

# Nothing Can Stop the Work of God

## Acts 5:12-42

<sup>12</sup> The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. <sup>13</sup> No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. <sup>15</sup> As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. <sup>16</sup> Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

<sup>17</sup> Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. <sup>18</sup> They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. <sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. <sup>20</sup> "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

<sup>21</sup> At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. <sup>22</sup> But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, <sup>23</sup> "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." <sup>24</sup> On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

<sup>25</sup> Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." <sup>26</sup> At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

<sup>27</sup> The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. <sup>28</sup> "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

<sup>29</sup> Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! <sup>30</sup> The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. <sup>32</sup> We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. <sup>36</sup> Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. <sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup> But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

<sup>40</sup> His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

<sup>41</sup> The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. <sup>42</sup> Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

### **The Kingdom of God is at Work**

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- God was revealing himself to the people and one of the ways was through signs and wonders, and that includes healing. The signs and wonders showed the people that the apostle's message about Jesus Christ was from God.
- The people recognized the work of God in the apostles, but they were not willing to openly follow Jesus, because of they were afraid of the persecution that the believers were facing. When Jesus was still alive, the people did the same thing to Jesus. They gladly receive his signs and wonders, but they were unwilling to publicly confess their faith in him.
- There was opposition from the authority, but God added to their number, he continued to bring people into his kingdom. The kingdom of God was advancing despite having opposition.

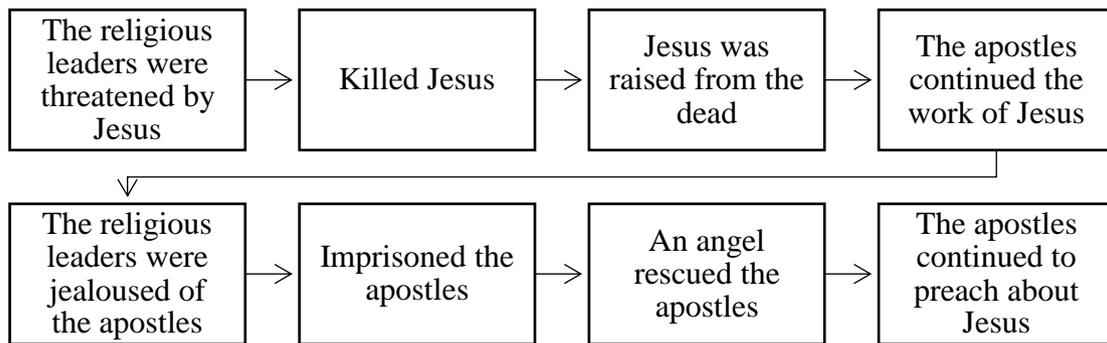
### **Opposition Cannot Stop God's Work**

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- The high priest and the Sadducees were threatened by what the apostles were doing, they were filled with jealousy. So, they put the apostles in prison to demonstrate their "power" over them, hoping to put a stop to what they were doing. But, God showed that he is above their power; he sent an angel to rescue the apostles, and then asked them to continue to tell the people about Jesus and the new life he brings. The religious leaders asked them to shut up, but God asked them to not be afraid and speak.



- Imagine the frustration the religious leaders had!
- God’s work will continue regardless of the opposition. The wicked plans and actions of men cannot stop God from doing his will.

**Psalm 21:11**

*<sup>11</sup> Though they plot evil against you  
and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed.*

**1. Be Faithful**

<sup>25</sup> Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” <sup>26</sup> At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

<sup>27</sup> The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. <sup>28</sup> “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”

<sup>29</sup> Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings! <sup>30</sup> The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. <sup>32</sup> We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

- V. 29, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” The truth is simple. We must be faithful to obey God regardless of what happens.
- The apostles were clear of their mission: they were to be witnesses of what the Lord has done through Jesus Christ. They were commissioned to tell the people about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the forgiveness and salvation that is offered through the sacrificial death of Jesus. They were determined to faithfully obey him even if it brings persecution. In fact, they were prepared to be persecuted. Jesus had warned them about it, and they have seen what the authority has done to Jesus. The persecution was not a surprise to them, and they were not going to be intimidated by it.
- Peter then continued to speak the truth that the religious leaders were guilty of killing Jesus. Even though he knew it was going to offend them and cause him trouble, Peter spoke with boldness and confidence in the truth. Peter was not going to sugarcoat things to avoid persecution. He was faithful to obey God in speaking the truth with boldness.

- At the same time, Peter shared the message of the cross; the forgiveness and salvation offered by Jesus through repentance. The religious leaders murdered the Son of God, but the good news is, they can still be forgiven if they repent from their sins and turn to God. That is the message of Jesus Christ, that sinners can be forgiven and saved because of his death and resurrection.
- The people were glad to receive that message of forgiveness, and many believed in Jesus. But, the Sanhedrin was furious. They did not bother to examine the truth in Peter's claim. They were not interested, they did not want it to be true, because they did not want to lose their power, their authority and status. They were not going to admit that Peter was right, that they have gone against God's will and murdered the Son of God. So, they were furious when Peter accused them for sinning, and they wanted to kill him and the other apostles.

<sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. <sup>36</sup> Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. <sup>38</sup> Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. <sup>39</sup> But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

<sup>40</sup> His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

- God intervened by using one of their own, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, to speak about an important truth that they will later witness themselves: God's work cannot be stopped!
- The incidents with Theudas and Judas the Galilean showed how futile the work of man is. They can gather people for a short while but in the end, they end up to nothing. "For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail." (v. 38)
- Jesus was the complete opposite. After his death, not only did his disciples not scatter, more and more were added into the numbers who followed Jesus. "But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." (v. 39)
- In the next few chapters of Acts, the persecution will intensify, and the believers will soon begin to be martyred for their faith. Even though the Jewish leaders tried to stop the spreading of the Gospel with persecution and execution, God's work did not stop. In fact, it flourished even more after that. The believers scattered all over the world because of the persecution and they brought the Gospel to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8).

#### **Psalm 33:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> The LORD foils the plans of the nations;  
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

<sup>11</sup> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,  
the purposes of his heart through all generations.

- God’s kingdom will continue to advance. Men may try to disrupt his plans, but they will not succeed. God is the one with the true power to frustrate and obstruct the plans of evil ones. And he will know how to rescue us when we face opposition. Our role is to be faithful to obey the Lord.

## 2. Rely on the Holy Spirit

### **Luke 21:12-19**

<sup>12</sup> “But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. <sup>13</sup> And so you will bear testimony to me. <sup>14</sup> But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. <sup>15</sup> For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. <sup>16</sup> You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup> Everyone will hate you because of me. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> Stand firm, and you will win life.

### **Luke 12:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, <sup>12</sup> for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

- We are vessels for the work of the kingdom of God. As we face opposition and persecution, God is with us, he will teach us how to respond; what to say and what to do.
- When we forget to look to God, God’s work can become worrisome and a burden especially when there is persecution. We forget that God is the one in charge, that this is his work (not ours), that he is the one who convicts and changes people, he is the one who brings fruits to our labour. If we are not careful to rely on God, we can become frustrated, agitated, and cynical with people. We can become overwhelmed; we can become judgmental; we can be tempted to give up. But, Jesus tells us to stand firm, to listen to the Holy Spirit, because God is doing his work, and he is teaching us.

### **John 15:5**

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

## 3. Rejoice (vv. 41-42)

<sup>41</sup> The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. <sup>42</sup> Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

- The warnings and threats did not stop the apostles, the imprisonment did not stop the apostles, the flogging did not stop the apostles. In fact, they rejoice in their suffering because they were counted worthy to suffer for, and like their Lord and Saviour.

**Matthew 5:10-12**

<sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

- Even though they were persecuted, there was joy because the work of God continued, the kingdom of God was advancing, many people were added to their numbers, many came to know Jesus, many repented and received forgiveness and salvation.
- The apostles stood firm in their faith and count it a joy to suffer for Christ, because they were convicted of their calling. They had encountered the resurrected Jesus. They witnessed the death and resurrection of Jesus, they were convinced that he was the Son of God, that he offers eternal life, and they know they are commissioned to share this good news to everyone. So, when people are being saved, they rejoice, they were glad to suffer for such a cause.
- Whatever profession we are in, our first and most important calling is as God’s children, doing the Father’s business, being salt and light, being God’s royal priesthood, as God’s ambassador, sharing the good news, bringing forgiveness, hope and salvation through the person of Jesus Christ.
- We must be convicted of our calling to represent Christ. We must encounter the resurrected Jesus; we must be fully convinced of the message we bring to the people.
- When we live with that conviction and priority of our calling, we will have clarity of our purpose and mission. Then as we face opposition, we will learn to be faithful to God, we will learn to rely on the Holy Spirit to discern and obey the Lord, and we will rejoice because people are being saved and freed in Christ. Whether it is in the office, in our families, in our nation or serving in church and ministry, like the apostles, we will never stop proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

**The Kingdom of God At Work**

- Throughout history, there are many different occasions where people tried to stop the work of God, but none of the attempts have ever been successful. God protected his church; and God sustained his people through very difficult times. On top of that, God often uses these difficult times for his purposes. What men meant for evil, he turns it for his purpose.
- E.g., the fastest growing churches are often in the nations that Christians are being persecuted. Christians who face intense persecution understand the truth about God’s work. They are aware of the persecution they face, but their focus is not on their persecution, but on the victory that Christ has brought them, on the work that God is doing in their community and their nation. They see the hand of God in their situations, and they know that God is truly in control, and he is greater than all the earthly threats no matter how powerful they seem to be. And they rejoice because the kingdom of God is growing, and nothing can stop that from happening.
- We may have a misconception that if we are doing God’s work, everything should go on well, go on smoothly without any difficulty. We may also think that before we do something, we need to feel God’s peace, otherwise it is not God’s will. Yes, God does

help us, and he does give us peace, but we need to be careful not to understand that in a shallow way.

- E.g., if our company is cheating the clients and they ask us to forge some numbers in the documents, the right thing to do is to refuse because we shouldn't cheat. But we may not always feel at peace because we are aware that by going against our boss's instructions, it will bring us trouble, it may get us sidelined or even fired.
- E.g., if we were to follow Christ and his values, we will be very different from the world. The world may laugh at us, ridicule us, insult us because of our beliefs; we may not fit into the society, we may be rejected. We will feel upset and hurt by the persecution we face. We may not always feel at peace to continue to stand for God, to stand for what is right.
- In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus struggled with going to the cross even though he knew that was the will of God. He was deeply distressed, but he submitted to the will of the Father because he trusted God and faithfully obeyed him.
- There will be times God will bring peace that surpasses understanding in the challenges we face. There will also be times where we are in distress, yet the Lord calls us to stand firm for him. He assures us that he is standing with us, and we must learn to faithfully obey God, trusting in the Lord, relying on the Holy Spirit than what we feel or what we know.
- There will be opposition when we follow Jesus. What we must do is to look to the Lord. No opposition, no power in this world is strong enough to deter the will of God. In his kindness, God invites us to be part of his will, to partner with him to build his kingdom. His kingdom will continue to advance no matter what. As we partner with God in doing his work, when we face opposition, we can be sure that God is with us, helping us, guiding us and teaching us.

## Prayer

<sup>39</sup> *But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men;*"

- Nothing can stop the work of God.

<sup>29</sup> *"We must obey God rather than human beings!"*

- We will be faithful to obey God, relying on the Holy Spirit.

<sup>41</sup> *rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*

- We will rejoice because God's kingdom is advancing.

### Church

- We will hunger for God, through prayer and the meditation of God's word.
- Transformative work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.
- We will be faithful to care for and minister to all the people that God sends.
- We will be a place of healing, restoration and reconciliation.
- Unity based on God's love and truth: breaking barriers between people from different groups.
- Workplaces: we will respond to our calling in the harvest field, representing Christ to those around us.
- Compassion and wisdom to help those who are in need.
- Salvation for our loved ones.

### Christmas Gatherings:

29 Nov: Redeeming Roses  
4 Dec: Life Explorers  
5 Dec: Sunday School  
18 Dec: Lifeline  
25 Dec: Christmas Service

### Covid-19

- To be vigilant and to look to the Lord
- Those who are sick, those who have lost loved ones
- Government: wisdom and compassion
- Economy
- Mental health
- Church: to bring hope with the Gospel

### Malaysia

- Leadership: righteousness, integrity, compassion for the people
- Unity: between all people group
- Justice and mercy: care for the marginalized (the poor, oppressed, widows, orphans, foreigners)
- Church: instruments of love and unity, prophetic voice to the nation
- Salvation