



April 28, 2024
"Believe More"

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Evening Classes at 6:30
 Church Cleanup on Saturday, May 4th ★ VBS June 17-21

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ACTS 5:34-42 ~

A Pharisee named Gamaliel (Acts chapter 22:3) ...

The Pharisees...

Babylonian Exile...

Synagogue Gatherings...

The Sadducean elites...

The School of Hillel and the School of Shammai...

Happy (early) Mother's Day

Gamaliel used a couple of examples, out of a hundred he could have used...

His point was that if the present movement was another human attempt at power or overthrow it would likewise be stamped out. On the other hand...

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

While the elites agreed in principle, they still needed to...

“They flogged them,” is no joking matter (II Corinthians 11:24&25).

The punishment was severe, yet the Apostles rejoiced afterwards... Why?

Salvific belief is to believe in Jesus’ name unto eternal salvation. What if He told you right now...

The most important thing in life is _____ you believe and the second is _____
_____ you believe it.

ACTS 6:1-6 ~

- 1) The church in Jerusalem was expanding by leaps and bounds (Matthew 28:18–20).
- 2) The conflict with antichristian forces was growing as well (I Peter 4:12–16).
- 3) The more people that you have in the church, the more...
- 4) The leadership of the church had to evolve.

The Hellenistic Jewish Christians were complaining against the Hebraic Jewish Christians. To “complain against” is γογγυσμός (gōn-gūs-mōs).

It is human nature to put people in categories and judge them by those categories...

Hellenistic versus Hebraic Jews was a matter of degree only.

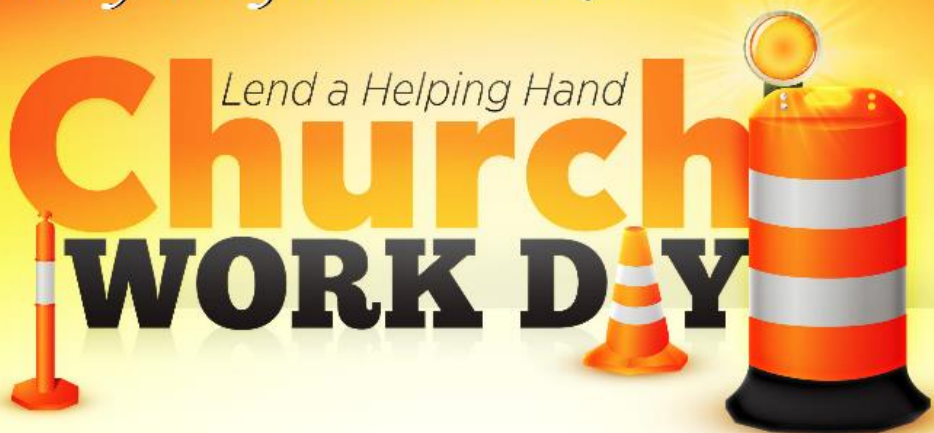
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



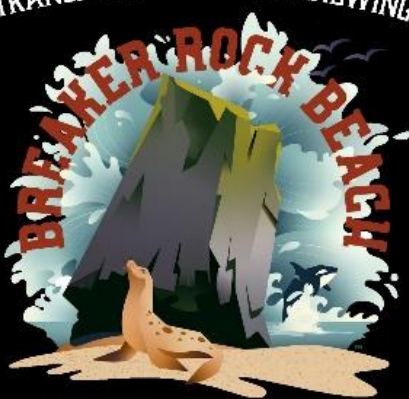
May the fourth be with you.

Lend a Helping Hand
Church
WORK DAY



THEME VERSE: BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.

JUNE 17-21
 10 AM - NOON



JUNE 17-21
 10 AM - NOON

GOD'S ROCK-SOLID TRUTH IN A
 WORLD OF SHIFTING SANDS
ROMANS 12:2

CHURCH CAMP

8/29-9/1

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lêtheia
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



Last week we saw the Apostles proclaiming Jesus to the Jewish ruling council declaring to them that even though the blood of the long-anticipated Messiah was indeed upon them, there was now forgiveness and restoration for them in His glorious name. Believe in Jesus by humbly repenting and following Him and you will be Saved.

That would be obedience to God, and it is those who obey God by believing in Jesus who are actually led by His Holy Spirit.

Well, predictably, the Jewish leaders nearly lost their minds with indignation and anger to the point that they nearly murdered the Apostles on the spot.



Acts 5:34–42, 34But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. 35And he said to them, “Men of Israel, be careful as to what you are about to do with these men. 36For, some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37After this man, Judas of Galilee appeared in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he also perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. 38And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and leave them alone, for if the source of this plan or movement is men, it will

be overthrown; 39but if the source is God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.” 40They followed his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. 41So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ.



“A Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people,” is a well-established fact confirmed by his student, the Apostle Paul, in Acts

chapter 22, as well as by several other historical sources. He was the leader of the school of Hillel.

The Pharisees were sort of like the early Christian Protestants in that they believed the key to, and the foundation for, a right understanding of God and what He expected from His children was Holy Scripture. They were devoted to the study of God's Word, in their case, the Old Testament.

Pharisaism had its beginnings among the exiled Jews nearly 2,600 years ago and was the forerunner to the Rabbinical Judaism that survives today. From the time of Moses, Judaism was a Tabernacle or Temple centric religion, meaning that the center of religious life was in a single location administered by priests. To properly practice Judaism required personal participation at the single Holy place where God would meet with His people.

A change was necessitated in 587 B.C. when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, destroyed Solomon's Temple, and deported the Jews to Babylon. For 70 years the Jewish people were living about halfway between Baghdad and Najaf in present-day

Iraq, which is more than 500 miles east of their homeland as the crow flies.



The Jews began meeting on the Sabbath wherever they could, usually in someone's home. They would fellowship together, they would sing hymns, they would tithe of their income, they would break bread, and they would pray with, and for, one another. The main focus of the gathering was when an educated teacher would read a passage from the Hebrew Bible and explain the text to the people in their newly adopted Aramaic language.

Small gatherings required more teachers than the old system of priests in a single gathering. These teachers evolved into the Pharisees we know and love as this

practice of meeting away from a central Temple became more and more normative.

Naturally, when the second Temple was built in Jerusalem there was a return to Temple worship with priests, nearly all of whom were Sadducees. Yet, many Jews had become extremely fond of the Synagogue system and the local Pharisaic teachers. In the first century these were competing concepts of how Judaism should be practiced.

The Sadducean elites despised the Pharisees for even existing as an alternative to their own complete control of Judaism, but because the Pharisees were so popular with the people, the Sadducees cooperated and shared some power with the Pharisees.

When Rome leveled the Second Temple in 70 A.D. The Sadducean priests were once again without a workspace and were therefore irrelevant. When Rome simultaneously overthrew the Jewish nation, the Sadducean nobility likewise became irrelevant.

At the time of our passage today the Pharisees were of two camps. Some followed the School of Hillel and some of the School of Shammai. Hillel was the more

lenient of the two. Gamaliel, who may have been Hillel's grandson, was the present head of the School of Hillel. He was the mentor of both Paul and Barnabas.

I said that the School of Hillel was more lenient, which is to say more liberal, than the School of Shammai. As an example, Hillel believed that the Bible may be taught to anyone, in the expectation that they would repent and become worthy of its Message. Shammai's students had to meet stringent standards of piety and intelligence beforehand to be worthy of instruction. Another illustrative example is the two great Rabbis were once asked if a person should tell an ugly bride that she is beautiful. Beit Shammai said it was wrong to lie, and Beit Hillel said that all brides are beautiful on their wedding day.



During labor, the pain is so great that a woman...

Can almost imagine what a man feels when he has a cold.

It reminds me of a couple that I was counseling many years ago. One of their fights started because the wife asked her husband if he thought that she was as pretty as an actress in a movie that they were watching together. He protested to me, "I couldn't lie to her – I'm not a liar." Well, first of all, of course he was a liar, when it suited him, but more to the point, I told him that his response should have been a resounding yes because to every husband the most beautiful woman in the world should be his wife. Yes, to me, you're even prettier.

Awww, I won't be here on Mother's Day, so that's my gift. It is true though. When faced with a difficult

situation, oftentimes what's needed is a different perspective.



Gamaliel used a couple of examples, out of about a hundred similar examples possible, to show how false Messiah's and other would-be revolutionaries were all eventually caught and killed, and their people scattered. His point was simple and straightforward. If the present movement was another human attempt at power or overthrow it would likewise be stamped out. On the other hand, if it was really from God, nothing could prevail against it, and they would be found to actually be opposing God Himself.

The solution according to the wise old teacher was patience. Everything would work out if they just let it run its course.

Ironically, the Ruling Council was already fighting against God and had been doing so for quite a while.



While the elites agreed in principle with Gamaliel, they still need to extract their pound of flesh from the Apostles for the insult their egos had suffered. Not only had the Apostles refused to obey their order, not only had they created a stir among the people against them, not only had they repeatedly accused them of murdering the Messiah, not only had they escaped from jail and gone right back to preaching in the Temple, they had also had the audacity to preach

Jesus to them directly, like they could be taught by rabble, and icing on the cake was the Apostle's conclusion that they were the ones obeying God and speaking for Him and therefore the one's truly led by the Holy Spirit not the religious elites of the Council.

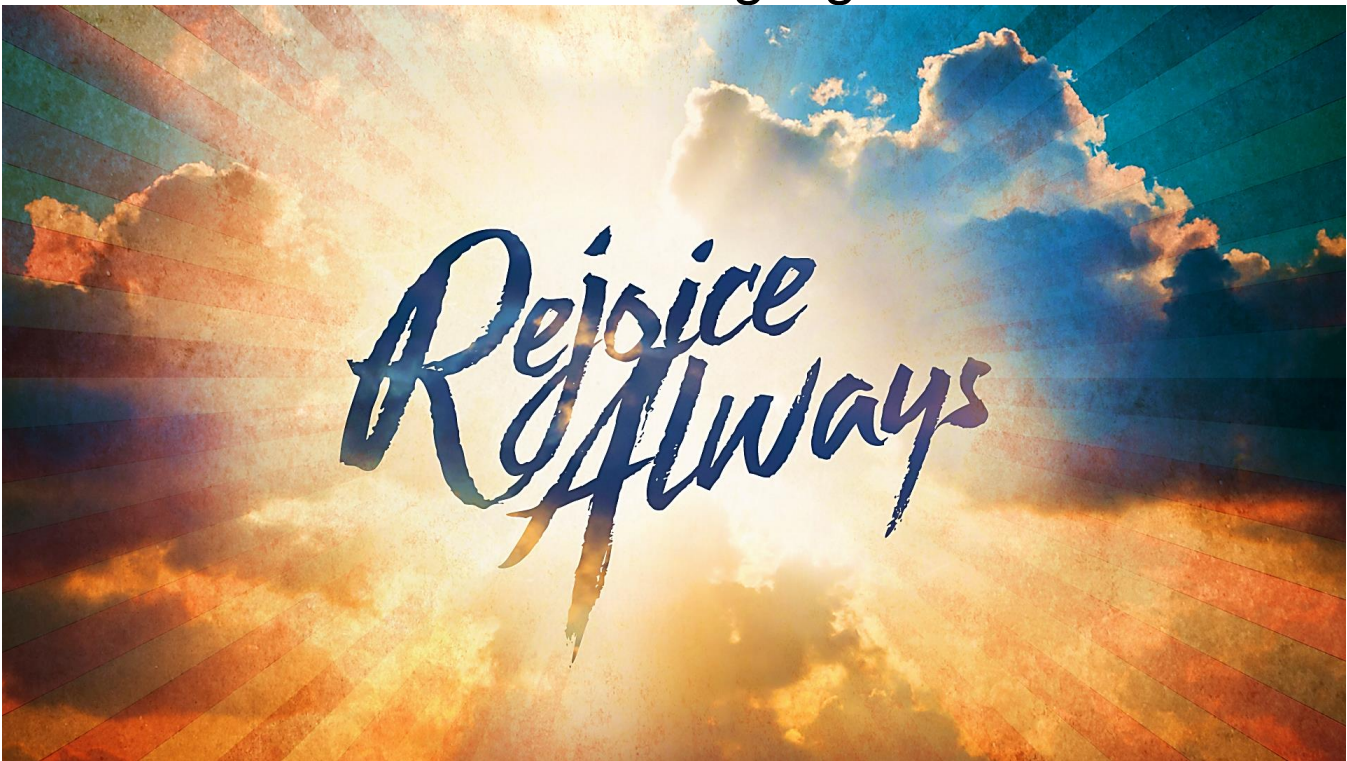
So, they had the Apostles flogged and then they released them with the same explicit warning not to minister, teach, preach, or proclaim the name of Jesus as the Christ, or the Messiah, or the Anointed One of God, anymore.



“They flogged them,” sounds almost humorous to us. We use the term in jokes or as a euphemism for being lightly mistreated. Flogging is and was extremely serious business. While the Jewish “forty lashes minus

one,” was not nearly as brutal as the Roman scourging that Jesus endured, it was still horribly painful and would permanently mark a person with scars.

Receiving thirty-nine lashes with a multi-tailed whip is no laughing matter. Saul was an agent of the Sanhedrin who ordered Christians flogged and then, as the Apostle Paul, he himself was flogged five separate times and was beaten with rods on three other occasions (II Corinthians 11:24&25). His bare back would have been a disturbing sight.



Even though the punishment was extremely severe by our standards today the Apostles rejoiced afterwards. They saw their persecution and suffering as a sign that

God Himself approved of their ministry efforts in boldly proclaiming Christ.

Why did they view it that way and why, after being threatened with execution and actually being whipped, did they continue “every day, in the temple and from house to house... teaching and preaching the good news of Jesus as the Christ”?

It wasn't because they were stoic, or fatalistic, or were filled with bravado either false or real, it was simply that they believed so much that nothing in this physical life mattered in comparison.

That is salvific belief – that is what it is to believe in Jesus' name unto eternal salvation. What if He told you right now that you are to preach the Gospel at Depot Park in Kalispell and that you would be arrested, booked, put on trial, and publicly flogged with 39 strokes of the whip? What if after that Jesus told you to go back and preach the Gospel again?

I have always said that the most important thing in life is what you believe and that the second is how much you believe it. How much do you believe? What would you be willing to sacrifice for the advancement of the

Gospel, the fulfillment of His Will, the building of His Kingdom, and the glory of His Name? These are all things that we are 100% certain that He wants from us so... how much do you believe?



Acts 6:1–6, 1Now at this time, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint developed on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. 2So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3Instead, brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4But we will devote ourselves to prayer

and to the ministry of the word.” 5The announcement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6And they brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Four general things continued to go on and even to escalate over time.



1) The first, on a positive note, was the continuing success of the ministry of proclaiming Christ through preaching and teaching the Good News. The Gospel Message was being announced and souls were being

Saved as a result. The church in Jerusalem was expanding by leaps and bounds.

Because the Great Commission of Christ for His church is to make more disciples, we should have that as our highest goal – proclaim, preach, teach, and share the Message that can save a person from eternal separation. “18Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. 19Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Some would say that it is equally important to take care of, mentor, disciple, teach, the people already in the church, but the Truth is, the single-greatest way that is done is by encouraging Christians to minister to the lost. Everyone in here needs to prioritize proclaiming Christ where He is not already welcome.

Church growth is the right problem to have and a good problem to work through, but it is always a problem, nonetheless. That brings us to the other three

exponentially increasing realities faced by the first church.



2) The conflict with those who felt threatened by Christianity and the popularity of the Apostles was growing as the perceived threat to them grew. Peter and John had been arrested, twice. The second time they had been released by an angel and then rearrested and flogged. We'll soon see the Jewish elites further escalate their attacks on Christianity and its leaders. It will get a whole lot worse from here.

We are promised persecution if we actually stand boldly for Christ and obey His command to share His Gospel with others. The Apostle Peter wrote in his first letter, "12Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery

trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. 13Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world. 14If you are insulted because you bear the name of Christ, you will be blessed, for the glorious Spirit of God rests upon you. 15If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs. 16But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!" (I Peter 4:12–16).

That from a guy who had been flogged and would ultimately be executed for his faith. American Christians use this passage to feel better about life's general difficulties – that's wrong. This is about being persecuted because you stand for Jesus, not because you stand for your own rights.

Again, how much do you believe? Back then Christians willingly sacrificed their lives for their belief in Jesus, today many Christians are unwilling to even sacrifice their Sunday morning for Him.



3) The more people that you have in the church, the more opinions that you have in church, and so, the more friction between people that you have to deal with. It was absolutely inevitable that there would be “a complaint.” Disunity is only a complaint away, my friends.

Friction is inevitable because we are not created or recreated to be identical people. The concept that church unity comes from homogeneity – from sameness – from everyone being alike – is as wrong as it can possibly be. Good grief, if we were all identical, we certainly wouldn’t need the Holy Spirit to make us “likeminded.” We certainly wouldn’t have to be

taught to get along, we certainly wouldn't need to be admonished to love each other.

I said the other day that having an opinion and even expressing that opinion at the appropriate time and in a reasonable fashion is good. There's nothing wrong with a complaint per se. Bringing an issue to the attention of someone who can correct it before it becomes a point of division is warranted.

What is unacceptable is falling in love with your opinions. What is condemnable is taking your opinions and setting them upon the altar of your heart and worshipping them. Go ahead and have an opinion but realize that everyone else has an opinion as well, and the chances that your opinion is superior to everyone else's is... unlikely. Unlikely, at best. Man, am I being kind and gentle this morning, or what?

For them, the complaint had to do with the perception that the Apostles were playing favorites. There was truth in the charge, otherwise it would have been handled differently. The Apostles recognized that they were being spread too thin and they came up with a solution.



4) The leadership of the church had to evolve to meet the demands of the expansion of the Christian community. The structure of the church, its polity, and its governance needed to adapt to suit the situation within the confines of basic Christian principles. It's the same today.

Jesus never gave specific instructions for how to organize and run the church. The Holy Spirit never inspired any Bible author to clarify that dearth of instruction. We have very little prescriptive or proscriptive information to go on.

Their solution at the time was to create a group of leaders within the church who would minister to the group in the arena of their physical needs.



The issue was initially handled poorly, as is usually the case. The Hellenistic Jewish Christians were complaining against the Hebraic Jewish Christians. To “complain against” is our dear old friend γογγυσμός (gōn-gūs-mōs). Remember Gone Goose Moss? No Gone Goose Moss – do not be a Gone Goos-er. It is an onomatopoeic word meaning that the word sounds like what it describes. It’s like “meow,” or “pop,” or “sizzle.” γογγυσμός is the sound made when murmuring or muttering in a low and indistinct voice with the idea of a grumbling, complaining, and backbiting.

It arises out of personal dissatisfaction and is the behind-the-scenes, under-the-breath murmuring due to things not going the way I think they should go – things not going my way. It stems from a fundamental lack of gratitude... a focus on the negative, rather than a thankfulness for the positive. Instead of being grateful for what I do have, I grumble about what I don't have.

A lack of gratitude is always a sign of arrogance. There is always the assumption that I am right and that I deserve things to go the way I think best.



Hellenistic Jews as opposed to Hebraic Jews. Here we already have division. It is human nature to put people in categories and judge them by those categories... We call it xenophobia, the recognition that someone is

different in some way from us and then treating them differently because of that difference. It's never long before we see ourselves as not just different, but better. The result is racism, or separatism, or prejudice.

The actual difference was the Hellenistic Jews had grown up outside of Jewish-controlled territory and were far more influenced by the Greco-Roman culture than the Hebraic Jews were. It was a matter of degree only. Hebraic Jews spoke Aramaic and some Greek. Hellenistic Jews spoke Greek and some Aramaic. Galilean Jews were more Hellenistic than Judean Jews, Roman Jews were more Hellenistic than Galilean Jews.

Why the problem? Hellenistic widows were not locals. They had travelled to Jerusalem. The situation was similar to the Warming Center on Meridian. It was built to care for our local homeless population, but some believe that it has encouraged homeless people from other areas to move to Kalispell. Some would say we should care for our local homeless people first.

The perception was that those non-local widows were not being treated the same as the local widows and

there must have been some truth to it because the Apostles took action to fix the issue.

I plan to talk a little more next week about widows, and Deacons, and the role the church plays in helping people both inside and outside of the fence. For now, I would like us to focus on the present church. Yes, Alêtheia, but also some other church if you're just visiting or passing through.



While an unsaved person can be a dedicated church member it is not possible for a Saved person to be a dedicated Christian apart from church. I'll say it another way... A person's lack of participation in the life of a local church is the litmus test, the barometer, the benchmark, by which we can measure their lack of

belief in Jesus. One more time even plainer... While you cannot guarantee that a devout churchgoer is a Christian, you can be assured that a careless churchgoer has higher priorities in life than following Jesus. Please think about what I just said.

I'm not here to wreck your day, I'm here to help you have a better eternity. A hobby is something we do when we feel like it, when it's convenient for us, but a covenant is something we do regardless of feelings or convenience. Is Christianity your hobby or are you in a covenant relationship with Almighty God?

If the former, you can and should get that right with God... now.