

Acts 5:12-42
CBBC
August 28, 2025

Introduction—Lack of freedom of religion, hostility towards morality, boldness and violence against Christianity.

The church is always where God wants it to be.

He continues to draw people in by confirming the Gospels with miracles. 12-16. We continue to have all sorts of miracles happening. Although it pains us to think this way, what happened with Ananias and Sapphira is also considered a miracle. But this does describe some of the shifting landscape and foreshadows a bit of what is going to happen. The apostles are still doing signs and wonders on Solomon's portico, but they don't have quite as large an audience. The people hold the Christians in high esteem. How could they not? There is healing and signs. There are definite acts of service. That hatred and anger that we will see later have not yet crystallized. And Christians are being added to the church. It is amazing. We are told that it is multitudes of men and women.

The miracles are such that people want Peter's shadow to fall on the people in mats and cots. People come from all the towns around, bringing the sick and demon-possessed. All of them are healed. It is amazing. This is the end of the first growth spurt in the church. In chapter 6, they are going to create the office of deacon, and then Stephen is going to be seized. He will give his speech in front of the religious leaders, and he will be stoned to death. Then the great persecution is going to be unleashed. People are going to be scattered, looking back, we can see how God is massively growing the church with all of this healing, teaching, and conversions. And while we will

see healing and conversion happening in other places, we don't see it to this degree again.

The high priest and the Sadducees, who were the more liberal of the religious leaders, are jealous of what these apostles are doing. This is not a godly jealousy; this is a jealousy that is rooted in animosity and hatred. The people are flocking to the apostles, who are not only being healed but are stating that they are only able to heal because of Jesus working in them. They will talk about it later, but the temple system is being denied, and its replacement is the man whom they had killed.

They throw them in prison. It's uncomfortable. It is dangerous. It is pretty nasty. What happens in the middle of the night? An angel of the Lord comes and leads them out. "Good, we have escaped, we can lay low for a while or just take off." But what does the angel do? He tells them that they are to continue teaching what they have been teaching, and they are to do it where they have been teaching it. They are not to move to another location, a safer location. They are to go back to where they were.

God has absolute authority over the church. It doesn't matter what the government wants. Jesus created the church. We have to understand how different this was. There was already a community of God's people, and they were Israel. But, since they had continually rebelled against God because of the wickedness of their hearts, they were set aside for a while. So God creates another community of believers. They are literally "the assembly." In Matthew 16:18, God tells the disciples that He is going to take Peter's confession that Jesus Christ is God and make it the foundation of the church. In the same way that Satan cannot prevail against anyone that God protects, so Satan will not prevail against the church. God has total authority over the church and

every local congregation. In Revelation 3:7, Jesus reminds the church of Philadelphia that what He opens cannot be shut, and what He shuts cannot be opened. God increases and decreases the church as He desires. It does not matter what powers are raised up against the church; none of that happens without God allowing it. We see God doing this in other places. Remember Paul and Silas in jail in Philippi? They are beaten, thrown in prison, and what happens in the middle of the night? There is an earthquake, a jailer, and a plea. People come to Christ, and there is a church in Philippi. No matter how hostile humanity is to the church, the church is always where it is supposed to be because God puts it there. It cannot be moved from that place if God desires it there.

I think it is important to note that God quickly and with little drama takes them out of prison, and then He puts them back where they came from. There are times when the Lord will allow the government or those in power to persecute believers. It is essentially part of their nature. But in the same way that Satan could not act unless God gave him permission, so there is no power that can act against the church unless God allows it. This should be an incredible comfort to us. We should not fear what man can do to us or the church. Should we be concerned and pray? Absolutely. But we should not be anxious. If we lose our religious freedom here in the U.S., it would be a terrible thing, but that will in no way impact whether or not God keeps the church in the U.S. It doesn't matter how hostile the U.S. becomes against the church; if Jesus wants us here, the church will not be moved.

The church only has one Lord.

In verses 21-26, the religious leaders gather the next day to tear into the apostles, but when they send out to the prison, they find everything locked and the guards there, but when everything is opened, there is no one inside.

The religious leaders are incredibly astonished. This is compounded even more when they are told that these same people who are supposed to be in prison are once again, outside, in the temple and teaching the people.

The captain of the guard goes out to get them, but does so carefully because they knew that if they handled them roughly, they would be stoned to death by the populace.

(27-32) They are confronted by the priest. The priests pointed out that back in Acts 4:18, they told them not to teach in Christ's name. "Don't give credit to Jesus because of these miracles." But they keep doing it, and they say, "that they intend to bring this man's blood upon us." "Tied to Jesus' preaching is the guilt of the priesthood for the obvious point that Jesus would not have been crucified if the priesthood had not acted in a corrupt manner. If the religious leaders had not lied, hated God, and twisted everything around, Jesus would not have died. The rejection of Christ is a vital part of the Gospel.

Peter responds to them right off the bat. "We must obey God rather than men." This statement does so many things. It is an indirect confession that Jesus is God. Because who called them to make disciples? Jesus, and they must obey Him rather than men. They also have them emboldened by the Holy Spirit and through the miraculous release from prison that had just taken place. This is a confession. It is a

declaration and a recognition. Our obligation, our need, the Gospel means that we are going to obey God, rather than what men tell us, when the two contradict.

Peter gets personal here. God gave us Jesus, whom you killed. God has exalted Christ by putting Him on the right hand of the Father. He has given repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (which has been promised in Isaiah and the Psalms). We saw it happen. The Holy Spirit has also confirmed it in the hearts of others. They have been commissioned by God to call others to follow Christ. There is no question as to whom they will obey. It's not an issue. Whether it is our job, our government, or our unsaved friends and family, we hold obligations and responsibilities to all of them, but they only have the authority over us that God gives them. The church has only one Lord.

The church cannot fail in God's purpose.

The leadership wants to kill them, but calmer heads prevail. A man named Gamaliel stands up; he is honored by all. He asks that the apostles be taken somewhere else, and he lays out a pragmatic argument, but it is biblically pragmatic. He brings up two different examples of people who rebelled against the government in the name of God, but both were destroyed and wiped out.

He tells them that this may very well be God working. He doesn't say it here outright, but there is at least some acknowledgement of the authority of the apostles' miracles as well as Christ's. If it is not of God, it will fall apart. If it is of God, it will keep going, and they may even be seen as going against God if they go against the Jewish believers. So they called them in, beat them, and told them not to do it anymore.

Remember what happened before they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. They hid, they were afraid. Now they rejoiced that they could share in Christ's sufferings. I

Peter 4:12-13. They got to drink out of some of that cup. They did not cease teaching and proclaiming Christ.

Conclusion—

There are many things we should be concerned about, our own souls, the souls of others, our personal holiness, and so on, but we don't need to be concerned about the church.

While God providentially uses politics and political power to help, they are not necessary. God using political power shows His power, not the power of politics.

Nothing should distract us from our