

Honored to be Dishonored

Jeremy Bell

October 24, 2021

Acts 5:12–42

Many Signs and Wonders Done

[12] 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, [15] so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. [16] The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

The Apostles Arrested and Freed

[17] But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy [18] they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. [19] But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, [20] "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.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. [22] But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, [23] "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." [24] Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. [25] And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." [26] Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

[27] 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. [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. [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. (ESV)

- In our text today we’ll see that God continues to move powerfully among His people.
- Many signs and wonders are being done through the apostles.
- The work that God was doing through them stirred up jealousy in among the religious leaders, such that the apostles get thrown in jail again for preaching Jesus (Acts 5:18).
- And this time they get beaten, but the apostles rejoice in being found worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:40-42).

1. God’s Power on Display

- People were amazed at the healing power of Almighty God.
- Peter already had said – “don’t look at me as though the power if coming from me – its coming from God Himself!”
- The power wasn’t his – it was God’s power flowing through him.
- So filled with the Holy Spirit in these days, God used Peter and the other apostles in mighty ways that fulfilled His plans for building the church.
- Many were turning to Christ. Many were believing!

God Still Heals Today

- Multiple texts of scripture confirm healing is a gift for the church today, not just for the apostles and the early church.
 - 1 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us that God gives the gift of healing to some as a spiritual gift.
 - James 5 instructs us that the prayer of faith makes the sick well.
- We humbly acknowledge that God is in charge of healing, the power comes from Him, and we also acknowledge that He gives good gifts.
- So we ask in faith, and His will is done.
- We receive what He gives, knowing that He is an all wise Father.

2. Obedience Amidst Growing Hostility

- The Apostles were arrested and then miraculously freed from prison by an angel of the Lord.
- The Apostles again proclaimed the gospel and declared their commitment to continue doing so even though prohibited by the Sadducees.

“To be sure, Christians are called to be conscientious citizens and generally speaking, to submit to human authorities. But if the authority concerned misuses its God-given power to command what He forbids or forbids what He commands, then the Christian’s duty is to disobey the human authority in order to obey God’s.” – John Stott

- They embodied the same spirit as that of Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego when they stood before Nebuchadnezzar and would not obey his command to bow down
- And if it wasn’t for the intervention of Gamaliel, they probably would have died
- Gamaliel states a truth that is ultimately true – that what God has set in motion cannot be stopped.
- And so they beat the apostles and released them

3. Rejoicing in Suffering for His Name

- The apostles were beaten – likely the 40 lashes minus 1
 - It was determined that 40 lashes was enough to legally kill a man
 - So they did one less than 40 to be within the legal limit

- Afterwards, though beaten, they rejoiced!
 - Rejoiced at being considered worthy to suffer for Jesus
 - To count their lot with Him
 - As one theologian said (Alexander, quoted in Stott)
 - “Honored to be dishonored”
 - “Given the grace to be disgraced”
- Those who obey what God commands experience the blessing of knowing His joy. They are rejoicing with great joy in their Lord!
- Though they would experience great opposition, they were able to rejoice with great joy because they knew they were doing what the Lord asked them to do
- Doing the will of God brings joy to life!

[10] “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[11] “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

– Matthew 5:10–12

- Tertullian, an early North African (Tunisia) church historian and theologian, is quoted as saying in 192BC to the rulers of the Roman Empire, whom were horribly persecuting Christians:

“Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust...The more you mow us down, the more we grow; the seed is the blood of Christians.” – Tertullian, 192AD

- As the disciples rejoiced, they were now even more motivated
 - In the temple daily
 - House to house
 - They did not cease teaching and preaching Christ!

Conclusion

- We have seen
 - The glory of God going forth in healing and wonders
 - Let us keep our eyes on Christ as we ask for healing in faith!
 - The obedience of the disciples in the face of growing hostility
 - May we, church, continue to be faithful to proclaim Him in the face of much hostility
 - The joy of suffering for the name of Christ

- When we are insulted, or persecuted, we can count in joy in the Lord, to be identified with Him
- We have an enemy who hates the work of the Lord, and labors to try to defeat it but God has promised that His church will be built
 - That the gates of Hell itself will not prevail against it
 - That though Satan may try to disrupt, to dissuade and to destroy, the unstoppable gospel will march forward
- God's kingdom will be built
- And we participate with God in this great work!

Questions for Discussion/Application

- Re-read the text, Acts 5:12-42. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?
- In verses 12-16, we see the Lord used the Apostle Peter in remarkable ways to heal the sick. What should our attitude be today in terms of asking God to heal those who are sick?
- The Apostles were obedient to God and continue to proclaim the gospel under the constant threat of persecution. What lessons can be drawn for us today from their example?
- Is anyone here sick? How can we pray for you? Perhaps take time at some point in your meeting to pray for anyone who is sick.
- Consider taking time to pray for the persecuted church around the world. [Here is a great resource](#) from Voice of the Martyrs.