"GOD'S WORK CANNOT BE STOPPED"

ACTS 5:12-42

5-3-2026

INTRODUCTION: V. 12-16

** God's Work Cannot be Stopped!*

Why not? 3 Reasons:

I. Trying to Stop God's Work is:
<u>Fighting Against God's COMMISSION</u> (v. 17-26)

(It's Vain to Attack the <u>Will</u> of God)

A. GO!

B. STAND!

C. SPEAK!

II. Trying to Stop God's Work is:
<u>Fighting Against God's TRUTH</u> (v. 27-33)

(It's Vain to Attack the <u>Word</u> of God)

III. Trying to Stop God's Work is:
<u>Fighting Against God HIMSELF</u> (v. 34-41)

It's Vain to Attack the <u>Person</u> of God)

CONCLUSION: V. 42

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INTRODUCTION: The existence of Satan and his evil companions in crime was a lesson God taught me early. When I became saved and tried to tell others about the Gospel, it was amazing to me to experience resistance. Why would people fight against something so wonderful as salvation through Jesus Christ? Then I recalled my own heart and rebellion against the truth prior to my salvation. Throughout time the Devil has tried to thwart what God was doing and has failed at every attempt. He puts thoughts into the minds of those who belong to him to oppose God's Word and work.

EX -
Noah - Ark (no doubt he was mocked and ridiculed)
Nehemiah - Walls of Jerusalem (Sanballat & Tobia tried everything)
Daniel - Prayers
Jeremiah - Preaching

Now the Apostles are again doing God`s Work and they refuse to be stopped.

5:12
"Signs and wonders" were God's way of authenticating the message and messengers (i.e. the Apostles) (Heb. 2:4; II Cor. 12:12; Ro. 15:18-19).

> How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Hebrews 2:3-4)
>
> Paul said: "...for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. 12:11-12)
>
> He also said: "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." (Romans 15:19)

The Jews required signs (I Cor. 1:22), and God gave them abundantly!

True apostles performed signs and miracles with:

1) <u>Repetition</u> (**v. 12**) - "were...wrought" (imperfect tense)

2) <u>An exclusive office</u> (v. 13) - Their office was unique (only 12 and Paul with the office).

   V. 13
   "Durst" = dared. No one dared join the ranks of the apostles. No one dared call himself an apostle; but rather the people highly esteemed them! (They gave them the credit and respect due them. They made them large)
   After what happened to Ananias & Sapphira (5:1-11), no wonder no one dared to

deceitfully act like an apostle. They all feared (v. 11) to usurp the prerogatives of the Apostles.

Today, however, you have all kinds of bogus clergy claiming to be apostles.

3) Purpose (**v. 14**) - Salvation of souls is more important than the healing of bodies. The goal (purpose) for all ministry is to add people to the Lord.

4) Spontaneity (**v. 15a**) - Miracles were unrehearsed, right out on the streets (miracles were not staged, planned, prepared for, etc.)

5) Supernatural Ability (v. 15b) - "Shadow" passed by

V. 15b
"Shadow of Peter" = "The desire of the people to be contacted by Peter's shadow for healing was not necessarily superstition, for a woman once desired to touch Jesus' garment, and yet He said to her, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mt. 9:20-22). God was working through Peter, and it made little difference whether the instrument was the hem of a garment, clay and spittle, the pool of Siloam, or the shadow of an apostle. It was God's will which provided the power."

They were spectacular signs and wonders:
--physical healings
--demon exorcisms (Ex. sons of Sceva
SEE: Acts 19:13-17)

6) Unlimited effectiveness (**v. 16**) - They could heal everyone with God's power.

ILLUS: Oral Roberts Hospital is a joke and a discredit to his supposed ability to heal.

There were no failures. Nobody was sent away because he or she "did not have faith to be healed."

*** God's Work Cannot be Stopped**

Why not? 3 Reasons:

I. Trying to Stop God's Work is:
Fighting Against God's COMMISSION (v. 17-26)

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V. 17
They were being filled (passive - by Satan) with jealousy (a zeal motivated by hatred).

Why jealousy (envy)?

1) the apostles were popular (multitudes were being converted)
2) the Sadducees power was in jeopardy
3) their former orders not to speak in the name of Jesus were disregarded (cp. 4:18-21)
   (in fact, Peter and John told them they would be)

A. GO!

This verb speaks of initiative. (imperative)

The Great Commission says: "Go ye therefore..."

In order to bring people to Christ, we must go after them.

B. STAND!

V. 20
This participle speaks of courage

"Stand" = aor. participle.

"Speak by taking your stand."

The word is passive - Let God help you to stand up!

C. SPEAK!

This verb speaks of communication.

God never told us to win anybody to the Lord. He said: "Speak! Witness! Teach!" etc.

You will never lead a soul to Christ unless you speak (verbalize the Gospel).

They need more than your lifestyle.

V. 20
"All the Words of this life" - God's Commission is evangelism and discipleship (birth and growth)
V. 21b - 23
Can you imagine the surprised looks on the faces of the guards when they discovered that their most important prisoners were gone! The Sanhedrin

must have really been burnt when they heard the report. Here they were trying to stop God's miraculous working, but their actions only multiplied God's miraculous working! (See Wiersbe, p. 72)

God's work cannot be stopped!

v. 24
"Doubted" = "...They were perplexed about how they escaped and as to what would become of this miraculous escape."

II. Trying to Stop God's Work is: Fighting Against God's TRUTH (v. 27-33)

(It's Vain to Attack the Word of God)

Throughout history there has been a conflict between God's living Truth and man's dead tradition. Those holding to the tradition always persecuted those holding to the truth.

The English martyr Hugh Latimer said, "Whenever you see persecution, there is more than a probability that Truth is on the persecuted side" (cited from Wiersbe, p. 71)

V. 29

"Answered" = Passive pt. Apostles were caused by the Holy Spirit of God to answer. jesus said they would be delivered up before councils, etc., and they were not to think in advance what to say, but the Holy Spirit would speak in them (Mt. 10:17-20).

"We ought" = it is necessary.

The Apostles had no choice but to disobey the Sanhedrin. If they had obeyed them, they would have disobeyed the command (commission) of their Savior, that of God Himself.

You cannot serve 2 masters! You either side with God or the world!

One who takes a stand on God's Word:

1) Won't be bought off - You can't bribe God's man with money to alter his message - My only authority is the Bible. I don't want to preach for filthy lucre but to obey God.

2) Won't be threatened to stop preaching - If certain people don't want to hear it, he will simply go (like Paul) to people who do want to hear it.

V. 30-31

1. The Resurrection was true (v. 30a)

2. The fact that they killed Jesus was true (v. 30b)

   (It's amazing that they are trying to sneak out of their guilt for the death of Christ when just a few weeks previously, the multitudes were urged on by these priests to say, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt. 27:20, 25).

3. The fact that Jesus is exalted is true (v. 31a)

4. The fact that He can grant repentance and forgiveness is true (v. 31b)

5. The fact that Peter and the Apostles were eye-witnesses is true (v. 32)

6. The fact that the Holy Spirit is also witnessing this facts is also true.

7. The fact that the Holy Spirit comes to those who obey the truth is also true.

V. 32

To obey God is to submit to his will and be saved! You receive the Holy Spirit when you obey Him in the matter of salvation and not before.

Jesus is called the "Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:9). You can't obey God without accepting His free gift of salvation,a nd you will not accept His salvation without your life changing into one of obedience.

(EX - children's song - "OBEDIENCE is the very best way to show that we believe.")

Obedience in this context is following, listening to, and submitting to God and not men (v. 29).

V. 30-32

Peter didn't change his message at all! (he is still preaching the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ - cp. 2:22-36; 3:13-14; 4:10 - and the fact that salvation is only in Him; Peter is still calling for repentance! cp. 2:38).

Truth never changes!

V. 33

"Cut to the Heart" - not the same Gk. word as in 2:37; here it does not mean conviction, but infuriating anger.

In 2:37, the sincere humbled people were stung in their hearts; here, these religious liberals were cut. The word means literally to cut or saw through something.

This message cut across their grain!

It irritated them to the point of anger.

Why were the Sadducees so angry? Peter preached the Resurrection (v. 30) and the Holy Spirit (v. 32f), both of which the Sadducees denied (cp. 23:8).

Don't get mad when someone cares enough about you to give you the truth.

The truth will often hurt! The truth will often be hard to swallow, but accept it as good for you (EX medicine)

--It never pays to ignore the truth! (ILLUS: warning signs saying: "high voltage" or "explosive").

To ignore a fact does not alter a fact.

III. Trying to Stop God's Work is:
Fighting Against God HIMSELF (v. 34-41)

(It's Vain to Attack the Person of God)

V. 34

Gamaliel was a Pharisee. Why would the Sadducees listen to a Pharisee?

This man was a widely-known, respected rabbi (Paul was instructed under him before his salvation - 22:3).

Another reason why they listened to Gamaliel was because the people at large respected the teaching of the Pharisees (EX: Jesus said: "Do what they say, but not as they do, for they say and do not").

Josephus said of the Sadducees: "They are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions (ideas) of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear (tolerate) them" (Antiquities, XVIII 1:4)

V. 36, 37

Gamaliel describes people who "obeyed" a human leader as if to imply that Peter was calling on them to obey him (Peter).

Peter was not calling on them to obey himself but God!

The unsaved always become offended because they think it is you who are commanding them to be saved, when in fact it is God! We are merely telling them what God has said (not our own religion, etc.)

In those days Palestine had a quick succession of fire-brand leaders who set themselves up as the deliverers of their country and sometimes even as the Messiah (Barclay p. 50).
EX - Simon Bar Cochba - led revolts and promised victory over Rome
EX -Another man named Theodas who said to the people who followed him that he could divide the rivers of the Jordan and that they could cross on dry ground.

(Whenever God sends the real [ex. Jesus the Messiah], Satan sends in the counterfeits to confuse the issue. EX - false Christs in Trib. before Christ's return to set up kingdom.)

Judas in A.D. 6 said that God was the King of Israel and to him alone was tribute due. He called paying taxes blasphemy (Barclay, p. 50).

v. 38
Gamaliel basically said: "If this is merely another new human movement, it would fade away in due time as countless others had."

NOTE: However, some human movements -

1. Last for many years before dying out. Just because something lasts for a while doesn't mean it's from God. Temporal success is no test

of truth. Beware of pragmatism. Some cults grow faster than God's church (EX. Mormons, J.W.'s)

2. Change like a chameleon with the times (EX. R.C.C.)

V. 38, 39

"Come to naught" & "overthrow" = Lit. to loosen down. To come down. EX. to cave in like a rotted roof on a house.

This does not mean that the true Church never faced opposition (men have died). But the movement only spread further under persecution.

"Ultimately God's program will emerge victorious, and human schemes will vanish" (Kent, p. 59).

Jesus said: "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18)

2 possible ideas:

1) The doors (gates) that lead <u>into</u> the grave (Hades) - "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory"

2) The doors (gates) that lead <u>out of</u> hell - the evil, spiritual wickedness that fights against God's program. Note: In ancient cities, the most powerful dignitaries sat at the gates of a city and judged. What Jesus is saying is that not even the most powerful demons destined for Hell will be able to overcome God's work of building His church.

To fight against God's <u>program</u> (the church) is to fight against God.
To fight against God's <u>Word</u> is to fight against God.
To fight against God's <u>people</u> is to fight against God.
Jesus said to Saul: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou <u>me</u>?" (Acts 9:4)

Prov. 21:30 - "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord."

Peter even realized this point more when he saw that God was accepted and bestowing the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles. he said: "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?"

V. 40

"Beaten" - "forty stripes save one"
(Dt. 25:3; II Cor. 11:24)

Every lash across the back of the Apostles was in a sense another stripe on Christ! (They suffered shame for <u>His name</u> - v. 41).

Paul said he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossian church. He said in Col. 1:24 that he did "fill up that which is behind (lacking) of the afflictions of Christ" in his "flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."
Paul said: "I bear in my body the mark of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).
When people oppress you because of your faith, remember it is <u>not</u> really you they are attacking but Christ!

Jesus said: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me" (Mt. 10:40)
Luke 10:16 - "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

I Thes. 4:8 - "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit."

Mt. 25:45 - "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment"

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (Jn. 15:18; cp. I Jn. 3:13).

V. 41

"Shame" = dishonor. Not worthy of respect and honor.

when you are treated like dirt for the name of Jesus, rejoice!

Peter was really joyful! Why? Because He remembers how he had previously denied the Lord three times. He did not want to suffer shame then. Afterwards he regretted it, and now he had his chance to show Christ his love for Him.

CONCLUSION: **v. 42**

The beating and the threats did not frighten or discourage the Apostles.

We tend to stop when:

1. A door gets slammed in our face
2. Someone makes fun of us

3. The weather conditions and circumstances are not just right.

But God's Work Cannot be Stopped!

Trying to stop God's Work is:

I. Fighting against God's commission
II. Fighting against God's truth
III. Fighting against God Himself

We have a commission to fulfill, truth to preach and defend, and a God who is with us until the end of the world!

Application: No one can fight God and win. If God is working in your life, don't fight Him. If God is doing something special in someone else's life don't fight it. No one can thwart God's ultimate will.