

Living Out Our Faith - Pt7
Acts 5:12-42

V12-18

- After reading of the Apostles witnessing with great power, and the early church having great grace upon them, chapter 5 begins with a story that ends with the early church experiencing great fear. Interestingly this fear didn't come from external attacks, as the early church had just endured their first round of opposition and passed the test with flying colors; receiving a stern rebuke not to teach or speak in the name of Jesus from those who didn't want to hear of the doctrine of Jesus Christ or His ability to forgive sins. This fear came from the Lord exposing the first internal sin inside the church, and then dealing swiftly to stop it from spreading within the church, which got everybody's attention.
- It's easy to get caught up in the miracles, healings, signs and wonders that the Apostles were doing. But what made this move of God so authentic was people's lives were changing for the glory of God. A man who had never set foot inside the temple was seen leaping and praising God, people who are selfish by nature became concerned about each other, so much so that they wouldn't take ownership of what they owned anymore, instead it was a "what's mine is yours" kind of deal (**Acts 4:32**). It's still that way today, as a genuine conversion is not proven by just the words that you say. What makes it believable is the life that you live.
- Verse 14 tells us the church was growing rapidly. But it wasn't a mere numerical growth that we see today. That can be misleading. Although people were seeing lives changed and believers were being added daily, folks didn't just rush in to join (v13). After hearing of the penalty for Ananias' lie can you blame them?
- Here is one of the great evidences of God's Spirit moving upon a group of people - life. Verse 16 - folks are bringing those who are hurting and in need of help to those whom they see being used by God. If you're being conformed into the Lord's image day by day then scripture shows us there will be reproduction.
- Verse 17 - notice growth and opposition go hand-in-hand. Here's what makes these religious leaders so dangerous, as it wasn't enough for them to reject the Savior (**Acts 4:17**), but they didn't want others to hear just as Jesus said they would respond (**Matthew 23:13**).
- The Sadducees, who were opposed to anything supernatural, are highly upset, and because they were rich and influential, anyone caught in their cross hairs were in serious danger. They were so unable to cope with the Apostles that they have them arrested and thrown into jail.

V19-33

- The Sadducees thought we got them now as they defied a direct order - we told them not to teach in Jesus name, and defied our doctrine - we are the final authority in this nation. Since the real reason was envy, and this being the second incarceration, which meant a more severe punishment, nobody could have predicted how this would end.
- Verse 20 - if ever a scenario proved that a Christian's life is not about money, jobs, possessions, and achievements, but about faith and souls, it's got to be right

here. God sends angels to free them, but not to run to the hills and preserve their lives. Instead to go back into the battle and preach life. Wow! It's been said the largest nation in the world today is procrasti-nation, but not this group. After being freed the night before they could have said well we had a long night guys we'll just make the noon day prayer, early in the morning then hasten to do God's will.

- Meanwhile the highest powers of Israel were gathered to judge the Apostles, and when they send for them the guards are shocked to find they've been keeping empty jail cells secure. Verse 24 - they've been down this road before when an empty tomb was also tightly guarded (**Matthew 28:11-13**). Finally someone lets them know where the Apostles were. Notice the Apostles didn't resist arrest or tell the others to form a formal protest; they simply go.
- Verse 28 - let this be said of us individually and as a body corporately, that we've filled our area of influence at home, at work, in the neighborhood, with family and friends "...with the doctrine of Jesus Christ." Amen!
- Verse 29 - if you're going to oppose your parents, spouse, or civil authorities, it must be by the authority of scripture, as **2 Corinthians 5:20** tells us we're ambassadors for Christ. Had we'd been diplomats then we could try and please everyone. Instead God calls us ambassadors for Him, meaning He is the One we aim to please.
- Verse 30-32 says not only did the Apostles not change their convictions but neither did they change their message, as Peter indicts the leaders for Jesus' death, boldly affirms that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and that they needed to repent for the forgiveness of their sins.
- Verse 33 - they were furious. They've tried interrogation, intimidation, even incarceration, but none of their methods seemed to work. So their next step is to kill them, just as they plotted to kill Lazarus just for being a testimony (**John 12:9-11**).

V34-42

- Although the Sadducees controlled the Sanhedrin, the most influential and respected member of this 70 person council was a man named Gamaliel. So vast was his knowledge of Old Testament law, and so vigorous was his attempt to keep it that his contemporaries called him the "beauty of the law." He was known as a man of integrity, so much so that only a handful of students were allowed to study under him. And one of his most brilliant and famous students was the Apostle Paul, before his conversion.
- He wisely tells them that if what these guys are doing is through human energy it will come to nothing, but if it is of God well fellows you'll be fighting the Almighty Himself and you know that result. Afterwards they agree but still wanting to teach them a stern lesson, have them beaten and commanded them not to speak in Jesus name again.
- Their threats have the reverse effect. In spite of the bloody beating the Apostles leave the meeting rejoicing. They didn't see their offenders as the problem; rather they saw their God counting them worthy by allowing them to go through this trial. What a perspective! Rejoicing in the face of persecution. Christians today feel for the most part that we're not to suffer for our faith; but we are to always

be treated fairly, with respect, and honor. This is contrary to our calling outlined in **1 Peter 4:12** and **2 Timothy 3:12**.

- Verse 42 - every opportunity they could get their hands on to teach and preach Jesus they took full advantage of. As we close I want to draw a contrast between the Apostles and the council. The council was educated, ordained, and approved by men, yet they had no ministry of power. On the other hand the Apostles were ordinary laymen, yet there was no denying God's power at work in their lives.