



## 'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #7

### Acts 5:12 – 42 (NASB)

Pages 82-96 in *'Acts For Everyone' (Part 1)* by N. T. Wright

#### Acts 5:12-16 (NASB95)

*At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. <sup>13</sup> But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. <sup>14</sup> And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, <sup>15</sup> to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. <sup>16</sup> Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.*

**Q: What are we to make of Luke's statement: "they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them..." ?**

- First off, here again Luke makes it clear how united in purpose the early Christians were.
  - They went to the hub of Jewish society and power (the Temple), and preached boldly that it was obsolete—that Jesus had replaced it.
  - They did this because the mission of spreading the gospel was their highest priority.
- Second, there are always more "fans" than there are those who are "in the game".
  - The people "held them in high esteem", but they weren't willing to risk the fallout from being completely committed; so they kept their distance.
  - The early disciples were so committed and engaged in the mission that there were no "half-hearted" Christians.

**Q: What was the result of the early Christians' total commitment to God's rescue mission, and boldness to preach the gospel?**

- More and more people decided to get in the game!

**Q: Why does Luke say multitudes of men and women were constantly "added to their number", instead of "joining their cause or movement or church?"**

- In [Acts 2:47](#), Luke made it clear it was the Lord who did the adding of people who were being saved.
  - If the Lord is the one doing the adding, then:
    - People don't get to join, they can only appeal to Jesus for acceptance.
    - Christians/churches don't get the credit for who or how many people the Lord adds to their number!

**Q: What should we learn from these early disciples and the way people responded to them?**

- The world will take the message of Jesus seriously when they see radical commitment to it and real power in it.
- "Thus the fact that so many people coming to Jerusalem and being cured was not simply a matter of a sudden burst of healing energy. It was about (and everyone knew it was about) **the establishment of a new reality in a dangerous place:** the power of the living God becoming concrete, definite, undeniable, not simply a matter of a few people telling a very strange story and behaving from time to time as if they were drunk. **It is when the church, through prayer and wisdom and often in the teeth of opposition, acts with decisive power in the real world** – to build and run a successful school, or medical clinic; to free slaves or remit debts; to establish a housing project for those who can't afford local rents, or a credit union for those ashamed to go into a bank; to enable drug users and pushers to kick the habit and the lifestyle; to see hardened and violent criminals transformed by God's love – **that people take the message of Jesus seriously.** Of course there will then be opposition, because we shall be invading territory that is currently under alternative occupation. But God's power will be at work, and people will know it." P. 86

## Acts 5:17-26

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. <sup>18</sup> They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. <sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, <sup>20</sup> **“Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”** <sup>21</sup> Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought. <sup>22</sup> But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, <sup>23</sup> saying, “We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside.” <sup>24</sup> Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. <sup>25</sup> But someone came and reported to them, “The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!” <sup>26</sup> Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).

### **Q: Why is the message called “this life”?**

- The life Christians live, in many ways, IS THE MESSAGE!
- “What the apostles were doing was quite simply to live in a wholly new way. Nobody had lived like this before; that, indeed, was one of the extraordinary challenges which impinged on people as the gospel set off around the wider world. This was ‘a way of life’, as we say, that people hadn’t ever tried. In fact, nobody had ever imagined it.” P. 88
- “It was ‘a way of Life’ in the sense that Life itself had ‘come to life’ in quite a new way; a force of Life had broken through the normally absolute barrier of death, and had burst into the present world of decay and corruption as a new principle, a new possibility, a new power. And it was this Life, of course, which was carrying the apostles along with it, like a strong wind driving sailing boats out across a wild sea.” P. 88

### **Q: Why did the message need to be spoken as well as lived?**

- “But wordless symbols, however powerful, remain open to a variety of explanation. From the beginning, the apostolic faith

has been something that demands to be explained, that needs to be taught. There is much to say, because people fill their heads with all kinds of half-truths or downright untruths. Things need to be spelled out carefully step by step: Who Jesus was and is, what God did through him, how it all drew to its head the long scriptural story of God’s people, what it all meant in terms of the long-awaited ‘kingdom of God’.” P. 88

## Acts 5:27-42

When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, “We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, **“We must obey God rather than men.”** <sup>30</sup> “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. <sup>31</sup> “He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, **to grant repentance to Israel**, and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> “And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” <sup>33</sup> But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. <sup>35</sup> And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. <sup>36</sup> “For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> “After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> “So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; <sup>39</sup> but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.” <sup>40</sup> They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. <sup>41</sup> **So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.** <sup>42</sup> **And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.**

**Q: What does Peter mean when he says God granted repentance to Israel?**

- “But, on the way, we must note the point that ‘repentance’ itself is not simply something humans do, as though to persuade God to be gracious to them. Repentance itself remains a gift from God, something the Holy Spirit brings about (see too [Acts 11:18](#)). There is another mystery here, but it’s one the early Christians lived with, and indeed lived by.” P. 94

**Q: Why would suffering shame for His Name cause the apostles to rejoice?**

- Because they were enough like Jesus to be treated like He was.
  - When people who don’t like *Jesus*, but who like *us* just fine... we have a BIG problem!
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## Follow Up Assignment

Q: Are we, as a community of believers, so committed to the mission of Christ and the gospel that “half-hearted” believer’s wouldn’t want to be a part of us?

Q: What message is your life preaching?

- Are you speaking “*the whole message of this life*”? If not, why not?
- Does the message from your mouth match the message of your life?

Q: Whom are you obeying: *God* or *man*?

- If you are relying on people to tell you what God wants you to do, are you obeying *God* or *man*?
- How are you making sure it is God you are obeying?

Q: If you were to be put on trial, accused of being a follower of Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict you?