

Lesson 6
TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES
Acts 5:17- 42

Memory Verse: “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.” (Acts 5:42 NIV)

Acts warns about antagonists facing the church. One of which is prejudice. Prejudice means prejudging, judging on the basis of limited information. The outstanding example of this type of opposition in Acts is the unbelieving Jews. They refused to accept the witness of the Christians. They would not tolerate the evidence that the Christians presented. They became the major enemies of the church, as well as missing the blessings that could have been theirs if they had acknowledged their Messiah. The church faces the same opposition today (e.g., traditional concepts as opposed to Scriptural revelation). Many Christians are simply playing church. The commitment of many Christians to non-biblical traditions, as though they were biblical, is frightening.

The root cause of this problem is lack of confidence in the Holy Spirit. Prejudice says, "I do not trust what the Holy Spirit has said in Scripture." We must always interpret experience in the light of revelation, not the other way around. Many Christians feel safer with tradition. Many Christians simply want to be told what to believe and do. They do not want to think for themselves, or even read the Bible for themselves.

After Pentecost, the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ spread rapidly in Jerusalem as Spirit empowered witnesses shared the gospel with the lost. Signs and wonders accompanied the preaching of the Word, and no one could deny that God was at work in a new way among His ancient people.

But not everybody was happy with the success of the church. The “religious establishment” that had opposed the ministry of Jesus, and then crucified Him, took the same hostile approach toward the apostles. “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you,” said Jesus. “They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service” (John 15:20; 16:2 NKJV). These words were beginning to be fulfilled.

It was the age-old conflict between living truth and dead tradition. The new wine could not be put into the old wineskins, nor could the new cloth be sewn on the worn-out garments (Matt. 9:14–17). The English martyr Hugh Latimer said, “Whenever you see persecution, there is more than a probability that truth is on the persecuted side.”

We see in this account different responses to God’s truth, responses we still see today.

Scriptural Reading: Acts 5:17- 42

Things to learn: 1) Attacking the Truth 2) Avoiding the Truth 3) Affirming and Announcing the Truth

Questions

1) What do you observe in the Council’s response to the persistent teachings of the Apostles who were released by the Lord from jail as reported in verses 17 to 28?

2) Were Gamaliel and his followers correct in recommending the release of the Apostles who presented them the Truth (in verses 33 to 39)?

3) How did the Apostles (in verses 29 to 32 and 40 to 42) defend the Truth and in what ways can we internalise the message?