

The Conflict between Witnessing and Opposition to the Gospel

Acts 5:12-6:15 (ESV) / March 11, 2023

1) WITNESSING: *The Apostles Continue to Witness after the Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira* (5:12-16)

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.

None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. **And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,**

so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

1^A) OPPOSITION: *The Arrest of the Apostles for Witnessing for Jesus* (5:17-18)

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

2) WITNESSING: *The Apostles are Released from Prison to Keep Witnessing for Jesus* (5:19-25)

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

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

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

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.

But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported,

"We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside."

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. And someone came and told them,

"Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."

2^A) OPPOSITION: *The Apostles Are Tried before the Council for Witnessing for Jesus* (5:26-28)

Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 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.”

3) WITNESSING: *The Apostles Will Obey God to Witness for Jesus, not the Council’s Charge* (5:29-32)

But Peter and the apostles answered,

*“We must obey God rather than men.
The God of our fathers raised Jesus,
whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.
God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior,
to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
And we are witnesses to these things, and
so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

3A) OPPOSITION: *The Sanhedrin Seeks to Kill the Apostles for Witnessing about Jesus* (5:33,)

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

4) WITNESSING: *Gamaliel Intervenes for the Apostles to Continue Witnessing about Jesus* (5:34-39a,)

But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them,

*“Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.
After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered.*

*So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail;
but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!”*

4A) OPPOSITION: *The Apostles are Beaten, Threatened, and Released for Witnessing about Jesus* (5:39b-40, ESV)

So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

5) WITNESSING: *The Apostles Keep Witnessing and the Church Continues to Grow* (5:41-42)

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

5A) OPPOSITION: *The Apostles are Distracted from Witnessing about Jesus* (6:1-2)

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said,

“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

6) WITNESSING: *The Apostles Appoint Others to Allow the Apostles to Witness about Jesus* (6:2-8)

And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose

Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.

These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

6^A) OPPOSITION: *The Sanhedrin bring False Witnesses Against Stephen for Witnessing about Jesus* (6:9-15)

Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly instigated men who said,

"We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said,

"This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us."

And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

**Why Does Witnessing about Jesus Demand the Power of the Holy Spirit?
The Church in Jerusalem / Acts 3:1-8:3**

But you will receive power when **the Holy Spirit** has come upon you, and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8, ESV)

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for **the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:38-41, ESV)

1.	Witness:	Lame man healed; Peter's message of Jesus	3:1-26
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Arrest and imprisonment of Peter and John by the Sanhedrin	4:1-7
2.	Witness:	Peter's message of salvation only in Jesus (filled with the Holy Spirit)	4:8-12
	<i>Opposition:</i>	Peter and John charged to stop witnessing about Jesus	4:13-18
3.	Witness:	Peter and John refuse to stop witnessing	4:19-20
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Sanhedrin threatened them and let them go	4:21-22
4.	Witness:	The church rejoices and is filled with the Holy Spirit with boldness	4:23-37
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Holy Spirit is lied to by Ananias and Sapphira	5:1-11
5.	Witness:	Many signs and miracles performed; Peter's shadow heals	5:12-16
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The apostles are arrested and imprisoned for their witness	5:17-18
6.	Witness:	The angel of the Lord frees the Apostles to witness	5:19-26
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Sanhedrin charges the Apostles not to witness about Jesus	5:27-28
7.	Witness:	The Apostles refuse to remain silent and choose to obey God	5:29-32
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Sanhedrin wants to kill the Apostles	5:33
8.	Witness:	Gamaliel convinces the Sanhedrin to release the Apostles to witness	5:34-39
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Apostles beaten, charged to remain silent, and released	5:40
9.	Witness:	The Apostles continued to preach and to teach about Jesus	5:41-42
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The Apostles are distracted from witnessing by feeding the Greek widows.	6:1-4
10.	Witness:	Seven men are selected to serve tables as the Apostles and Stephen witness	6:5-8
	<i>Opposition:</i>	Stephen falsely accused before the Sanhedrin to stop his witnessing	6:9-15
11.	Witness:	Stephen witnesses to Jesus through the history of Israel	7:1-53
	<i>Opposition:</i>	Stephen stoned with the approval of Saul (Paul)	7:54-58
12.	Witness:	Stephen cries out to Jesus before he dies	7:59-60
	<i>Opposition:</i>	The church in Jerusalem scattered due to the persecution	8:1-3