

## Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

(June 25, 2017)

Dave Smith

Sermon manuscript

**Sermon Series:** Disciples, On the GO!  
(Studies of the book of Acts)

### **The LOGICAL Christian Life**

(Acts 5:12-42)

Study #8

#### **Introduction: What were you thinking?...**

When someone asks, *“What were you thinking?”* you know that they aren’t really expecting an answer. It’s a question that makes a statement: You weren’t thinking!

My father asked me that question once, when I was seventeen years of age. It was after an unfortunate incident involving a car. When he asked, he didn’t want me to tell him what I was thinking.

Honestly, I really hadn’t been thinking much at all.

Dad’s question, though, moved me to start thinking about the importance of thinking. He prompted me to make a turn toward wisdom and toward logical thinking.

The ability to think clearly and logically is an important life skill.

Thinking logically will help you solve a math problem and win a debate. It’ll even help you when driving on Loop 1604.

It turns out that thinking and living logically is crucial to the life of faith, too. And if “logic” sounds a bit on the cold side, trust me. What we’ll see this morning is spiritually passionate logic.

Today, our study in Acts shows Jesus’ disciples living on the basis of spiritual logic - and they call us to follow the same path.

When we catch up to them at Acts 5:12, fear rules the day.

Normally, that would be a bad thing. In this case, it’s a good thing, because THIS fear is healthy. THIS fear liberates.

After Ananias and Sapphira had been disciplined for lying to the Holy Spirit, the church was experiencing the fear of the Lord. And the fear of the Lord produces holiness and obedience and worship.

The fear of the Lord is not a terror that paralyzes. It is a response to God’s majesty that energizes.

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, paints a picture of the wonderful things that were happening in the church, in the light of this energizing fear.

#### **Background: The State of the Communion (vv. 12-16)**

- Acts 5:12 tells us that the apostles were empowered by God to perform more miracles.
- Verse 14 tells us the *“multitudes of men and women”* were coming to faith in Jesus.
- Verse 16 tells us that word of the great things that were happening was getting out, and that those from outside Jerusalem were making their way to Jerusalem to be healed of diseases and to find deliverance from Satan’s power.<sup>1</sup>

To sum up, the church in Jerusalem was doing great.

But after this great progress report, we come to a familiar word at Acts 5:17. It is the word *“But.”* We’ve seen that word before. Where that word pops up we usually find trouble.

Wherever God’s work is flourishing, the enemy - Satan - will set traps and snares to trip up the church. We’ve seen see this trap before.

---

<sup>1</sup> People were coming from all around Jerusalem to be healed. In this, history was repeating itself, for they did the same thing with Jesus (see Matthew 4:24).

## **In the Jail Again (vv. 17-25)**

### **“Prison Fellowship” for ALL the Apostles (vv. 17-18)**

*Naming the opposition (v. 17)*

#### **Jealous Sadducees**

***[17] But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.***

We’ve seen the Sadducees take center stage before.

In the Gospels, they opposed Jesus and helped turn Him over to the Romans for crucifixion.

In Acts 4, they opposed the apostles, Peter and John, and sent them to jail for a night.

Well, here they are again, and this time, they are jealous. They had been jealous of Jesus had while He was alive. Now, they are jealous of the success of His followers.

#### **Offended Sadducees**

They are jealous - and they are angry.

When they had released Peter and John from their earlier jail sentence they had told them, *“No more speaking about Jesus!”*

And yet, here they are, speaking about Jesus.

The Sadducees were powerful men and they weren’t going to stand for this insubordination. They were ready to deal with the apostles of Jesus as forcefully as they had with Jesus.

*A time for action! (v. 18)*

***[18] They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.***

The previous jail time involved only Peter and John. This time, the Sadducees rounded up all twelve apostles and threw them in jail together.

The first time, they were simply held overnight. This time, I suspect that the Sadducees intended to keep them in jail much longer.

The point of this jail sentence is to convince the apostles that it simply wasn’t worth it to keep on with this “Jesus nonsense.”

God had other plans...

### **“Catch & Release” Apostles (vv. 19-21a)**

*Released (v. 19)*

***[19] But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison... - and, just like that, the apostles found themselves standing outside the jail in the middle of the night.***

Now, God-sized things had to happen for this miraculous jailbreak to take place.

Things like unlocking and opening the locked jail door, and ensuring that the guards slept during the whole thing.<sup>2</sup>

The apostles are now breathing clean, fresh, free air. THEY are free! And then the angel who released them gave them a Great re-Commission.

*Re-commissioned (v. 20)*

He told them, ***[20] “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”***

Are you surprised at this?

---

<sup>2</sup> As well - while this didn’t have to happen, we know from later on in the story that it did happen - the gate had to be closed and locked behind them after they got out.

The angel performed miracles on minds and metal to set the apostles free. But the point was NOT to bring them from jail to safety. The point was to thrust them back out on to the front lines.

He sent them straight from the frying pan of jail into the fire of witness!

Notice just how committed our Commander-in-Chief - Jesus - is to the mission of bringing the Gospel to those who are lost.

Now, of course, God loves us who belong to Him. There is no question about that.

But we who are His are “saved.” We are safe forevermore. And nothing can separate us from the love of God. Not even death.

There are others, though, who are not safe and sound in the arms of God. They need to be rescued. And we who are safe are the people who are to rescue those who aren’t.

This is God’s plan: that the saved - who can never be unsaved - will rescue the lost.

My friends, this is hot-blooded, spiritually passionate, logic.

Jesus proved His love for us by giving His life on the cross. He is now *less concerned* with our safety, our reputations and our comfort, and is *more concerned* that we be *on mission* for Him.

Having rescued our eternal souls, you and I are expendable in the on-going war for the souls of those who are still far from God.

If there are inconveniences and costs - even casualties - along the way, it is worth it. The people you and I know who do not know Jesus need Him more than we need relief.

He loves THEM so much that He is willing to send people like US to go get them. That is simply logical.

Now, this apostolic jail break took place “**during the night.**”

And as soon as it was light they headed straight to the Temple, just like the angel told them to do.

*Re-engaged (v. 21a)*

**[21a] Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach.<sup>3</sup>**

Do you suppose that the apostles experienced fear as they walked from the public jail to the temple?

Possibly. Probably.

Fears of getting arrested again. Fears of going back to jail. Fears of worse than that.

But, along with these fears, they also knew the fear of the Lord. They feared, they revered God more than they feared the Sadducees. So, they spoke about Jesus in the temple.

While the apostles were sharing the gospel at the Temple, Luke takes us back to the chambers of the Sanhedrin.

I suspect that if the apostles were fearful and obedient, the Sadducees were gloating.

The Sadducees were sure that, now, after having spent a night in jail for a second time, Peter and his friends will be more compliant.

They probably thought, “*They’ll see that talking about Jesus isn’t worth it. The Jesus Movement is over.*”

But the Sadducees didn’t know what had happened during the night. And when they sent soldiers to the jail to drag the apostles back to the Council they didn’t find what they thought they would find.

---

<sup>3</sup> To return to the temple and preach after a beating and in the face of more of the same if they continued may seem to us an act of mad recklessness. To them, it seemed perfectly reasonable. Logical.

## **Found and Lost and Found! (vv. 21b-26)**

*Mission NOT accomplished! (vv. 21b-24)*

The soldiers rushed back to the Sanhedrin with a report.

**[23]...“We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside.”**

So, everybody knows that the apostles are no longer in jail. But nobody knows where the apostles are.

And that’s when somebody else rushed in with the news.

*From jail to the temple (vv. 25-26)*

**[25]...“The men whom you put in prison<sup>4</sup> are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”**

After that shocking news sunk in, the members of the Sanhedrin sent the soldiers to the temple with orders to haul the apostles back to the Council. They are going to have to answer again for talking about Jesus again!

So, the scene we see next is very confrontational. The Sanhedrin is railing at the apostles. The Jewish high priest spoke to the Twelve.

## **Apostles vs. Council, Round 2 (vv. 27-40)**

### **The Apostles - Scolded by the Council (vv. 27-28)**

**[28]...“We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”**

*“Guys, did you think we were kidding the first time? We meant it! NO MORE TALKING ABOUT JESUS. PERIOD.”*

So, what will the apostles say to the Sanhedrin’s threats? Will they obey? Will they retreat? Always the spokesman, Simon Peter answers the high priest with clear-headed, spiritually-minded logic.

### **The Apostles - Standing Firm! (vv. 29-32)**

*Point 1: “We must obey God rather than man”*

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

That is the most logical thing you’ll ever hear. If there is a God, it is only reasonable that we should obey Him rather than any human authority.

But Peter wasn’t finished. He evangelized the Sanhedrin!

*Point 2: “Hey, have you guys heard the Gospel?”*

**[30] “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. [31] He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”**

So, Peter, standing trial for the crime of preaching Jesus, preached Jesus - to the prosecution!

Talk about bold!! And then, talk about loving!

He cared for the eternal souls of these men who had put him in jail. After all, Jesus died for them. Clearly, Jesus loved them.

So, it’s only logical that Peter would also love them enough to present the Good News to them, too.

But despite logic, love, and boldness, the Sanhedrin wasn’t at all receptive.

<sup>4</sup> Note the emphasis of the unnamed announcer, “**YOU put in prison.**”

## The Apostles - an Unexpected Sponsor (vv. 33-39)

*Conviction and wrath (v. 33)*

**[33] But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.**

If they were “*cut to the quick*” - being convicted of the truth of what Peter was saying, called for a response of repentance. Of faith. Of turning to God.

Instead, they wanted to kill them. They were on the verge of stoning the apostles<sup>5</sup> to death - but deliverance came from a completely unexpected source.

God brought an advocate to their rescue from within the ranks of the Council itself, an Advocate who recommended caution.

The man’s name was Gamaliel.<sup>6</sup> He was not a Sadducee, but a Pharisee. He was a highly-respected teacher of the Law.

Jesus reserved some of His harshest rebukes for Pharisees, but the apostles owed their lives to this one.

Gamaliel first had the apostles leave the room. Then he gave his advice.

*Wisdom from Gamaliel (vv. 34-39)*

He told his fellow Council members to be very careful when handling Jesus’ followers.

He reminded them of two other men - Theudas<sup>7</sup> and Judas of Galilee - who had started revolutionary movements some years earlier.

---

<sup>5</sup> Presumably by stoning, which is what they will do shortly to Stephen, Acts 7.

<sup>6</sup> We will see Gamaliel, again, later in Acts, as he was the man who mentored Saul of Tarsus before Saul was converted and became the Apostle Paul.

<sup>7</sup> The Jewish historian Josephus mentions a man named Theudas, an impostor who persuaded many to take their possessions and follow him to the Jordan, evidently posing as a second Moses who would part the waters and lead the people to a place where they would be free from Roman domination.

No action was taken against them, and their movements came to nothing. Gamaliel advised the same non-action here. Do nothing to the followers of Jesus.

**[38] “So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; [39] but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.”**

Thankfully, Gamaliel’s wise and logical counsel prevailed. The Sanhedrin agreed to not kill the apostles. Instead, they kindly and gently released them, as we will now see.

## The Apostles, Lashed Then Unleashed (v. 40)

**[40] They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.**

Did you get that?

*“Yeah, you’re right Gamaliel. They might be speaking the truth. So, let’s let them go...RIGHT AFTER WE BEAT THEM!”*

Now “flogging” was not the punishment Jesus endured before He was crucified. That Roman beating was called a “scourging” (sometimes “the half death”).

But a flogging was no light slap on the wrist. A Jewish soldier would beat a man on his back and chest with a three-stranded strap of calf hide.

Thirty-nine lashes. It was a painful beating, and each of the apostles received it.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The Law required that a fellow Jew not be beaten with more than 40 lashes, lest he be “humiliated.” The Jews of Jesus’ day stopped at thirty-nine in case there might have been a miscounting.

The Sanhedrin's hope was that this flogging, coupled with another tongue-lashing, would finally convince the apostles that it was just not worth it to keep on following and talking about Jesus.

Well, our story is almost over. There is only one final scene to see. There has already been miracles and conversions and angel-powered jail breaks and it's all been pretty exciting.

I think, though, that there is no more inspiring image than what we find at the very end of the story, after the flogging.

### **Taking it BACK to the Streets (vv. 41-42)**

#### **Shamed, but Not ASHAMED! (v. 41)**

***[41] So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.<sup>9</sup>***

They no doubt saw the parallels between their treatment and what Jesus experienced. They remembered Jesus' words about persecution.

Yes, they suffered. Yes, they were treated shamefully. But they didn't believe that God had abandoned them.

They understood that life is all about making investments in eternity. They made those investments, suffered for it, and were satisfied with the deal. They were honored to be dishonored for Jesus.

And they kept on keeping the faith by giving it away.

#### **Beaten, but not BROKEN! (v. 42)**

***[42] And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.***

They paid no more attention to the Sanhedrin's second set of instructions than they had to the first. What they had said earlier - "***We must obey God rather than men.***" - wasn't just a slogan. It was their life.

### **Conclusion:**

Again, how very logical.

The apostles looked at all they had been through. Then, they look at all they know about Jesus. And they logically concluded - "*Jesus is worth it all.*"

Today, given what Jesus has given us and given what is in store for us after this life is over, isn't it only logical to conclude that He is worth it?

- He is the only One worthy of the first place in our hearts.
- He is the only One worthy of our allegiance and commitment.
- He is the only One worth risking it all for.

Such a life is, after all, only logical.

---

<sup>9</sup> *[Matthew 5:10] Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*