

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 09.27.2020

PERSECUTION AND FIRE! – ACTS 5:17-42

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Jesus' earthly ministry focused on meeting people's needs, both spiritually and physically. The most important need everyone has is a personal relationship with Jesus. Beyond helping to meet that need, though, the church is a place for people to feel accepted and to be connected to other imperfect people who empathize with one another's pain and who can help shoulder the burdens of life. Here in Acts 5, we see Peter and John finding a man who was lame and begging alms. Rather than give him money, in Jesus name they healed him leading to a tremendous response to the gospel. Note that the miracles and wonders that were performed through the apostles were evidence that Jesus is indeed risen from the dead and his people continue to do the miracles He did because He is in them. Then rather than being happy for the man, the Jewish leaders, the Sadducees and Pharisees were envious. As they had done earlier, the Sadducees arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. However, God intervened in the lives of His disciples by using Angels. Here we have a physical deliverance and a divine revelation directing them to go back to what they were doing, preaching the gospel in the temple courts. Let's get into our study...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most or spoke to you from Pastor Ray's message this last weekend?
2. Have you ever experienced a challenge that changed you physically? What was the challenge? How did it change you?
3. What challenge changed you the most spiritually? Would you say it was worth it? Why or why not?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 5:17-26

1. Why were the religious leaders opposed to the apostles? (5:17)
2. What happened when the Christians were put in jail? (5:18-19)
3. How do you account for the jealousy of the Sadducees?
4. As an apostle, how would you feel during the events of verses 18-21? What would you expect to happen next?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 5:27-41

1. What does the Sanhedrin accuse the apostles of in verse 28?

Prepare! in 2020

2. What assertions in Peter's response would arouse their fury (vv. 29-32)?
3. What stands out to you about Peter's response to the accusations he faced? What is the application for us in ministry today?
4. Who intervened on behalf of Peter and the others? How? (5:34-39)
5. What effect did Gamaliel's speech have? (5:40)

Christians do not respond with violence or resistance (Luke 22:49–51). Peter offers no defense, only a witness, an offer of salvation to Jesus' murderers. Flogging sometimes resulted in death. Why do you think the disciples considered it worthy rejoicing that they suffered in Jesus' name? It's no small wonder Peter picked up a "suffering for Jesus" theme in his epistles (see 1 Pet. 4:13; 2:18-21; 3:8-17). They had beaten Jesus, and now they had beaten His disciples who praised God that they could suffer for the name of Jesus. God will allow nothing to stand in the way of the proclamation of His gospel and the expansion of His church.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

Pastor Ray stated that we may be moving toward a time of greater persecution of Christians. Today we are seeing a supernatural battle. We have entered into a time of persecution against Christians here in the U.S.A! But, do not be afraid or discouraged. God will deliver you one way or the other. God does use angels and some of you may have entertained angels unaware. God's greatest concern is about the harvest and is not willing that any should perish. We believe a great harvest of souls is coming. When persecution comes, it brings a holy fire so rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus!

1. How do you think your relationship with Christ and your commitment to the body would be different if persecution was a real threat to your everyday life? What would this do to your faith?
2. How do you explain why God sometimes delivers you out of hardships, but at other times He allows you to go through them? What might God be trying to teach you by allowing you to face persecution?

PRAYER - Thank God for refining our faith through discipline, persecution, and brokenness. Pray that God would continue to refine the faith of your group members and use them to proclaim Christ's kingdom. I have found that my greatest times of spiritual growth have not happened when everything is smooth; rather it has come through difficulty. Everything we go through is "Father Filtered." He will use everything we go through to make us better, and more conformed to the image of Jesus. Praise Him!

*"Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"
Hebrews 1:14*