

Acts chapter 5 contains three basic parts. First, in vv1-11 Luke describes the church's relation to two hypocrites within (Ananias and Sapphira); second, in vv12-16 he describes the church's relation to the lost without (the sick and demon-possessed); third, in vv17-42 he describes their relation to their enemies (the Jewish leadership). These are basically the three relationships the church has in every generation. It has to police itself, minister to the lost, and face or endure opposition.

Thus, I want to divide vv17-42 into two parts, considered vv17-32 this morning, and vv33-42 next week. Within vv17-32, we learn three things happened to the apostles: they were arrested (vv17-18), they were delivered (vv19-25), and they were questioned (vv26-32).

- I. They were Arrested (vv17-18)
- II. They were Delivered (vv19-25)
- III. They were Questioned (vv26-32)

I. They were Arrested (vv17-18)

1. Within vv17-18 we learn the apostles are again arrested for the second time (the first time was back in chapter 4:3 – notice who arrested them and why).
2. (1) Who arrested them, v1—"Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees)."
3. Now I mentioned several week ago, that the ruling body of the Jews was called the Sanhedrin (which means Council).
4. While every city had a Lesser Council (comprised of 23 members), it was in Jerusalem that the Great Council met (which was comprised of 70 members).
5. Some of these 70 were from a religion sect called Pharisees, and others were from another sect called Sadducees.
6. While there were several similarities between these two sects, there were also important differences.
7. Generally speaking, the Pharisees were theologically conservative, whereas the Sadducees were liberal.
8. This means, the Sadducees rejected the supernatural—they did not believe in angels or the resurrection.
9. Gordan Keddie—"The Sadducees were the 'liberals' of their day, for they rejected the supernatural, and, among other things, denied the existence of angels and spirits and repudiated any idea of a resurrection."
10. (2) Why they arrested them, v17—"and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison."
11. The Greek word rendered "indignation" by the Old and New King James, and "jealousy" by the NASB and ESV literally refers to "strong zeal or ardor."
12. The point being, their zeal was misguided passion—they were jealous to the point of being indignant over the apostles.
13. They were upset at the popularity of the apostles—the fact that many people were listening to them and even joining them.
14. Bruce Milne—"The New movement of the Nazarenes (as the disciples were popularly known) was universally respected in the city and being widely seen as a legitimate expression of Israel's ancient faith. In other words, people had modified their loyalties; for many the Sanhedrin no longer commanded primary allegiance. The Nazarenes, not the Sadducees, were the flavor of the month!"

II. They were Delivered (vv19-25)

1. Beginning with v19, we learn that God sent an angel at night to liberate or deliver the apostles from prison (notice three things about their deliverance – the who, how, and why).
2. (1) Who delivered them, v19—"But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out."
3. Angels are created beings who serve God—while they are spiritual, they often take the form of a human.
4. (2) How they were delivered—v19 simply says, the angel "opened the prison doors and brought them out."
5. But from v23 we learn, the prison was shut securely and the guards were standing in front of the prison doors.
6. Thus, putting these two verses together it seems, the angel enabled them to escape at night, so as to be unseen by the guards.
7. Lenski—"Sometime during the night an angel appeared in the prison where the apostles were confined, miraculously opened the locked doors from the inside, and himself led the apostles out. The guards saw nothing."
8. (3) Why they were delivered, v20—"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."
9. In other words, they were delivered for the sole purpose of resuming the very task for which they were imprisoned twice.
10. The phrase "all the words of this life" is a beautiful description of the gospel message, which contains eternal life.

III. They were Questioned (vv26-32)

1. We find from v26, that the captain of the temple brought the apostles to the Council "without violence."
2. The reason being—"for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned"—if you remember, the people largely respected the Christians.
3. (1) The high priest's question (vv27-28), v28—"Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"
4. (2) The apostle Peter's response (vv29-32), v29—"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said"—that is, Peter spoke on behalf of the other apostles (consider three things about this response).
5. (a) Their allegiance, v29—"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'"
6. (b) Their message, vv30-31—their message, as found in vv30-31, concerned Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation.
7. (i) Crucifixion, v30—"Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree"—that is, they were especially responsible for His death.
8. Now, this of course does not mean, they actually crucified Him, but it does mean they were complicit in it.
9. Peter describes their activity as "murder"—a flagrant violation of the 6th commandment—"you shall not commit murder."
10. This underscores the fact, that Christ was totally innocent of every accusation levelled at Him by the Jews.
11. Furthermore, Peter speaks of their murder as—"hanging Him on a tree"—that is, He was crucified on a cross.

12. Why Peter uses this language is likely because of the OT practice, of hanging those who were stoned on a tree.
13. In the OC, those put to death were then hung upon a tree, outside the camp, as a sign of the cursing of God.
14. Lenski—"Not only did the Sanhedrin bring about the death of Jesus, a death that was shameful in the eyes of Romans (crucifixion), but they inflicted upon him the death of those who are accursed by God (suspension on tree)."
15. (ii) Resurrection, v30—"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus"—that is, raised Him up from the dead.
16. You murdered Him, you killed Him—God raised Him up, He gave Him life—this of course refers to His resurrection.
17. Peter refers to Him, as "the God of our fathers"—that is, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—this was a rebuke to them.
18. For keep in mind, this was the highest Jewish court, who prided themselves as the descendants of the fathers.
19. In essence, Peter accuses them as acting contrary to the God of the fathers, as acting in opposition to His purposes.
20. Thus, though man murdered Him, God the Father raised Him up on the third day—the same Jesus they killed, He raised.
21. (iii) Exaltation, v31—"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."
22. By "right hand" is meant a place of highest honor—this was in reward to His humble obedience to death.
23. The Father exalted Christ to His right hand as "Prince" and Savior"—these are titles given to Christ at His exaltation.
24. The first (Prince) literally can be rendered "author" or "leader"—both concepts are found in the world.
25. Peter used the same word back in 3:15—"you killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead."
26. Here "Prince of life" refers to the "author" or "source" of life—the one who sovereignly bestows life (physical, but especially spiritual life).
27. Thus, I suggest that Peter intends both ideas—Christ is a glorious Prince, who graciously bestows various gifts.
28. For example, let me illustrate—think of a benevolent King, who rules over a very needy, but beloved, people.
29. Let's say, the King just won a great victory of their enemies, and in so doing, has acquired unlimited riches.
30. Because he is a gracious King, he bestows these riches upon his needy people, as their benevolent Sovereign.
31. He would be both the source or author of their riches, but he would also remain the Prince or Ruler of the people.
32. But notice the nature of the riches this Prince gives—"to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."
33. Now, I want to return to this phrase in a few minutes, but here I want to you to notice, repentance and forgiveness are gifts granted by the exalted Christ.
34. 2Tim.2:24-25—"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth."

35. (c) Their calling, v32—"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."
36. Here Peter speaks of their apostolic calling, to bear witness to the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ.
37. They were called to serve as witnesses "to these things" through their preaching and inspired writing.
38. But they were not the only witness—"and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."
39. The phrase "to those who obey Him" refers to those who come to Him—who bow before Him as King.
40. Within the gospel there's a divine summons for all sinners who hear the message, to bow before Christ.
41. Every person who obeys this summons receives the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to their spirit about the truth.
42. Those who believe the apostolic witness (as found in Scripture), receive the Spirit who bears witness with their spirit (they are children of God).

IV. Applications

1. Here I want to close by suggesting five observations from v31, and that the fact that Christ has been exalted to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
2. I believe "repentance" can best be defined or described as—The sinner taking sides with God against himself.
3. Repentance is agreement with God—it's the closing of the mouth, in humble and contrite harmony with God.
4. In repentance we agree with what God says about Himself, about sin, about ourselves, about Christ and salvation.
5. Joseph Bellamy—"In true repentance our eyes begin to be opened to see things as in fact they are; God's character infinitely amiable, and our own infinitely odious; his law wholly right; and our ways as wrong and criminal as that supposes. And in this view we begin to take all the blame to ourselves."
6. Thus, here I want to suggest that Christ has been exalted to give or bestow repentance in these FIVE ways
7. (1) He gives it victoriously—that is, Christ bestows salvation upon His people as an exalted and victorious King.
8. And there's a sense in which this is a primary point of this passage—the cross of Christ was NOT a failure.
9. From a worldly perspective, it would appear that Christ lost, in that He was murdered and shamefully hung on a tree.
10. But that is far from the facts—for it was through that crucifixion that our Savior secured salvation for His people.
11. Remember, dear friends, it was but a small step from the cross to the throne—these are necessarily related.
12. Thus, here's the point—Christ in His cross work, earned salvation for us, which includes repentance and forgiveness.
13. Put another way—through His humiliation, Christ earns His throne, from which He bestows gifts to His people.
14. Put another way—the authority and power necessary to apply salvation was given Christ in and at His exaltation.

15. John Flavel—"Christ enthroned in the highest glory in heaven is there to abide for the effectual and successful government, both of the world, and of the church, until the number given him by the Father, before the world was, and purchased by the blood of the cross, be gathered in."
16. 2Sam.5:12—"So David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel."
17. (a) The fact of his exaltation—David was exalted over Israel, after he was humiliated and victorious over their enemies.
18. In other words—David's exaltation came through humiliation—he was hated without a cause by his own people.
19. Furthermore, David's exaltation came through much blood-shed—he defeated Goliath and the enemies of God.
20. So too, Christ came to the throne through humiliation and blood-shed—He was hated, and He defeated God's enemies.
21. (b) The purpose of his exaltation—"He exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel"—for their good.
22. The pronouns refer either to God or David—but either way, the point is the same—David was exalted for the good of the people.
23. (2) He gives it graciously—that is, Christ bestows repentance and forgiveness as gracious and undeserving gifts.
24. This is glorious news for poor sinners—you must look nowhere else, but to Christ Himself, to find repentance.
25. That is to say—we not only learn where repentance comes from (exalted Christ), but how sinners receive it.
26. Sinners receive repentance by looking to Christ, as the crucified, resurrected, and now exalted—Prince and Savior.
27. Zech.12:10—"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."
28. According to John 19:37, this prophecy was literally fulfilled, when our Savior was pieced in the side with a spear.
29. That is, there were multiple Jews (and Gentiles) who literally looked upon Christ whom they pierced, and mourned.
30. But I trust we all agree that this prophecy has a much broader application than those in first century Palestine.
31. No—when the LORD promises to "pour on the house of David the Spirit of grace"—He means His true Israel.
32. Every person given to Christ from everlasting, will in time, be given the Spirit as—"the Spirit of grace and supplication."
33. But notice—it is the Spirit's task to work within such people, the grace of repentance, or mourning over their sin.
34. This the Spirit does, by enabling the soul to look to Christ—"they will look upon Me whom they pierced."
35. In other words—repentance comes by looking to Christ as crucified—not just because Jesus died on the cross.
36. But because, it was you and I, who pierced Him—it was ultimately our sins, that hung Him upon that tree (cross).
37. John Scott—"Before we can see the cross as something done FOR us, we must first see it as something done BY us."

38. My friends, there's an important reason why the message of the cross is to be preached before repentance and forgiveness.
39. The cross is to be preached first and foremostly, because it's as sinners to it, there hearts will be broken for sin.
40. (3) He gives it nationally, v31—"to give repentance to Israel"—that is, His NC spiritual Israel, or the church.
41. Now—I think Peter intentionally uses the word "Israel" as he's presently addressing the Jewish rulers of Israel.
42. In other words—though He was rejected by physical Israel, there was another Israel that would embrace Him.
43. Thus, by "Israel" is meant Christ's true Israel, comprised first of an elect Jewish remnant, to which Gentiles would be added.
44. Lk.24:46-47—"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
45. This passage, as good as any, identify for us what Peter meant by "Israel"—"all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
46. Oh, my brethren, how gracious is our Savior, that He would have forgiveness first preached, beginning at Jerusalem.
47. For remember, it was Jerusalem sinners that murdered Him, and hung His body outside the city, on a tree (cross).
48. (4) He gives it savingly, v31—"to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins"—or repentance for forgiveness of sins.
49. In other words—He doesn't merely bestow upon them repentance, but He also bestows upon them forgiveness of sins."
50. Now—the first thing I want to here do is, point out that Scripture often puts repentance and forgiveness together.
51. Mk.1:4—"John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."
52. Lk.24:46-47—"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
53. In other words—there is a very close and important connection between these things—repentance and forgiveness.
54. (a) We are not saved BY repentance—we must ever remember, wherever there is repentance, there is also FAITH.
55. The one grace necessarily presupposes the other, thus—we are justified (forgiven), not by repentance but faith.
56. The forgiveness of sins is a part of our justification, and Scripture everywhere ascribes justification to FAITH.
57. We are justified BY FAITH ALONE—it's by faith that sinners lay hold of Christ, in whom we are justified.
58. Thus, it's important to clarify, that we are not justified because or through our repentance, but through FAITH.
59. There have been those, through the history of the church, who have taught salvation through or by repentance.
60. Simply put, friends, you can weep an ocean of tears, but all of that will not atone for or forgive a single sin.

61. The only thing that can atone for our sins and provide forgiveness of sins, is the precious blood of Jesus Christ.
62. Hymn—"Not the labors of my hands, can fulfil thy law's demands; could my zeal no respite know, could my tears for ever flow, all for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone..."
63. (b) We are not saved WITHOUT repentance—but this is also important to remember—repentance is essential to salvation.
64. God never gives forgiveness, without also working repentance in the heart—they are necessarily and intimately related.
65. Mk.2:17—"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."
66. (5) He gives it lovingly—by this I mean, He gives repentance to His Israel, because He deeply loves them.
67. This is to say—He longs to convert them, and bring them to Himself—that He might fellowship with them.
68. The sovereign, victorious, reigning King, gives His blessed Spirit, so that His Israel, would have repentance and the forgiveness of sins.