

A Study in Acts

Lesson 6: Acts 5:12 – 5:42

Growth In the Church

Act 5:12-16 KJV

- (12) And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.
- (13) And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.
- (14) And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)
- (15) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.
- (16) There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

So the original “church building” for the Church of Christ is on Solomon’s Porch just outside the Temple. Those that might oppose the Apostles would not come near them, most likely because of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. But others began to spread the word around about what the Apostles were doing. Before long, throngs of people were seeking out the Apostles to have their sick healed.

And the Apostles took advantage of this by teaching them Jesus and the way to salvation. As a result, the church grew in “multitudes”.

Reaction to the Growth of the Church

The Apostles Imprisoned

Act 5:17-18 KJV

- (17) Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,
- (18) And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

The high priest is no doubt making good on one of the threats made to Peter and John back in Acts 4. This time, apparently all of the Apostles are taken to the local jailhouse.

The Jail Break

Act 5:19-21 KJV

- (19) But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,
- (20) Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.
- (21) And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. 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.

Whether this angel is Michael, as some have thought, or Gabriel, or what particular angel, is not known. However, it was a good angel, an elect angel, one of those ministering spirits sent by God to minister to the heirs of promise; one of those angels that excel in strength, as appears by what he did: for he opened the prison doors where the apostles were put, and which had more doors than one, and these strong and close shut, and guarded by keepers; but were easily opened by the angel.

It is interesting to note that they were not freed in order to go hide or see to their own security. They were freed so that they might go back to the temple and continue to teach “all the words of life”.

The Apostles went the very next morning and continued to teach. Soon it was time for the Sanhedrin to meet. They came together and sent for the prisoners.

The Apostles on Trial

Act 5:22-24 KJV

- (22) But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,
- (23) 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.
- (24) 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.

Apparently the angel closed the prison door, and allowed the Apostles to slip passed the guards unnoticed, because everyone is surprised to find the cells empty.

When they all heard that the cells were empty though the guards were in place and the doors shut a bolted, they were uncertain how it had been done and what consequences they were about to face as a result of this miracle.

The Apostles Before the Council

Act 5:25-28 KJV

- (25) Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.
- (26) Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.
- (27) And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,
- (28) 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.

Can you imagine the words of the captain of the guard when he came to get the Apostles? We know that there must have been a tremendous crowd of people. The captain is familiar with had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Yet somehow he had to convince the Apostles to come before the council.

Jesus had promised them they would be brought before the entire Sanhedrin, and here they were. The high priest, who must have been very frustrated at this point, says “Didn’t we tell you not to preach the name of Jesus. Yet, not only do you preach this name, you accuse us of killing him.”

Notice that the Apostles are said to have “filled Jerusalem” with their doctrine. Would that we could fill all of Pflugerville with our doctrine.

The Apostles’ Defense

Act 5:29-32 KJV

- (29) Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.
- (30) The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.
- (31) 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.

(32) And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Peter starts, but the others talk as well. Their point is that they should obey the commandments given to them from God by the angel (that is to teach the words of life) rather than the commands given to them by the council (that is to keep their mouths shut).

Then, they again offer the accusation that it was these men, the council, that took an active part in having Jesus slain. That God, with his right hand (that is with his power), exalted him so he could turn Israel from its ungodly ways and for the forgiveness of sins. Basically, this is another shot at the Sanhedrin letting them know that their authority with regards to salvation and the ways of God was over.

In verse 32, the Apostles do their chief duty of witnessing the resurrection. Then we come to a line that many use to indicate we all get the Holy Spirit when we obey the gospel. Many use this to say that we all should get the miraculous gifts the Apostles have when we are baptized. But what we receive is not the extraordinary gifts, but the ordinary measures of his grace.

The Sanhedrin's Response

Act 5:33-39 KJV

- (33) When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.
- (34) Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;
- (35) And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.
- (36) For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.
- (37) After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.
- (38) And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:
- (39) But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

Notice that the Sanhedrin are “cut to the heart”, not “pricked in their hearts” as the crowd was in Acts 2. The difference is guilt versus anger. The Sanhedrin were not sorry they had killed Jesus, they were mad because this act had not stopped the teachings that their days as spiritual leaders of the people were over. So they talked about doing the same to the Apostles as they had done to Jesus.

But a respected man, and obviously a very intelligent man, talks them out of it.

With regards to the story of Theudas, Josephus speaks of a man with this name, who set himself up for a prophet, and drew a large number of people after him; pretending, that if they would follow him to the river Jordan, and take their goods along with them, he would but give the word, and the waters would divide and leave them passage to go over dryfoot; but Cuspius Fadus, who then had the administration of Judea, sent out some troops of horse, before they were aware, and killed many of them, and took divers others, and brought them in triumph to Jerusalem, with the head of Theudas.

Of Judas of Galilee, Josephus writes: "there was a man of Galilee, by name Judas, who led his countrymen into rebellion, declaring it an evil, should they suffer tribute to be paid to the Romans, and introduce mortal rulers after God." Again, it was the Romans that broke up this rebellion. Judas was killed and his followers either killed or forced to flee.

Gamaliel tells the council that they should let the Apostles go and for a very logical reason. If the things the Apostles do are done with the power of men, they will eventually fail and be destroyed by the Romans. If the Apostles really are who they claim to be, the Sanhedrin would be trying to fight God; an unwinnable battle.

The Verdict

[Act 5:40 KJV](#)

(40) And to him they agreed: and 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.

The council could not turn the Apostles loose without some kind of punishment. So they beat them before releasing them. In Matthew 10:17, Jesus had warned them that this would happen.

[Mat 10:17 KJV](#)

(17) But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

Typically, they would be whipped forty stripes save one. Paul also received this punishment:

[2Co 11:24 KJV](#)

(24) Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

The Apostles Rejoice

[Act 5:41-42 KJV](#)

(41) And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

(42) And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

The Apostles took to heart Jesus' teaching at the sermon on the mount:

[Mat 5:10-12 KJV](#)

(10) Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(11) Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

(12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

The Apostles also knew that they would not be prevented from assembling the church for awhile. So this was also a cause for rejoicing. And so, this part of the story ends with the church growing and thriving in the very heart of the land of its enemies, and Jesus Christ was preached every day, not only in the temple, but in every house as well.