



Message #13

“OPPORTUNITY, OPPOSITION, OBEDIENCE”

Acts 5:12-42

Acts 5:12 takes us back to a familiar setting: Solomon’s Portico (Colonnade). This location is where Peter and John went to preach the gospel after the healing of the lame man at the “Beautiful Gate”. Apparently, this site continued to be very important for the Christian church after that time. We could say this location was “ground zero” for the public ministry of the early Christians. Now we see many signs and wonders being done there by the apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The apostles, early Christians, and others interested in the gospel were gathered in Solomon’s Portico. But now there was also a political tension in the air (after the recent persecution of the church). Even though people held them in “high esteem”, they feared their own leaders, so they dared not associate with the Christians.

And yet, we are told in 5:14 that despite this tension, the church continued to grow. This growth has been a feature of these early days of the church...

Acts 2:41 – 3,000

Acts 2:47 – more added daily

Acts 4:4 – 5,000 (at least). From this point the church grew too rapidly to count.

Acts 5:14 – “multitudes” / more and more.....

Why do you think the church experienced such growth in these early days, despite the difficulties and growing opposition/persecution?

What attracts people to a church in our modern day?

Are numbers the only means of measuring the growth of a church?

Is too much emphasis placed on numbers of people attending churches these days?

FUN FACT #1:

Verse 15 says the sick were brought into the street and laid on “beds and mats” in the hope of the apostles coming by to heal them. Beds and mts are different terms for different things.

“Beds” probably denoted what the rich sick people lay on.

“Mats” probably denoted what the poorer sick people lay on.

FUN FACT #2:

Verse 15 also says that the sick were brought out in the hope that even Peter’s “shadow” might pass over them and they might be healed.

Scripture doesn’t say that anyone WAS healed by Peter’s shadow passing over them....but it does, of course, indicate the regard that people had for Peter and his relationship with God.

What sort of “shadow” are you casting? What sort of legacy are you leaving, and what sort of influence are you exerting on those around you?

Live in the light of the Son so that your shadow and influence will be for good and for God.

OPPORTUNITY

Motivated by envy and indignation at the apostle's standing with the people, the High Priest and the party of the Sadducees have them arrested and placed in jail. However, God showed His mercy by sending an angel to orchestrate their "escape" (5:19-20). This was a particularly ironical thing, as the Sadducees did not accept the existence of angels!

Leaving aside the actual details of this escape, the purpose of it was not just to have the apostles released, but to reaffirm their commission to proclaim the Gospel, despite the opposition.

5:20 – "Go, stand in the temple courts, and tell the people all about this new life."

The apostles were thus instructed to go to the very centre of Jewish life and faith (the temple) to stand strong for Jesus. The apostles were delivered to declare!

1 Peter 2:9 (look it up) reminds us that we, also, have been delivered to declare.

What opportunities do you have to declare the "new life in Jesus" in the "centre of your world"?

What opportunities do we, at Church@TheGabba, have to declare the new life in our community?

Using the apostles as an example, what does it take to be faithful to this call/commission?

OPPOSITION

So, after their "escape" from prison, the apostles went back to the temple courts and once more started witnessing to the new life they had in Jesus. And, of course, they were arrested again and brought before the Sanhedrin (like the supreme court of the Jews for religious matters). They (Peter and John) had previously been warned by the Sanhedrin to stop sharing their faith so now, with a second charge, they were likely to be punished. Even more so because they were unrepentant and, in fact, inflamed the whole situation by counter-charging the Jewish religious leaders with the murder of Jesus Christ (5:30).

The High Priest, in interrogating the apostles, accused them of being "determined to make us guilty of this man's blood". Interestingly, this was the very thing that he and his associates had said to Pontius Pilate!

Read MATTHEW 27:25.

Thanks to the wise counsel of Gamaliel (a well-respected Pharisee), the apostles were not sentenced to death. They were flogged and then released, with the strict warning to not speak in the Name of Jesus.

Read 5:38-39....What are your thoughts about this statement?

OBEDIENCE

Of course, the apostles had no intention of stopping sharing their faith with the world. They even counted it a point of rejoicing for having been arrested and flogged....counted worthy for suffering "...for the Name". The key to the apostles' courage and resilience in the face of persecution and opposition was not in their own strength...but in their obedience. **5:29...** **"We must obey God, not man!"**

When is it acceptable (or even right) for a believer to disobey the civil authorities?

In the choices that you make every day, how can you ensure that you are following Jesus, not man?

The apostles rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

List all the names for Jesus that Peter used in his preaching (3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-31). How had the disciples view of Jesus expanded?

What does "The Name" of Jesus mean to you?
