

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XII. Relying On God For The Opportunity To Minister

(Acts 5:12-42)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 5:12-42 reveals the great need to rely on the Lord for the opportunity to minister. We view the passage for our insight and application (as follows):

II. Relying On God For The Opportunity To Minister, Acts 5:12-42.

- A. Following the purging of the Church by the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira, believers in the Early Church greatly revered the Lord, and God richly blessed the ministry of the apostles, Acts 5:12-16:
 - a. God enabled the apostles regularly to perform miraculous signs and wonders among the people as they met in Solomon's portico, the porch area surrounding the courtyards of the temple, Acts 5:12 ESV.
 - b. Though their fear of the religious rulers inhibited many people from joining the Church, they still held these believers in high regard, and many were nevertheless added to their number, Acts 5:13-14.
 - c. People came from towns around Jerusalem bringing sick and demon-afflicted people, and many of the infirmed were laid on cots in the streets that Peter's shadow might pass over them to heal them, v. 15-16.
- B. However, the spread of the influence of the Early Church angered Israel's religious authorities, so they took action to squelch the Early Church's ministries by imprisoning the apostles, Acts 5:17-18.
- C. Nevertheless, the God sent an angel of the Lord to release the apostles from prison and direct them to go to the temple, to stand and to speak to the people all the words of the Gospel of life in Christ, Acts 5:19-20.
- D. When the apostles obeyed the angel and the religious leaders found them released and continuing to minister in the temple, God arranged to continue to provide the apostles the opportunity to minister, Acts 5:21-42:
 1. God kept hindering the religious leaders from blocking the apostles out of fear of the people, Acts 5:21-26:
 - a. The Sanhedrin prepared to meet and sought to bring the apostles out of prison to their meeting, but then they learned that regardless of the closed-up prison, the apostles were missing! (Acts 5:21-23)
 - b. Shocked at this news and wondering what might occur next (Acts 5:24 ESV), the religious leaders then heard that the apostles they had imprisoned were standing and teaching in the temple, Acts 5:25!
 - c. The officials then went and brought the apostles from the temple to their meeting, but not by force, for the religious leaders feared that the people might stone them if they publicly arrested the apostles, Acts 5:26.
 2. God kept hindering the religious leaders from blocking the apostles by Gamaliel's counsel, Acts 5:27-42:
 - a. When the officials brought the apostles into their meeting, the high priest asked if they had not before ordered them not to teach in Jesus' name, adding that their failure to obey this order had filled Jerusalem with their beliefs and could result in causing the leaders to be convicted for crucifying Jesus, Acts 5:27-28.
 - b. Peter and the other apostles replied that they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29), that the God of their fathers had raised up Jesus Whom they crucified and had exalted Him to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance and forgiveness to Israel, Acts 5:30-31. The apostles said they were witnesses of these things, and so was the Holy Spirit Whom God had given to those who obey Him, Acts 5:32.
 - c. This reply brought the Sanhedrin under great conviction, and they intended to kill the apostles, Acts 5:33.
 - d. However, Gamaliel, a respected rabbi of the Pharisee sect who was a reputable doctor of the Law rose up in the meeting and warned the others in the Sanhedrin to be careful how they treated the apostles, Acts 5:34-35. He explained that other leaders of religious sects had risen and become discredited by their own acts, that the Sanhedrin should let the apostles alone to see what would become of their movement, Acts 5:36-38. However, Gamaliel added that were the apostles from God, the Sanhedrin would not be able to stand against them, and the Sanhedrin would then be found to be guilty of fighting against God, Acts 5:39.
 - e. The Sanhedrin took Gamaliel's advice, they beat the apostles and commanded them not to speak in Jesus' name and released them (Acts 5:40), so the apostles returned to continue their ministry, Acts 5:41-42.

Lesson: *When the religious leaders tried to block the apostles' ministry, God still gave them room to minister.*

Application: *May we rely on God to give us the opportunity to minister for Him regardless of the obstacles we face.*