

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #25

COMMENTARY ON: 5:34-42

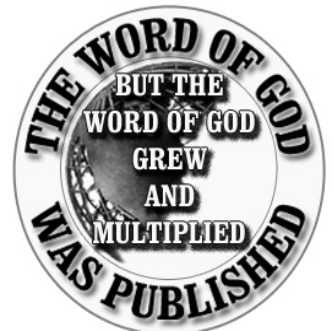
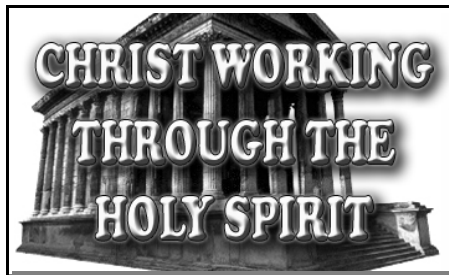
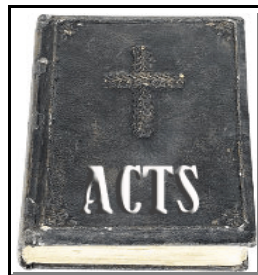
GAMALIEL GIVES HIS COUNSEL

Because the work of the apostles had not yet been completed in Jerusalem, God will not allow it to be thwarted by their enemies. While the council was moved with envy, and could not reason in a sound manner, God will use a man with a greater degree of judgment than the high priest to bring some order to the trial. This will be a man who is acquainted with Scripture. He will also be a man of discernment, who has taken note of extraordinary events, and been able to correlate them with his knowledge of the ways of God. Even though the high priest and Sadducees were wicked men, they will yield to the wisdom of the man who speaks to them. This is the working of the Lord, and must be perceived as such. This was not a matter of the council yielding to greater wisdom. It was rather the Lord overturning their intentions. Yet, it has every appearance of being the triumph of sound reasoning. There is much to be seen here that will encourage our hearts to trust the Lord in all kinds of circumstance.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

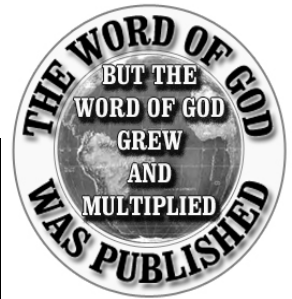


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 25



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- *Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification* -----
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

GAMALIEL GIVES HIS COUNSEL

“ 5:34 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. 37 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. 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.” (Acts 5:34-42)

INTRODUCTION

Because the work of the apostles had not yet been completed in Jerusalem, God will not allow it to be thwarted by their enemies. The Lord Jesus has been

given the reins to the Kingdom, together will all power in heaven and earth. He is engaged in the building of His church, and will not allow that work to be

thwarted by the devil, whom He soundly defeated in His death (Heb 2:14). The work is under way as His ambassadors are sounding forth the message, in which

Challenged with the assumed authority of the high priest and his council, the Apostles quickly answer – by Given O. Blakely

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- THEN GAMALIEL STOOD UP (5:34)
- TAKE HEED WHAT YOU INTEND YOU DO (5:35)
- THINK ABOUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED RECENTLY (5:36-37)
- LET THESE MEN ALONE (5:38)
- YOU CANNOT FIGHT AGAINST GOD (5:39)
- TO HIM THEY AGREED (5:40a)
- THEY BEAT THEM AND LET THEM DO (5:40b)
- THEY LEFT REJOICING (5:41)
- THEY CONTINUED TO TEACH AND PREACH (5:42)
- CONCLUSION

the power given to Him has been invested. While the council was moved with envy, and could not reason in a sound manner, God will use a man with a greater degree of judgment than the high priest to bring some order to the trial. This will be a man who is acquainted with Scripture, and is an expert in the Law. He will also be a man of discernment, who has taken note of extraordinary events, and been able to correlate them with his knowledge of the ways of God.

Even though the high priest and Sadducees were wicked men, they will yield to the wisdom of the man who speaks to them. This is the working of the Lord, and must be perceived as such. This was not a matter of the council simply yielding to greater wisdom. It was rather the Lord overturning their intentions in His own inscrutable wisdom. Yet, it has every appearance of being the triumph of sound reasoning. There is much to be seen here that will encourage our hearts to trust the Lord in all kinds of circumstance.

THE PRECEDENT APPROACH

There are a number of things being revealed in the book of Acts. It is not a mere history book, or the establishment of a pattern to be emulated or followed. There are, to be

sure, precedents in this record of events. A precedent is a certain order, arrangement, or significance that took place in previous times. However, it is essential to know the type, or kind, of those precedents. **They are not to be viewed as primarily organizational or procedural.** That is, the book of Acts is not fundamentally about the pattern or organization of the church. Neither is it intended to establish a single body of words through which men are told how to be saved. For example, there are a number of statements made concerning the appropriation of salvation and the remission of sins. All of them are harmonious, yet no single one of them is intended to be the official approach or nomenclature of the church. Here are some examples of what was said.

- ⇨ *“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21)
- ⇨ *“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 2:38).
- ⇨ *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”* (Acts 3:19).
- ⇨ *“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:36-37).
- ⇨ *“To him give all the prophets*

witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

- ⇨ *“And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39).
- ⇨ *“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31).
- ⇨ *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

None of these statements was intended to be an all-inclusive formula for salvation. Nor, indeed, are men to merge them all together and come up with a general statement that includes them all. **What we have in these statements is a record of a living approach to salvation. Each of them addressed men in a certain state, and dealt with circumstances as they were.** The speaker had to discern where the people stood – whether or not they had actually believed, or been convicted of sin, or repented. Words that were delivered had to be *“fitly spoken,”* or appropriate for the occasion. Having said this, no man has been authorized to develop his own approach to appropriating salvation, disregarding the words that have been revealed about it. The mythical “sinner’s prayer,” or various “repeat after me” prayers, are cases in point. All of them conveniently ignore an assessment of where the people are, and how they ought to be directed.

If there is no discernment, it is quite possible for any of us accept as

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saved people who have not really Rom 10:16). Perhaps they have never “turned” from sin, or been “baptized into Christ,” or “called upon the name of the Lord.”

So far as the involvement of men is concerned, the Kingdom of God is driven by understanding – spiritual understanding. This includes some measure of comprehension concerning God, Christ, salvation itself, and mankind. Without this understanding men are trying to build a house without the Lord – and it is written, “Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Psa 127:1).

WHAT IS CONTAINED IN ACTS

Having said this, we ought to note some of the things that are being

have eyes to see it, we can behold in this book Jesus building His church. He is at work in activities that are recorded, not only putting members into his body, but excluding others. It is His administration that we are seeing as He governs the affairs of men in the interest of bringing many sons to glory.

⇒ **THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The manner in which the Holy Spirit is now working is also revealed. He is the liaison of Jesus, revealing the truth to the preachers, convicting the sinners, and comforting the saints. He is the power behind the Truth, producing results that glorify both God and Christ.

hearted. His reaction to liars in the church is made known, as well as His care for the faithful. What the Prophets said of Him is being displayed in the affairs of men.

⇒ **FALLEN MAN.** The nature of fallen men is also being manifested. The extent to which a sinner will go to suppress the truth is seen. The callousness of an unbelieving heart, and the brashness with which it moves men against believers are also made known.

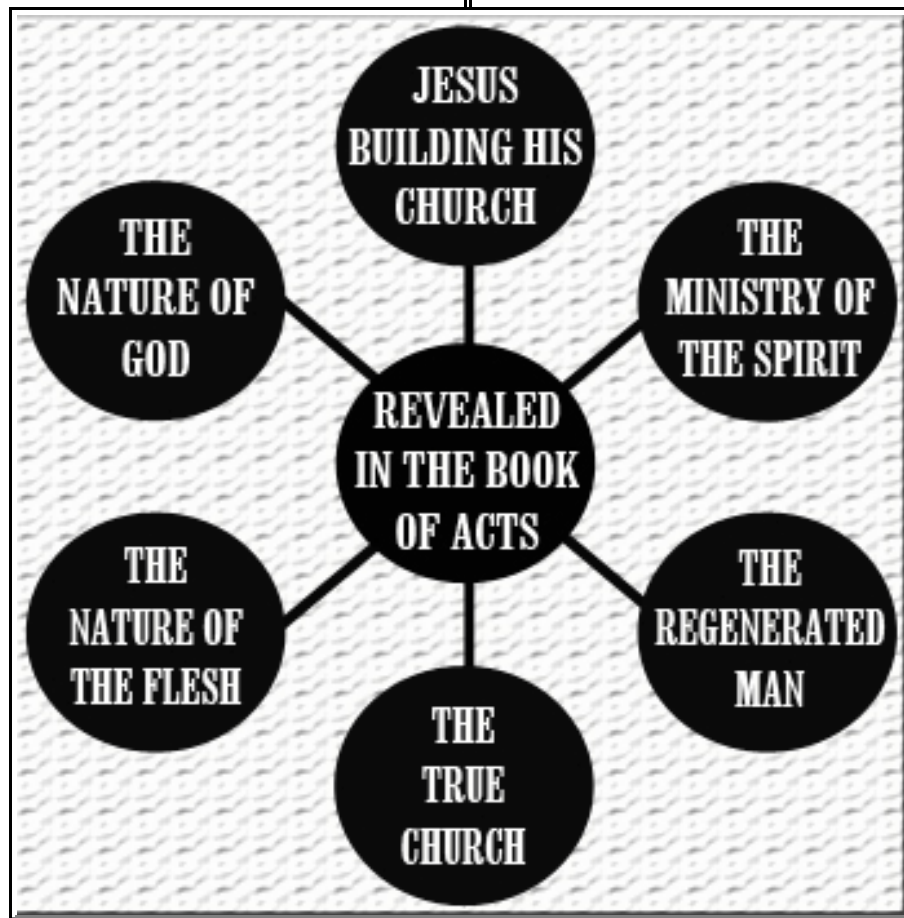
⇒ **REGENERATED MEN.** The nature of those who are a “new creation” is chronicled. How “newness of life” reacts under stress, threats, and when favor is granted are displayed. We behold what the saints do when they are threatened, and how they answer when they are interrogated by those who reject their message. Their response to heavenly direction is also seen.

⇒ **THE TRUE CHURCH.** The manner of the collective church is also put into words. Their unity in heart and soul is revealed. Their consistency is seen in their steadfastness, recourse to prayer, and fellowship with one another.

WE MUST BE ALERT

Because of the remarkable nature of many of the recorded incidents, the significance of these lofty revelations can be easily overlooked. Should this occur, we will view much of what is written as related solely to the beginning of the church. We will tend to marvel that such things ever took place, rather than perceive them as confirming expressions of Divine life.

Indeed, there are things in this book that are unique – like Pentecost and the conversion of the household of Cornelius, to name two. These were spiritual epoches that will never be precisely duplicated again, even though much of what took place is *characteristic* of the continued work of the Lord. The latter – *characteristic things* – must be discerned, else we will, at the best, lapse into lifeless traditionalism. For example, rather than seeing the detailed manner in which the prayer of the early church



revealed in this volume. There is more being made known than what took place among men.

⇒ **JESUS IS BUILDING HIS CHURCH.** If we

⇒ **GOD HIMSELF IS MADE KNOWN.** The God of Scripture is being made known. We are beholding the meaning of Him being intolerant of iniquity, and merciful to the broken-

was answered (chapter 4) as a standard procedure, it is to be perceived as confirmation that the Lord does, in fact, empower His church for what they have been given to do. When they resort to Him in the hour of need, they will obtain mercy and find grace to help.

WHAT WE WILL SEE IN THIS TEXT

There are several kingdom principles that will be seen in this text. A listing of a few of them will assist us to be spiritually alert and able to perceive

them.

- ⇒ Those who have an understanding of Scripture are more qualified to give advice (verse 34).
- ⇒ It is good to consider what we propose should be done (verse 35).
- ⇒ A spiritual perception of current events can assist us in making sound judgment (verses 36-37).
- ⇒ What men originate will come to an

end (verse 38).

- ⇒ What God initiates cannot be overthrown (verse 39a).
- ⇒ Those who oppose God are actually fighting against Him (verse 39b).
- ⇒ Suffering for Christ is associated with worthiness (verse 41).
- ⇒ Joyful insight enables men to do the work God has assigned to them (verse 42).

THEN GAMALIEL STOOD UP

“6:34 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.”

Care must be taken not to view this text as a mere record of history – i.e., the activities of men. **God is present in the affairs of men, orchestrating things for His own glory.** The Scriptures have considerable to say about this matter, and it is particularly relevant when it comes to issues relating to His salvation. We must never allow an academic approach to Scripture to rob us of this perspective.

- ⇒ **THE LORD IS GOVERNOR.** *“For the kingdom is the LORD’S: and He is the governor among the nations”* (Psa 22:28).
- ⇒ **HE IS WORKING IN THE EARTH.** *“For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth”* (Psa 74:12).
- ⇒ **THE EARTH IS FILLED WITH HIS GLORY.** *“And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”* (Isa 6:3).
- ⇒ **HE RAISES UP AND DEPOSES RULERS.** *“... Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth*

the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:20-21).

- ⇒ **HE GIVES AUTHORITY TO WHOMEVER HE WILLS.** *“This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up*

all: and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron 29:11-12).

- ⇒ **EVERYTHING ALIVE HAS BEEN PRESERVED BY HIM.** *“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee”* (Neh 9:6).

In bringing many sons to glory, it is essential that He be in absolute control of every circumstance. At no point does His salvation depend upon the whims of men, nor is it threatened by the most fierce of all adversaries.

over it the basest of men” (Dan 4:17).

- ⇒ **EVERYTHING IN THE EARTH IS HIS.** *“Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over*

- ⇒ **HE RULES BY HIS POWER WHILE BEHOLDING THE NATIONS.** *“He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah”* (Psa 66:7).
- ⇒ **EVERYTHING IS NAKED AND OPEN BEFORE HIM.** *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with*

whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13).

All of these matters are particularly involved in the finishing of the work of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. **In bringing many sons to glory, it is essential that He be in absolute control of every circumstance.** At no point does His salvation depend upon the whims of men, nor is it threatened by the most fierce of all adversaries. Whatever freedom men may be imagined to possess, they are **not** free to overturn the purpose of God, thwart the work of His servants, or obscure His great salvation. The only power they have is what God has given them – and God can withdraw that whenever He wills.

In the case before us, the Lord will use a respected man to bring a halt to the present harassment of the apostles. God did not use this method to protect Jesus when He was delivered up, for the purpose He was working forbade such an action.

A PHARISEE NAMED GAMALIEL

"Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law . . ." Other versions read, "The one of the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law," ^{NKJV} "But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law," ^{NRSV} "But one of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a man of learning in the law," ^{BBE} "A Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law . . . stood up in the Sanhedrin," ^{CSV} "But a certain man, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law . . . rose up in the council," ^{DARBY} "But a Pharisee named Gamaliel stood up . . . expert in Moses' Teachings," ^{GWN} "But one member, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was an expert in religious law," ^{NLT} "But one of their members, a Pharisee named Gamaliel (an expert on religious law)," ^{LIVING} and "But someone in the High Council having gotten up, a Pharisee, by name Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law." ^{ALT}

Gamaliel was not a visitor in this gathering, but was himself a member of the council, or Sanhedrin. He was also a Pharisee. Yet, he had not thoroughly adopted the views of this council, nor of the Pharisees. **He was, in a sense, among the council, yet separate from it.** He saw and understood more than the others.

His field of expertise was not human behavior, politics, or social trends. He was "a doctor of the law," or "expert in the law of Moses." The expression "doctor of the Law" comes from a compound Greek word – νομοδιδάσκαλος (nom-o-did-ask-olos). The word means "teacher and interpreter of the law," ^{THAYER} and "teacher of the law, interpreter of (the Mosaic system of) law," ^{FRIBERG}



INTERPRETING THE LAW

A facet of one being an expert in the Law is its interpretation. That word, however, requires some further explanation. It does not refer to attaching a private meaning to the Scripture. In the words of Nehemiah, interpreting the Law is giving its "sense," or "meaning" ^{NIV} (Neh 8:8). **Strictly speaking, there is only one valid interpretation, or meaning, of Scripture.** That meaning, when handled

with wisdom, can be applied to a variety of circumstances. That was what was involved in Moses and other chosen men judging the people. It is said of them, "And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves" (Ex 18:26). Difficult matters were issues in which the proper answer was not obvious to the people. Such occasions required the judgment of someone who had a working knowledge of the Law, and knew how to associate it properly with the situation.

The Nature of Scripture

Scripture has a certain nature that must be discerned. It is not primarily a handbook of conduct. God has not given it to men only to tell them how to conduct their lives. **Both the Person and purpose of God are inherent in Scripture.** That is, it reflects who He is and what He is doing. Like certain traits of a master painter are found in all of his paintings, so the character of God is found in all of His works and words. He never speaks or works independently of His own character, nor expresses Himself in a manner that is not perfectly harmonious with who He is. **His "eternal purpose" (Eph 3:11) is also reflected in all of His ways, words, and works.** All of His expressions are in strict concert with the purpose. In some way they are always related to what God has purposed in Christ Jesus, even though it may not be apparent to finite minds.

Scripture contains a record of Divine expressions, particularly as taking place in this world, among men.

There are a few references to Divine activities that took place outside of the creation itself and worldly history.

- ⇒ The status of Christ's Person prior to Him coming into the world (John 1:1-2).
- ⇒ A conflict between holy angels and the "prince of Persia" (Dan 10:13-20).
- ⇒ Satan and His angels being cast out of heaven (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6; Rev 12:7-9).
- ⇒ A council between the Father and the Word regarding Him coming into

the world (Psa 40:6-8; Heb 10:5-9).

- ⇒ The reception of Jesus into heaven following His ascension (Dan 7:13-14; Mk 16:19).
- ⇒ The enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God (Heb 1:3; 10:12).

Even in these cases, however, they are all related to God's working among men. In fact, their relevance is seen in that association.

No person can handle the Word of God correctly whose vision is dominated by human considerations – whether it is in the area of needs or solutions. This observation will become more evident as we consider the counsel of Gamaliel. He did not see in Scripture a solution to an aggravating problem, but the presence of a Sovereign God and the invincibility of His purpose.

Doctor of the Law

This word translated “*doctor of the law*,” or “*teacher of the Law*,”^{NKJV} is

text, his expertise was not merely that of knowing what the text said, but of being able to correlate it with both history and circumstance. In modern vernacular, he was able to read between the lines, seeing the significance of the Scriptural record. He could take statements concerning God, and relate them to events that were recorded in Scripture. Then, having made this correlation, he could reason upon a contemporary event with greater precision than others.

Other Experts

There are other Scriptural experts mentioned in Scripture. Those who could handle the Word of God with precision and power.

⇒ **SAMUEL.** Samuel had an understanding of the ways of God, and could explain to the people “the manner of the kingdom,” even writing it down in a book (1 Sam 10:25).

⇒ **LEVITES.** Certain Levites of Nehemiah’s day were able to give “the sense” of Scripture, and cause the people “to understand the reading” (Neh 8:8).

⇒ **LUKE.** Luke received a “perfect understanding” of the Gospel “from the very first,” and was able to correlate it with Moses and the Prophets (Luke 1:3).

⇒ **APOLLOS.** Apollos was a man described as “mighty in the Scriptures,” being “instructed in the way of the Lord” (Acts 18:24).

⇒ **THE TWELVE APOSTLES.** The twelve Apostles were guided into all truth, having “the mystery of Christ” revealed to them (John 16:14; Eph 3:5).

⇒ **PAUL.** Paul received unparalleled knowledge of “the mystery of Christ,” being able to expound it from the Scriptures (Eph 3:2-5).

⇒ **ELDERS.** The Scriptures refer to diligent elders who “labor in the Word and in the doctrine” (teaching) (1 Tim 5:17).

⇒ **PREACHERS AND TEACHERS.** Those

One of the great weaknesses of our time is the general approach that is being taken by Christianity as a whole. Man himself has become the focal point in nearly all religion. His problems are perceived as the ultimate arena in which God is determined to be made known. The Bible is seen as a textbook for human conduct, and the church is perceived as something like a hospital for debilitated humanity.

Permit me to say it again: God's Person and purpose are reflected in all of Scripture. Where some perception of this is not seen, it is not possible to handle the Scriptures correctly.

The Liability of Our Times

One of the great weaknesses of our time is the general approach that is being taken by Christianity as a whole. **Man himself has become the focal point in nearly all religion.** His problems are perceived as the ultimate arena in which God is determined to be made known. The Bible is seen as a textbook for human conduct, and the church is perceived as something like a hospital for debilitated humanity. But not one of these is true. **The Bible is primarily a revelation of God, and the church has been established to be His dwelling place – the “house of God” (1 Tim 3:15) “the Temple of God” (1 Cor 3:16-17), and the “habitation of God” through the Spirit (Eph 2:22). If we approach religion with any other emphasis, we will be carried by the tides of distraction into a place where Satan is more free to work.**

found three times in Scripture.

⇒ **SOME OPPONENTS OF JESUS.** “Doctors of the Law.” It is first applied to some officials who, together with the Pharisees, came to see Jesus. The occasion was when Jesus healed the impotent man lowered from the roof to His feet. At that time, these experts in the Law challenged Jesus’ ability to forgive sins (Luke 5:17-21).

⇒ **A PERCEPTIBLE MAN.** “A doctor of the Law.” In the text we are considering, it is applied to a single individual who excelled his peers in his understanding of the law (Acts 5:39).

⇒ **PRETENTIOUS TEACHERS.** “Desiring to be teachers of the Law.” It is also used by Paul to describe those who had usurped the position of teacher – who possessed no real understanding of the Law at all (1 Tim 1:7).

Gamaliel was an expert in the Law of Moses. As will be seen in this

who speak to others in the name of the Lord are admonished to give diligence to be men who handle the word of God correctly (2 Tim 2:15).

It appears that such men, though sorely needed, have never been very plentiful. In our text, among the Sanhedrin, a true expert in the Scriptures narrowed down to one person – Gamaliel. As will be seen, this expertness was not limited to familiarity with the text of Scripture itself. That quality was, indeed, resident, **for no person can be an expert in something with which he is not acquainted.**

The Contemporary Rarity of This Quality

I have observed over the years how exceedingly rare it is to find a preacher or teacher who is expert in Scripture. For the most part, this is the weakness of many Christian leaders. They often have more understanding in human sciences than in the Word of God. I have personally spoken with many preachers and teachers who readily acknowledged their weakness in Scriptural knowledge. If you have ever attended a preachers meeting, or a gathering of Christian leaders, you have no doubt also found this to be the case.

Well known Christian conventions rarely feature speakers who are expert in Scripture, and can handle the Word of God to the profit of the hearers. Modern views of religious experts are those who can present a compendium of the comments men have made about Scripture. However, few of them have a personal understanding to present.

If someone was to ask you who in our time was an expert in Scripture, who would come to your mind? If you have trafficked among truly godly people, you may be able to identify a few. **The point I am making, is that such men are not plentiful** – and most people know that. That circumstance might be somewhat acceptable during the infant-days of the church. Even then, however, its leaders could not be spiritual toddlers, unable to handle the Word of God. The apostles were not *“unskillful in the word of righteousness”* (Heb 5:13). That is because they had been with Jesus, and

were filled with the Holy Spirit. What would lead anyone to imagine that as the church advanced through time it was God’s will for its leaders to be ignorant and unlearned in His ways and Word? Such a condition is completely unacceptable in any time. If the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16), and the Scriptures are the means through which men are made *“thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim 3:17), **exactly where can a place made for a leader who cannot handle Scripture?** If *“patience and comfort”* are administered through the Scriptures (Rom 15:4), how can a person who lacks expertise in them be propelled into a position of leadership? If what God has revealed is made known *“by the Scriptures”* (Rom 16:26), and if the church has been put upon *“the foundation of the apostles and prophets”* (Eph 2:20), what kind of religious system produces leaders who are not experts in the Scriptures?

What Is Known of Gamaliel?

We know very little of this man. The Scriptures do not have much to say about him, and even history is largely silent about him. What is here said of

One historical commentator says of him, *“The Jews celebrated him as ‘the glory of the law,’ the first designated Rabban ‘our master.’ Son of rabbi Simeon, and grandson of Hillel; president of the Sanhedrin under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius; he died 18 years before the fall of Jerusalem.”* LIGHTFOOT COMMENTARY, FAUSSET, EASTON, AND SMITH BIBLE DICTIONARIES It is also said of him, *“Ecclesiastical tradition makes him become a Christian, and be baptized by Peter and Paul (Phot. Cod. 171, page 199), together with his son Gamaliel, and with Nicodemus; and the Clementine Recognitions (1:65) state that he was secretly a Christian at this time.”* MCCLINTOK & STRONGS All commentators concede that these statements are exceedingly difficult to confirm, and therefore give no weight to them. They should not be merged with what the Spirit has said about Gamaliel.

HAD IN REPUTATION

“... had in reputation among all the people, . . .” Other versions read, *“held in respect,”* NKJB *“respected,”* NIV *“who was honored,”* NIV *“of whom all people had a high opinion,”* BBE *“highly respected,”* GWN *“had in auctorite,”* TNT *“very popular,”* LIVING *“highly esteemed,”* AMPLIFIED *“held in great respect,”* AMPLIFIED and *“honorable.”* ALT

If the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16), and the Scriptures are the means through which men are made “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:17), exactly where can a place made for a leader who cannot handle Scripture?

him is all we need to know. What we know from Scripture is as follows – taken from only two verses.

- ⇨ He was a member of the Jewish council, or Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34).
- ⇨ He was a Pharisee (Acts 5:34).
- ⇨ He was an expert in the Law (Acts 5:34).
- ⇨ He was held in high regard by the people (Acts 5:34).
- ⇨ He tutored Paul in *“the perfect manner of the Law”* (Acts 22:3).

Notice the caliber of man that was held in reputation – *“a teacher of the law.”* NKJV This was not a view of him that was held only by the Sanhedrin, but was how *“all the people”* considered him. The words *“had in reputation”* mean that Gamaliel was perceived as *“valuable, precious, costly, of great value, held in high honor, and respected.”* GINGRICH

Notwithstanding, a man like Gamaliel would certainly not be featured at any of the Christian conventions with which I am familiar. **Imagine, if you can, a man being held in high regard within the church because of his expertise in Scripture.** Such a view is hardly apparent at all, if, indeed, it can be proved to even

exist. *"The people"* of our time have vaulted the organizers, entertainers, church builders, and motivators to places of prominence.

In the first part of 2007, a godly man in this area went to be with the Lord. For over sixty years he had been prominent among those who had an appetite for the Word of God. At his funeral, the school in which he had played a prominent place for several decades spoke kindly of him. Yet, even though he had a prodigious mind, and was very articulate and robust when he was over ninety years old, he was retired from the scholastic community over twenty years earlier. The newer students did not hold him in high regard, and did not want to take his classes. Their teachers, whoever they were, had not taught them to place a high value on such people. The student and faculty administration did not hold him in high regard, for they did not insist that those coming to a Christian college sit under his teaching. Local churches rarely asked him to preach. For the most part, he was not asked to speak at the brotherhood conventions, or featured at key gatherings. In other words, he was **not** *"had in reputation."*

not a mere nucleus of scholars that held Gamaliel in high regard, but *"all of the people."*

COMMANDED TO PUT THE APOSTLES FORTH

"... and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space." Other versions read, *"commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while,"* NKJV *"gave orders to put the men outside for a short time,"* NASB *"ordered that the men should be put outside for a little while,"* NIV *"made a suggestion for the men to be put outside for a little time,"* BBE *"he directed them to put the legates aside for a short time,"* MRD *"and asked to have the men taken outside for a time,"* NJB *"and ordered that the men be sent outside the council chamber for a while,"* NLT *"requested that the apostles be sent outside the Council chamber while he talked,"* LIVING *"ordered that the apostles be taken outside for a little while,"* AMPLIFIED and *"gave orders for the apostles to be taken outside for a few minutes."* PHILLIPS

The word *"commanded"* is translated from a Greek word meaning, *"to command, order,"* THAYER *"direct,"* FRIBERG *"to state with force and/or authority what others must do -*

spoke as one who knew the intent of the Law, having some understanding of its reflection of a holy God. He was no doubt aware of the many times God had upbraided Israel for lacking justice in their social affairs.

Once the prophet Isaiah thundered, *"None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity... And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment"* (Isa 59:4, 14-15). Jeremiah also addressed the matter of the lack of justice: *"They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge"* (Jer 5:28). Micah cried out as well: *"Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity"* (Micah 3:9). Habakkuk also lifted up his voice, *"Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth"* (Hab 1:4).

Gamaliel knew well that the haste with which this council was proceeding was not good, and therefore he speaks out.

Some might wonder why he did not speak up at the trial of Christ. Speaking from the standpoint of legal adjudication, the council had proceeded in a strictly **illegal** manner. However, in the death of Jesus, the *"determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"* was being carried out (Acts 2:23). Therefore Gamaliel, by Divine intent, was not permitted to speak at that time. Prior to this, when Jesus began to enter into the final phase of His ministry, Nicodemus, himself a Pharisee, had raised a question about the way in which the leaders were judging Him. His efforts were summarily ignored. *"Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he*

He did not speak as a mere scholar, or one that had an academic familiarity with the Law. Rather, he spoke as one who knew the intent of the Law, having some understanding of its reflection of a holy God.

My own father, also now with the Lord, was also in that category. Even though he was an astute teacher of teachers, he was consistently asked to take a back seat behind the promoters, motivators, and scholastic dupes.

Of course, there have been numerous experts in Scripture who have also been pushed to the side in preference for the worldly-wise. This is not at all strange in the current church scene.

The point to be seen here is that, with all of their wretchedness, Israel was still, on this particular point, in better shape than the church of our day. It was

'to order, to command,' LOUW-NIDA *"to state with force and/or authority what others must do - 'to order, to command,"* LIDDELL-SCOTT and *"urge."* GINGRICH

Being wise, Gamaliel spoke with recognizable authority: i.e., he directed the people what they ought to do, commanding them with all the force of moral authority. As they proceeded with the hearing, he deemed it best to have the apostles removed from the place of judgment. It appears to me that there was a certain degree of shame associated with what they were doing, and Gamaliel knew it. He did not speak as a mere scholar, or one that had an academic familiarity with the Law. Rather, he

doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house” (John 7:53).

Now, however, we have a different case before us. **The apostles’ work has not yet been completed, and therefore God has devised means for them to continue.** As it is written, “For we must needs die, and are as water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: **yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him**” (2 Sam 14:14). We are beholding the enthroned Savior, turning the hearts of men, and governing their affairs in the interest of His church. **There is no circumstance or personality over which Jesus does not have absolute power.** Personalities that are ultimately subject to Him include holy angels, evil angels, Satan, demons, wicked spirits, rulers, common people, evil men, and godly men. So far as men are concerned, they all fall into one of two categories: vessels that are “to honor,” and vessels that are “to dishonor.” **From the higher vantage point of view, all of them are in Christ’s house** – His “great house”(2 Tim 2:20). They are like “good” and “bad” fish in the net of His Kingdom (Matt 13:47-48) – like “wheat” and “tares” in “His

The wicked may prove to be a formidable challenge to us, but they are no challenge at all to the exalted Christ. He can use them, change them, or remove them according to His own will. He has that power. He can “make” a righteous man’s enemies be at peace with him.

field”(Matt 13:24-25).

The wicked may prove to be a formidable challenge to us, but they are no challenge at all to the exalted Christ. **He can use them, change them, or remove them according to His own will.** He has that power. He can “make” a righteous man’s enemies be at peace with him (Prov 16:7). He can stir up an adversary against a king He Himself has put in place and endued with unparalleled wisdom (1 Kgs 11:14,23).

Thus, the exalted Christ will work in this situation, confirming that it is in His control. Ultimately, it is His purpose that will be served.

Private, Yet Known

Take note that this is private council, and yet it is recorded in

Scripture! This fulfils a word written by Solomon. “Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: **for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter**”(Eccl 10:20). Jesus once said, “Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops” (Luke 12:3). He was teaching men to live in view of the imminence of the day of judgement, when all will be known.

All of this is a picture of that coming day of judgment when not only the words and deeds of all men will be made known, but “the counsels of the heart” as well (1 Cor 4:5). Men must conduct their lives with these things in mind. There are no secrets (Heb 4:13).

TAKE HEED WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO

⁴⁸⁵ **And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.”**

We will now see why Gamaliel was held in such high regard. His words will be “fitly spoken” (Prov 25:11) and spoken in “due season”(Prov 15:23). That is a facet of wisdom that cannot be learned by rote. Men may be taught the answer to various questions, but they cannot be taught to answer in proper words and at appropriate times. That kind of answer is the result of discernment, not instruction.

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES

“And said unto them, Ye men of

Israel, take heed to yourselves . . .” Other versions read, “take care,”^{NASB} “consider carefully,”^{NIV} “be careful,”^{CSB} “pay close attention to,”^{NET} “be very careful,”^{PHILLIPS} and “be watching yourselves.”^{ALT}

The word translated “take heed” is very precise. Its lexical meaning is “to bring to, bring near – like bringing a ship to land.” In its application it is used to denote “turning the mind to, attending to, be attentive . . . to attend to oneself; i.e. to give heed to oneself,”^{THAYER} “to hold one’s mind to someone or something, give heed to, pay attention to,”^{FRIBERG} “To be alert to, to be on guard against,”^{LOUW-NIDA} “to bring a ship near a place, bring it to port . . . to turn one’s mind to a thing,”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} and “to be concerned about, care for, pay attention to.”^{GINGRICH}



The need to “take heed to

yourselves” is like getting a boat back where it belongs after it has been set adrift. Such a boat is not anchored, and is at the behest of the stormy sea. Being tossed about, it is in danger of being dashed to pieces.

So it is when men are pushed out upon the treacherous sea of life without being solidly anchored. Their corrupt emotions thrash them about like stormy waves toss a ship that is drifting.

Gamaliel is calling the Sanhedrin back to the shore of sobriety – summoning them to be anchored in the port of sound thought instead of being carried among by their soulish nature.

It ought to be noted that sin dulls the powers of perception and reason, causing men to move forward without proper consideration or honest assessment. Sin compels men to focus on the wrong thing, and forget about the main thing. At the time sin is dominating them, there is no thought of God, His manners, or the brevity of life. At such a time men are, in a very real sense, insane – without thoughtful moorings. In such a case, men are moved to act in flagrant contradiction of the Divine imagery they bear.

In the kind of society in which we find ourselves, there is every conceivable disadvantage. Basically, it is a hedonistic society, absorbed with all manner of pleasure and enjoyment. Leisure is exalted as a time when men can enjoy themselves, while work and productivity are seen as burdensome. We are not surprised to see the world taking hold of this concept. **However, when it creeps into the church, we have a most serious circumstance on our hands.** When the affairs of the church are tailored to make them enjoyable to the flesh, men have caved in to the times.

The Jewish council had vigorously

opposed the apostles because they did not like what they were doing. Their manner and their message chaffed against their flesh. Their religion was one of self-satisfaction, with little or no regard at all for the pleasure of the Lord.

There comes a time when men must stop thinking about pleasure and begin thinking about what is right: a time when self must be dethroned, and the Lord must be seen as the preeminent One to please. How do ones deeds fit into the truth – into the way things really are? That is what Gamaliel is calling upon the council to ponder – **to consider themselves in view of what is good and right in the sight of God.** To think in terms of who God is and what he has determined.

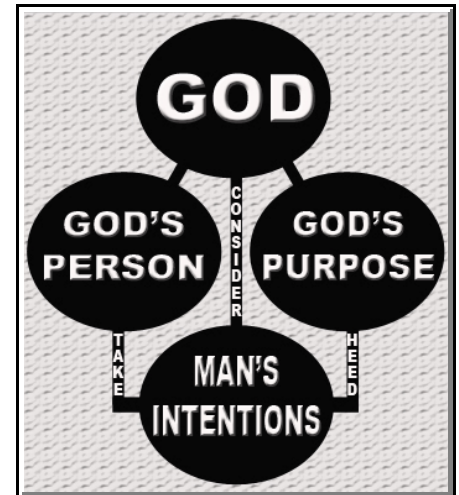
WHAT YE INTEND TO DO

“ . . . *what ye intend to do as touching these men.*” Other versions read, “*what you propose to do with these men,*”^{NASB} “*What you intend to do to these men,*”^{NIV} “*what you do with these men,*”^{RSV} “*as touching these men, what ye are about to do,*”^{ASV} “*what ye do about these men,*”^{BBE} “*what you are about to do with these men,*”^{ESV} “*what you are planning to do to these men,*”^{NLT} “*in regard to what you propose to do concerning these men,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*what action you intend to take against these,*”^{PHILLIPS}

In order for man’s intentions to be valid, they must integrate with God’s Person and purpose. If they are pointed in any other direction, they are vain.

It is imperative that men be encouraged to consider what they “intend” – that is, what they have in their minds, and what they are thinking about. What a person intends is what they are working to cause to come to pass. It is an objective they are intent upon fulfilling, a goal they are determined to reach. In the text before us, the intention of the Sanhedrin was to

kill the apostles. They had no fleshly reason to question their ability to do this. After all, they had delivered Jesus to death – and He was the one of whom the apostles were preaching. Surely they



would not prove to be more formidable than their Master! – at least that is how they were thinking. When the apostles had said they were a witness to the facts concerning Jesus, as well as the Holy Spirit whom God gives to those who obey Him, this group of men “took counsel to slay them” (verse 33). In fact, that was the reason for convening the very gathering Gamaliel is now addressing.

He calls upon them to ponder what they have purposed for these men – to kill them. They obviously felt they were thoroughly capable of doing this, thereby ridding themselves of their aggravating presence. However, they had not brought God and His purposes into their thinking. Nor, indeed, had they pondered the inability of men to, of themselves, carry out their own purposes. Because truth can always be lived out in human experience, Gamaliel will draw their attention to some things that had recently taken place – things they had apparently passed over.

THINK ABOUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED RECENTLY

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. ³⁷ 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.”

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

once occupied a lofty position. It is said of him, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee” (Ezek 28:17). Although he occupied a high position and was given much glory, he was not satisfied, but aspired to exalt himself to the **highest** position. This is Satan’s nature, and he promotes this attitude among the sons of men.

The Lord has made clear how pride in created beings touches Him. He is said to “hate” a “proud look.” Those dominated by pride “will not seek after God.” In a definition of “the fear of the Lord,” Solomon says that it includes the hatred of pride. When pride comes, “then cometh shame.”

The Lord has made clear how pride in created beings touches Him. He is said to “hate” a “proud look” (Prov 6:16). Those dominated by pride “will not seek after God” (Psa 10:4). In a definition of “the fear of the Lord,” Solomon says that it includes the hatred of pride (Prov 8:13). When pride comes, “then cometh shame” (Prov 11:2). Solemnly the Scriptures affirm, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov 16:18), and “a man’s pride shall bring him low” (Prov 29:23). Pride is the characteristic that causes a person to be “lifted up” in his own estimation, and thus “fall into the condemnation of the devil” who is the author of that trait (1 Tim 3:6).

When men are fundamentally self-centered, they can learn nothing from the things that are taking place in their presence. This is a decided disadvantage, for if God is working salvation in the midst of the earth (Psa 74:12), and is the Governor among the nations (Psa 22:28), **then there is something to be learned from what is taking place in this realm.** This circumstance is also buttressed by several other considerations. Here are a few of them.

to nought.”

Very little is known of this man. Even history is largely silent concerning him. However, we need nothing more than the testimony of Gamaliel to confirm the reality of Theudas – particularly since his testimony is confirmed by the Holy Spirit including it in the Scriptures. The lessons to be learned from this individual do not require a lengthy dissertation about his life. The point that is being made only requires the words that are provided concerning him.

Theudas “boasted himself to be somebody.” In this regard, he was like Simon the sorcery, a man from Samaria who is described as “giving out that he himself was some great one” (Acts 8:9). These are, in a way, like “false Christs” (Matt 24:24), professing to have the answers to the human dilemma. Peter identified this kind of person as those who promise men “liberty,” yet are themselves “servants of corruption” (2 Pet 2:18-19). In order to do this, they must speak much about themselves and what they have professedly discovered, or been given to see. This, of course, in stark contradiction of the manner in which the servants of God conduct themselves.

- ⇨ Promotion comes from the Lord. He is the Judge who puts down one and raises up another (Psa 75:6-7).
- ⇨ Kingdoms are assigned leaders according to God’s will (Dan 4:17).
- ⇨ There is no such thing as a calamity that is not brought by God (Amos 3:6).
- ⇨ In natural calamities, God has His own way (Nah 1:3).

Theudas Boasted

Other versions read, “claiming to be somebody,”^{”NKJV} “giving himself out to be somebody,”^{”RSV} “who said he was someone important,”^{”BBE} “alleging himself to be somebody,”^{”DARBY} “affirming himself to be somebody,”^{”DOUAY} “He claimed that he was important,”^{”GWN} “and said of himself, that he was some great one,”^{”MRD} “who pretended to be someone great,”^{”NLT} “professing to be a person of importance,”^{”WEYMOUTH} “asserting himself to be a person of importance,”^{”AMPLIFIED} and “made himself conspicuous by claiming to be someone or other.”^{”PHILLIPS}

Four Hundred Men Joined Themselves to Him

Other versions read, “joined up with him,”^{”NASB} “rallied to him,”^{”NIV} “gave their support,”^{”BBE} “to whom resorted,”^{”GENEVA} “went after him,”^{”MRD} “collected,”^{”NJB} “to whom resorted,”^{”PNT} “espoused his cause,”^{”WILLIAMS} “allied themselves,”^{”AMPLIFIED} and “a following.”^{”PHILLIPS}

Fundamental to a sound theology is the fact that God Himself is imminent in all of creation, including the machinations and activities of all humanity. He is not an absent God, but beholds all men, intervening in their affairs at will, and maintaining ultimate control over them. Gamaliel will cite two examples of Divine management.

THEUDAS

“For before these days rose up

Boasting of this sort is evidence of the presence of the tempter. It was Satan himself who first said, “**I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High**” (Isa 14:14). He pushed himself forward – even aspiring to be “like the most High.” Pride was Satan’s besetting sin, even though he

As men who have not received the love of the truth are prone to do, a number of men were convinced of the validity of Theudas' cause, and joined up with him. They were deceived by his boasting, being devoid of the wisdom that can distinguish between truth and the lie. By nature, men do not possess the ability to properly evaluate self-professed leaders.

There is no historical writings that provide further information about this imposter. **Such information is not required, for both himself and his cause failed.** This is the precise point that Gamaliel is making – the failure of ill-advised messengers and causes.

He Was Slain, and They Were Scattered

Other versions read, *“He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.”*^{NKJV} *“And he was slain; and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing,”*^{NASB} *“He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing,”*^{NIV} *“but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared.”*^{NRSV} *“he was put to death, and his band was broken up and came to nothing,”*^{BBE} *“He was killed, and all his followers were scattered. The whole movement was a failure,”*^{GWN} *“but he was killed, and all those who were loyal to him were disbanded and came to nothing,”*^{NAB} *“but when he was killed, all his followers scattered and that was the end of them.”*^{NJB} *“but he was killed, and his followers were harmlessly dispersed,”*^{LIVING} *“but he was killed. And all of the men who followed him were scattered. They were never able to do anything.”*^{IE} *He was killed, and all his followers were dispersed and annihilated,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“but he was slain and all his followers were dispersed and as a party annihilated,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“but he was killed and all who had listened to and adhered to him were scattered and brought to nothing.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

The validity of something can be partially determined by its longevity – its ability to remain in place for some time. That this is true is confirmed by the Word of the Lord, which announces the appointed frustration of all merely human objectives.

- ⇨ *“He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise”* (Job 5:12).
- ⇨ *“The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect”* (Psa 33:10).
- ⇨ *“For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous”* (Psa 37:17).
- ⇨ *“There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD”* (Prov 21:30).
- ⇨ *“That frustrateth the tokens of the*

^{LIVING} and *“And after this one rose up Judas the Galilean, [who led an uprising] during the time of the census.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

You may recall that Jesus was also born during a time of taxation, or census (Luke 2:1-5).

The Jewish historian Josephus provides some incidental information about this man. “A person surnamed *“the Galilean”* (Acts 5:37), so called also by Josephus (*Ant.* 18, 1, 6; 20, 5, 2; *War*, 2, 8, 1), and likewise *“the Gaulonite”* (*Ant.* 18, 1, 1). He was born at Gamala, a fortified city on the Sea of Galilee, in Lower Gaulonitis; and after the deposition of Archelaus, during the thirty-seventh year after the battle of Actium (Josephus, *Ant.* 18, 2, 1), i.e. A.D. 6, he excited a violent insurrection

I say this is incidental information, for it really adds nothing to the text. The point that is being made is not that Judas appeared, but that he, together with his cause and followers disappeared. That makes their objectives and the history of them meaningless.

liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish” (Isa 44:25).

It should not surprise us, therefore, that the cause of Theudas was dashed upon the rocks of futility.

JUDAS OF GALILEE

“³⁷ 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.”

Judas of Galilee

Other versions read, *“After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census,”*^{NKJV} *“After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census,”*^{NIV} *“After this man, there was Judas of Galilee, at the time of the numbering,”*^{BBE} *“After this man, rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the enrolling,”*^{DOUAY} *“After this man, arose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the tribute,”*^{GENEVA} *“After him, at the time of the taxation, there was Judas of Galilee,”*

among the Jews, in concert with a well known Pharisee named Sadok, against the Roman government exercised by the procurator Coponius, on occasion of a census levied by the emperor Augustus, asserting the popular doctrine that the Jews ought to acknowledge no dominion but that of God. He was destroyed, and his followers scattered by Cyrenius, then proconsul of Syria and Judaea. We also learn from Josephus that the scattered remnant of the party of Judas continued after his destruction to work on still in secret, and labored to maintain his free spirit and reckless principles among the people (Josephus, *War*, 2, 17, 7-19).“

I say this is incidental information, for it really adds nothing to the text. **The point that is being made is not that Judas appeared, but that he, together with his cause and followers disappeared.** That makes their objectives and the history of them meaningless.

Drew Away Much People

Other versions read, *“drew away many people after him,”*^{NKJV} *“led a band of people in revolt,”*^{NIV} *“got people to follow him,”*^{NRSV} *“some of the people went after him,”*^{BBE} *“attracted a following,”*^{CSB} *“seduced much people after him,”*^{MRD} *“incited people to follow him,”*^{NET}

“attracted crowds of supporters,”
NJB *“drew away some people as disciples,”*
LIVING *“He also led a group of followers away,”*
IE *“influenced people to desert and follow him,”*
WILLIAMS *“drew away a popular following after him,”*
AMPLIFIED and *“enticed many of the people to follow him.”*
PHILLIPS

“The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa 24:1). This is not merely a technical statement, to be followed by some thought like this: “And all men **should** acknowledge this and bow the knee to the Lord!” Rather, this is a

brood,”
TNT *“and that one perished, and all, as many as were obeying him, were scattered,”*
YLT *“but he was destroyed and all his followers were scattered,”*
IE *“he also perished and all his adherents were scattered,”*
AMPLIFIED and *“But he too died and his whole following melted away.”*
PHILLIPS

Rather, this is a statement of the real case, and whether or not men acknowledge it or yield to it has nothing whatever to do with it. How many Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzars Belchazzars, Herod’s, Pilates, etc. does it take to convince men of this?

Like all false leaders and prophets, this man beguiled *“unstable souls”* (2 Pet 2:14). He led them to believe that the affairs of this world are really governed by people, and that if they band together they can change the direction of history. Our society is also plagued by such leaders, and they continue to seduce the people into thinking they can, of themselves, change the landscape of history.

That whole approach, even though it may have a pleasant sound to it, it fraught with error. **It assumes the world and its governments are actually controlled by men.** However, we are categorically told this is not the case.

statement of the real case, and whether or not men acknowledge it or yield to it has nothing whatever to do with it. How many Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzars Belchazzars, Herod’s, Pilates, etc. does it take to convince men of this?

He Also Perished

Other versions read, *“he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered,”*
NASB *“He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered,”*
NIV *“he was put to death, and all his supporters were put to flight,”*
BBE *“he also perished; and all, even as many as consented to him, were dispersed,”*
DOUAY *“He also perished; and all even as many as harkened to him are scattered a*

The labors of this Judas and his followers were also total vanity. Like the world around which they were centered, they *“passed away,”* leaving nothing but an unpleasant memory.

During the last century there have been some notable examples of human efforts that were vain. These include nations like Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. There have been religious movements that have been crushed openly: David Koresh and the Davidians, and Jim Jones and the People’s Temple. Other movements slated for ultimate demise include Joseph Smith and the Mormons, Reverend Moon and the Unification Church, and Ron Hubbard and his Scientology.

Many others could be named, but this will suffice to confirm that the same diversions are occurring in our time that did during the time of our text. They will be no more successful than the causes of Theudas and Judas the Galilean! That is because of **nature** everything that is driven by human initiative alone. Even Gamaliel saw that fact.

LET THESE MEN ALONE

“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.”

Now Gamaliel draws some conclusions concerning the facts he has just related. He will filter those facts through the word of God, which has made known the character of both the works of man and of God. This ability presumes a working knowledge of God’s word.

REFRAIN FROM THESE MEN

“And now I say unto you, Refrain

from these men, and let them alone . . .”
 Other versions read, *“keep away from these men and let them alone,”*
NKJV *“in this present case, stay away from these men and let them alone,”*
NIV *“Leave these men alone! Let them go!”*
NIV *“Do nothing to these men, but let them be,”*
BBE *“Withdraw from these men and let them alone,”*
DARBY *“We should keep away from these men for now,”*
GWN *“Desist from these men, and let them lone,”*
MRD *“have nothing to do with these men, and let them go,”*
NAB *“hold aloof from these men and leave them alone,”*
WEYMOUTH *“stand off (withdraw) from these men and let them*

alone,”
AMPLIFIED *“let these men alone: leave them to themselves,”*
PHILLIPS and *“draw away from these men and permit them.”*
LITV

The counsel bears a faint resemblance to the word of Pilate’s wife to him concerning Jesus: *“Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him”* (Matt 27:19). With Pilate’s wife, the counsel was driven by the disconcerting effects of a dream. With Gamaliel, it was his perception of the working of God among men. **In both**

cases, however, it was clear that it is dangerous to be aggressive against a person sent by God.

Now, Gamaliel will reason with them concerning this counsel, placing before them two incontrovertible facts. Both of them are based upon the revelations of both God and man that were given through the Law and the prophets. This is not a mere historical analysis, and must not be viewed in that manner. The fact that the statements are made by Gamaliel confirms that they were driven by an understanding of the Law of God rather than expertise in the manners of men. The second part of his counsel also confirms this is the case.

IF THIS COUNSEL OR WORK BE OF MEN

“ . . . for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought.” Other versions read, “for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing.”^{NKJV} “if this plan or action should be of men, it will be overthrown.”^{NASB} “if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail,”^{NIV} “for if this teaching or this work is of men, it will come to nothing.”^{BBE} “for if this counsel or this work have its origin from men, it will be destroyed.”^{DARBY} “if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail,”^{ESV} “I can guarantee that if the plan they put into action is of human origin, it will fail.”^{GWN} “For if this device and this work originate from men, they will dissolve and come to nothing.”^{MRD} “For if this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself.”^{NAB} “if this plan or this undertaking originates with people, it will come to nothing.”^{NET} “If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord.”^{NJB} “If they are planning and doing these things merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown.”^{NLT} “If what they teach and do is merely on their own, it will soon be overthrown,”^{LIVING} “for if this scheme or work is of human origin, it will come to nothing.”^{WEYMOUTH} “if this program or movement has its origin in men, it will go to pieces.”^{WILLIAMS} “if this doctrine or purpose or undertaking or movement is of human origin, it will fail (be overthrown and come to nothing),”^{AMPLIFIED} and “if this teaching or movement is merely human it will collapse of its own accord.”^{PHILLIPS}

“This Counsel”

Gamaliel perceives a kind of design in what the apostles are saying and doing. They are not merely engaging in emotional outbursts or acting irrationally. He refers to a “counsel,”^{KJV} “plan,”^{NASB} “purpose,”^{NIV} “undertaking,”^{ESV} “endeavor,”^{NAB} “movement,”^{NJB} “planning,”^{NLT} “scheme,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “program.”^{WILLIAMS}



The Greek words translated “this counsel” are ἡ βουλή (ay bou-lay). The first word is a definite article; that is, it points to something specific; i.e. “THIS counsel,” or a specific and particular counsel. The word “counsel” comes from the next word which means, “purpose,”^{THAYER} “a decision, deliberation . . . resolve, decision, purpose, plan,”^{FRIEBERG} “intention,”^{UBS} “that which has been purposed and planned,”^{LOUW-NIDA} “will, determination . . . advice, plan, design,”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} and “resolution, decision.”^{GINGRICH}

It was apparent to Gamaliel that there was a motive in what the apostles were doing. They were being driven by a purpose, or a cause – like Theudas and Judas had causes they had espoused, and purposes they intended to fulfill. Their plans called for obedience from the people in order that their objectives might be met. Now he perceives an intelligent design in what the apostles are doing – some kind of purpose that is being executed. He does not have a clear indication of its source, but he knows it is there.

Much of what parades itself under the banner of Christianity cannot be traced to a clear and intelligent objective. One often wonders precisely what the religious merchants are trying

to do. They affirm they are trying to help the people, but that is not clear enough. I suppose that Theudas and Judas also represented themselves as doing something that would advantage the people. Otherwise, they could not have garnered a following.

There are certain causes that are being espoused by Christian leaders. They cover a range of things. Happy marriages, financial success, good health, making the world a better place to live, reaching the youth, relieving the poor, and a host of other things. **First, let it be clear that no such objectives are ever one time stated in the Word of God.** Nothing of this gender is ever held out as the aim for Christ coming into the world. In fact He once said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matt 10:34). And again, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division” (Luke 12:51). **As noble as making the world a better place to live may sound, whether on an individual or collective level, that is not why Jesus came.** God can give a nation peace, cause their enemies to be at peace with them, and cause them to prosper – and do so without Jesus Christ, redemption, or the hope of glory. The people do not require the Holy Spirit for these things to happen, nor do they need to have their names written in heaven. We know this is the case, because all of them happened to certain people before Jesus came into the world. No person of sound mind is against such things, or will declare them to be wrong. But those who associate them with the “eternal purpose” of God could not possibly be more wrong.

The Source Is the Issue

Being an expert in the Law, Gamaliel knows that **the source of the objective is the critical issue.** He will narrow it down to two sources: man or God: human or Divine.

His statement concerning the purposes of men – all of them – is startling to the spiritually lethargic soul. If it is “of men, it WILL come to nought,” or “be overthrown.”^{NASB} There is not the slightest chance that this will not happen! In his record, Luke does not give an explanation for the statement, or make some modification to it. This

further confirms that the statement was correct. With care, when required, the Spirit alerts us to why and what men said. For example, when Caiaphas said, "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." the Spirit added, **"And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation"** (John 11:50-51). On the mount of transfiguration, when Peter said, "And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," the Spirit added, **"For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid"** (Mark 9:5-6).

However, no such editorial remark is here provided by the Spirit. The statement is true, and can be fully supported by the Scripture.

The point is that if something is of human origin, the seeds of corruption are within it. This is why preaching cannot be flavored with human wisdom. It will cause the message to fail. It is precisely why Jesus said, "the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). **As soon as the thoughts and purposes of men make their way into their doctrine, it at once is determined that it will collapse.** It cannot stand. The seeming nobility of the purpose is not the point, but its origin.

The Example of the early Church

The early church was keenly aware of these things. On one occasion, in their aggressiveness to preach the Gospel, they had saturated the area of "throughout Phygia and the region of Galatia" with the Gospel. They then were "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia." After they had come to Mysia, they determined to "go into Bythynia: but the Spirit suffered them not," or "did not permit them"^{NKJV} to do so (Acts 16:6-7).

Being sensitive to the Lord, and having some understanding of His ways, these brethren did not attempt to work around these imposed restraints. **They were responsive enough to the Spirit that they did not press the issue beyond the point where they discerned His inhibition.** While they were waiting,

Paul had a vision in the night in which he saw a man of Macedonia standing and crying out, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!" As the brethren "immediately" considered the vision, they "endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering [concluding'^{NKJV}] that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (Acts 16:10). Their conduct confirms that they also knew the truth Gamaliel had articulated: "if this counsel or this work be of men, it WILL come to nought" (Acts 5:38).

It WILL Come to Nothing!

Because the intelligence and aptitude of men are currently overstated, it is necessary to confirm this statement. The affirmation has been made that if the source of a cause is men, **the cause will fail**, and there is no way to avoid that failure. It is not simply that the men do

his counseling was of a most excellent order. It was described as counsel that was "as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God" (2 Sam 16:23). When word of this counsel reached the ears of David, He prayed, "O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2 Sam 15:31). Although Ahithophel's counsel was excellent, a certain man named Hushai, told Absalom, "The counsel that Ahithophel hath given thee is not good at this time" (2 Sam 17:7). Absalom chose to believe him, and reject Ahithophel's counsel. The explanation for his unreasonable response is described in these words: **"For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon**

This is a failure that is imposed by God, and that imposition can in no way be neutralized. If the plans are being made by Saul of Tarsus, the Lord will bring them to an instant and grinding halt by appearing to Him and changing him. If it is wicked Herod, plotting to kill the servants of God because it pleased Christ's enemies, he will simply be struck dead.

not have enough strength to bring it to pass – although that is true. **This is a failure that is imposed by God, and that imposition can in no way be neutralized.** If the plans are being made by Saul of Tarsus, the Lord will bring them to an instant and grinding halt by appearing to Him and changing him (Acts 9:3-6). If it is wicked Herod, plotting to kill the servants of God because it pleased Christ's enemies, he will simply be struck dead (Acts 12:23).

⇨ **DAVID.** On one occasion, when Absalom, David's wayward son, was seeking to kill him and usurp the kingdom, some excellent counsel was given to him by Ahithophel, who had aligned himself with Absalom. Strategically Ahithophel's counsel was superb. We are told that all of

Absalom" (2 Sam 17:14).

- ⇨ **NEHEMIAH.** In Nehemiah's day, the enemies outnumbered the Jewish builders. Their "counsel" was to overthrow the work. According to appearance, it looked like they were well able to do it. However, as time progressed, God Himself threw their counsel down to the ground. It is written, "And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and **God had brought their counsel to nought**, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work" (Neh 4:15).
- ⇨ **SOLOMON.** Solomon stated the impossibility of human counsel offsetting Divine counsel. **"There is no wisdom nor understanding nor**

counsel against the LORD” (Prov 21:30). And again, “*Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*” (Psa 127:1).

rooted up” (Matt 15:13).

⇨ **PAUL.** “*For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*” (1 Cor 1:19). And

appointed end.

Now, the issue becomes whether or not men can see this, and submit themselves to it. **When it comes to the work of the Lord, whatever they put their hand to, must have its beginning with God.** If it does not, it will fail, be destroyed, and thrown down.

When it comes to the work of the Lord, whatever they put their hand to, must have its beginning with God. If it does not, it will fail, be destroyed, and thrown down.

This, of course, has some arresting ramifications. Perhaps you have wondered why so many professed Christian enterprises are always begging for funds, marketing their goods, and urging people to assist them in getting out of debt. The reason can, in many cases, be traced to the truth that was uttered by Gamaliel. **Whatever plans have their genesis in men alone will come to an end, and therefore they tend to deteriorate.**

⇨ **ISAIAH.** When certain enemies rose against Judah, and they were sorely outnumbered, The Lord spoke to the remnant of His people through Isaiah. “*Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people*” (Isa 7:5-8).

again, “*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness*” (1 Cor 3:19).

I am not naive about these matters. I realize that it is out of order to make laws about these things and impose them upon others. Every conscientious person must take this knowledge and learn to work with it – just like the apostles did.

⇨ **JESUS.** “*But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be*

These, and other, reasons are why whatever has its genesis with men will come short of its objective. **In the end, the only thing that will be finished is what God has started – and there will be no exceptions to that rule.** There is no way to contradict this fact. To be even more precise, the government in its totality has been placed upon the shoulders of Jesus. **ONLY what He Himself begins will be finished.** That is precisely why He is called ‘the Author and Finisher,’ “Alpha and Omega,” “the First and the Last,” and “the Beginning and the End” (Heb 12:2; Rev 1:11; 22:13). **Jesus does not finish what men conceive and initiate!** Nor, indeed, do men finish what the Lord begins. **What men begin, regardless of what it is, will come to an**

The Complicating Factor

The complicating factor in all of these things is this: **when the church has not developed a sensitivity to the Lord Himself, they are in a position where they cannot be profitably directed by Him.** They are, in a sense, shut up to their own resources and imaginations – and that is a state of total vanity. Such may be described as having hope “*in this life only*” (1 Cor 15:19).

YOU CANNOT FIGHT AGAINST GOD

³⁹ **“But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”^{40a} And to him they agreed . . .”**

dominant in the minds of men to avoid errors in judgment.

Having stated that what is originated by men will, of necessity, fail, Gamaliel now establishes that what God initiates **cannot** fail. Once again, this is something that is fundamental to sound theology. This kind of thinking must be

IF IT BE OF GOD

“*But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it . . .*” Other versions read, “*if it is from God,*”^{NIV} “*if it does in fact come from God,*”^{NJB} “*if it is really from God,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*if it has its origin in God,*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*if it should be from God.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Integral to this perception is the fact that God is at work in the earth, fulfilling His own purpose. **There are causes that come from Him.** There are men raised up to do His will, and fulfill His objectives. When it comes to delivering a message, there is such a thing as doing the will of God. There is a word that is coming from God, and there are a chosen people who are delivering it. The men themselves are not the point,

Challenged with the assumed authority of the high priest and his council, the Apostles quickly answer – by Given O. Blakely

but the mission on which they have been sent, and the message they are delivering. Therefore it is written, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as **the Lord gave to every man?**” (1 Cor 3:5).

How serious is it to oppose one of these ministers? Does a religious body of any kind have a right to do so? What if they are the Sanhedrin? Or the high priest? Of the elders of the people? Does their position give them a right to attempt to stop men who are bringing a message from God?

What of our day? Is there a group of men – any men – who can actually attempt to impede the delivering of a word from God? Can they establish preaching or teaching priorities that have not been sanctioned by the Almighty? Are they free to adopt a new agenda, in hopes of building a more impressive organization? Gamaliel will not philosophize about this matter. His acquaintance with Scripture has already established his thoughts on the subject. He will go strait to the bottom line, and draw his conclusion after that.

YOU CANNOT OVERTHROW IT

“... ye cannot overthrow it . . .”

Other versions read, “you will not be able to overthrow it,”^{NASB} “you will not be able to stop these men,”^{NIV} “you will not be able to overthrow them,”^{NRSV} “ye will not be able to put them down,”^{DARBY} “ye cannot destroy it,”^{GENEVA} “you won’t be able to stop them,”^{GWN} “it is not in your power to frustrate it,”^{MRD} “you will be powerless to put them down,”^{WEYMOUTH} “You can never stop it,”^{WILLIAMS} “you will not be able to stop or overthrow or destroy them,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “you cannot defeat them.”^{PHILLIPS}

There is no ambiguity in what this expert in the Law says. **A cause that comes from God CANNOT be deterred or nullified!** Once again, the inclusion of his words by the Holy Spirit, without any editorial remark, confirms that they are true.

No one can restrain the work of God! Thus the prophet declares, “*Indeed before the day was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and **who will reverse it?***”^{NKJV} (Isa

43:13). And again, “*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, **My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure***” (Isa 46:10). And again, “*And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?***” (Dan 4:35). And again, “*Because the **foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men***” (1 Cor 1:25).

If Satan himself cannot delay or abort the purposes of God, who is foolish enough to think there is any man or group of men that can do so – particularly when they are controlled by the wicked one? Satan could not stop Jesus from being born – and he was given 4,000 years to do so. He could not remove Jesus when He was a helpless infant. He could not stop Him from growing in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and man. He could not

born – and he was given 4,000 years to do so. He could not remove Jesus when He was a helpless infant. He could not stop Him from growing in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and man. He could not stop Him from rising from the dead.

stop Him from rising from the dead. He could not stop Him from ascending into heaven. He could not stop Him from pouring forth His Spirit. And, He cannot stop Him building His church (Matt 16:18), or coming again (Acts 1:11). All of those things have to do with Divine purpose.

As depicted in the Revelation, the only time the world has any power over the servants of God is when they have “*finished their testimony*” (Rev 11:7). This was confirmed in the life of Jesus (John 17:4), Paul (2 Tim 4:7), and Peter (1 Pet 1:13-14).

They are also confirmed in the inspired history of the chosen people of God.

⇒ When Israel entered into Canaan, Joshua reminded the people, “*There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel: **all came to pass***” (Josh 21:45).

⇒ When he was getting ready to die, Joshua said to the people, “*And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; **all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof***” (Josh 23:14).

⇒ In Mary’s marvelous response to the announcement that she would bear the Son of God, she said, “*He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; **as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever***” (Luke 1:54-55).

⇒ In Zechariah’s praise following the birth of John the Baptist, he confessed, “*To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear*” (Luke 1:74).

⇒ At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon told the people, “*Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto His people Israel, according to all that He promised: **there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which He promised by the hand of Moses his servant***” (1 Kgs 8:56).

None of God's intentions could be overthrown. **No cause that has been initiated by Him has ever failed.** This is involved in His faithfulness – doing what He has promised, and carrying forward every cause to completion. If any Divine objective falls short of fulfillment, then He will be proved unfaithful. In such a case, He will have encountered someone more powerful than Himself.

Some May Object

Some may object, saying this is too simplistic – even though God has emphatically declared this is the case. He has even challenged someone to interfere with what He purposes, or cause it to come short of fulfillment. He thunders from heaven, *“The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand”* (Isa 14:24). And again, *“I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it”* (Isa 46:11). And again, *“There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand”* (Prov 19:21). And again, *“There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD”* (Prov 21:30). And again, *“Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?”* (Lam 3:37).

Notwithstanding the strength of these affirmations, the simple think they see a hole in the reasoning. They point out that all of God's purposes are not being fulfilled, for God *“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim 2:4). Thus, they reason, if all men are not saved, His purpose has been thwarted.

The reasoning of such men, however, is flawed. First, God provided for the salvation of all men, but is nowhere said to have **purposed** to save all men. He has promised salvation only to those who are in Christ Jesus, for *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

In his inspired synopsis of God's great salvation, Paul outlines the purpose of God. *“For whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that*

He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

This should not be difficult for men to perceive. Salvation involves the deliverance of people from this present evil world (Gal 1:4). It requires there separation from other people (Acts 15:14; 2 Cor 6:17-18). He has purposed to save no one else. He has never said He intends to save the ungodly, the worldly, the slothful, and the unfaithful. He is not committed to the salvation of those who do iniquity, and draw back from Him.

Adopting the Divine Agenda

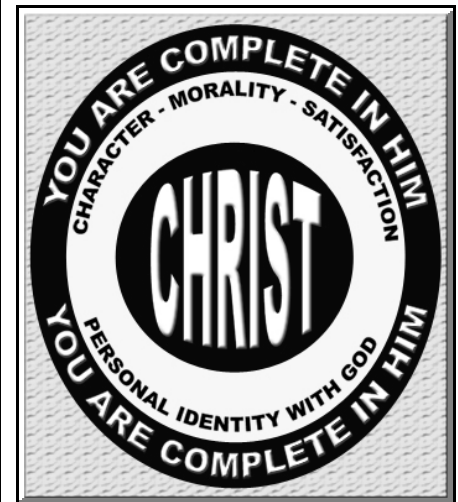
All of this highlights the importance of adopting the Divine agenda, and delivering the ordained message. If men adopt some purpose that has not been revealed by God – for the Lord does nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7) – they have entered into a futile work.

Because of the spiritual obtuseness of our times, it is necessary to elaborate on these words. Let us say that a person adopts the fundamental purpose of causing boys to be strong moral men. Another makes his purpose to make strong families. Still another chooses to emphasize being financially successful. Yet another makes his emphasis the health of the body. No one of sound mind is willing to affirm that any of these things is wrong. Yet, if they are adopted as an emphasis, or primary purpose, they **are** wrong.

All such emphases insinuate that there is some deficiency in Christ – that believers are not, in fact, *“complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power”* (Col 2:10). When it comes to matters of character, morality, satisfaction, and personal identity with God, other things are imagined to be required. That is precisely why men create special procedures, routines, and life-styles that are declared to assist in actually shaping and maturing the believer. You must buy their books or attend their seminars to obtain them, for there is not any revealed association of them with the Lord Jesus. They are an

addendum, or supplement, to Him.

It is one thing when men teach methods and techniques related to life in this world alone. Never, however, can such things become the emphasis of one's life. Should that ever happen, the individual is no longer seeking *“first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* However, when they tie such things to life in Christ, and suggest that those skills or procedures improve one's character and relationship to God, they are operating in the domain of the lie and are under Satan's control.



Anything that is not authored by Jesus cannot possibly have anything whatsoever to do with pleasing God, serving God, or being more pleasing to Him. Men do not provoke God's favorable attention by being involved in such things. We are specifically told that *“the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him”* (2 Chron 16:9). It is also written that God said, *“I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none”* (Ezek 22:30). Of the same type of quest Isaiah wrote, *“And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him”* (Isa 59:16). The Psalmist wrote, *“The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any*

that did understand, and seek God" (Psa 14:2).

Nowhere is the Lord ever represented as seeking for someone who is healthy, wealthy, or successful in business or some other earthly activity. Noah did not found grace in the eyes of the Lord because he was a disciplined and excellent ship builder. Moses did not find favor because he had several skills he learned in Egypt. Paul was not chosen because he was an expert in the Law of Moses. Those are not the kind of things God is looking for.

How, then, can it is possible for any emphasis on man-made routines to have the slightest bearing on a person's standing with God. Are exceptionally healthy people more apt to take hold of the truth of God? Do people who live their lives by strict regimen have the advantage when it comes to being godly

that revelation does not deal with such things. They are in the area in which we have been given freedom, and are not to judge one another.

The text of reference has to with *"bodily discipline"*^{NASB} that is related to religion. Some of the more liberal translations are wholly misleading at this point: i.e. *"physical training,"*^{NIV} *"training of the body,"*^{CSV} *"training the body,"*^{GWN} *"physical exercise,"*^{NJB} and *"physical exercise."*^{ISV} **The "bodily exercise" to which the text refers relates to the subduing of the fleshly lusts by abstinence and disciplined routines.** It also relates to penance, as practiced in some segments of Christendom. It can even include fasting, particularly if it is not accompanied by prayer. These routines parallel the various ceremonies under the Law, referred to as *"carnal ordinances,"* or *"regulations for the body"*^{NASB} (Heb 9:10).

tends to consume more time than can be justified. What I have said relates to anything and everything that originates with men coming to an abrupt halt.

FOUND TO FIGHT AGAINST GOD

"... lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Other versions read, *"lest you even be found to fight against God,"*^{NKJV} *"or else you may even be found fighting against God,"*^{NASB} *"you will only find yourselves fighting against God,"*^{NIV} *"in that case you may even be found fighting against God!"*^{NRSV} *"you might even be found opposing God,"*^{RSV} *"you are in danger of fighting against God,"*^{BBE} *"lest ye be found also fighters against God,"*^{DARBY} *"You may even discover that you're fighting against God,"*^{GWN} *"that ye may not be found placing yourselves in opposition to God,"*^{MRD} *"Take care not to find yourselves fighting against God,"*^{NJB} *"lest haply ye be found to strive against God,"*^{PNT} *"You might even be fighting against God Himself!"*^{IE} *"It is to be feared that you may find yourselves fighting God,"*^{WILLIAMS} and *"you might actually find yourselves to be fighting against God!"*^{PHILLIPS}

That is, if the cause being put forward by the apostles was initiated by God. In such a case, those who oppose the cause are, in fact, fighting against God Himself, for whoever in any way resists what God is doing has launched a war against Him. There is no question about the outcome of such an initiative.

Mark it well, **this is an inspired interpretation of human conduct.** Those who are actually fighting against God **do not know** that is what they are doing. The high priest, Sanhedrin, and elders of Israel thought they were opposing the apostles. They did not have it in their minds to attack God. Yet, what they were actually doing was waging a war against Jesus, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. It was really Jesus that they were not receiving, as well as the Father who sent Him. As the Lord Himself said, *"He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me"* (Luke 10:16).

Fighting against God is described

How, then, can it is possible for any emphasis on man-made routines to have the slightest bearing on a person's standing with God. Are exceptionally healthy people more apt to take hold of the truth of God? Do people who live their lives by strict regimen have the advantage when it comes to being godly and discerning?

and discerning?

A Religion of the Body

For some people, the body, not the heart, is the core of religion. It is the secret to everything else. Their religion consists of external routines and disciplines, and have no real substance to them. Scripture refers to such an approach to religion as *"bodily exercise."* It is written, *"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"* (1 Tim 4:8). He is not speaking of exercise as it is related to bodily health. It is not the manner of the Spirit to relate such things to life that is in Christ Jesus. This does not mean that such activities are wrong, or are to be shunned. It is rather

It is stated that external routine *"is only of little profit"*^{NASB} – that is, as it relates to life in Christ Jesus. Even that profit is largely confined to those who are in a state of spiritual infancy.

My point here is that the religious creations of men all have to do with such things. None of them are really associated with spiritual improvement, growth into Christ, Christ being formed in them, or conformity to His image. All of the things they emphasize have to do with life in this earth alone. As such, they do not require Jesus and His present ministry. Hence, they are destined to fail.

This will suffice, as this subject

in several different ways in Scripture, and all of them sobering.

- ⇨ **RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.** *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always **resist the Holy Ghost**: as your fathers did, so do ye”* (Acts 7:51).
- ⇨ **PERSECUTING JESUS.** *“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus **whom thou persecutest**: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”* (Acts 9:5).
- ⇨ **RESISTING THE WORDS OF AN INSPIRED MAN.** *“And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees’ part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not **fight against God**”* (Acts 23:9).
- ⇨ **EXALTING THE HUMAN VOICE AGAINST GOD.** *“Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou **exalted thy voice**, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel”* (2 Kgs 19:22).
- ⇨ **STRIVING WITH THE MASTER.** *“Woe unto him that **striveth with his Maker**! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?”* (Isa 45:9).
- ⇨ **PROVOKING THE LORD.** *“Do we **provoke the Lord** to jealousy? are we stronger than He?”* (1 Cor 10:22).

In all of their hatred and insolence, even the Egyptians knew it was pointless to fight against God. When they were pressing forward through the dried bed of the Red Sea in pursuit of

Israel, God took off their chariot wheels. The Egyptians saw what was happening and cried out, *“Let us flee from the face of Israel; **for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians**”* (Ex 14:25). Notwithstanding, sin can so stupify the people that they cannot associate what has taken place with the hand of the Lord. Our text is a case in point. God has delivered the apostles from prison miraculously, so that there was no human explanation for it. Yet, these wicked Jewish leaders were so blinded by

Scriptures, they checked to see if they said what Paul was saying. The account is given by Luke. *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* (Acts 17:11). Their search confirmed that Paul was speaking the truth, and therefore *“many of them believed”* (Acts 17:12). **He was declaring a Messiah that fulfilled what the Scriptures had said of the Messiah whom God would send.**

It took a Gamaliel, skilled in Scripture, to draw the conclusion for them. If, perchance, God was the one behind the work of the apostles, they would be fighting against Him if they sought to stop their efforts.

sin that they could not see it. It took a Gamaliel, skilled in Scripture, to draw the conclusion for them. If, perchance, God was the one behind the work of the apostles, they would be fighting against Him if they sought to stop their efforts.

Actually, the matter was more clear than even Gamaliel could see. It really was no *perchance* matter at all. These men **were** opposing God, fighting against Him, and guaranteeing their own downfall. The work of the apostles originated with God Himself. The work of the Jewish council originated with men. That, and that alone, would determine the ultimate outcome of these events.

ASSUMING IS OUT OF ORDER

Later in time, when Paul was converted and preaching the Gospel, he encountered a people described as *“more noble.”* Their nobility surfaced when they did not assume that the words spoken by Paul were true. Being able to handle the

Today there are gospels being preached that cannot be supported by the Scripture. Some resort to Moses to justify what they are saying believers should do – like the health and diet proclaimers. Others take us to Moses to confirm that God wants us to be healthy and wealthy, and to be leaders in business and government. However, they cannot show us where God said He was going to send a Messiah who would do such things. They cannot confirm from the Word of God that this is why Jesus died, rose again, ascended into heaven, and was seated at the right hand of God. If they use the Scriptures at all, they must create a sort of patchwork theology that allows them to blend Moses and Solomon with the worldly-wise men of the day.

However, there is no room in their systems for the words of Jesus, the Head of the church, and His apostles, who laid the appointed foundation. Such systems are all built upon the sand.

TO HIM THEY AGREED

^{40a} **And to him they agreed . . .** Other versions read, *“they agreed with him,”*^{NKJV} *“they took his advice,”*^{NASB} *“His speech persuaded them,”*^{NIV} *“they were*

convinced by him,”^{NRSV} *“it seemed to them to be right,”*^{BBE} *“they listened to his advice,”*^{DARBY} *“they consented to him,”*^{DOUAY} *“they assented to him,”*^{MRD} *“his*

advice was accepted,”^{NJB} *“The Jewish leaders then agreed with what Gamaliel said,”*^{IE} *“His advice carried conviction,”*^{WEYMOUTH} and *“they gave in to him,”*

MONTGOMERY

How could this band of unreasonable men agree with sound counsel? Did their hearts suddenly become tender? Did they change their minds about the apostles? This was **not** a demonstration of the power of reason.

shall be fulfilled" (Rev 17:17).

⇒ When they are wayward, He can turn the hearts of people against His own people. Again it is written, "***He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants***" (Psa 105:25).

What we are seeing in the book of Acts is the working of the Christ, not the working of men. In this text we have some vessels that were "to dishonor." They are God's enemies, and have taken upon themselves to shut down the preaching of the Gospel. Jesus, however, simply will not allow them to do so.

Rather, this was the Lord intervening in the affairs of men. He overturned the intentions of the council like He overturned the counsel of Ahithophel. In the case of Absalom and David, the Lord overthrew good counsel that He "*might bring evil upon Absalom*" (2 Sam 17:14). In this case, He overthrew the wicked counsel of the Sanhedrin in order that the apostles might go on preaching. As it is written, "*He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong*" (Job 5:12-13). Heaven had directed the apostles to preach. The council had directed them to cease from preaching. Indeed, as it is written, "*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand*" (Prov 19:21).

If men are given leave to do their will, over and above that will, they will, as in the case of killing Jesus, do "*whatsoever*" His "*hand*" and "*counsel determined before to be done*" (Acts 4:28). Our great God can "*put it*" into men's hearts "*to agree*" with someone else, as

⇒ He did with the kings of the earth who agreed with spiritual Babylon. As it is written, "*For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God*

⇒ He can put His fear into men's hearts. As it is written, "*I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*" (Jer 32:40).

⇒ God put "*His wisdom*" into the heart of Solomon (1 Kgs 10:24).

⇒ He "*put*" it into the heart of Artaxerses – a Persian king – to "*beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem*" (Ezra 7:27).

⇒ He "*put*" into Nehemiah's heart to **repair the walls of Jerusalem** (Neh 2:12).

⇒ He is a God described as one who "*hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?*" (Job 38:36).

⇒ He can "*put gladness*" into the heart (Psa 4:7), "*give*" people a "*new heart*" (Ezek 36:26), and put an "*earnest care*" for His people in the heart of His servants (2 Cor 8:16).

⇒ The New Covenant itself involves God **putting His law "in their inward parts,"** and writing "*it in their hearts*" (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10; 10:16).

This is the true God, and it is how

He works among the sons of men. If you, like myself, have come from a background that emphasized man's *free will*, all of this may sound strange. However, if your mind has been shaped by the Word of God, an emphasis upon man's imagined *free will* sounds strange. If this whole subject is confusing, you owe it to yourself to search the Scriptures and see whether what I have said is true. See if God ever uses the expression "*freewill*"^{KJV} or "*free will*," in reference changing the direction of anything – particularly in regards to salvation. Find if men outside of Christ are in any sense said to be "*free*." Perceive if the Gospel is preached as though they were, what men call, *free moral agents*. And, if they are, why is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit necessary, or being born of God, or being illuminated, or delivered, and having Christ "*formed*" within.

What we are seeing in the book of Acts is the working of the Christ, not the working of men. In this text we have some vessels that were "*to dishonor*" (Rom 9:21). They are God's enemies, and have taken upon themselves to shut down the preaching of the Gospel. **Jesus, however, simply will not allow them to do so.** He raises up a man they do respect, and bends their wills toward his counsel.

The action that follows will confirm that they did not do this with all of their hearts. While they did consent to let the apostles go for the time being, they did not consent to their continued preaching of the Gospel. Our text says "*they agreed*." The Greek word from which "*agreed*" is translated is ἐπειθοσαν (e-pies-thas-an). The root meaning of the word is "persuasion, persuasive power,"^{THAYER} "to convince someone to believe something, and to act on the basis of what is recommended,"^{LOUW-NIDA} "To prevail upon, to win over,"^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} "with persuasive words of wisdom . . . convince, persuade,"^{GINGRICH} This is not a word that emphasizes the insight or understanding of the hearers – as though they responded, "Now we see the error of our ways." **Rather, the word emphasizes the skill of the persuader,** who so skillfully presented his case that there was no immediate way of negating what he said. Solomon had this kind of thing in mind when he wrote, "*he that winneth souls is wise*" (Prov 11:30). This does not emphasize the wisdom of the hearer, but

of the speaker. In our text, the idea is that the council could not think of a way to negate what Gamaliel said, and thus deferred to his judgment. That, of course, is not the most noble moral action. Far better to be able to perceive the wisdom of what is said, and understand the words that are spoken.

By way of illustration, Stephen also spoke words of unparalleled wisdom to the Jewish council. We are told, “they

were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” However, rather than releasing Stephen, the council “secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’” The people were thereby stirred up, and the outcome of it all was that Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 6:10-7:59). What was the difference in the account we are reading and that of Stephen? Was Gamaliel wiser than Stephen, and thus

more capable of moving the people? Who could imagine such nonsense? God was at work in both instances. In the case with Stephen, his work was completed, and a young witness names Saul was there, who would be impacted by his God-glorifying death. In our text, the work of the apostles was **not** completed, and God would be more greatly glorified by them continuing to preach the Word, converting sinners and establishing believers.

THEY BEAT THEM AND LET THEM GO

^{40b} . . . 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.”

Here the wickedness of men will be confirmed. This is primarily evidenced in their enmity against God Himself, secondarily, in the absence of a love of the truth, and third in their unjustified hatred of the apostles.

THEY CALLED AND BEAT THEM

“ . . . and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them . . .” Other versions read, “And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them,” ^{NASB} “They called the apostles in and had them flogged,” ^{NIV} “and they sent for the Apostles, and, after having them whipped,” ^{BBE} “And calling in the apostles, after they had scourged them,” ^{DOUAY} and “and they had the apostles called in, gave orders for them to be flogged.” ^{NJB}

Flogging was no minor punishment. The word itself means, “to flay, skin . . . to beat, throb, smite . . . beat with many stripes,” ^{THAYER} “remove the skin, flay, bear, strike repeatedly, whip,” ^{FRIEBERG} “to strike or beat repeatedly,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} and “to have one’s skin flayed off.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} This is not merely the administering of severe bruises, but an act in which the skin is separated from the flesh, and often the flesh from the bone. It created deep lacerations, and was a prolonged activity. This was done with rods or sticks, and is also referred to as scourging. Under the Law of Moses, this manner of punishment was

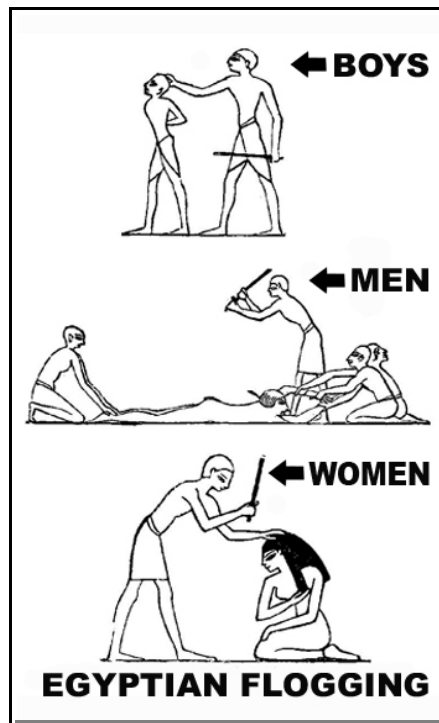
administered to those who broke the Law (Lev 19:20; Deut 22:18). It was generally administered to the back, as stated in Proverbs 10:13: “a rod is for the back of him who is void of understanding.” To this present day this remains a manner of punishment in the East. In China, the rod is applied to the soles of the feet in such punishment. In fact, historians have said that China was “governed by the stick” ^{McCLINTOK & STRONG’S} Egypt and Persia (now Iran/Iraq) also still practice this form of punishment.

is taken from some Egyptian art which depicted the use of rods for punishment on children, men, and women. Under the Law of Moses, this form of punishment, although not limited to rods, was administered while a man was lying down before the judge (Deut 25:3), as depicted in the graphic of Egyptian flogging. You may remember that Paul said he was beaten with rods on three separate occasions (2 Cor 11:25).

You can see that the Sanhedrin, while deferring to the counsel of Gamaliel, were by no means moved to be compassionate toward the apostles. Rather, they subjected them to a very severe form of punishment, even though they could find nothing worthy of punishment in them (Acts 4:21). They also proceed with this beating, even though they have been counseled by Gamaliel to leave them along.

This is the first time the apostles have endured bodily oppression. Their first opposition was incarceration and being threatened. Now, however, the opposition is increasing, and they are subjected to a harsh form of punishment. During His ministry, Jesus told them, “But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and **they will scourge you in their synagogues**” (Matt 10:17). While this scourging was not in a synagogue, it was done in the name of religion – particularly the activities of the Temple.

Thus we catch a glimpse of one of Satan’s main attacks against the



The picture of Egyptian flogging

servants of God. He launches an initiative against the body of Christ from a religious environment. The most serious of these environments is the one that comes in the name of God Himself. In our text, it is the God of Abraham and of Israel. Later, persecution will be experienced from those who actually wear the name of Jesus.

THEY COMMANDED THEM THAT THEY SHOULD NOT SPEAK

“. . . they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.” Other versions read, “ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them,”^{NASB} “giving them orders to give no teaching in the name of Jesus, they let them go,”^{BBE} “enjoined them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them,”^{DARBY} “ordered them not to speak about the one named Jesus, and let them go,”^{GWN} “Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go,”^{NLT} “commanded them not to talk to the people ever again about the name of Jesus. After that they let them go free,”^{IE} “charged them to stop speaking on the authority of Jesus, and then turned them loose,”^{WILLIAMS} “released them, with instructions not to speak about the name of Jesus,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “sternly forbade them to speak in or about the name of Jesus, and allowed them to go.”^{AMPLIFIED}

At once you see that these men completely missed the point of Gamaliel’s words, even though he had convinced them. Of what, then, did this expert in the Law convince them? It was that they should let the men go. They saw no correlation at all with letting them go

and their cause being of the Lord. Gamaliel had told them not to oppose these men, lest they be found fighting against God. However, they are not only opposing the work of the apostles, but strictly charging them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, or say anything about Him. Their hearts were so hard they could not see that such an edict was really fighting against God.

The Tendency Remains Today

There remains among religious men this inveterate tendency to look only on the surface of things, judging according to appearance, and in harmony with the flesh. There is now, however, a complicating factor. In our text, a pure

consoling word for such a people. There is no good message from heaven for those who are content with this world, and who seek primarily their own temporal interests. Those who deliver a Gospel that is tailored for casual and disinterested people have brought reproach upon the Savior. They have not accentuated the right things, and thus moved the Holy Spirit out of the picture, for He does not use convenient and false gospels to convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Now, the truth is not generally opposed by the ungodly simply because it is not being declared.

I fear that if the unvarnished

I fear that if the unvarnished truth of Christ was clearly declared in the average church, we would find the divisions among professing worshipers of God still as sharp as those that are revealed in our text.

message was being preached that gave little or no regard to the desires of men. It was the desire of the Lord that was fundamental, and the work of Jesus was the primary work. In our day, however, there is a strong appeal to the desires of the people – people who do not look deeply at things, or perceive the real “issues of life” (Prov 4:23). We are in a generation that is dominated by hedonism, or the quest for pleasure.

Thus, the people are already at a decided disadvantage, for God has no

truth of Christ was clearly declared in the average church, we would find the divisions among professing worshipers of God still as sharp as those that are revealed in our text.

After beating them, the council releases the apostles, delivering a sort of ultimatum to them. What will the apostles do? Will they stop preaching as they were commanded to do? How will they react to unjust treatment? Will they give up, or leave the area, choosing to preach somewhere else? We will see.

THEY LEFT REJOICING

“⁴¹ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

It is important to perceive that we are witnessing the expression of “newness of life.”

- ⇒ We are beholding how it responds in times of popularity (Acts 2:47; 5:13).
- ⇒ We are shown how true life responds when it is threatened (4:24-30).
- ⇒ When it confronts hypocrisy in the church, life also has a response (5:3-11).

- ⇒ Its response to the commands of the Lord is made known (2:41; 5:20-21).
- ⇒ When standing before critics, we have also seen the expression of genuine life (4:20; 5:29).

Now, we will see how spiritual life

responds to suffering.

- ⇨ This is not the triumph of the human will, but the people being **caused** to triumph in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 2:14).
- ⇨ This is reigning in life by Christ Jesus (Rom 5:17).
- ⇨ It is having dominion over sin because men are *“under grace”* (Rom 6:14).
- ⇨ We are witnessing an example of taking the kingdom by force (Matt 11:12; Lk 16:16).
- ⇨ This is the victory that comes from believing Jesus Christ is the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).
- ⇨ We are given to see what it means to press toward the mark (Phil 3:14).
- ⇨ This is not being weary in well doing (2 Thess 3:13).
- ⇨ It is believing to the saving of the soul (Heb 10:38).
- ⇨ Here we behold disciples denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Jesus (Matt 16:24).

This is something we must press to comprehend: **the doctrine of the epistles is lived out in the book of Acts.**

THEY DEPARTED FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL

⁴¹ *And they departed from the presence of the council . . .* Other versions read, *“So they went on their way from the presence of the Council,”* ^{NASB} *“the apostles left the Sanhedrin,”* ^{NIV} *“So they went away from the Sanhedrin,”* ^{BBE} *“and they indeed went from the presence of the council,”* ^{DOUAY} and *“The apostles left the council room.”* ^{GWN}

After being beaten, the apostles were not carried from the council chambers. **They left under their own power.** They further *“went their own way.”* They did not rush to a physician to treat their wounds. They did not seek legal counsel in order to press charges against their oppressors. They did not return to warn the other disciples of impending danger. They did not perceive

what happened to them as being a contradiction to the prayer for God to behold the threatening of their enemies. They did not ask God why all of this was happening when they were trying to

been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for speaking about Jesus,” ^{GWN} *“rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus,”* ^{NLT} *“but they were happy, because they were*

serve Him. **Those kind of responses are the whimpers of the weak.** The faith of these men had been strong.

When they left the council, they departed to resume their labors, knowing they would be required to ignore the mandate that was given to them.

REJOICED THAT THEY WERE COUNTED WORTHY

“ . . . rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” Other versions read, *“rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name,”* ^{NASB} *“rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name,”* ^{NIV} *“they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name,”* ^{NRSV} *“happy to undergo shame for the Name,”* ^{BBE} *“rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the name,”* ^{CSB} *“rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus,”* ^{DOUAY} *“rejoicing, that they were counted worthy to suffer rebuke for his Name,”* ^{GENEVA} *“They were happy to have*

given the honor of suffering dishonor for the name,” ^{IE} *“rejoicing that they had been deemed worthy to suffer disgrace on behalf of the NAME,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“rejoicing that they were being counted worthy [dignified by the indignity] to suffer shame and be exposed to disgrace for [the sake of] His name,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“full of joy that they had been considered worthy to bear humiliation for the sake of the name.”* ^{PHILLIPS}

How can the adversary ever hope to overcome holy men when they consider suffering for the name of Jesus an honor and a privilege? They did not delight in the suffering itself, but in the confirmation that it delivered to their hearts. Suffering feels no better to the body of a child of God than it does to anyone else. However, saints live according to a power that is greater than that of the flesh. They are able to reach higher, see further, and be aware of more than the limited senses of the body. Faith is in God and can therefore draw on resources that are external to the *“natural man.”*

In our life with Christ, this world

is not the main place, and therefore the things that are experienced in it are not the primary things. Ultimately, all believers are being called out of the world in order to dwell with the Lord forever. Seen in its very best sense, life in this world is a time of preparation and orientation for glory. It is what we are, where we go, and what we do AFTER the present heavens and earth pass away that is of the most critical importance. No person who is cast into hell will think that his life on earth was in any sense worth the living. However, everyone in the glory will be thankful for every minute they lived for Jesus and without regard for their personal pleasure and comfort.

your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess 1:5).

Suffering for the name of Jesus is the path that leads to glorification. That being the case, when men suffer for Jesus’ sake, they ought to contemplate the glory that is ahead. Then they will not only be tested with all suffering, but will thereby be inducted into the reign to which they were appointed, and for which they were duly prepared.

Suffering for the name of Christ

- ⇒ It drives the trusting to draw closer to the Lord.
- ⇒ It provokes holy contemplation.

In all of this, the disciples are in fellowship with Jesus, who, *“for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame”* (Heb 12:2). This is the same kind of rejoicing that Paul and Silas did when they were beaten and placed in prison, with their feet *“fast in the stocks.”* It was at that time that they *“prayed and sang praises unto God”* (Acts 16:23-25). They were fulfilling the word that Jesus gave to them early in His ministry: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”* (Matt 5:10-12).

This kind of rejoicing is the result of spiritual discernment. A person cannot rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus out of a sense of obligation, or in obedience to a commandment. It is their insight and understanding that prompts such marvelous rejoicing.

By the same token, where the real cause of suffering is not known, or if the hope of glory is not present, it will become the point at which the soul will begin to draw back – as Peter did on the night of Christ’s betrayal (Lk 22:57). In our text, Peter is facing a greater degree of suffering than He did on that night in the palace of the high priest. Yet, he does not draw back so much as a millimeter. **The difference is that both his present ministry his eternal destiny were now clear to him.** The *“full assurance of faith”* (Heb 10:22) and *“the full assurance of hope”* (Heb 6:11) belonged to him. Unlike those early days, His perception of Jesus was now accompanied with *“the full assurance of understanding”* (Col 2:2). Those who are in possession of such benefits cannot be shaken by the opposition of mere mortals. Their faith makes them superior to circumstance, as well as their enemies.

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Scripture indicates that our role in heaven is an assignment. The saved will be told, *“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Mat 25:34). When James and John asked that they might be seated on Christ’s right and left hand, He replied, *“But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared”* (Mark 10:40). While this is not the only view of our inheritance, it is an essential one. **It is in view of this arrangement that great suffering can be perceived as indicative of a significant role in glory.** It appears to me that this is how the apostles were viewing things.

When they said *“counted worthy to suffer,”* they were not speaking of the suffering itself, but concerning the cause that drove that suffering. In it, a certain worthiness was being cultured. Paul spoke more specifically of this line of thought to the Thessalonians. *“So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all*

cannot be done accidentally or inadvertently. Such suffering can only be experienced when the life of Christ is manifested through those who are walking by faith. That manifested life chaffs against those who are of this world, and even threatens them. **Those who see in this revelation a threat instead of an opportunity lash out against the vessels through whom Christ’s life is being made known.** While the opposition can take different forms, it always accomplishes a number of things in the one who is unwilling to walk in contradiction of Jesus.

- ⇒ It confirms that the believer is not of this world.
- ⇒ It ratifies his identity with Christ.
- ⇒ It makes a further separation between the believer and the world.
- ⇒ It brings a greater clarity to the nature of Christ Himself.
- ⇒ It brightens the hope of glory.

THEY CONTINUED TO TEACH AND PREACH

⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

Confirming the invincibility of faith, the apostles resume their heavenly-appointed mission. They have nurtured their faith, refusing to abandon it during times of difficulty. As a result, they have been *"kept by the power of God through faith"* (1 Pet 1:5). **That is the factor that makes faith unvanquishable!** It is, after all, *"the victory that overcometh the world"* (1 John 5:4-5). Where men are overcome by the world, whether by threats or lures, it is always because of a fundamental deficiency in their faith.

DAILY IN THE TEMPLE, AND IN EVERY HOUSE

"And daily in the temple, and in every house . . ." Other versions read, *"And every day, in the temple and from house to house,"*^{NASB} *"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house,"*^{NIV} *"And every day in the temple and at home,"*^{NRSV} *"And every day, in the Temple and privately,"*^{BBE} *"Every day in the temple complex, and in various homes,"*^{CSB} *"And they ceased . . . daily, in the temple and at home,"*^{MRD} *"and all day long, both at the temple and in the homes,"*^{NAB} *"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house,"*^{NIB} *"And every day, in the Temple and in their home Bible classes,"*^{LIVING} *"every day, in the Temple or in private houses,"*^{WEYMOUTH} *"they never ceased for a single day, both in the temple area and at home,"*^{AMPLIFIED} and *"Then day after day in the Temple and in people's houses."*^{PHILLIPS}

Even as it was with their blessed Lord, the religion of the apostles was not seasonal. In *"a great falling away,"* when people find it difficult to devote two or three uninterrupted communal hours a week to their *"Father's business,"* this kind of report sounds most strange.

There are precious few structures devoted to the Lord Jesus that are used daily for the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. They may be opened for exercise, public education, sundry community services, etc. Some may even

provide some kind of counseling services every day in which they attempt to meet the needs of people with special problems. But who has heard of daily preaching and teaching?

Yet, God had cultured a people to whom this concept was not strange. Jesus Himself taught in the Temple every day Matt 26:55; Mk 14:49; Lk 19:47; 22:53). Even the lame man who was healed by Peter and John was *"laid daily at the gate of the Temple"* where people were regularly moving in and out (Acts 3:2). There was even a daily *"hour of prayer"* (Acts 3:1). Even the First Covenant was, in a manner of speaking, one that included daily teaching and prayer.

This kind of conduct blends well with the nature of spiritual life, which must be sustained on a daily basis. It is exceedingly difficult to conceive of a modern preacher delivering the Word of God every day. Or, for that matter, where would he do so if he so desired? The point is that a sanctified place and form was in place that allowed for daily teaching in the things of God.

It is not surprising, therefore, that after the day of Pentecost, the early church *"continued daily with one accord in the Temple"* (Acts 2:46). And now, after they have been beaten, the apostles return to the Temple every day to teach and preach.

This kind of conduct blends well with the nature of spiritual life, which must be sustained on a daily basis. It is exceedingly difficult to conceive of a modern preacher delivering the Word of God every day. Or, for that matter, where would he do so if he so desired? **The point is that a sanctified place and form was in place that allowed for daily teaching in the things of God.** The apostles, therefore, capitalized on the opportunity.

Remember, the angel of the Lord had told the apostles, *"Go, stand and*

stand in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). He did not say to do so every day. In the modern church scene, that word might have been interpreted to mean *every Sunday*. But that is not how the apostles viewed the word of the angel. **Their hearts were not tuned to a weekly frequency.** Even when they were severely beaten and strictly charged to stop preaching, they went back to the Temple every day and taught.

Even that was not the end of the matter. They also engaged in the same activity *"in every house."* When they were not in the Temple, they were in private dwellings. What a marvelous picture of their commitment to and love for the Lord Jesus, as well as their consistent

interest in the people.

THEY CEASED NOT TO TEACH AND PREACH JESUS CHRIST

" . . . they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Other versions read, *"they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ,"*^{NASB} *"they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ,"*^{NIV} *"they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah,"*^{NRSV} *"they went on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ,"*^{BBE} *"they ceased not teaching and announcing the glad tidings that Jesus was the Christ,"*^{DARBY} *"they refused to stop teaching and telling the Good News that Jesus is the Messiah,"*^{GWN} *"they went on ceaselessly teaching and proclaiming the good news of Christ Jesus,"*^{NJB} *"they continued to teach and preach this message: Jesus is the*

Messiah.”^{NLT} *“they were not ceasing teaching and proclaiming good news -- Jesus the Christ,”*^{YLT} *“They kept on telling the people the Good News that Jesus is the Messiah,”*^{IE} *“to teach and to proclaim the good news (Gospel) of Jesus [as] the Christ (the Messiah),”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“they continued to teach unceasingly and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.”*^{PHILLIPS}

And what were the apostles doing in the Temple and from house to house? Were they listening to the problems of the people? Or simply engaging in some neutral kind of social activities? Or just, as some are wont to say, “hanging out?” **Their activity was focused.** They were *“teaching and preaching.”* That is, expounding and declaring, or opening and alleging, or announcing and elaborating, or making known and enlarging upon. The theme of these activities was *“Jesus Christ.”* That is, they declared and expounded His Person and His work; who He is, what He said, what He did, and what He is doing. **He was presented as God’s solitary remedy for the human condition cased by sin.** He was shown to be the only means of coming into the favor of God, or being

accepted by Him. Only through Him could men be brought back and kept, or converted and sustained.

This is another way of expounding the fact that men are *“complete”* in Christ (Col 2:10). The Jewish leaders had convinced the people that Jesus was the problem, and therefore they crucified Him. By exalting Him and giving Him all power in heaven and earth, God had affirmed that He was the total answer – not just initially, but for all of life. Only Jesus can give eternal life (John 10:26; 17:2). He is the only one who can give us an understanding of God, which is essential to the maintenance of eternal life (1 John 5:20). He is the only One who can lead us, or feed us, or keep us. He is the only One to whom God ultimately listens, and therefore He is the Intercessor. No one else can bring us to God (1 Pet 3:18). He is the only One by whom we *“do believe in God”* (1 Pet 1:21). He is the *“Head of the body”* (Col 1:18). There is no authority or profitable power part from Him, for He has been given *“all power in heaven and earth”* (Matt 28:28). He is the One in whom we made a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). He alone can keep us *“from falling”* (Jude 1:24). All

of *“the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* are hidden in Him (Col 2:3). He is the only One in whom we can *“rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Pet 1:8). In Him alone do men *“have boldness and access with confidence”* (Eph 3:12). The love of God is realized only through Him (Rom 8:39).

How is it possible that other Gospels have arisen that move men to trust in other things? Why has Jesus been upstaged in modern preaching with a man-centered message? How can these things have happened within the church? **A change of emphasis has occurred because, at some point, Jesus Christ Himself ceased to be the Subject of preaching and teaching.** About this, there can be no question!

The preaching of Christ results in a certain non-worldly emphasis, for Jesus is in heaven, where our affections are to be placed (Col 3:1-2). Such preaching always yields good results in those who believe. Likewise, it stirs up those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. All of these things are being lived out in the book of Acts.

CONCLUSION

Our text reveals the triumph of faith. The apostles had faith in Christ, knowing that He was the Son of God. This faith compelled them to do what the Lord had commanded them before He left the world – preach repentance and the remission of sins in Jesus’ name, *“beginning at Jerusalem”* (Lk 24:47). When they encountered threats from the very people who had crucified the Son of God, they immediately prayed the Lord would behold the threatenings of their enemies, and grant them that with all boldness they might speak the word (Acts 4:29). Now, after being arrested and beaten, then commanded to speak no more in Jesus’ name, they return to the Temple every day preaching Jesus Christ, and doing so from house to house as well. **How is it that they were able to be so consistent in their obedience and faithfulness – particularly when it involved suffering?**

Many professing Christians compromise their faith under some mere social pressure from their peers. Some do so in order to be more popular, not wanting to be different from the crowd. Others buy into a compromising religion – a system of *Christian* thought that allows the individual to remain close to the world, and even maintain worldly preferences. What is the difference between the apostles and such people? Is it that the apostles were a kind of spiritual supermen who did things the rest of the body of Christ cannot do. Admittedly, there was such a thing as *“the signs of an apostle”* (2 Cor 12:12), and the *“many signs and wonders”* that were done by them (Acts 2:43; 5:12). Did they not pray for God to grant them boldness to speak His word by stretching forth His hand *“to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child Jesus”* (Acts 4:30)? Do

those things account for their faithfulness? Indeed not!

First, they did not ask for signs and wonders to be done so they would keep the faith, or be consistent, or love God with all of their heart and soul. **Rather, they had asked for these things in order that they might confidently preach in the face of adversity.** The question is, what made them want to do this? Why were their hearts so insistent that they continue, and not relent?

The answer is found in the very nature of newness of life. The *“new man,”* we are told, *“is created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:24). He is *“renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him”* (Col 3:10). This creation takes place when a person is born again – in fact, this is the result of the new birth. There is, however, one

complicating factor. There can come a time when each child of God must “put on the new man,” as the Ephesians were admonished to do (Eph 4:24). This is true even though, in another sense, “the new man” was put on when they were baptized into Christ (Col 3:10; Gal 3:27).

When a person is really living by faith, the new man remains in

dominance, the “old man” is “put off” (Col 3:9) and the flesh is “mortified,” or “crucified” (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:24). However, if men begin to “draw back” (Heb 10:39), and allow the entrance of “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb 3:12), the “old man” rises to prominence, and “the flesh” begins to dictate the manner of life. Faith will not allow such things to happen, but unbelief will cause them to

take place.

What, then, is the distinction of the apostles, and of the record we are reading? **It is that they were living by faith, and thus were able to fulfill their calling.** Those who lack spiritual consistency, and are in a backward motion, are **not** living by faith, but are in the grip of unbelief.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 4/13/2007. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Twenty-sixth lesson will cover verses 1 through 7 of the sixth chapter: “DISSENSION ARISES, BUT IS OVERCOME.” Having failed in his attempt to corrupt the church through Ananias and Sapphira, and not being able to eliminate the preaching of the Gospel through the Jewish council, Satan now raises dissension in the church. Thoughtless neglect has provided him an opportunity to work. However, again working through the apostles, his purpose will be dashed to the ground. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, and Eva
406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)

Adah Hutchcraft (adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com), Jason Hutchcraft (preacherhutch@heatoncc.org)

WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS
SPEAKING/LEADING IN THE ASSEMBLY
DURING MARCH 2007**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. <i>Given O. Blakely</i> (AM exhortation, PM message, PM message, Teach Wednesday Lessons, Teach Friday Lessons). | Table). | text, AM closing Scripture and prayer, Reading PM sermon text, Reading PM sermon text). |
| 2. <i>Aaron Hutchcraft</i> (AM opening word, AM Lord's Table, AM class, AM message, PM exhortation, PM exhortation, PM exhortation, PM exhortation). | 8. <i>Barbara Hutchcraft</i> (AM closing Scripture and prayer, Leading PM songs, Leading PM songs). | 18. <i>Amanda Miller</i> (AM calling). |
| 3. <i>Ricky Sims</i> (AM message, AM Lord's Table, AM message, Leading PM songs, PM message). | 9. <i>Matthew Cobb</i> (AM Scripture shower, Leading AM songs). | 19. <i>Baylie Sims</i> (Reading AM sermon text). |
| 4. <i>Robert Cobb</i> (Teaching AM class, AM exhortation, AM message, AM exhortation, AM class, PM Lord's Table, PM Lord's Table, PM Lord's Table). | 10. <i>Tasha Sims</i> (Leading AM songs). | 20. <i>Annie Sims</i> (AM closing Scripture and prayer, Reading PM sermon text). |
| 5. <i>Jeremy Williams</i> (AM opening word, PM Lord's Table, PM introduction, PM message). | 11. <i>Levi Miller</i> (AM calling). | 21. <i>John Hill</i> (PM Intercessory prayer and benediction). |
| 6. <i>June Blakely</i> (AM Class, leading PM prayer sessions). | 12. <i>Nichole Williams</i> (AM opening word). | 22. <i>Isaac Murphy</i> (AM Scripture shower). |
| 7. <i>Tony Parker</i> (AM calling, AM Lord's | 13. <i>Rebecca Scalf</i> (Leading PM songs). | 23. <i>Gene Hutchcraft</i> (AM exhortation). |
| | 14. <i>Michele Cole</i> (AM Scripture shower, PM Introduction, PM Introduction). | 24. <i>Gretchen Dill</i> (Leading AM songs). |
| | 15. <i>Melissa Parker</i> (Leading AM songs, AM opening word). | 25. <i>Mariah Murphy</i> (Reading AM sermon text). |
| | 16. <i>Judah Hutchcraft</i> (AM Scripture and closing prayer, Reading AM sermon text). | 26. Benjamin Blakely (AM Scripture shower). |
| | 17. <i>Logan Williams</i> (Reading AM sermon | 27. <i>Preparing Lord's Supper</i> (Various sisters). |
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A Table in the Wilderness

Developing the theme: "THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD"

Friday: 7:00 PM Blakely Home (Hungry Saints Meeting)

Saturday and Lord's Day Morning: 8:00 AM Don DeWalt Prayer Center

Lord's Day Evening: 6:30 PM Blakely home