

November 2, 2014

BECOMING THE CHURCH JESUS ENVISIONS
Standing Firm in the Face of Difficulty
Acts 5:12-42

Something profound happened in the lives of the early church- they became living witnesses to the power and presence of Jesus. The scriptures say they were recognized as people who “... *had been with Jesus.*” But the journey of the early church was met with opposition and even persecution. Today, we can follow their example as we learn how to stand firm in the face of difficulty.

A. What can we expect as fully devoted followers of Jesus?

1. **Miracles happen and lives are transformed.**

“Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.” Acts 5:14-16 (NIV)

2. **Satan gets angry and opposition occurs.**

“Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.” Acts 5:17 (NIV)

3. **Problems and persecution become a reality.**

*“They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.”
Acts 5:18 (NIV)*

*“When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death... They called the apostles in and had them flogged.”
Acts 5:33, 40 (NIV)*

4. **God gets the ultimate glory.**

“Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” Acts 5:38-39 (NIV)

“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.” Acts 5:41

5. **The church continues the mission of Jesus in power!**

“Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.” Acts 5:14 (NIV)

“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.” Acts 5:42 (NIV)

B. How do I stand firm in the face of difficulty?

1. I must constantly find my strength in Christ.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” Ephesians 6:10, 13 (NIV)

“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV)

2. I must listen to the Holy Spirit for wisdom and discernment.

“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Ephesians 6:11-12 (NIV)

3. I must use the word of God in every aspect of my life.

“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Ephesians 6:14-17 (NIV)

4. I must pray, pray more, and keep on praying!

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)