

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 5:27-42

Topic

The twelve apostles are beaten but rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus

Title

Shame On!

Acts 5:27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them,

Acts 5:28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Acts 5:29 But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

Acts 5:31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Acts 5:32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Acts 5:33 When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

Acts 5:34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.

Acts 5:35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.

Acts 5:36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.

Acts 5:37 After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.

Acts 5:38 And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;

Acts 5:39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God."

Acts 5:40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

Introduction

Public beatings are not too popular here in the United States. If you are going to Singapore, however, I'd recommend you obey the law to the letter. Some of you might recall the case of American teenager Michael Fay who was publicly beaten there in 1994 for vandalism.

We can't be absolutely certain about exactly how the beating of the twelve apostles was carried out. There's a clue in the writing of the apostle Paul. He became something of an expert at being beaten. In Second Corinthians 11:24 and 25 he wrote,

2 Corinthians 11:24 From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one.

2 Corinthians 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods...

These are two different types of beatings. One was what we would call a scourging or a flogging. Tied to a post with your back exposed you would be flogged thirteen times with a scourge formed of three cords. The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy limited the beating to forty lashes (or *stripes*). Thirteen strokes of the scourge would count as thirty-nine stripes – one below the legal limit of *forty stripes*. Though meant as a form of corporal punishment, you could die from a scourging.

Paul mentioned a second type of beating with what he called *rods*. We would probably call it caning. I wasn't able to find a description of caning in the first century but I don't think the procedures have

changed much. It's what you receive in Singapore. The cane itself is a wooden rod. The subject to be caned is strapped to a frame with the buttocks exposed. Parts of the prisoner's body are padded to prevent accidental damaging of the kidneys and the genitals, but the procedure can still leave permanent scars on the subject. You might be left crippled by it.

The twelve apostles were either scourged or caned. They could have died from either or been left crippled. They certainly would be left scarred.

There was also an emotional component to being beaten. It was done publicly, with all or parts of your body exposed. It was humiliating and shameful to be scourged or caned.

It should therefore stun you to read [so they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name](#) (v41). Rejoicing and shame don't normally go together.

I want to explore the believer's rejoicing and shame this morning. I'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 Jesus Is No One To Be Ashamed Of, and #2 Jesus Is Someone To Bear Shame For.

#1 Jesus Is No One
To Be Ashamed Of
(v27-32)

[Murdered by hanging on a tree.](#) Peter's interpretation of Jesus on the Cross in verse thirty reminds us how shameful was our Lord's death. If we are His followers then we can expect to bear shame for Him as He bore it for us.

The world may try to silence you by shaming you. You can bear the shame, even rejoice that you are counted worthy to be treated just like Jesus was. He is no one to be ashamed of.

We are picking-up in the middle of a story. The apostles had been arrested for preaching about Jesus against the orders of the Jewish ruling council to stop. An angel released them miraculously from jail.

They went right back to their preaching. They were re-arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin to be questioned about their disobedience.

[Acts 5:27](#) And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them,

[Acts 5:28](#) saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

The questioners can't even bring themselves to say the name of Jesus. It is a blatant show of their disrespect.

Sadly in our culture nonbelievers do say His name but it's only when they are cursing. Other nonbelievers may not curse but they disrespect the Lord in other ways. Intellectuals, for example, have their theories about who Jesus really was. They reduce Him to a mere man and Christianity to a religion. It is disrespect for His life and work of dying for them on the Cross that they might have eternal life.

Tucked in with the disrespect of the Sanhedrin is a tremendous statement: [you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine](#). It would be great to hear that about our county!

How did they do it? By simply giving their personal testimonies as witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. It's something each of us can do. Our cities can be filled with the Gospel as we talk to one person at a time.

[Acts 5:29](#) But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

The apostles weren't trying to overthrow either the Jewish authority or the Roman authority. They weren't insurrectionists; they were resurrectionists! If government prohibits you from obeying God then you obey God rather than government. But you do so peacefully.

Their statement is also a basic principle to live by. In every circumstance I ought to obey God rather than men. When it comes to every day living I am looking for the Lord's wisdom and instruction and not the world's wisdom and instruction.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

Jesus did not invent a new religion. He came as prophesied by the Jewish patriarchs in the Jewish scriptures. The crucifixion was no accident. It was part of the plan. God **raised up Jesus** from the dead.

Hanging on a tree is a reference to the shame associated with being put to death as a criminal. Deuteronomy twenty-one describes capital punishment and says that one deserving of death should be hung on a tree. It says that person is **cursed**. The Jews were not allowed by Rome to put criminals to death. They couldn't hang them on a tree but had to turn them over to Rome to be crucified.

Murdered is a word meaning *with your own hands*. Rome may have carried out the deed but these men were understood as killing Jesus with their own hands.

Acts 5:31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Not only was Jesus raised. He was and is **exalted** to a place of supreme authority and power. Despite their heinous crime the Lord lives to offer them and all Israel **forgiveness of sins** if they will **repent**.

Acts 5:32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

The apostles were simply stating facts. That is what a witness does. You and I are just as much His witnesses today. We should state the facts, as we understand them from the Bible.

It helps if we are credible as witnesses. Our lives ought to reflect the testimony we give.

Peter and the eleven ended their talk with a reminder that their talk and their walk are energized by the dynamite supernatural power of God the Holy Spirit. His presence in our lives sets us apart from every other religion or philosophy of men. Not only are we told what to do to please God but we are empowered to do it.

Jesus hung exposed as He was crucified, after being humiliated and beaten, bearing shame so that He might offer His killers – the human race – forgiveness of sins. Yet the twelve apostles were not ashamed of Jesus.

Being unashamed of Jesus is the prerogative for being able to bear shame for Him.

#2 Jesus Is Someone To Bear Shame For (v33-42)

Shame is a subcategory of suffering we don't always mention and are rarely prepared for. If you follow Jesus you will be called upon to bear shame of some kind at some point. Instead of reacting against it, count yourself worthy that your witness has caused you to be treated exactly like your Lord was treated.

Acts 5:33 When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

Not exactly a Harvest Crusade! You will encounter many hard-hearts in your witness.

Acts 5:34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.

The Jewish ruling council of seventy-men was dominated by the sect of the Sadducees. They were the wealthy, materialistic, worldly element. Their earthly comfort led them to deny the supernatural.

There was a smaller but powerful group of Pharisees on the council. The common people revered the Pharisees. Gamaliel was their spokesman.

Acts 5:35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.

Acts 5:36 For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.

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Acts 5:39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God."

Commentators are split. Some consider Gamaliel's advice wise while others say it was ignorant. God used it but it was ignorant. I say that because it ignored the truth. Every movement that prospers isn't necessarily of God! There are many 'successful' cults today that are not of God.

Gamaliel should have encouraged the council to study the Scriptures. He should have said, *"Guys, let's look into their claims about Jesus. If they are false, we ought to be able to show it from the Scriptures. If they are true, then we've got some repenting to do."*

Acts 5:40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

God had shown everyone that this council had no real authority. The apostles had the authority. Here were men living in a supernatural realm, being used to perform miracles, signs, and wonders. Sure, the council could order them to stop and punctuate it with beatings. But all it did was expose them as worldly and reveal the apostles as other-worldly.

Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Bloodied... bruised... scarred... limping... hanging-on to one another... *Yet rejoicing!* Jesus had suffered shame for them. They were being treated like their Lord – suffering shame for His sake.

If you 'get' that then you will be ready the next time you are overlooked or misunderstood or mistreated.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

They went right back to witnessing. They obeyed God rather than men.

In the current period of seeker-sensitive Churches, think about the imagery from this text. You go to Church and there is a guy or a group of guys who have just been beat-up by the authorities for believing in Jesus and telling others about Him. They are encouraging you to believe and tell others about Him. You can be just like them – bloodied, bruised, scarred for life, maybe crippled for life, put to shame. It's not hard to speculate that the opposition will get even worse. Soon you will lose your job and have all your goods seized.

Ready to sign-on for all that? **If you are a Christian you already have!**

Will it ever really come to that? It **is** 'that' in most of the world. It may not come to that in America. I hope it doesn't.

Every day there are sufferings to bear. Let's rejoice in the ones that target us because we are Christians. Let's toughen-up a little, not act so hurt and defensive, when mistreated. Let's rejoice that people notice we are Christians.

After all, God has given us His Spirit.

- being changed to bring change -

