

The Church: DEFINED

Study Questions

Week 10

Do you remember Jesus' words back in Acts 1:8? "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and *you will be my witnesses* in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The role of a witness might seem harmless, but it can get you into trouble. This week, let's pay close attention to the confidence of the apostles even as the opposition ratchets up to a new level. The form of opposition might look different, but we need that same confidence today, here at "the end of the earth."

MAIN TEXT: Acts 5:17-42

CONNECT & OBSERVE

1. What did you find most significant from Sunday's sermon?
2. Read the passage in Acts. What questions come to mind as you consider these verses?

LEARN

3. Verse 17 supplies a key insight. The Jewish leaders are "filled with jealousy." Why are they jealous and, in general, what kinds of things does jealousy lead to?¹
4. Verses 17-26 display another spectacular, supernatural work of God. What is surprising, then, about the high priest's words in verses 27-28? How would you describe the response from Peter and the apostles in verses 29-32?²
5. In verses 33-39, Gamaliel's advice dampens the leaders' raging murderous emotions (v. 33). What's good or bad about his advice?³

¹ To help, think of *jealousy* as: "intense negative feelings over another's achievements or success" (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 427).

² We should also not overlook the prior actions of the apostles; namely, that they returned to the temple and teaching as soon as they were released!

³ For example, we can certainly affirm that no one can stop God's plans! On the other hand, though, it is not always true that movements die out quickly if they're not from God. Some have criticized Gamaliel's advice as being too fatalistic: "Waiting to see how things turn out is not an adequate form of guidance for difficult situations...If a movement is wrong, it should be vigorously opposed" (David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 225). Craig Blomberg reminds us that "Belief in Scripture's inerrancy and authority does not imply that everything spoken by every character in the Bible is true, merely that everything spoken is what those people actually said!" (*From Pentecost to Patmos*, 33)

6. Commentators point out how the beating mentioned in verse 40 was likely 39 lashes with a three-stranded leather whip that could even result in death. With this in mind, what's your reaction to the apostles' response in verses 41-42?

APPLY

7. How has this passage encouraged you? How has it challenged you?

8. *Confident Witness* is one of [Calvary's Shaping Values](#), meaning that "We communicate in word and deed that salvation is found in Christ alone." Thinking about the passage, in what ways are the challenges to this kind of witness similar today? How are they different?

9. Being a witness can get us into trouble. Brainstorm for a minute...how do we, or should we, help each other be confident witnesses even if opposition comes?

10. There's an attitude or commitment in verse 41 that seems critical to a confident witness: the apostles were "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."⁴ Take time to pray together about this, asking the Lord to imbed this same kind of attitude inside of us.

⁴ Darrell Bock observes how "The phrase 'counted worthy to suffer dishonor' is an oxymoron, a dishonor that is a cause for joy. The leaders beat them to produce shame. They hope that the shame might function as a deterrent and stop their preaching or at least persuade others not to heed them" (Acts, 252).