good place to be.

God's world – God's rules.

God's eternal kingdom – God's one and only way in – Jesus.

The blood of Jesus offers full forgiveness and there is no other way of salvation.

The church has been under siege for 2000 years – it has only thrived – it will triumph – and you will want to be on the side of the Lamb when this world is done.

Your Persecution Can't Stop Us

Acts 5:17-42 (June 15, 2025)

Main Point: Jesus tells us that preaching the gospel puts us on the wrong side of the world but the right side of eternity.

General Questions:

1. How do you understand the limits of our obedience to secular authority in Romans 13?
2. Why do Christians – who do not seek secular authority – pose a threat to unrighteous use of authority?
3. What are the ways secular authority can persecute us?
4. What are the ways religious authority can persecute us?
5. How are we to respond to unrighteous use of authority?
6. How are we to respond to false religions and teachings?
7. Why is use of secular authority counterproductive to the gospel?
8. Why is the example of Jesus so important to help us when we are persecuted?
9. How do you know you have the truth?

Application Questions:

1. What do you think the way forward will be in Australia in terms of persecution?
2. How do you know how you are to live in light of persecution?
3. How can you prepare for it now?

What convicted me in the message?

What moved me in the message?

What will I do in light of the message?