

Dundonald Youth: Acts

Week 7: They never stopped!

Open in prayer: Ask God to be with you, speaking to you through his word, helping you to trust Jesus Christ.

Opening Question: Why hasn't Christianity fizzled out yet? *What other religions have you learnt about at school? How come Christianity hasn't died out? Why is Christianity the only religion with followers all across the globe in all different cultures? Do you think Christianity could ever die out?*

Read Acts 5:17-21a.

Why did the religious leaders put the apostles in jail? v17 **jealousy** at power (miracles), influence, success, popularity. v17 **Sadducees** = don't believe in physical life-after-death so apostles teaching totally clashes with their worldview. Wanted to silence them.

Thinking about the different characters involved, where does the **power** lie? v17->v18 is so striking - they were jealous so they threw them in jail. Total power imbalance! The religious leaders hold all the power. Or do they...?! v18->v19... an 'angel of the Lord' lets them out! Who *really* has the power?? God!

Who do the apostles obey? Flip back and remember chapter 4:17-18. They've been thrown in jail, they've been released from jail and told to tell people about the NEW LIFE found in Jesus... so they do! They teach people (who Jesus is, what he has done, what it means to follow him)!

Read Acts 5:21b-24.

How do we know this jailbreak was an act-of-God and not of human strength? Look at the details in v23. The jail is still locked (!) the guards are still outside (!) - if it had been a human rescue mission the guards would have been knocked out, the doors blown off... so clearly this was a supernatural event from God?!

Read Acts 5:25-32.

What are the religious leaders upset & concerned about? v26 they fear the people (specifically that people would turn on them if they used force on the apostles). v28 they have directly disobeyed their command, and are making them look bad saying that they are **guilty** of having Jesus killed. Which is understandable! You wouldn't want to be accused of murder... let alone murdering the Messiah, the Son of God?!!! But the truth is that they *did* have Jesus killed?! Look at the report in v25. "the men **you put in jail**" - they *did* that too! they can't deny their actions...?!

What familiar themes / phrases are in the apostles reply?

- That they must obey God not humans (cf. 4:19-20)
- That they (the Jewish leaders) killed Jesus, but God raised him, has exalted him as Prince / Lord / Messiah / Saviour! (cf. 2:36, 3:15, 4:10)
- With the purpose of repentance and forgiveness (2:38, 3:19)
- The apostles are spirit-empowered witnesses (1:8)

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Read Acts 5:33-40.

What does Gamaliel say? Think carefully what you intend to do (v35). Remember Theudas, and Judas of Galilee - if what the apostles are saying and doing is 'of human origin' it will fizzle out (v38), but if it's not... then they'll just be fighting an impossible battle against God?! (v39)

What are the strengths / weaknesses of his advice? It's wise and true! However it's limited... he doesn't go the extra step and say 'and if what they are saying is *true* and *from God* then we need to repent and believe!' he just says 'you'll be fighting a losing battle'. And so they *don't* turn to God, and they *do* still flog (brutally whip on the back) the apostles, and again command them *not* to speak about Jesus (v40).

Read Acts 5:41-42.

How do the apostles react to this episode?

What do you make of this?

They leave *rejoicing* that they've been able to suffer disgrace for the sake of Jesus?! And they definitely don't listen to the religious leaders and stop speaking about Jesus... v42 = everyday, everywhere, **they never stopped teaching** and proclaiming the good news about Jesus! It's fearless, it's bold, it's encouraging and challenging and comforting to know how committed those eye-witnesses were to continue trusting in and telling other people about the *risen* Lord Jesus!

Sidenote:

v33 made me think of this!
 (or sadly the religious leaders don't do this!) - they should fall on their faces and repent (!) but instead they are furious and continue their opposition...



NOW LISTEN TO THE TALK - Youth Bible Series: Acts 7

- ➔ How has reading Acts encouraged you to keep going as a Christian? What did you make of those 3 encouragements that your faith in Jesus is not misplaced? What do you find hardest about being a Christian? How does what we've read in Acts speak into that?

Pray: Praise God that Jesus has all authority, offers life, and faith in him is not misplaced!

Listen/Sing: We Must Go - Tim Hughes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3NelRb1LY4>)

Meditate: Hebrews 11:26