

LESSON SIX

(5:12-42)

On Solomon's Porch, 5:12-16

12 Now many signs and wonders were 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 honor. 14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, 15 so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, 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.

V. 12 - Notice the emphasis that is placed upon the apostles, yet consider that we know very little about most of them and their work. Most of what we do know about early church history concerns only two of the apostles, Peter (with John) and Paul. We may assume that God used the others in the same general ways as he did Peter and Paul.

The early Church, without any buildings large enough to house them all, used God's house of prayer (Matt. 21:13), set aside for the use of his people, as their meeting place. It surely was appropriate, since God had planned to produce the church through the Jewish nation. Note again the oneness of the believers.

V. 13 - A verse well-known for its problem: who are the "rest" who would not join themselves to "them?"

The "rest" have been identified as 1) other believers who feared the apostles, 2) non-believers, including "the people," or 3) non-believers, other than the people, such as rulers, scribes, etc. There seems to be no easy solution, even though the general import is clear. We prefer #1.

join - The Greek term has the idea of a close union, as of marriage, Matt. 19:5; or work for, Luke 15:15; or associate with, Acts 17:34.

V. 14 - In connection with 2:47, the ones being saved were added by God to the church. Now we have believers added to the Lord, which is the same thing, since the church equals the body of the Lord, Eph. 1:21-23. Note that "women" are mentioned. Christianity is surely God's greatest gift to women, bringing her a status unlike any other system in the world. Today's women's lib doesn't compare in any respect with what God has for the Christian woman.

V. 15 - As is evident, the apostles had the same general power to heal as Jesus, and did so, as God gave them power (ch. 3), Heb. 2:4. Whether any were healed by Peter's shadow is not stated. Later, Paul's abilities were extended beyond his physical presence, Acts 19:11ff.

sick - The Greek word means sick or weak as in Matthew 8:17; Romans 14:1; etc.

V. 16 - **the sick** - To this description Luke added “those afflicted” (K.J. “vexed”). This last group is described by a word meaning to trouble or to disturb. The root word is found in Luke 6:18, where, in a similar situation, Jesus was healing people who were “vexed” with unclean spirits. Luke used the term “unclean spirit” to describe a demon, Luke 4:33, 35.

QUESTIONS

53. Who did Luke say did the “signs and wonders”?
54. Where was the evangelism of the early church taking place?
55. How many people did the apostles attempt to heal but failed to heal?

In the Prison, 5:17-20

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 common prison. 19 But at 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.”

V. 17 - This text may well indicate that the high priest (Caiaphas) and his party, the Sadducees, had enough power within the Sanhedrin to effect the arrest of the apostles, quite apart from the Pharisees (who may also have agreed to the move, though not mentioned by Luke).

party - Translates the Greek term which is often transliterated into English by heresy. See its occurrences in Acts 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5; 28:22; I Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20; Titus 3:10; II Peter 2:1. In its basic form, it simply meant to choose something or someone or between two things. The noun form as in our text indicates the result of a choice. The term is not necessarily, in itself, bad, though sometimes it got that way.

jealousy - Is not necessarily bad itself, since the O.T. taught that God was a jealous God over Israel. See also Rom. 10:2; 13:13; II Cor. 12:20; Philippians 3:6. It obviously is a problem emotion, and difficult to handle for anyone. It often results in evil being done.

V. 18 - The activities of the whole number of the apostles brought about this action. They had all prayed to speak the word boldly and had evidently done so. The results were much too much for the Jewish religious leaders to be able to bear.

V. 19 - As in chapter 12, God intervenes and brings them freedom so that they may continue practicing that for which they were imprisoned. Angels played an important part in the Bible, and evidently were an important part of God's team to help mankind. See Hebrews 1:14.

V. 20 - **Go** - The same verb form is found in Matthew 10:6. **Stand** - The second command, in a participle form, which like an infinitive, could be used as an imperative. **Speak** - the third command, to be obeyed when they had obeyed the first two commands. The Sanhedrin had forbidden this very thing - speaking (i.e., preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus). **in the temple** - A public place. One cannot help but marvel at this miracle, but the record does not inform us about it, except in the most brief way. The important thing was the message and its proclamation: **all the words of life** - the message which they had been forbidden to speak, but which alone had life.

QUESTIONS

56. What do you know about the sect of the Sadducees?
57. Did the high priest have the right to have the apostles arrested?
58. At what time of the day did the apostles start teaching? Where?

On Solomon's Porch, 5:21a

21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and taught.

V. 21 - The men were released at night, and began their obedience as soon as possible. Perhaps this was customary, to utilize the cooler times of day. Too, early morning sacrifices were offered, along with prayer times - hence, many people would be around the area.

Before the Sanhedrin, 5:21b-41

Now the high priest came and those who were with him and called together the council and all the senate 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, and they returned and reported, 23 "We found the prison door securely locked and the sentries standing by the doors, but when we opened it we found no one inside." 24 Now when the captain of the

temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. 25 And some one came and told them, "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 without violence, 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 ordered the men to be put outside for a while. 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean arose in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him; he also 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 men, 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!"

40 So they took his advice 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.

V. 21 - **council and...senate** - The Jewish Sanhedrin plus elders (apparently) of the people. An important matter was before them!

officers - The word for a servant, or helper, one who assists. It could mean a guard as in Matt. 5:25; Mark 14:54, 65; John 7:32, 45ff.; 18:18; or an attendant, as in Luke 4:20; or one who serves another, as in Luke 1:2; John 18:36; Acts 13:5; 26:16; I Cor. 4:1.

V. 23 - The text does not admit of any interpretation except that of a miracle. Moreover, God replaced everything so that the apostles' absence would not be noticed until such time as they would be sent for.

V. 24 - The council had every cause to wonder what was happening - but they finally ignored all the evidence and evil triumphed again in their lives. Their actions only put into greater relief the actions of the apostles. The mustard seed (of the church) was growing and would soon, despite intense opposition, become a large tree!

V. 25 - The word had gotten around quickly about the apostles being in the temple, and many were not in sympathy with them.

V. 26 - The people were much divided over the apostles and their message, but enough were favorable to make the soldiers fearful when the arrests were made. This was also true with both John and Jesus: each had followers, despite the general opposition from the hierarchy. As Mark 12:37 puts in, "The common people heard him (Jesus) gladly." This was also true in a great measure for the apostles.

V. 28 - Caiaphas summed up well the basic facts. The apostles had been enjoined to cease, but rather had continued to proclaim their message which included an indictment of the Jewish leaders for murder (mentioned again in v. 30). The priest and leaders had taken the blood of Christ upon them, Matt. 27:25. However, the message preached was, even for murderers, redemption of their sin, and a new life in Christ. Notice that the apostles were "teaching" the message, as well as preaching it.

V. 29 - **to obey** - From a verb "to persuade" which turns into persuaded and thus obedient. See Acts 27:21; Titus 3:1.

As one attempts to obey God's will in conjunction with man's will, the time may well arise when, whether actually so or not, said wills are seemingly in conflict. The only choice a Christian can make on such occasions is to obey God, trusting that God will honor his faith and forgive any misunderstanding. The apostles thought the faith and forgiveness issue was clear, and answered accordingly. That is all anyone can do.

V. 30 - **The God of our fathers** - The apostles and others never for a moment let themselves or others think that what they were preaching was anything but what their God had always planned. Their appeal was to the Old Testament, which everyone accepted as from God. We may also find good usage of the O.T. that will strengthen our case for Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah of God.

V. 31 - **at his right hand** - As in 2:34. This was the position of power. **Leader** - Sometimes translated **prince**, **author**, or **pioneer** as in Hebrews 2:10; 12:2. **Savior** - The problem that continually plagued the Jews was their concept of their Messiah and what sort of savior the Messiah was to be.

repentance...forgiveness - Jesus had commanded the apostles in Luke 24. The basic command to both Jews and Greeks involved a change of mind, which would change the future way of life, and at the same time bring forgiveness of sin for the past life, as the change of mind was effected through obedience to Christ. It was a great gift from God to have the privilege of changing our minds about sin. See Acts 11:18.

V. 32 - The Holy Spirit was not a well-known concept to the Jewish people, if the O.T. be our guide. Perhaps some concepts were not recorded or the idea may have been taught but not recorded for our information. Hence, what the Sanhedrin understood by Peter's remark about the Holy Spirit is not clear. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is only given to those obeying God. No text tells us what to do to obey better than Acts 2:38. See also John 14:23.

V. 33 - **enraged** - The Greek term has the idea cut or sawn in two, both here and 7:54, the only times it occurs. The apostles' response verily tore the listeners apart. The effects of the apostles' words were so great that the council members were minded to take more lives rather than being minded to change their minds. Paul found the same situation in ch. 23, as well as in Acts 13:45-47; 18:6ff.

V. 35 - **do** - The form of the Greek term indicates a way of doing.

Gamaliel's advice has been viewed differently. Some take it as a "cop-out" in that evidence available was ignored, and his response was negative. Some see it as the best possible position to take considering the make-up of the council. We remember a famous student of Gamaliel, Saul of Tarsus, who finally was convinced of the evidence about Jesus. He may have been present in these proceedings.

V. 36-37 - Gamaliel reasoned that both Theudas and Judas were not of God, and they came to nothing without any opposition necessary. He thus reasons that if God had been backing these two men, they would have rather prospered. He suggested the same course of action would be prudent in the case before them.

Perhaps of interest is the fact that Gamaliel was a grandson of Hillel, and later became president of the Sanhedrin.

The enrollment he mentioned is the same sort of event as in Luke 2, and occurred every 14 years.

V. 37 - **were scattered** - The prodigal son did this with his money, Luke 15:13. Jesus used this term when he quoted Zechariah 13:7 in Mark 14:27. God's children were scattered, John 11:52, and Jesus' death would unite them, John 10:16.

V. 38 - keep away, divorce yourselves from them is Gamaliel's advice, because if it is only of men, the work will not stand.

V. 39 - He continued to reason that if it were of God, not men, no possibility existed of vanquishing it. It seems to me that he reasoned rightly, and gave good advice to the council.

opposing God - The Greek term means God fighters no less!

V. 40 - The council was persuaded (i.e., to obey) and allowed the apostles to leave after having *beaten* them (the term occurs in such texts as Luke 22:63; Acts 22:19 and I Cor. 9:26; II Cor. 11:20). They were never to speak again in or for Jesus.

V. 41 - The men thought the cause for which they were beaten was worthy of the beating. Some have over the year accused the apostles of lying about the empty tomb and a resurrected Jesus. It seems rather dumb to even state such a thing. Men will suffer and die for what they believe is the truth, whether it be so or not. No man or group of

men in their right minds would suffer so or die for what they knew was false. The apostles' reaction had been reflected many times before (as in Heb. 10:32 - 11:40) in the O.T. times, and afterward, as Christians throughout the ages have likewise endured, and for the same reason: unshakable faith in God.

The Spread of the Word, 5:42

42 And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

V. 42 - Feeling honored by being dishonored, the apostles continued as obedient witnesses for Jesus, both in public and private. Paul did likewise, Acts 21.

We honor, even so far removed in time, their faith and zeal. They were totally committed to the ministry of Jesus. As we consider the statement of Jesus in 1:8, it seems evident that the apostles did not think their present distress was reason to leave Jerusalem for Judea, etc. The church would soon be scattered, however, by persecution and would take the message everywhere, even if the apostles remained.

QUESTIONS

56. When we consider how wrong the Jewish leaders were, even in the face of much evidence, we only need to read such texts as John 7:49 ("This crowd, who knows not the law, are accursed") to understand the leaders better. Were the Jewish leaders biased, ignorant, or what?

57. In what ways were the apostles bringing the blood of Jesus upon the heads of the Jewish leaders?

58. What had God done with Jesus?

59. Were (at least) two witnesses required by Jewish law to establish anything?

60. Why did Gamaliel give the advice he did?

ABA REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

1. What is significant about the inclusion of “women” (5:14)?
2. Do you believe people were healed when Peter’s shadow fell on them? Explain your answer.
3. Is jealousy always bad? Explain your answer.
4. What role did an angel play in the apostles’ release from prison, and what three commands did the angel give them?
5. What charge did the High Priest give the apostles, and what was Peter’s bold reply?
6. Explain the Greek term for “enraged” and discuss how it describes the reaction of the council members.
7. Who was Gamaliel, and what advice did he give to the Sanhedrin?
8. Who were Judas and Theudas, and what had they done in the past?
9. What does the Greek term “opposing God” mean?
10. Complete the following verse, “And every day in the _____ and at _____ they did not cease _____ and _____ as the _____.”