

The rescue of God into the dangers of preaching!

Acts 5:17-33

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INTRODUCTION

In ancient Greek and Roman drama there were on occasion, situations where the hero of the play would find himself or herself in such a difficult position that **there appeared to be no way out**. The playwright would have written the **theatrics** with such animation and **suspense**, *in order to entice the watching the audience* that sometimes it seemed impossible for the actor to survive the scene or the plot to be resolved

And as we know, we want the actors to survive, we want the hero of the story to end rescuing the damsel in distress and **live out the rest of his life to a ripe old age**. We don't want the hero to die! Or to be left defeated!

So what you would see in these ancient Greek and Roman dramas is *Deus ex machina!* **God out of or from the Machine**...So a representation of Roman or Greek god would be lowered into the stage production to resolve the plot or rescue the hero.

And what we have in our passage is exactly this *deus ex machina!*, yet!! Not with the ending we have become accustomed to by these Roman and Greek plays – the ending that seeks for the actor to be praised! And for all things to turn out well for the actor. No!

What we have here is...

**God comes to the rescue of the apostles by the means of an angel, God enters...He intervenes in His own drama in a fantastical way, frees the apostles....but only to throw them again...
into the dangers of preaching!!**

BODY

Acts 5:17

17 But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy
18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

I want you to pay close attention to the actors of this play.

- **We have the Sadducees** – who were the aristocratic priests, the controlling council of the Jewish state;
- **We have the Apostles** who are the ambassadors of Christ Jesus arrested and put in the public prison.

It would be good for us to know what these Sadducees believed...?

Acts 4:1-2

1 as [the apostles] were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and **the Sadducees came upon them,**

2 greatly annoyed **because** they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus **the resurrection from the dead.**

You see, the Sadducees did not **believe in the resurrection of the body**, they did not believe in angels or demons, and they did not believe in **the spiritual life**. The Sadducees believed this to be superstition, incompatible with their rational minds.

1. **The Sadducees** denied: “a **resurrection** after death!”
 - **The Apostles** said;

Acts 5:30

30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

2. **The Sadducees** denied; “**retribution** for sin!”
 - **The Apostles** said:

Acts 5:31

31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

3. **The Sadducees** denied “the existence of angels or heavenly beings!”

- **The Apostles** proclaimed;

Acts 5:19

19 during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out....

4. **The Sadducees** denied: “a supernatural, spiritual existence!”

- **The Apostles** said:

Acts 5:32

32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Can you see the irony in the unfolding drama of redemption? Satan captures the mind of the world to tearaway at the **very fabric of God’s revelation** by making the world believe the complete opposite of God and yet God still cannot be overcome. He uses the very ideas, the very theology of the so-called religious establishment against itself.

1. The Sadducees thinking themselves the **religious authority imprisoned** the apostles for what they preached, but God overruled the Sadducees and released the apostles whom the Sadducees imprisoned.
2. Not only did God free the Apostles but **God released them by the very means the Sadducees denied** – God used angels to free the apostles – when the Sadducees did not believe in angels...
3. But Not only did God free the apostles but then God refuted everything the priestly order stood for by the mouth of the Apostles...and you where this happened...?In the very teaching establishment of the Sadducees...in the temple!

We see this;

Acts 5:19-21

19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,

20 “Go and stand **in the temple** and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”

21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at **daybreak and began to teach...**

Two observations for us today....

Apart from the obvious sovereignty of God!
Allow me to show you something of your God deems important.

QUESTION #1

Let me start with a question...if I was to ask you; When you read about the beginnings of the church...especially Acts...what would you say is God priority **for the church**?...to the point that He would demonstrate Himself as the deus ex macina?

That God would intervene, in His own drama to make sure, His purpose was carried through?

The passage is before us...

1. Would you say that God’s highest priority for the church **is in social justice**?
2. Would you say that God’s highest priority for the church is the **Christian’s spirituality**?
3. Would you say that God’s highest priority for the church is **ministry programs**?

Is not what we see as God’s priority for the church – preaching of the gospel Jesus and everything else for the church is secondary?

God in His prerogative enters into His creation through the means of an angel to rescue His servants and instead of telling them, be of good cheer!, Go on holiday, you have already suffered much!

God frees His apostles from prison, **which they have been placed their because of their preaching**, then says to them, rather than go and preach where you were arrested in Solomon’s’ portico; **which**

has little religious importance, go to the very centre of the religious establishment, and preach my gospel there...

The apostles are arrested for gospel, freed, only to be once again placed in the very position that got them arrested in the beginning; the preaching of the gospel of Jesus!

G. Campbell Morgan proclaimed from the **Westminster pulpit early in the 1900's** he said;

Find me a man who calls himself a Christian and does not witness to the risen Christ, the crucified Christ, the exalted Christ, the living, working Christ, and he is of use neither to God nor man.

Find me a church where the Resurrection light is not shining, where the passion of blood is not proclaimed, and enthroned Lord is not revealed, and the working Lord is not felt and it is a tomb, an insult to God and to man.

OBSERVATION #2

I see by answering another question: What does God seek in his apostles? What is God after in them... and by extension in us?

This is such a powerful passage for us, because it tells us how God wants us to be His witnesses...notice that when the apostles are first arrested, they are in Solomon's portico...I mentioned this last week...

Acts 5:12

12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

This is not the first time they were arrested...do you remember when the Peter heals the lame man who was seated at the gate called beautiful...they were going to the temple for prayers NOT to preach...but soon as they heal the lame man we read;

Acts 3:11-12

11 While [the lame man] clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the **portico called Solomon's**.

12 And when Peter saw it **he addressed the people:**

Then we read in

Acts 4:1-2

1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and **the Sadducees** came upon them,

2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people

Acts 4:3

3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day,

The apostles are already known by the religious council...They are not liked...and that fact that they are preaching in Solomon's porch is no good to the Sadducees, but look what God desires from them now...

Acts 5:20

20 "Go and **stand in the temple** and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

God wants the apostles to stand in the temple...a position of authority and **IN THE TEMPLE** now...not just a covered walkway on the perimeter of the temple. **BUT IN THE TEMPLE!!**

Two questions here;

1. What do you think God wants from them?
2. What do you think the Sadducees will do to them?

Well, what God wants from them...and from us...is just obedience!! Do what the Lord desires from you, trusting in Him that He will come down from heaven and save you if need be!

But remember! His saving from difficult circumstances does not mean He will place you in better circumstances...but does mean He will never leave you or forsake you!

When the Sadducees finally interrogate them see what their commands are?

Acts 5:28

28... “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.”

Now listen their response;

Acts 5:29

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “**We must obey God rather than men.**”

God desires obedience...and from this obedience God will not take back His promise;

Acts 5:32

32 we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those **who obey him.**”

God does not want your piety, your skills, your talents, your money, your time, your ministry above obedience...You and I are the witnesses for Christ our God...He demands obedience...doing what the Lord desires for your life...

The Second question...what do you think the Sadducees will do with these apostles, these witnesses, that have obeyed God...?

Acts 5:33

33 When they heard this, they were enraged and **wanted to kill them.**

It is reminiscent of the ministry of Jesus, is it not?

CONCLUSION

Let me end by asking you another question!

See how the apostles were in prison, then released from prison and told to go to the temple and preach!!!

They knew at the very least that they would be **imprisoned again**...we read further in this chapter that indeed they were arrested, **but they were also beaten**...

So let me us you a **question Providence**; if God commissioned you to preach and you knew that you would be imprisoned and beaten for it, would you go out and preach?

Think about it, if God asked you to go our and proclaim His gospel, and you knew you would be imprisoned and beaten for it would you?

Now ask yourself would you proclaim the gospel if nothing would happen to you for it...but just name calling....you wouldn't be thrown in prison, you wouldn't even be beaten for it...but maybe you would be just heckled every now and again...would you then preach the gospel...?

Amen.