

Apostles Persecuted

Acts 5:17–41

- ❑ Apostles
- ❑ The high priest and the council
- ❑ The angel of the Lord
- ❑ Gamaliel—a Pharisee, a doctor of the law, a man of reputation and influence, commanded the council and the senate to give the apostles a little space
- ❑ Examples of Theudas and 400 men and of Judas of Galilee

The Lord sent His angel by night to open the prison doors, and he brought forth these men whom God had commissioned to do His work.
(5T 713.2)

What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-tried soul more dearly loved by his Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake. "I will love him," Christ said, "and will manifest Myself to him." **John 14:21.**
(AA 85.1)

As they went forth preaching Jesus everywhere, the men who were worked by the Holy Spirit did many things that the Jews did not approve. There was danger that the ideas and doctrines of the rabbis would be brought into disrepute. The apostles were creating a wonderful excitement. The people were bringing their sick folk, and those that were vexed with unclean spirits, into the streets; crowds were collecting around them, and those that had been healed were shouting the praises of God and glorifying the name of Jesus, the very One whom the Jews had condemned, scorned, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and caused to be scourged and crucified. (*TM* 67.3)

This Jesus was extolled above the priests and rulers. The apostles were even declaring that He had risen from the dead. The Jewish rulers decided that this work must and should be stopped, for it was proving them guilty of the blood of Jesus. They saw that converts to the faith were multiplying. "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (*TM* 67.3)

The assertions made by the apostles that they had seen Jesus after His resurrection, and that He had ascended to heaven, were overthrowing the fundamental principles of the Sadducean doctrine. This was not to be allowed. The priests and rulers were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

(TM 68.1)

“The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” We see here that the men in authority are not always to be obeyed, even though they may profess to be teachers of Bible doctrine. (*TM* 69.1)

Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them. **None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible** will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God's immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus? (GC 593.2)

There are many today who feel indignant and aggrieved that any voice should be raised presenting ideas that differ from their own in regard to points of religious belief. Have they not long advocated their ideas as truth? So the priests and rabbis reasoned in apostolic days: What mean these men who are unlearned, some of them mere fishermen, who are presenting ideas contrary to the doctrines which the learned priests and rulers are teaching the people? They have no right to meddle with the fundamental principles of our faith. (*TM* 69.1)

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming. The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. (*Mar* 200.2, .3)

The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat. All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness. (*Mar 200.4*)

But there are men who will receive the truth, and these will take the places made vacant by those who become offended and leave the truth....

Men of true Christian principle will take their place, and will become faithful, trustworthy householders, to advocate the word of God in its true bearings, and in its simplicity.

The Lord will work so that the disaffected ones will be separated from the true and loyal ones.... The ranks will not be diminished. Those who are firm and true will close up the vacancies that are made by those who become offended and apostatize. (*Mar 200.5,.6*)

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: *That we henceforth be* no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (Ephesians 4:11–14)

But we see that the God of heaven sometimes commissions men to teach that which is regarded as contrary to the established doctrines. (*TM* 69.2)

The Sanctuary Doctrine
The Cleansing of the Sanctuary
The Investigative Judgment
Death Is a Sleep

The Papacy—Think to Change Times and Laws

The Trinity

The Sunday Law, The Seal of God, The Mark of the Beast

The Three Angels' Messages and Babylon is Fallen

Because those who were once the depositaries of truth became unfaithful to their sacred trust, the Lord chose others who would receive the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and would advocate truths that were not in accordance with the ideas of the religious leaders. And then these leaders, in the blindness of their minds, give full sway to what is supposed to be righteous indignation against the ones who have set aside cherished fables. They act like men who have lost their reason. They do not consider the possibility that they themselves have not rightly understood the word. They will not open their eyes to discern the fact that they have misinterpreted and misapplied the Scriptures, and have built up false theories, calling them fundamental doctrines of the faith. (TM 69.2)

Even Seventh-day Adventists are in danger of closing their eyes to truth as it is in Jesus, because it contradicts something which they have taken for granted as truth but which the Holy Spirit teaches is not truth. Let all be very modest, and seek most earnestly to put self out of the question, and to exalt Jesus.
(*TM* 70.2)

But let us follow the history of the men whom the Jewish priests and rulers thought so dangerous, because they were bringing in new and strange teaching on almost every theological subject. The command given by the Holy Spirit, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life,” was obeyed by the apostles; “they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. (*TM* 71.1)

“But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and **brought them without violence**: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.” (*TM* 71.1)

If the priests and rulers had dared act out their own feelings toward the apostles, there would have been a different record; for the angel of God **was a watcher** on that occasion, to magnify His name if any violence had been offered to His servants. (*TM 71.1*)

The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity. "They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Malachi 3:17. If the blood of Christ's faithful witnesses were shed at this time, it would not, like the blood of the martyrs, be as seed sown to yield a harvest for God.

(GC 634.1)

Their fidelity would not be a testimony to convince others of the truth; for the obdurate heart has beaten back the waves of mercy until they return no more. If the righteous were now left to fall a prey to their enemies, it would be a triumph for the prince of darkness. Says the psalmist: "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me." Psalm 27:5. Christ has spoken: "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." Isaiah 26:20, 21. Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for His coming and whose names are written in the book of life. (GC 634.1)

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood upon us.” (See Matthew 23:34, 35.) “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.” (TM 72.1)

Acts 5:34

Acts 22:3

“Then the Holy Spirit moved upon Gamaliel, a Pharisee, “a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people.” His advise was, “Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed.” (*TM* 72.2)

They were planning how to do this, when **an angel from God was sent to Gamaliel to move upon his heart to counsel the chief priest and rulers.** Said Gamaliel, Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. The evil angels were moving upon the priests and elders to put the apostles to death; but God sent his angel to prevent it, by raising up a voice in favor of the disciples in their own ranks. (1SG 85.1)

Though the rulers of this world know it not, yet often in their councils angels have been spokesmen. Human eyes have looked upon them; human ears have listened to their appeals; human lips have opposed their suggestions and ridiculed their counsels; human hands have met them with insult and abuse. In the council hall and the court of justice these heavenly messengers have shown an intimate acquaintance with human history; they have proved themselves better able to plead the cause of the oppressed than were their ablest and most eloquent defenders. They have defeated purposes and arrested evils that would have greatly retarded the work of God and would have caused great suffering to His people. In the hour of peril and distress "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. (GC 632.1)

- ❑ Peter & John—Acts 4:3—released with a warning
- ❑ Peter & John, apostles—Acts 5:18—angel of the Lord
- ❑ Peter—Acts 12:4—angel
- ❑ Paul & Silas—Acts 16:19, 23—earthquake
- ❑ Paul—Acts 21:33—sent to Rome
- ❑ Paul—2 Corinthians 11:23—in perils oft

Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

- ❑ Hebrew midwives were instructed to kill newborn baby boys (Exodus 1:15–17)
- ❑ Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego—fiery furnace (Daniel 3:18)
- ❑ Daniel—prayed (Daniel 6:10)
- ❑ The Magi—did not report back to Herod (Matthew 2:8,12)
- ❑ Peter & John (Acts 4:18; 5:28)
- ❑ End time—Revelation 13:15; 14:9, 10

Yet the attributes of Satan so controlled their minds that, notwithstanding the wonderful miracles that had been wrought in healing the sick and in releasing God's servants from prison, the priests and rulers were so filled with prejudice and hatred that they could hardly be restrained. "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. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (*TM 72.3*)

We can see what evidence was given the priests and rulers, and how firmly they resisted the Spirit of God. Those who claim superior wisdom and piety may make most terrible and (to themselves) fatal mistakes if they allow their minds to be molded by another power, and pursue a course in resistance to the Holy Spirit. **The Lord Jesus, represented by the Holy Spirit, was in the presence of that assembly,** but they did not discern Him. **For a moment they had felt the conviction of the Spirit, that Jesus was the Son of God;** but they stifled conviction, and became more blind and hardened than before. Even after they had crucified the Saviour, God in His mercy had sent them additional evidence in the works wrought through the apostles. **He was giving them another call** to repentance, even in the terrible charge brought against them by the apostles, that they had killed the Prince of life. (*TM 73.1*)

The spirit of God revealed its presence unto those who, irrespective of the fear or favor of men, declared the truth which had been committed to them. Under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power, the Jews saw their guilt in refusing the evidence that God had sent; but they would not yield their wicked resistance. Their obstinacy became more and more determined, and worked the ruin of their souls. It was not that they could not yield, for they could, yet would not. It was not alone that they had been guilty, and deserving of wrath, but that they armed themselves with the attributes of Satan, and determinedly continued to be opposed to God. Every day, in their refusal to repent, they took up their rebellion afresh. They were preparing to reap that which they had sown. The wrath of God is not declared against men merely because of the sins which they have committed, **but for choosing to continue in a state of resistance**, and, although they have light and knowledge, repeating their sins of the past. If they would submit, they would be pardoned; but they are determined not to yield. They defy God by their obstinacy. These souls have given themselves to Satan, and he controls them according to his will. (TM 74.2)

☐ John 7:9–23, 27, 28

☐ Luke 11:37–52

When for the truth's sake the believer stands at the bar of earthly tribunals, Christ stands by his side. When he is confined within prison walls, Christ manifests Himself to him and cheers his heart with His love. When he suffers death for Christ's sake, the Saviour says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." John 16:33; **Isaiah 41:10**. (AA 85.1)

“They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.” “He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight.” **Psalms 125:1–3; 72:14.**

“The Lord of hosts shall defend them; ... the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land.” **Zechariah 9:15, 16.** (AA 86.1, .2)

Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. "Peace I leave with you," He said, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." **John 14:27**. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention. (AA 84.1)

Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose mind is stayed on thee*: Because he trusteth in thee. (**Isaiah 26:3**)

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

2 Corinthians 4:2, 6–9, 17–18