

Consequences for True Faith

International Bible Lesson

Acts 5:27-42

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“Peter and the other apostles replied [to the Sanhedrin]: ‘We must obey God rather than human beings!’” (Acts 5:29—NRSV).

True faith in Jesus Christ leads to obeying God. After Jesus rose from the dead, but before He ascended into heaven, He commanded His followers to be His witnesses—to tell others what they had seen and heard from Him. He told them to begin in Jerusalem after they received the Holy Spirit, and then go everywhere. He commanded them to teach those of all nations to obey everything He commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). From the Book of Acts, we know that when His followers were arrested, threatened, or persecuted they kept obeying Jesus and telling others about Him just as Jesus commanded. His leaders and followers did not stand alone when they testified about Jesus; the Holy Spirit witnessed through them. At his trial, Peter told the Jewish leaders: “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32). All those who came to trust in Jesus on and after the Day of Pentecost received the Holy Spirit because they obeyed Jesus as Peter taught them: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Later, when they needed boldness and wisdom to keep teaching about Jesus, the Holy Spirit filled them once again in answer to their prayers and their commitment to obeying Jesus. The Sanhedrin did not understand these spiritual realities, so they flogged the apostles and commanded them not to preach again, but they rejoiced and returned to preaching in the temple courts.

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Thinking Further

1. What do you think might have been the primary reason for the apostles' arrest?
2. When ordered to do so, when should a Christian disobey God?
3. Who does God give the Holy Spirit to? Did the members of the Sanhedrin have the Holy Spirit within them?
4. As a respected teacher of the law, why do you think Gamaliel did not use the law of God in his presentation to the Council?
5. Compare Acts 5:41-42 and Matthew 5:10-12. How do you think Jesus' teaching helped the apostles?