

Acts 5:19: *'But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 'Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.'*

God opened the prison doors, releasing the Apostles to return to the Temple, preaching and teaching the Words of THIS life: they were speaking the words of life but also portraying the words of *this life*, this life of persecution and deprivation, of being hated, pursued and killed by the World.

Not many would volunteer to that kind of life and, yet, when God calls, reveals Himself to and saves one, then, like the Apostles, one cannot but speak the words of life.

Verse 21: *'And when they (the Apostles) heard that, (what the angel of the Lord had said) they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came (he did not yet know the Apostles had been freed), and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and told, ²³ Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.'*

The high priest, all who were with him, the entire council and senate of all Israel... they wanted this thing kept quiet but God was forcing this to be seen and known by all Israel.

Some years later, the same kind of situation will surround Paul and Silas in Thessalonica: *'... But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and **set all the city on an uproar**, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, **These that have turned the world upside down** are come hither also;'* Acts 17:6

Beginning with the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, God did turn the World upside down! Satan has always sought to destroy the Work of God but It has always continued to grow and strengthen: Jesus said: *'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'* Matt 16:18

Verse 24: *'Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.'*

Their doubt, their fear was that this would continue to grow (it was already into many thousands) so large that their own positions and authority would be at risk. Their hold on power was precarious enough as it was; theirs was a balancing act between the people and Rome; they knew that Rome could, anytime, choose to destroy all that they had... which, by the way, is exactly what happened about 35 years later which was directly precipitated by their rejection and treatment of the Lord Jesus Christ and of these, His Apostles.

Verse 25: *'Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.'*

This is a theme throughout the history of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ; someone hears the Gospel, is drawn by God and is born again; they begin to tell their friends and family: some believe, some don't care while others reject the Word, even violently. Believers gather together, some can meet openly in designated locations while others must meet secretly to avoid arrest and prison but the time of true believers meeting openly is fast coming to a close as country after country outlaw the possession, teaching and learning of God's Word. For us, here, we can still meet freely but depending on what happens during the run-up to November's so-called election that could change overnight.

Verse 26: *'Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.'*

Too bad the 'people' didn't respond in the same way toward the teaching of Jesus; a little stoning of the authorities might have been a good thing...

This 'captain and officers' are not Romans; these are Jewish authorities; they recognize that this 'new movement' is quickly growing beyond their perceived control, so much so, that they 'fear the people!' They

realize that they must resist causing an uprising; if that were to happen, Rome would quickly become involved; they understand: they must show the Roman governor that they can control the people; this is the same thinking this same Caiaphas said, regarding Jesus: *'Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. ⁴⁸ If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. ⁴⁹ And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ Nor consider that it is expedient **for us**, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. ⁵¹ And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; ⁵² And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. ⁵³ Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.'* John 11:47

Verse 27: *'And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, ²⁸ Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.'*

Once again, straitly commanding: 'Do Not Teach in the Name of Jesus!!' All Jerusalem was being filled with their teaching/doctrine. It was too bad for Jerusalem that 'all Jerusalem' didn't respond to their doctrine; soon, real persecution will begin against the growing Church in Jerusalem; God will force them out into the World to preach the Gospel and Rome will completely destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.

Caiaphas accuses the Apostles of intending to bring Jesus Christ's blood upon them; it's a little late for that, actually. He undoubtedly remembers most clearly what he and the other leaders had urged among the crowd watching the condemnation of the Lord Jesus Christ: *'Then answered **all the people**, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.'* For the past nearly 2000 years, Jews around the World have been paying the price for their ancestors' evil curse on their own progeny!

Verse 29: *'Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.'*

Here, Peter is explaining their disobedience to the commands of the Jewish ruling authority yet, later, Peter will write: *'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; ¹⁴ Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.'* 1 Peter 2:13

Later, we'll read how Paul does disobey the authority's command to cease from preaching Salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but he, then later, wrote: *'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. ² Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: ⁴ For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.'* Rom 13:2

We're commanded to submit ourselves unto our governing authorities but we can clearly see that those in power are increasingly evil; what are we to do?

Very simply, we are commanded to submit and obey until the point when what we are commanded to do would be in violation of the Rule and Will of God as revealed in His written Word.

But, then, there are those times when what we are commanded to do is not clearly addressed in God's Word. For example: 'You must take the covid vaccine to be able to work or shop or leave your home; you must allow it to your children or they cannot attend school...'

When that happens, we are left with prayer and then the exercise of our God-given wisdom and conscience. We must weigh every possible outcome and then decide what we must do. Some have taken the vax and experienced no obvious ill effects while others have and it seemed to result in very ill effects, even death.

Very literally, this can be the choice of: 'Is this the hill I'm ready to die on? vs Is this worth the risk to myself or my children?'

Soon, the question, to so many, will be: 'Is it better to take the Mark on my hand or forehead and be able to move about or is it better to refuse the Mark, resulting in death?' That is the choice for which all the World's peoples are, even now, being prepared. Little by little, incrementally, we are being forced to make small concessions in order to move about freely. Soon, the choices will begin to be even more difficult as we are becoming more and more squeezed into the place where that final choice will need be made by every person left on the Earth after the removal of the True Church, in the Rapture.

'Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.' He continues:

Verse 30: *'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.'*

'God raised Him back to life after you crucified Him: His Blood is already on your heads and you know it!'

Verse 31: *'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.'*

'Israel! Leadership! There's still time! He will grant repentance and forgiveness of sins!' Don't continue on your present path to destruction!

Some of these rulers, passing judgment on Jesus Christ's representatives, will still be alive 36 years later when Rome sends its army to destroy everything; some will surely make the connection between that horror and their actions this day, along with their actions a few months earlier; then will Jesus' Words be fulfilled: *'See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'* Matt 24:2

When the temple was destroyed and burned, Roman soldiers pulled down and lifted up every stone in the effort to find and retrieve any gold which would have melted and then run down into the cracks of the foundations. Jesus didn't have to say, not one stone left upon another; He could have simply said, 'It will all be torn down,' but His prophetic Word was specific and wholly fulfilled!

Verse 32: *'And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.'*

Throughout God's Word, His Prophets and Apostles have said, repeatedly: 'We cannot *not speak* the Words of God nor can we *not faithfully witness* to the Acts of God; Jeremiah wrote: *'Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.'* Jer 20:9

Not only do we speak and witness unto Him but even more so, His Holy Spirit does witness of Him unto the spirit of every child of God.

This is important: Peter said: *'...the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.'* That obey Him? Many would say this proves that the Holy Spirit is only given to those who are obedient and faithful in all things, those who've reached that level of holiness as in *'the holiness movement.'*

Does Peter mean that the Holy Spirit is only given to those who obey the 10 Commandments and all the Law? Peter means that the Holy Spirit is given to all those who obey one special command; Paul will later explain that exact command; speaking to the Philippian Jailer, he said: *'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.'* Acts 16:30

That is the one command to be obeyed in order to receive the Holy Spirit; it is the command that every true child of God has obeyed and then, to every true child of God, the Holy Spirit is given.

'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' Rom 10:9

Verse 33: *'When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.'*

Once before, we read of those whose hearts were cut: *'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'*³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren,

what shall we do?' ³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' Acts 2:36

After Peter's first sermon, 3000 hearts were pricked; they responded in repentance and faith to believe. Here, before the Jewish ruling council, Peter's words cut to their hearts but these respond with murderous hatred.

Every time God's Word goes out, it accomplishes God's intended purpose in every heart as it cuts deeply, revealing the heart of each heart:

'So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.' Isa 55:11

'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Heb 4:12

The Word of God always accomplishes, in every heart, exactly what God intended; to the one God is calling, His Word cuts, softens and opens the heart, revealing to the hearer his own sinful heart; then, God grants His gifts of repentance and faith to believe unto eternal Salvation.

To the one not being called by God, His Word has the opposite effect; that heart is hardened and further darkened in resistance, rebellion and sin, leading, ultimately, to eternal damnation unless God later draws that heart to Himself..... but whichever avenue a heart travels, it will always accomplish God's will... always!

'The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil... The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.' Prov 16:4, 33

These wicked Jewish rulers determined, in their wicked and evil hearts, to do unto these Apostles what they had recently done to the Lord Jesus Christ: 'kill them and be done with it!' They cast the lot, as it were, but God intervened through His special emissary to thwart their plans and fully accomplish His will:

Verse 34: *'Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; ³⁵ And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. ³⁶ For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. ³⁸ And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: ³⁹ But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. ⁴⁰ And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.'*

Gamaliel is not just some low level guy; he is well known and respected; they listen to him; in fact, he was Paul's instructor! Several years after this, here in Jerusalem, some of these same rulers and people were about to kill Paul; when Paul stood to give his defense, he said: *'... I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day...'* Acts 22:3

Gamaliel spoke from God and they, at least this one time, listened and freed the Apostles.

Verse 41: *'And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.'*

The next day... they're back at it again, giving no thought to their own safety while trusting God to uphold them until He would call them home.