

## Bible Study 19 – Acts 5:21-32

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, 23 “We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” 24 Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. 25 And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” 26 Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

1. The High Priest convenes the Council to condemn the apostles: Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

- a) They have already condemned the apostles in their hearts...
- b) They have already commanded the apostles not to preach and heal in Jesus' name....
- c) They have convened the Council to further censure and punish the apostles...

2. The High Priest and Council are confused by the apostles' absence: But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, 23 “We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” 24 Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to.

- a) The officers of the guard found the apostles' prison cell empty...

b) The officers of the guard frantically inform the chief priests that the apostles have escaped...

c) The officers of the guard are fearful of the repercussions...

3. The High Priest and Council exhibit consternation to discover the apostles at the Temple teaching the people: 25 And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."

a) The Council are astounded to discover that the apostles are within view...

b) The Council are astonished to digest the news that the apostles escaped prison and had returned to the Temple...

c) The Council are antagonistic towards the apostles' defiance...

4. The High Priest and Council order the Temple law enforcement to apprehend the apostles, but they respond cautiously afraid of the people: 26 Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

a) The Temple guard re-apprehend the apostles...

b) The Temple guard react cautiously for fear of the people...

c) The Temple guard were likely relieved to recapture and re-present the apostles before the Council...

5. The apostles are arraigned before the Council: 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

a) The High Priest interrogates the apostles before the Council...

b) The High Priest inveighs against the apostles for their defiance of the authorities...

c) The High Priest indicts the apostles for proclaiming Jesus whom the Council had condemned as a blasphemer, heretic, and revolutionary....

6. The apostles answer with an apologia (defence): 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ...32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

- a) The apostles reply in unison. They are united in the faith – such is their confidence, conviction, commitment, and courage...
- b) The apostles' response reveals their obedience to a higher authority than the Council's.... Their response reveals a divine imperative – we must obey God rather than men...
- c) The apostles' revelation is based on what they had personally seen and heard as witnesses confirmed by the enlightenment and equipping of the Holy Spirit...

7 The apostles articulate the good news which lay at the heart of their mission to the High Priest and Council: 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

- a) The apostles confess the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus whom the Council had condemned to death... Now, that takes faith and fortitude... but they will not be cancelled...
- b) The apostles communicate Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour... As the Way, the Truth, and the Life... This was his ministry and mission, and it continues in and through his church...
- c) The apostles confirm the need for faith and repentance for reconciliation, redemption, and renewal...

## Questions

1. Imagine yourself in the place of one of the apostles! How do you think you would have reacted to the authority's prohibition?
2. Romans 13:1 says: Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. How do we interpret such a statement in light of Acts 5:29?
3. Is civil disobedience ever justified for the Christian? If so, are there examples in addition to the above in the history of the church?
4. Where does supreme authority lie?