



# The Gospel Continues to Spread

*Acts 5:17–42*



## LESSON GOAL

The child will rejoice that man can do nothing to stop God from spreading His Gospel.

## BIBLE TRUTHS

- The Sanhedrin were jealous of Peter and John.
- The Lord sent an angel to open the prison doors.
- The gospel is unstoppable.

## KEY VERSE

“And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God.”

—*Acts 5:38–39*

## APPLICATION

- Tell the Gospel to your friends.
- Pray that people will be saved.
- Praise God that He has given us the gospel.

### Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



4 Age Group



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

#### Introduction

Much to the disappointment of the Sanhedrin, the apostles continued to do miracles in Jesus’ name and the church continued to grow. Luke describes how Peter’s reputation had grown so much that people would bring the sick into the streets “so that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them” (Acts 5:15). (Luke does not specify whether the people were healed or not when Peter passed by.) In addition to those inside Jerusalem, a “multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed” (5:16). The Sanhedrin was threatened by the growing number of those believers who met daily in Solomon’s Porch, the large portico along the eastern side of the temple (5:13). Luke records that “believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (5:14). Because of the apostles’ prominence and the church’s growth, the high priest and the Sadducees were “filled with indignation” (5:17). Motivated by jealousy and a desire to preserve their position, the high priest (which could either refer to Annas or Caiaphas) and the Sadducees were committed to stopping the apostles from spreading the name of Jesus.

#### Prison Did not Stop the Gospel’s Spread (Acts 5:17–26).

Similar to how Peter and John were dealt with in Acts 4:1–3, the high priest and Sadducees threw the apostles in prison overnight until the Sanhedrin could meet the next day. The prominent and affluent Sadducees were worried about both maintaining their position as Israel’s religious leaders and preserving Israel’s tenuous peace with Rome. The Sadducees were concerned how Rome would view the growing multitude of believers who proclaimed Jesus to be King.

During the night, the apostles were freed from prison. The Lord sent an angel to open the prison doors and command the apostles, “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:19–20). God wanted the apostles to continue proclaiming new life in Christ. The apostles faithfully obeyed and returned the next morning to the same place where they had been arrested the day before (5:21). Because sacrifices were offered each morning, there were many people present who heard the apostles’ proclamation of salvation. Even prison did not stop the Gospel’s advance!

As soon as the Sanhedrin met the next morning (“the council”), the high priest sent for the apostles, naturally expecting them still to be in prison (5:21). When the officers returned empty-handed and confused, the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the priests were at a complete loss (5:24). Although the prison was shut and the guards were still standing outside, the apostles were nowhere to be found (5:23). Imagine their embarrassment when someone came and reported:

“Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!” (5:25). To make matters worse for the high priest and his cohorts, the officers who went to re-arrest the apostles had to do so “without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned” (5:26). The popularity of the apostles had grown so large that the officers were afraid of being killed in the temple complex if they hurt the apostles. Since the officers were afraid to use violence, the apostles must have peacefully circled around from the east side of the temple complex where they had been preaching to the west side where the Sanhedrin had assembled. All the time the Sanhedrin wondered what had happened, the apostles had been preaching in the temple!

### **Decrees Did not Stop the Gospel’s Spread (Acts 5:27–32)**

When the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin, the high priest raised several accusations against the apostles. First, he accused the apostles of blatantly breaking the Sanhedrin’s previous command that they not “teach in this name” (Acts 5:28; cf. Acts 4:18). Second, he accused them of filling Jerusalem with “your doctrine” (5:28). The high priest continued to deny the authority of the apostles’ teaching. The apostles did not preach their own doctrine, but the truth the exalted Jesus had commanded them to proclaim. Third, the high priest accused them of trying “to bring this Man’s blood on us” (5:28). Even though the Jewish crowds had willingly accepted the responsibility for killing Jesus (Matt. 27:25), the priests and Sadducees hated the apostle’s preaching that they had been responsible (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10–11). Although they knew they were guilty, the Sanhedrin accused the disciples of trying to impugn them unfairly.

The apostles did not let the pressure of being before the Sanhedrin stop them from proclaiming the Gospel. Even though the Sanhedrin had decreed they stop preaching in Jesus’ name, the apostles boldly pledged obedience to God instead of men (Acts 5:29). Similar to the previous presentations of the Gospel in Acts, Peter and the apostles proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus (“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus”), the crucifixion of Jesus (“hanging on a tree”), the guilt of the Jews in Jerusalem (“whom you murdered”), the exaltation of Jesus (“Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior), and the necessity of repentance and the promise of forgiveness (“to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins”) (Acts 5:30–31). Instead of obeying the Sanhedrin’s decrees, Peter boldly proclaimed the apostles’ commitment to being Jesus’ witnesses (5:32). The apostles were joined in their witness by the Holy Spirit, who testified to Jesus through His filling the apostles and working miracles through them (5:32). Peter finished where he began: with a commitment to obey Christ. Unlike the Sanhedrin members who lacked the Holy Spirit, the apostles were obedient to Christ (5:32).

### **Plots did not stop the Gospel’s spread (Acts 5:33–39).**

The Sanhedrin hated the apostles for their authority, their unwillingness to stop preaching Christ, their Spirit-filled lives, their call for repentance and their insistence that the Sanhedrin was guilty of killing their Messiah. When they heard the apostles’ answer, the Sanhedrin was “furious and plotted to kill them” (Acts 5:33). Surprisingly, God used one of the Sanhedrin to prevent the murder of the apostles.

The Pharisee Gamaliel, “a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people” (Acts 5:34), urged the rest of the Sanhedrin to think before acting rashly. (Gamaliel was one of the most honored rabbis ever. Acts 22:3 reveals that Paul was one of his students.) Gamaliel began his argument by pointing to two failed Jewish revolutionaries, Theudas and Judas of Galilee (5:36–37). The movements started by both Theudas and Judas failed after each man died. Gamaliel next urged the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone (5:38). He reasoned that if “this plan or this

work is of men, it will come to nothing" (5:38). Just as the revolutionaries Theudas and Judas failed, these men would fail if their plans were only man's plans. But Gamaliel continued: "If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God" (5:39). If the apostles really were sent by God like they claimed, the Sanhedrin could not stop the spread of their message. Gamaliel presented the Sanhedrin with a flawless argument. If the Sanhedrin let the men go, they would neither be guilty of killing men who were destined to fail or opposing men who God decreed would succeed (and ultimately oppose God Himself). Since Jerusalem was supportive of the apostles, it made much more sense to listen to the popular teacher Gamaliel than oppose his advice and risk a rebellion from the crowds.

### **Persecution Did not Stop the Gospel's Spread (Acts 5:40–42).**

The Sanhedrin agreed with Gamaliel. Before letting the apostles go, they flogged them and commanded them again not to "speak in the name of Jesus" (Acts 5:40). The apostles were most likely flogged with thirty-nine lashes, one less than the legal limit of forty (Deut. 25:3). Although they had just been punished severely (some men died who received thirty-nine lashes), the apostles left the council "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). The apostles were not persuaded by neither the Sanhedrin's command nor their punishment. Whether in the temple or in people's homes, "they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (5:42). Physical beatings would not stop the apostles preaching the Gospel.

### **Conclusion**

The Pharisee Gamaliel was right: "If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it" (Acts 5:39). God's plan for the spread of the Gospel was unstoppable. Neither prison, nor man's decrees, neither murderous plots, nor 39 lashes were enough to stop the Gospel's spread. Although the opposition to the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection was just beginning to grow, God's plan was for it to spread. God's plan for the spread of the Gospel is just as unstoppable today as it was in the first century. It is unstoppable because it is not designed and accomplished by men but by God.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."  
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

What did the believers do for each other?

*They sold their possessions and gave to anyone who had need.*

What did Joses do with his money?

*Joses gave his money to the apostles.*

What did Ananias and Sapphira do with their money?

*They gave part of the money to the apostles but they lied and kept some for themselves.*

What happened to Ananias when he gave the money to Peter?

*Peter asked him why he lied to the Holy Spirit and then he died.*

What happened when his wife Sapphira when she came to Peter?

*She also fell down and died.*

What did to the people when they heard about Ananias and Sapphira?

*They became very afraid when they heard the news.*



### Difficult Concepts

**Jealousy:** The high priest and the Sadducees resented the rising popularity of the fledgling Church. Concerned about losing their own prestige and position, they grew bitter towards the Apostles. The high priest and the Sadducees resented the Apostles most, because the Apostles were the leaders of the threatening Christian movement.

**Gospel:** The Gospel message focuses on Jesus as the One appointed by God to die for His people's sin. Jesus was crucified on a cross, but God raised Him from the dead. Jesus' death and resurrection guarantees salvation from sin for those who believe His death removes their sin. The good news is that people who realize they are sinners, unable to rescue themselves, can be considered righteous before God by trusting in Christ's sacrificial death and victorious resurrection.

**False Teachers:** Simply put, a false teacher is one who teaches anything contrary or in addition to the truth of God's Word. False teachers will always fail, because they lack a truthful foundation. Their teaching is based on their own ideas, and because they are merely flawed men their teaching is also fatally flawed. Only God's truth provides genuine spiritual reality, an unshakeable philosophical support, and lasting value.

**Sanhedrin:** The Sanhedrin was the Jewish supreme court. It consisted of seventy elders and was presided over by the high priest. The Sanhedrin handled religious and civil cases in Judea. In the time of Christ, the Sanhedrin still functioned, but was subject to Roman authority in certain civil matters.



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### Jealousy

To illustrate jealousy, give obvious preferential treatment to one student. Talk exclusively about and to the student who was first in line. Promise them the first or best snack. Tell the student they can have all the blocks, or let them have a special class privilege. Then, ask the other students how they felt about your preferential treatment. Ask if they thought you were being fair. Finally, clearly state that your preferential treatment was only for illustration purposes.



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### Obey My Voice

In today's lesson, the apostles chose to obey God rather than man. Choose one student to be blindfolded. The object for the game is for the student to obey your voice and your voice alone. After you spin him or her around several times, begin giving the blindfolded student several instructions to follow (this would be similar to "Simon Says," i.e., stand on one foot, scratch your head, etc.). The only catch to the game is that the other students will take turns also giving the blindfolded student instructions, trying to get him or her to obey their voice rather than yours. The blindfolded student will have to listen very carefully; making sure he or she only obeys your voice. At the end of the game, explain to the students the choice the apostles had to make. They had to decide whether or not they were going to obey God or the Sanhedrin who told them to stop preaching the Gospel.



### Stop Prop

Materials: copies of "Stop Prop" craft page, craft sticks, scissors, crayons, glue

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page. Have each child color the sign and then cut out the sign and the verse. Glue the sign to a craft stick and the verse to the back of the sign. During the lesson, children may hold up their sign when the prison, people, or plots could not stop the gospel.



### Obey God Over Men

To encourage the students with the concept of obeying God rather than men when men's instructions contradict God's, give the students some examples of those in the Old Testament who were in similar situations. Some who obeyed God rather than man are Daniel (Daniel 6), Noah (Genesis 6), Shadrach (Daniel 3), etc.



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### God Is In Charge

To illustrate the concept of obeying God rather than man, create a skit where a student is put into a position of making the choice to obey God or man. It should be made clear to the students that God has set men in authority over us but when men's instructions contradict God's is when believers must obey God first.



### Hide and Seek

In today's lesson the apostles were put into jail for preaching the gospel. Have the students hide and another try to find them. After the students have been in jail for one minute they are free and must go hide again. If caught again they can be put in jail again.

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

### Bible Lesson

The apostles continued to do miracles and preach Jesus Christ as Savior throughout Jerusalem. The church grew bigger and bigger. Many Jews in Jerusalem were turning away from the Pharisees and following the apostles. This of course made the Jewish leaders very angry. They were jealous of the attention and following that the apostles had, and were afraid that they would lose their followers to the apostles. These Jewish leaders decided that they were going to stop the apostles from preaching their message so that no more people would become their followers.

The high priest ordered that the apostles be put in prison for the night, and they would have to stand before the Jewish leaders, called the Sanhedrin, and answer for their actions in the morning. Prison could not keep the apostles from spreading the gospel though! During the night while they were in their prison cell, an angel of the Lord came and opened the prison doors and brought them out. The angel said to them, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life" (5:20). The apostles obeyed and early the next morning went to the temple and preached the gospel.

That morning the Sanhedrin gathered, unaware that the apostles were not in the prison anymore. They sent a guard to bring them from the prison, but the guard returned and said, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" (5:23) They all wondered where the apostles could have gone, but then someone came and said, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" (5:25)

The guards went and got the apostles and brought them before the Sanhedrin. The high priest asked them, "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!" (5:28) The high priest was angry with them because they had been preaching about Jesus even though they had been warned not to, and they had been telling the Jews that they were guilty of Jesus murder.

Peter and the other apostles answered the charges, saying, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him" (5:29-32). Peter was very bold to tell the Sanhedrin that they would not obey them, but they would obey God instead.

The Sanhedrin hated the apostles for all the things they said and did, and started planning to kill them. One of the members of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named



Gamaliel, stopped this plan. Gamaliel was one of the most respected teachers in Israel, so when he talked, people listened. He told them that they should really think about what they were doing before they tried to kill the apostles. He reminded the Jewish leaders that this was not the first time someone had gathered large crowds of followers by teaching something different. In the past, there were two other teachers, named Judas and Theudas, who had done the same thing. When they died, the people who had followed them did not stay together, and those groups did not exist anymore. Gamaliel said that the same thing would happen with the apostles and their followers, unless God Himself was behind them. He said to the Sanhedrin, "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing, but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God (5:38-39). The Sanhedrin agreed with Gamaliel. It made more sense to let them go than to make the crowds angry by killing them.

Before letting the apostles go, they commanded them again not to speak about Jesus, and then they whipped them. The apostles had done nothing against the law that justified being beaten. They were beaten because they were preaching about Jesus. The apostles rejoiced as they left the Sanhedrin because God had found them worthy to be allowed to be persecuted for His name. They did not stop preaching the gospel, but rather continued to preach in the temple and to people in their homes about Jesus Christ. Being put in prison, threatened to be killed, and then beaten did not stop the apostles from preaching about Jesus.

The Pharisee Gamaliel was right, if what the apostles were doing was of God, then nothing could stop it. God would not allow anything to stop the truth from being preached.



## Lesson Questions

Who didn't like that the apostles were healing people in Jesus' name?  
*The religious leaders.*

Why didn't they like what the apostles were doing?  
*They were jealous because the apostles were getting more attention than they were.*

What did the religious leaders do to Peter and John?  
*They threw them in jail.*

What happened at night while they were in jail?  
*The Lord sent an angel to open the doors of the prison and let the disciples out.*

What happened when they came to get the disciples?  
*They found that the prison was still locked but that the apostles were not inside.*

What did they find that the religious leaders were doing?  
*They were standing in the temple and teaching the people.*

What did the religious leaders command the apostles not to do?  
*They told the disciples not to speak in Jesus' name. Then they had the apostles beaten.*

What did the apostles do after they were let go?  
*They praised God that He would use them and they kept on preaching.*



## **Presentation Ideas**

### **A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®**

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



### **Betty Lukens Flannel Graph**

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



### **The Gospel Cannot Be Stopped**

One of the amazing things seen in today's lesson is how man is unable to stop God from spreading the Gospel. To illustrate this concept take a foam cup and punch several holes in it. Each time you come to a point in the lesson where the Sanhedrin try to stop the apostles from preaching the Gospel, place several objects in the cup (i.e., marbles, grass, foam peanuts, rocks, twigs, etc.). These objects may represent various things that might try to stop the Gospel. At the end of the lesson, take another foam cup that is full of water (and does not have holes in it) labeled the Gospel. To illustrate how nothing is able to stop the Gospel from spreading, begin pouring the water in the cup with holes. The student will observe how the water is able to make its way around the obstacles and through the holes of the cup. Just as nothing was able to stop the water, nothing is able to stop the Gospel from spreading.



### **Act It Out**

Create the scene that might have taken place in today's lesson. Teachers will dress up as the apostles and share the gospel with the students. At the end of the presentation they are arrested but miraculously released and preach the gospel again.

## **Praise and Worship**

*Jesus Paid it All*

*Create in Me a Clean Heart*

*Christ the Solid Rock*

*Trust and Obey*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7*

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### **"Nothing Can Stop The Gospel"**

Materials: craft page copied on cardstock for each student, scissors, crayons, glue, hole-punch, string

Directions: Pass out the craft sheet to each student. Instruct the students to cut around the four open Bible pages, and the stop sign shape. Allow the students time to color pictures on the Bible pages to illustrate each section of the passage. Once students are finished drawing pictures, instruct the students to punch holes were indicated and then thread a string through the Bibles and stop sign. Remind the students that nothing can stop the spread of the Gospel.

### **Coloring Pages**

Give each child a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



### **MEMORY VERSE**

*"...for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it..." —Acts 5:38b-39a*



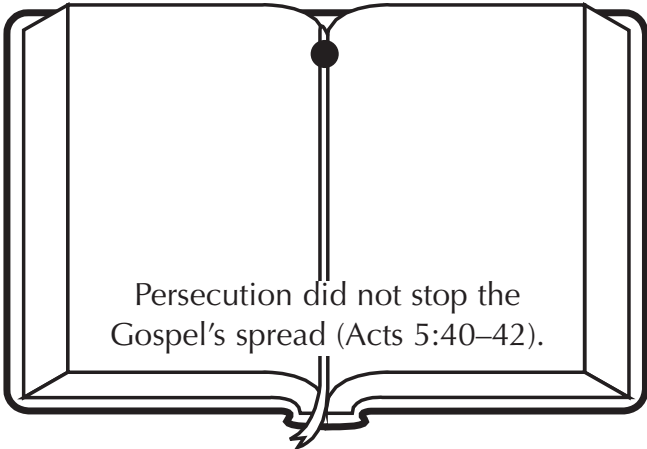
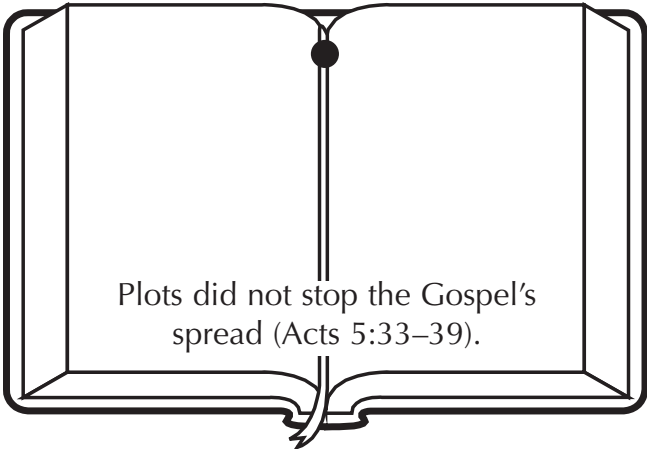
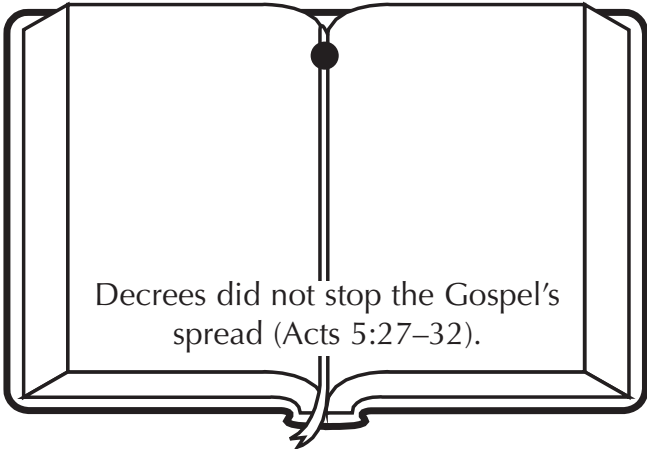
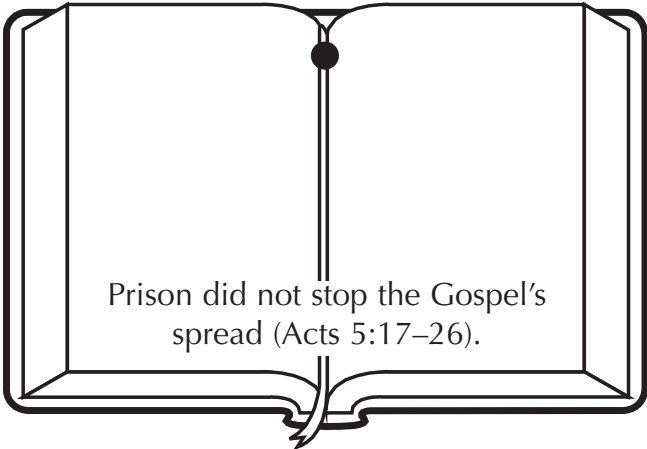
# Stop Prop



**“And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.” —Acts 5:38–39**



# Nothing Can Stop the Gospel









**"But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 'Go stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.'"**

**—Acts 5:19–20**





**"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."**

**—Acts 5:42**

