

Review

We are in the book of Acts, seeing the church in its earliest form...

5:12-16 Esteem Of The Apostles

God was using the apostles powerfully: There were miraculous healings taking place through their hands - and some believed even by their shadows! They were being entrusted with the administration of thousands of dollars of donated money. They were the guys that everyone was hearing teach the Word of God. And these were the men preaching the gospel, seeing people saved by the thousands.

And suddenly, these twelve normal guys - ex-fishermen, tax collectors, and political activists, were put up on a pedestal by the people: None dared associate with them - they were held in high esteem.

They had become the church's equivalent of movie stars, politicians, rock musicians, and sports heroes. Just like we still do today to Christian musicians, authors, evangelists, and even pastors.

But there should be only one celebrity: Jesus Christ. No Christian is any different than you. Don't hold me - or anybody else - in high esteem. Don't build a wall of separation, don't put anybody up on a pedestal. Because we're all just sinners saved by grace, which means it's only a matter of time before the person you exalt lets you down.

Of course, we are supposed to...

Heb. 13:7 Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

If you see something of Jesus in somebody, imitate that. But don't exalt them.

5:17-26 The Apostles Arrested, Released, Arrested

The popularity of Christianity and the miracles taking place because of it caused the Jewish leaders to be consumed with jealousy.

Remember, at this time the Sadducees made up the majority of the Sanhedrin:

Acts 23:8 ...the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge

them all.

Now, I think this is great: The apostles are preaching the resurrection of Jesus, and when the Sadducees put them in jail, it is an angel of the Lord that lets them out!

The Whole Message Of This Life

When this angel released the apostles from jail during the night, he gave them instructions:

Acts 5:20 "...speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."

They were reminded to speak the "whole message" ("**pas HRAY-ma**" - "**every word**") of this life. What is the "whole message"? It's not just that Jesus wants people in heaven, but also that they're on their way to hell. It's not just that God loves them, but also that God hates sin. Giving the good news means also delivering the bad news.

5:27-33 His Blood Upon Us

When the apostles were re-arrested, they were brought before the Sanhedrin. The high priest recognized Peter and John, who'd been arrested before, after healing a lame man (Acts 4:1-22). He said, "Hey, I warned you to stop teaching in the name of Jesus!" This was true. The Council had decided,

Acts 4:17-18 "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

The Council had been afraid that if the apostles kept teaching in the name of Jesus, the message would keep spreading among the people. They'd been right. Now, the church has managed to fill Jerusalem with this teaching!

The high priest also said something interesting: "You..."

Acts 5:28 "...intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

In reality, they had brought the blood of Jesus upon themselves. When they'd delivered Jesus over to Pilate, the governor of Judea, Pilate

found Jesus innocent. But the Jews were shouting, "Crucify Him!"

Matt. 27:24-25 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!"

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men

The apostles knew they were being threatened, and had been given clear orders to stop teaching in the name of Jesus. They had a decision to make: obey the authorities, or obey God.

This is a real quandary, isn't it? After all, the Bible tells us that...

Rom. 13:1-2 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

But when the authority tells you to do something that would actively cause you to sin, you have to decide whether to make a stand and say,

Acts 5:29 ...**"We must obey God rather than men."**

Of course, you need to make that decision understanding that the consequences may be very difficult - the Council intended to kill them!

5:34-39 Gamaliel's Speech

Gamaliel was one of the most prominent teachers in Judaism at the time. Years later, when the Apostle Paul was listing all of his accomplishments in Judaism, one of the things he would point out was that he'd been educated under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

Gamaliel suggested a very wise-sounding plan:

Acts 5:38-39 "...stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

It sounded wise, but Gamaliel was wrong. After all, there've been lots of false movements not of God which have not been overthrown.

And this brings up an important point: Have you ever considered that not everything in the Bible is truth? Oh, the Word of God is true: Gamaliel did say this. However, what he said was not true. Just because it's in the Bible doesn't make it truth. We've got to check the context.

I've heard TV evangelists quoting Job's friends as if they were speaking forth the word of God. But they were wrong most of the time!

And Nicodemus said to Jesus,

John 3:2 ...“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

But in fact, Jesus taught,

Matt. 24:24 “...false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders...”

So, be careful of the context, because not everything in the Word of Truth is true. Bible verses that tell us what someone said don't necessarily mean that the person was right in what they said.

5:40-42 Rejoicing For The Privilege Of Suffering

The Council decided to have the apostles flogged and then released. "Flogging" means to beat someone with a whip or stick as punishment or torture. But the word "flogged" is the Greek word "**DER-o**," which means "**to flay, skin, thrash, or smite.**" It is possible that the torture the apostles endured was much more severe than a beating or caning.

Whatever punishment they incurred, notice their response: They left...

Acts 5:41 ...rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Even while they were leaving, they were rejoicing. And they continued right on doing what they had been doing:

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.