

Acts 5:12-42 Bible Study

1. Have you ever 'suffered' for being a Christian (This doesn't mean that you had to suffer physical pain)? How did you respond? What is the worst form of suffering you think you are likely to ever face for being a Christian?

2. a. Read Acts 5:12-16. From what we've read already, why do you think "no one else dared join" the believers?
In 2:47 they enjoyed everyone's favour, but since then the religious leaders have rejected the teaching of the apostles and threatened them. Perhaps the crowds fear these leaders. So there is a clear distinction between believers and non-believers.

- b. What is surprising about this comment in this paragraph?
Despite the crowd's fear, many more people are still converted – God is not restricted by human rules; cf how the Christian church has flourished in countries like China.

3. Read Acts 5:17-26. What can we say about the kind of spiritual leadership the Jewish authorities gave to their people?
They seemed totally self-interested. They were motivated by jealous (v17), guarding their own positions, and they feared the people they were supposed to be leading (v26), a sharp contrast to the Spirit-empowered boldness of the apostles.

4. Why do you think God acted this way? ie setting the apostles free but telling them to go back to the temple, knowing they would only be arrested again?
We can only guess, but a few ideas: The priority of the gospel is again shown – even at personal risk to the messengers, in this first physical attempt to silence the gospel, God shows that he is not to be defeated by human opposition ("the one enthroned in heaven laughs"! Ps 2:4), perhaps God is giving those Jewish leaders with eyes to see more opportunity to stop rejecting him and believe the gospel (cf 2 Pet 3:9).

5. Read Acts 5:27-40. How does the response of the apostles in vv29-32 answer the high priest's two objections ie i) we ordered you not to 'teach in this name' and ii) 'you are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood'? Is there an example here for us to learn from and follow?
*i) God's command (Jesus' command – 1:8) overrules human commands. But then we must accept the consequences if there are any – the apostles allowed themselves to be arrested, they did not incite the crowd to defend them!
ii) They **were** guilty – in the physical sense of Jesus being innocent, but also in the spiritual sense in that they, as with all people, were sinners and need to receive "repentance and forgiveness of sins" from the risen Jesus. No one likes to hear that they are wrong, let alone that they are rebels before God! This is the gospel message, but so is God's offer of forgiveness.*

6. Does the response of the Sanhedrin in v33 show that they hadn't understood the apostles? What does this tell us about sharing the gospel with others?
*The Sanhedrin understood **perfectly** what the apostles said! They just didn't believe it. See Matt 10:34-49 for Jesus' explanation of this. The more clearly people understand the gospel, the more clearly they will be wither for or against it*

7. What do you think of Gamaliel's argument? What sort of spiritual leadership is being offered here?
It seems to be almost self-contradictory. If it is not from God, they ought to deal with it since they are the leaders. If it is from God – and they ought to be able to tell truth from error! – then they should believe it, not just 'see what happens'. Perhaps in his favour, he had in mind something like Deut 13:1-5.

8. Read Acts 5:41-42. How do you respond to the apostle's reaction to their suffering? How can this help us at times like those mentioned in Q1? Read also Jn 15:18-21, 16:33, 17:14-16.

9. From our reading of Acts so far, what things can we expect as we share our faith in Jesus? Write down three things that you can pray regularly in response.
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