

Unstuck: How the Early Church Changed the World

Lesson 7

Acts 5:12-42

October 24, 2021

Hated but Unafraid

Introduction

Jealousy, hatred, and persecution are all themes that we find in Acts 5:12-42. But we also see themes of miracles, joy, and obedience. In this account, the message and miracles of Peter and the apostles attracted significant attention but very different responses from different audiences. On the one hand, the Sadducees refused to believe the message of the gospel. But, on the other hand, they drew many people to the Lord, and the church grew quickly.

The powerful Sanhedrin acted as a high court and a governing body of the Jewish community and was controlled by the Sadducees. The apostles' actions confused the Sanhedrin: how to punish such popular men who were healing people? So the Sanhedrin jailed the apostles while they decided what to do with them, but the Lord had another idea: rescue.

When they finally did face the Sanhedrin, Peter told the Sanhedrin to their faces that they obeyed the Lord, not the powers of men, and for this, the apostles were flogged. But they were let go, and they immediately prayed out of thankfulness to have been deemed worthy of their suffering.

Think about your response to those who might respond to the gospel with bitterness and hostility. Would you be tempted to compromise the gospel and minimize the significance of the Cross, or would you be emboldened to speak the truth of Christ?

Memory verse: "Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number."—Acts 5:14

Pray and read Acts 5:12-42. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

What does the passage say?

1. What were the apostles doing that caused people to come to them? (Acts 5:12-16)
2. What did the Sadducees do to the apostles for preaching the Word and healing the sick? (Acts 5:18, 40)
3. What did the angel tell the apostles to do when he opened the doors of the jail? (Acts 5:19-20)
4. What did Peter say they must do? (Acts 5:29)
5. What was his reasoning for that? (Acts 5:30-32)
6. Why did the Sanhedrin not try to put the apostles to death? (Acts 5:33-40)
7. What did the apostles do after they were released? (Acts 5:41-42)

What does the passage mean?

1. What do you think was at the heart of the Sadducees' jealousy of Peter and the apostles? (Acts 5:12-17, 28-33)
2. What was the effect of the apostles' preaching and healing on their community and the church? (Acts 5:12-16)
3. Since the apostles were right back in front of the Sanhedrin shortly after their escape from jail, was their release in vain? (Acts 5:18-27)
4. How do you think the chief of the Temple Guard felt when he found out that instead of being in jail, the apostles were teaching in the Temple? (Acts 5:21-25)

5. Given the apostle's miraculous signs, why do you think the Sadducees did not believe the apostles' testimony? (Acts 5:12-42)

6. Why did the apostles respond with joy and witnessing after the Sanhedrin flogged them?

Applying the passage

1. Think back to a time when you witnessed or experienced something miraculous. What did it do for your relationship with Jesus?

2. Pray for a few minutes, then write down 2-3 times that you felt others might oppose your sharing the gospel. How did fear of persecution or rejection affect your testimony?

3. How can the actions of Peter and the apostles serve as an example for us today?