

Acts 5:12-42

Truth Over Comfort

? Think of a time where someone asked you about something, and you knew they wouldn't like your answer. What did you do?

Acts 5:12-32 (NIV)

¹² The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵ As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

²¹ At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²² But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³ "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." ²⁴ On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

²⁵ Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." ²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

? In verses 13 and 14, we can see the people's response to the teachings of the apostles and the apostles themselves. Despite their high regard of the apostles, why would people be hesitant to join them? Have you ever experienced this kind of hesitation?

? When the apostles were arrested, an angel of the Lord released them (vs. 18-19). ? Why do you think God freed them this way, instead of a different route, such as working in the religious leaders' hearts to let them go?

? Why is it significant that the apostles went back to the Sanhedrin with the guards of their own free will (vs. 26)?

? Peter angers the Sanhedrin by stating, "We must obey God rather than human beings!" Why are they angry, and why is the root of their anger important?

The Sanhedrin was the religious authority of the Jews of the day. They were supposed to be the highest and most honored, wisest and closest to God. To have their authority questioned not only undermined their political and social clout, but threatened their legitimacy as spiritual leaders. Their stubborn refusal to listen and their use of force to silence those they disagreed with would reflect very badly on the Sanhedrin if it were widely known.

Acts 5:33-42 (NIV)

³³ When they heard this, [the Sanhedrin] were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴ But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷ After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

? What is Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin in verses 35-39? Why is this significant?

? What can we take from the consequences the apostles faced and their reaction to their punishment?

? What consequences do we as Christians face for telling others about the Gospel?

? What makes it hard to speak the truth of the Gospel?

? How can we gain encouragement from this passage to speak truth rather than seeking comfort when we talk to others about our beliefs?

For Discussion and Accountability

? What does obeying God, rather than men, look like in your life?

? What makes you back down from sharing Gospel truth? How can you stand up and speak the truth this week?