

Acts 5:17-42

When someone say, “you will be in trouble, I promise!” You might feel offended. If your parents say the same thing, you might not feel good. However, you might do a self-examination, and see does their advice has a point. If God say this to you, you take it seriously, but why does God say something like that to me? No way!?

Let’s see what type of trouble and how this passage in Acts illustrates the point.

Book of Acts is the fifth book in the New Testament. The book mainly covers the acts of the apostles, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to witness for Christ starting from Jerusalem to the *ends of the world* (Acts 1:8). God sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles as well as to us. This book shows the Holy Spirit empower, guide and convict people. Many of the later chapters are about the missionary journeys Paul and fellow Christians made to spread the Good News. Today, we study what the apostles did including Peter in Chapter 5 while they were witnessing for Christ.

1) Commanded to act

a) Command given. God gave the command and it is clear here. Acts 5:20 stated, “Go, stand in the temple courts, and tell the people the full message of this new life.” It is the same today. God gave us commands clearly. It is all over the Bible. Commands in the area of

1. Further His kingdom by sharing it *to all the people* as stated in this chapter as well as in Acts 1:8,
2. Love others in terms of relationships of *those around you* (e.g., Mark 12:30-31). Look at the disciples at that short period after Jesus left. They love each other, and share everything with each other (Acts 4:32-35).
3. Be holy *yourself* as be righteous, honest and truthful as shown in the early part of this chapter. (Also see I Peter 1:16 and Lev.20:26)

b) Actions taken. In Acts 5:21, the apostles entered the temple courts as they had been told, and began to teach the people. Therefore, the first step is to act on a command with obedience, and not just listen.

2) Challenged but stand firm

- a) Often when you obey God's command and go into action, you face rejection and challenges. In fact, God promised you will face this kind of trouble when you witness for Him. John 15:20 and II Tim. 3:12 states you will face rejection when you follow Jesus. It is clear here the apostles have faced persecution from the high priest and all his associates. The apostles stood firm on their faith. They didn't regret nor back down. In Acts 5:29-32, they still told the truth. Sometimes, we can be afraid when we obey in action. We should have faith, and ask God for strength to sustain us.
- b) If it is from God, no one can stop it. That is your action is empowered by God. As shown in Acts 5:17-24, apostles got out of jail. Furthermore, Acts 5:39 shows the people's understanding has been changed that is knowing God is powerful through God's act in Christians' lives.

3) Counted as worthy for the persecution

Now, let's study verses 41 and 42.

- a) Joy because they have obeyed God
 - 1. joy because they knew they have conquered
 - 2. joy because they have been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for God's name
- b) It is the cost of following Jesus.
 - 1. physical – Just like the apostles, they were put into jail (Acts 5:18) and beaten (Acts 5:40). Remember, people reject you when you follow Christ is a Promise from God!
 - 2. emotional – We can have fear and stress from interrogation by earthly authority, and feel hurt knowing Christian brothers and sisters got persecuted.
- c) When you are under rejection, interrogation and/or persecution by earthly authority, are you able to have peace and joy? The apostles held their faith and continued God's work (Acts 5:42). Having faith in God to empower and guide you through.

Several years ago, my wife, son and I together joined a church mission to team with a local church in an Asian country. That country restricts religious practice including Christianity. We held a youth/college camp for young people to know Jesus. One day, the local police came and try to find all the teachers. We all hid in a room and

prayed while we told the students to have a temporarily sport break. After the police left, we continued the camp of teaching God's word. The police said they would come back and made sure the camp is over because they would arrest all if not. A day later the police came again, and we all left with mini-buses when the police just arrived the school. We stopped the camp because we didn't want the local students got into trouble and lost their faith. In addition, it would not bring good testimony to their parents if their children were under police arrest/warning. God protected us while we faced opposition. The key is that we held the faith, and made the decision through prayer. At that rush moment of our departure, the students were full of tears of missing us. They saw God's love through the teachers. They were moved by God's word. All the staff were full of joy even though we were chased out by the local police.

I encourage you to act on God's command, have faith and hold on to the truth although it seems difficult sometime.