

Traction gains Momentum
Week #3: Resistance

Challenge to read each section as we go.

Resistance creates the power that turns into momentum outward for the movement. **Our group of Jesus followers** are definitely getting resistance. **This is obviously a bad thing, isn't it?**

Sometimes we don't make the necessary changes until we hurt enough that we have to. Would they just **begin to wait** until Jesus returns? Would they **turn inward and isolate themselves** from the culture?

Resistance creates the spiritual muscle necessary to achieve the great commission. You also don't know what you don't know until you get someone pushing back against you. **Push back helps you define who you really are and what you are going to be about.**

If there were no opposition, would they have anything to propel them outward from Jerusalem?

That has all begun; **arrests, threats,** and two frightening **deaths.**

If you weren't here **last week**, two people sold property and gave it to Peter to help care for the poor in this new growing community. They conspired to lie about not giving the whole amount. They wanted to receive the **admiration** that they perceived others had gotten. Both of them dropped dead when confronted with their deception.

Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. ¹³ None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, Acts 5:12-14

It says that there was fear in the church and those who were watching them.

This seems very unlikely. Two people lie to Peter, the leader, and they drop dead. You would think that this would be the **death nail** for this fledgling movement. **When something bad happens, you spend a lot of energy getting over and through it.** That energy is not focused on creating momentum in a certain direction. We call that **sideways energy.** It takes a lot, but doesn't help move you in the right direction. **It just drains you.**

You have to get off the mat, do the public relations stuff, and then start moving outward. **That takes a lot of energy to get back to where you were before this bad thing happened.**

Some people are afraid and keeping their distance, **while others are drawn** to Jesus and his people. **The church grew, but some were reluctant to join because they knew it demanded commitment.**

If two people dropping dead in front of your leader won't stall this momentum and growth, what will? Think about the scandal that would cause. In the how to grow your church list of tips, scaring people into thinking that God might kill them. And then their **key leaders keep getting arrested.** What kind of group is that when their leaders are constantly getting arrested? **Where there's smoke, there must be fire.**

There are lots of tips on how to grow your church and how to get some momentum. Fear of approaching the leaders isn't one of them. **And yet this church is growing.** This movement that has taken a foothold in Jerusalem is **gaining the momentum** that it will take to fulfill the great commission of going to all the world.

If that won't stop this momentum, then what will? In the next part of this story, we are going to see **why they were gaining momentum** off of all this resistance and hardship. **As we look at that, we will be able to see that there were some little compromises lurking in shadowy corners.** Would they compromise, or would they do the hard things, the uncomfortable things that will keep this momentum going.

Remember, it's hard to get momentum once you've lost it. But when you have it, then it's hard for someone to stop you. **A massive locomotive** can be kept moving by a few blocks of wood, but that same train with a head of steam can smash through feet of steel reinforced concrete. **Momentum is a powerful thing.**

Here's what I'm saying... **Giving in to temptation stalls momentum.**

One way to describe compromise is when something turns your head. You are heading in the direction that you need to **go based upon principles and what you value.** They had the **great commission** and the power of the Holy Spirit. They know that they are to **keep telling people about Jesus** and asking them to follow him. They are to go and **make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching these new disciples to obey** everything that Jesus taught. **The plan is solid.** They have the **power and authority** to execute it.

They need to keep their head from getting turned toward something that looks shiny and desirable. When you turn your head, you stop moving forward. That's why people don't turn to look at beggars. They will slow down, and then they will have to deal with them. **When your head is turning side to side it is natural to slow down and finally stop.** Followers follow which means they keep moving.

The first temptation is found in really good common sense. **The temptation to stop reaching out.**

With all that is going on, it just makes really good sense to chill a bit. **Get back in the bunker, circle the wagons, get the white board out,** and start strategizing how to handle all of this stuff that's going on. **"Yes, we are seeing people coming to Jesus, but let's be practical.** It's not the time to **keep pushing** our luck. **One more arrest and our reputation is shot."**

We've experienced that temptation. Scarcity thinking. The enemy is too big. There will be fallout.

It's tempting to play defense. We need to do things to try to **keep the people** we have and **we use all of our energy, time, and resources** on that and then there is **none left for those around us who need Jesus.**

When we recognized that this was happening, here's what we felt God wanted us to do.

- We started talking about being outwardly focused.
- We changed our **governance** to enable that to happen.
- We **hired Matt** when we couldn't afford to.
- We made one of our core values **"release"** our money, time, and our people. When we were blessed financially, we **gave a bunch of money away.**

- **We put an immense amount of time, effort, and energy into a coffee shop that would not increase our numbers for worship, programs, or money in the bank.**
- **We began working toward you being disciple makers.**

The power being demonstrated in healings and the growth in number has the powers that are troubled. **Their power is based upon things remaining as they are.** People who are dead stay dead, meaning Jesus. There is no Messiah preaching a different message. **And the people still come to us for answers.** So they have them arrested in order to intimidate and scare them into silence.

It's the same for us. The enemy wants things to stay the same. He is winning. We are in a post-Christian culture.

They are thrown in jail over night. **During the night, an angel visits their cell,** opened the doors and led them out. Here's what the angel said to them.

"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." ²¹ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Why is this significant? **It's not subtle; it's bold.** It's not laying low, it's going to be a **significant, busy place** where you will be noticed. The temple was **the center of Jewish life** at that time. It was the point where **heaven meets earth.** It is God's home on earth. Where does God live? Where is his presence? Answer: in the temple.

It says the angel came during the night. And they went to the temple at daybreak. As the sun was rising, they were walking up to the temple. They didn't **go home, take a shower, get some rest,** and then get back at it later in the day. **It wasn't, "let's try to get over the trauma of being unjustly arrested and thrown into prison and then when we feel up to it, we will get back to preaching."**

At the very moment when there would **absolutely be a temptation to lay low for a while** and let the leaders cool off, **they went directly to the temple** to tell people who were going there to worship God, that Jesus was the messiah, Christ the King. This is the definition of reaching out, evangelism. This is making disciples.

The command by the angel was to go to the temple and "speak to the people all of the words of this life." The NIV says, "and tell the people all about this new life." The point is **not to compromise or leave anything out.** It is easy to lose passion for evangelism or reaching outward when being persecuted.

The powers that be, prison, fear of death, resistance, can't stop this movement from gaining the momentum it needs to explode out of Jerusalem into the world. **That is simply helping them develop the spiritual muscle they need to act out the great commission.** But what can stall that momentum is... **The temptation to only give half the story.**

They are told to give the whole story of this good news, not just the easy parts.

We aren't told their exact words as they started teaching in the temple, **but we do hear what they say when they are brought in for questioning.** This interview with the authorities goes a little differently since they can't figure out how they got out of prison and they have to be careful because some of the people are on the apostles side.

This brings us to the section of scripture that we are focusing on today. **Acts 5:17-42.** We needed to hit that little part of last weeks' story in order for this to make sense.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. They were told to go to the temple and give the whole story about Jesus, the whole gospel. **So, if they are to continue to be obedient, do they change their message in front of these leaders?** No. We can assume that what they say now to these men is very similar to the message they gave in the temple courts. **This message is consistent with what they have been teaching through the first four chapters.** ³⁰ **The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.** ³¹ **God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.** ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." ³³ When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

Great, more resistance that will help them create the momentum they need to go unto all the world making disciples.

But listen to this full message of the gospel.

"**The God of our fathers**". This is them saying that the God we have worshiped in this temple who made us into a nation, who brought us out of Egypt, who made a covenant with us, who gave us Kings and prophets to lead and teach us, the God who made us great, is behind this whole Jesus thing.

You killed him, but that same God raised him from the dead.

He is "**exalted at his right hand as leader,**" that is another way of saying that this **Jesus is King with authority over God's Kingdom.**

He is "**savior**" the one who will rescue us from our sin, having paid the penalty for our wickedness.

"**Israel, which means you, needs to repent.** Repent...change of mind for a purpose or an action. Aboutface follows the change of mind.

Forgiveness of sin... forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty.

And once you repent or change your mind and direction, you need to begin to "**obey him.**" **And that means follow.** And since people are following these men and they like it, they probably aren't going to respond too well to being told that they need to follow the Jesus who they killed.

There will always be a temptation to tell only part of the story. We like the forgiveness of sin. That's the "forgiveness only gospel." Half a gospel will not allow us to keep the great commission. We will fail because the gospel you preach or teach determines the disciples you make.

Let's read a little further.

³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to

nothing. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸ So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, ⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, **they beat them and charged them not to speak** in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.** ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, **they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.** Acts 5:34-42 Acts 5:40-42

The powers that be, a prison, fear of death, resistance, can't stop this movement from gaining the momentum; it needs to explode out of Jerusalem into the world. That is simply helping them develop the spiritual muscle they need to act out the great commission. But what can stall that momentum is... **The temptation to equate comfort to being blessed.**

"To suffer for Christ is an honor that causes joy." 213

This is why you can't stop these people. They are honored to suffer for Jesus. They aren't trying to be cool or fit in. When they are attacked or come up against resistance they get joy from. **And you know what joy brings? Energy. It's like a spiritual Red Bull or triple shot of espresso.**

The beating caused increased evangelism, not a decrease.

Let's look at that again.

⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, **they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus,** and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.** ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, **they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.** Acts 5:40-42

They were beaten and threatened. **All because they told people that Jesus was alive** and healing people and that they were guilty and needed to repent and start following him.

I've never been beaten as a form of behavior modification. I've never been threatened to stop doing something good and right because I might get beaten again.

But wait a second, the universe is such that when you do something good and right, people cheer you. When God blesses, the proof is that things get more comfortable, not less. Don't we always say, **"Well that must have been from God, because he opened the door and paved the way."** The door was opened after they were beaten and told to stop talking about Jesus.

They went from the jail, to the temple, to a beating and left the beating rejoicing because they received the honor of suffering a little bit for the one who suffered everything for them.

People who are willing to suffer for what they believe is of God will always repel some and attract some others.

The whole idea of joy from suffering or pain is hard to get our heads around it, because we don't see it. **We aren't having police come into this service** and shut us down, like happened recently in Albania.

I have a tattoo. That might be shocking to some of you.

In other words, when we go through an experience where God does not deliver us from pain and hardship, we must affirm that he can do it but has chosen not to since he has something better to achieve through our suffering. When we examine God's seeming inaction in times of crisis in this light, we can feel honored that he has called us to suffer for him, and we can look expectantly to the form that his 'over-conquering' (8:37) is going to take—a form that will even surpass the triumph of a miraculous deliverance. If God can save us and does not, it is only because he has some greater good in mind. 220

There was a greater good than miraculously rescuing them from this beating. It's not like these religious leaders were going anywhere. **They were going to have to live in a world where those guys exist** and Jesus is calling them to leave the prison and go back to preaching. From the frying pan and right back into the fire. Those people aren't going anywhere and very few change their minds. **If God causes them to miraculously skirt this beating he's still going to tell them to keep telling people about Jesus which means they'll have to deal with these guys.**

The greater good was that on the backs of their beating God raised up a people who weren't looking to see how God could smooth the path out for them. This greater good was the momentum that this little Jesus movement was starting to gain that would propel them across the world. God was playing the long game, not the short game.

Next Steps:

- Ask yourself "How important to me is the Gospel of Christ and honor of his name?"
- Ask yourself, "Do I know what the Gospel is?"

Let's read our definition of the gospel. "The Gospel is..."