

Getting Knocked Down

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help, and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Acts.
- The book of Acts, and chapter 5, it's on page 1100 in the Pew Bible, and if we read again at verse 17, Acts chapter 5, at verse 17.
- But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.
- But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.
- It was once said that getting knocked down in life is a given, but getting up and moving forward is a choice. Getting knocked down in life is a given, but getting up and moving forward is a choice.
- [1 : 2 1] And in many ways, that's so true when you look at life, because life, as we know it, it's full of upsets, it's full of disappointments, it's full of knockbacks, and it's full of knockdowns.
- And these things in life, they come upon us in a variety of different ways. Sometimes with sickness, sometimes with sorrow, sometimes because of siblings, sometimes just because of something someone said.
- Getting knocked down in life is a given, but getting up and moving forward is a choice. And you know, that certainly describes the experience of the church in this passage, and indeed the book of Acts.
- Because the early church, as we see in this book, it's repeatedly knocked down. But what's remarkable is that they keep getting back up again. The first knock that came to the early church, we find it in chapter 1 of the book of Acts, is when Jesus said that he's going to heaven.
- He's leaving the disciples, and he's ascending back to his father. And what did the church do when they were knocked by that? They went into hiding. But Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit will come in power.
- [2 : 3 0] And when the Holy Spirit comes in power, they will be the witnesses, his witnesses, from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth. And yet when the Holy Spirit did come in power, the church were knocked down again.
- Because some people, they publicly mocked the church. They said, these men, they're just drunk. They're drinking the new wine. And even when Peter stood up on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls were saved.
- And yet the church was knocked again. They were met with opposition and disdain. When Peter and John went to heal a lame man who was sitting at the door of the church, they were arrested.
- They were arrested. They were knocked down again. They were brought before the council of leaders and questioned and even threatened. But still they got back up again. The church wouldn't back down.

They wouldn't give up. They wouldn't stop speaking about what they had seen and what they had heard. Because these Christians came to realize that getting knocked down in life is a given.

[3 : 36] But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And then another knock came. It came at the beginning of chapter 5. And that knock was closer to home.

We're told that two church members, they dropped dead. And they dropped dead because they were lying to the Lord about their finances. These two members, Ananias and Sapphira.

And as you would expect, the whole church was filled with fear. But it didn't deter them from preaching the gospel. You know, my friend, the church may have been knocked down time and time again to the point that they could have stayed down.

They could have given up. They could have walked away from their calling and commitment to Jesus Christ. But instead they got back up again. And they sought to move forward with the gospel.

And you know, as we resume our study in the book of Acts, the church in the first century should always be an example to us as the church in the 21st century.

[4 : 37] Because they knew that getting knocked down in life is a given. But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And that's what I want us to see in this passage, in the second half of chapter 5.

And I want us to look at the whole chapter, the second half I mean. And I just want to consider it under three headings. Three simple headings. Healing, heralding and hindering.

Healing, heralding and hindering. So if we look first of all at healing. Healing. Look at verse 12. We're told that now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.

And they were all together in Solomon's portico. Now in order to emphasize just how resilient and determined the early church were in preaching the gospel to their community, Luke tells us that even though they've been knocked down so many times, they still seek to get up and move forward with the gospel.

Because we're told that there were many signs and wonders being done by the hands of the apostles. But what has actually been highlighted here is not what was being done, but where it was being done.

[5 : 56] Because the signs and wonders were told, these signs and wonders of the apostles, they were being done as they all gathered together at Solomon's portico. Now Solomon's portico was, or Solomon's porch, it was of course, it was named after King Solomon.

And it was the colonnade located on the eastern side of the newly built temple. Solomon's temple, as you know, it was destroyed when the Babylonians invaded.

And, but it's mentioned here because that's where Peter and John preached the gospel. It was at Solomon's portico that Peter and John preached the gospel after healing the lame man.

It was at Solomon's portico that Peter and John were arrested for preaching the gospel. It was also at Solomon's portico that Peter and John had to stand trial before the religious council for preaching the gospel.

And you know, what Luke is actually showing us here in verse 12 is that even though the early church was repeatedly knocked down for preaching the gospel, they got up again and they carried on preaching the truth about Jesus.

[7 : 07] They even went back to the same place to preach the gospel again. They went back to Solomon's portico in order to perform these signs and wonders in the name of Jesus.

And you know, when others would have given up, when others would have said, well, it's not, it's not worth it. There's no point. We're just going to be arrested again.

It's when others would have said, no, the Lord must be closing a door to us because we're being arrested all the time. When others said these things, the early church was becoming more and more resilient and more determined to preach the gospel to their community.

That's how important this message was to them. And that's how much they loved their community. That when they were knocked down, they got up again and they carried on.

And you know, this should make us question ourselves as Christians and as a church and even ask ourselves, is the gospel important to me?

[8 : 10] And do I love my community? Am I passionate about reaching the lost in my community? So passionate that when I'm knocked down from my faith or knocked back when I ask them to come to church, do I just give up?

Do I just give up? Do I just walk away? Do I just stay silent? Or do I get up again? And do I carry on speaking about this Jesus I love to the people I love? Because you know, my Christian friend, getting knocked down in life is a given.

But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And that's the choice we have to make every time we're knocked down and knocked back because of the gospel.

We have the choice to stay down or get up again. We're either going to be fearless with our faith or fearful with our faith.

We are either going to be fearless with our faith or fearful with our faith. And you know, what's actually interesting here is that both kinds of Christian were part of the early church. Those who were fearless and those who were fearful.

[9 : 16] Because we're told in verse 13 that there were some Christians in the early church who were knocked down for their faith and knocked back because of their love for lost sinners and their desire to see them saved.

And when they were knocked down, they stayed down. They became fearful with their faith. We're told none of the rest dared join them but the people held them in high esteem. They had an esteem for those who were fearless but they remained down.

They remained down to the point you could say that they gave up. They kept their head down. They remained silent and they said nothing to anyone. When they got knocked down, they decided to stay down.

And in many ways, they hid their Christianity in the trenches in order to stay away from the front line. But you know, my friend, that's not what Jesus has called us to. That's not what Jesus has called us to do.

Jesus hasn't called us to be fearful without faith and bury our head in the sand when we're knocked down for being a Christian. That's not what Jesus has called us to. That's not even the example Jesus has set for us.

[10 : 24] Because you know, it wasn't the early church who first stood and preached at Solomon's portico. It was Jesus. When you go back to John chapter 10, many of the Jews had gathered around Jesus and they'd all gathered at Solomon's portico.

And they're all asking Jesus, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. And Jesus tells them, you're not part of my flock.

Why? Because you don't believe. If you were part of my flock, you would believe because my sheep, says Jesus, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give to them eternal life and they will never perish.

Neither will they be plucked out of my hand. And, but Jesus says, you don't follow me because you don't believe in me. And with that, the Jews, they react to Jesus by rejecting his message and wanting to stone him.

They want to knock him down. And my friend, that's the example we have. The example of Jesus preaching the gospel and standing up for the truth. And that's the example that the first century church followed as those who were fearless with their faith.

[11 : 38] And that's also the example we have as the 21st century church. That's what we ought to follow. Where instead of being fearful with our faith, sitting back, staying silent, hiding in the shadows, we ought to be fearless with our faith, standing up, moving forward, always ready to give an answer for the reason, for the hope that is within us.

Now you might be thinking, but Murdo, get real. It's easy for you. You're a minister.

It's what you do. You're used to speaking about Jesus. You're called to this. You know, my friend, I've told you this before.

When I have to stand up and speak out for Jesus, I'm terrified. Terrified right now. My heart is racing. My mouth is dry.

My hands are sweaty. My stomach is churning. And yes, there are times that I've been knocked down when I ask people about their soul. Some of you are sitting here today. And there are times I've been knocked back when I ask people to come to church or come to Christianity Explored.

[12 : 52] But you know, looking at the example of Jesus and the early church, when we're knocked down, we can't stay down. We have to get up again. And by God's grace and God's strength, we have to keep moving forward.

Why? Because that's where the blessing is. That's what we see in verse 14. More than ever, believers were added to the Lord. Multitudes of both men and women.

The first century church was blessed when they were fearless with their faith. Because when they got knocked down, they got up again and they continued to present the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And you know, my Christian friend, that's what we need to do because that's what blessing is. We need to be fearless in our faith. And when we're knocked down, we need to get back up again and keep going.

We need to keep praying for opportunities. We need to keep speaking to people about their soul. We need to keep asking people to come to church and have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

[13 : 55] We need to keep inviting people to this glorious gospel. Because you know, is that not what Jesus taught us? That we ought always to pray and not to give up.

We ought always to pray and not to give up. My friend, we're not to give up praying and speaking and asking and inviting.

Because that's where the blessing is. And that's how healing takes place. We see that in verse 16. The people also gathered from the towns round Jerusalem bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits and they were all healed.

The blessing comes when we are fearless with our faith. Healing in people's lives and situations. Despite all the knockdowns and the knockbacks, what we see here is that when the early church was fearless with their faith, there was healing.

There was healing. But there was also heralding. That's what I want us to see secondly. Heralding. So healing and heralding.

[15 : 02] Look at verse 17. But the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

So after the blessing of seeing these souls saved, we're told that the apostles are back to square one. It didn't take long for opposition to show its ugly head and for another knock to come.

But you know, it should make us realize that in every century, the church has had enemies. It's always had opposition. There has always been and there always will be opposition to the church of Jesus Christ.

Because the devil doesn't want the gospel to spread. The last thing the devil wants is for the church to grow. The last thing the devil wants is for Christ to be proclaimed in a community.

The last thing the devil wants, my unconverted friend, is for you to be a Christian. That's the last thing the devil wants this morning. It was the same in the first century and it's the same in the 21st century.

[16 : 08] Wherever the church of Jesus Christ is and where it's flourishing, there will be opposition to the gospel. Wherever the name of Jesus has been fearlessly and even faithfully preached, there will be knockdowns and knockbacks.

And on this occasion, here, the knockdown that the apostles received was from this group called the Sadducees. Now, the Sadducees, they were one of the Jewish theological schools in Israel.

There was the Pharisees, there was the Essenes, and there was the Sadducees. The Pharisees, well, we hear a lot about them. They were the ones who were deeply religious. They were obsessed with all the rules and the regulations.

They loved the pomp and the ceremony. They loved the outward forms and fashions of religion. That's because they were more interested on what was external rather than what was internal.

They were the Pharisees. Then the Essenes. The Essenes, they were the complete opposite to the Pharisees. The Essenes, you could say that they lived a very quiet monastic life. They were like monks.

[17 : 12] They just hid away from the public eye. And then you had the Sadducees. The Sadducees, they were more defined by what they were against than what they were for.

They were against the doctrine of the resurrection. They didn't believe in the resurrection at the last day when God will open every grave and the dead will rise and they will have to stand before the Lord and be judged.

Instead, the Sadducees, you could actually say the Sadducees were more like atheists. They were more like atheists because they believed that when you die, you died. They believed that at death, the soul perished along with the body.

which meant that, well, they believed that there was no heaven and if there's no heaven, there's no hell. Something many people believe today. But more than that, the Sadducees, they didn't believe in angels.

They didn't believe in supernatural gifts. They didn't believe in the promise of eternal life. And so you can see why the Sadducees had such a bee in their bonnet about the early church. Because the early church and the church in every century has preached about Jesus and the resurrection.

[18 : 19] They preach about the promise of eternal life. They preach about heaven and they preach about hell. They preach about the fact that it's appointed unto man once to die and after that, the judgment.

And as we saw earlier, the apostles, they were given the supernatural gift of healing. A gift that I'm convinced was only given to the apostles in the early church.

It was given to the apostles in the first century. And since their death, the gift of healing has ceased. It's no longer active in the church today. We've got the word of God in its entirety.

That's what should bring healing. But you know, it seems that the Sadducees, they were against everything that the early church proclaimed and promoted. And yet, despite the opposition, it didn't deter the apostles.

This wasn't even the first time the Sadducees had arrested the apostles. It was the Sadducees who arrested Peter and John in Solomon's portico back in chapter 4. And they were arrested for preaching about Jesus and the resurrection.

[19 : 28] But now the apostles are arrested and they're put in prison just for healing the sick. And sad to say, it's obvious that these atheistic Sadducees were determined to get rid of the Christian church.

Because as a society, they were outspoken in their views, they were fierce in their opposition, and they were set on getting their own way. And my friend, there is nothing new under the sun.

Because you know, in the day and generation that we live, there are many atheistic and secular societies that are determined to get rid of the church of Jesus Christ.

And not surprising, they're outspoken in their views, they're fierce in their opposition, and they're set on getting their own way. But as the 21st century church, we must take our example from the 1st century church.

Because when the apostles, when they were knocked down again and again, and even put in prison because of what they believed, they got up and they carried on. They just carried on.

[20 : 37] And they got up and carried on because they knew as a church that getting knocked down and life is a given. But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And you know, when the Lord opened another door of opportunity to preach the gospel, they didn't shy away from it.

They just took it. That's what we see in verse 19. During the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. You know, the irony here is that the Sadducees didn't believe in angels and yet it was an angel of the Lord who opened the door, giving the apostles this renewed opportunity to preach the gospel.

And needless to say, the apostles, when they were given the opportunity, they grabbed it with both hands. They grabbed it with both hands. But you know, I love what the angel of the Lord said to the apostles in verse 20.

Go and stand in the temple and speak unto the people all the words of this life. And I love those words because they're the words that called me into the ministry.

[22 : 01] There are many verses that spoke to me when I was being called into the ministry and this was one of them. It's a wonderful verse. You know, even though I feel so inadequate for this task and completely out of my depth, this verse challenged me to get out of my comfort zone.

It reminded me that when the Lord opens a door of opportunity and commands us to go through it, we must respond in obedience. We have to go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

Now, my friend, your temple might not be a pulpit, but your temple, it may be the staff room. Your temple may be the work site.

Your temple may be at the school gate. Your temple may be in your own home, but you have to go and stand in it and speak unto the people all the words of this life. Whatever your temple is, when the Lord opens a door of opportunity and commands us to go through it, we have to respond in obedience.

And you know, my friend, it's only when we get out of our comfort zone, it's only when we get out of our comfort zone and speak the words of this life, that's when the Holy Spirit will work in bringing men and women to Christ.

[23 : 19] You know, that's the example we have here. The early church, they were committed to sharing the message of Christ in the power of the Spirit and just leaving the results to God.

And you know, that's how we ought to be as individuals and as a church. That's how we ought to be. When the Lord opens the door, we speak unto the people all the words of this life.

We remind people of the simple fact, life is uncertain, death is sure, sin is the cause, but Christ is the cure. We speak to them the words of this life and we do it in the Spirit, through the Word, but you know what, sadly, a trap which our church is falling into is a trap that removes the Holy Spirit.

In his commentary, Al Mohler, it's in the intimations this morning, he makes a statement, a statement that I believe the free church needs to hear because he says, the church is not built on marketing strategies or pragmatic advertisement schemes or feel-good programs.

He says, the church is built on the power of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. We should never look for alternative means to spread the gospel, he says, that downplay the centrality of God's Word or undermine the truth about his judgment or his salvation.

[24 : 44] My friend, the 21st century church is to follow the simple command that the first century church was given. Go and stand in the temple, whatever temple it may be for you, and speak unto them all the words of this life.

And you know, when we do that, when we do it, be sure for knockdowns, be sure for knockbacks because that's what happened to the apostles.

You know, they weren't even preaching for long when they went out in the morning. They were out of prison for only a wee while before the enemy realized that the prison was empty and the church was on its feet again moving forward.

And we're told that in verse 21, when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to preach. Now when the high priest came and those who were with them, they called together the council and all the senate of the people of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought.

But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison. So they returned and reported, we have found the prison securely locked, the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.

[25 : 53] And when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. And someone came and told them, look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple teaching the people.

And then they go and stop them again. Once again, we see opposition to the church, hindering the gospel. Which brings us to our third and final heading, hindering.

Healing, heralding, and hindering. Healing, heralding, and hindering. Look at verse 27. And when they brought them, they set them before the council.

And the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charge you not to teach in this name. Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. You know, by now the early church had learned that getting knocked down in life, it's a given.

[27 : 00] But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And another knockdown and another knockback comes when they're arrested all over again for preaching the gospel. And even when they're questioned, when they're questioned for what they were doing, you know, the apostles, they give to us what should be the motto of the church in every century.

We must obey God rather than men. We must obey God rather than men. That should be our motto. That should be our motto as a church, as a congregation, and even as individuals.

We must obey God rather than men. We must obey God rather than men in our doctrine, in our practice, in our church government, in the way we preach, in our form of evangelism, and even the way we worship, and even the way we live our lives.

We must obey God rather than men. Because as soon as we start obeying men rather than God, that's when we've lost sight of who the king and head of the church really is.

Because it's the Lord Jesus Christ who has commanded the church in the first century and in the 21st century to go and stand in the temple and speak unto the people all the words of this life.

[28 : 21] And you know, even though the early church was repeatedly knocked down by opposition, they carried on. They kept going. They kept preaching the gospel.

And when they were given an opportunity, they took it. They took the opportunity even in front of the religious council. They preached the gospel to them too.

No one was exempt. And what was the reaction of those of the council when they preached the gospel to them? We're told in verse 33, when they heard it, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

Those who opposed the church wanted to do to them what they did to Jesus. They wanted to kill him. They wanted to kill them all. And eventually they did.

Because many of the apostles, apart from John, they were all martyred for their faith and their commitment to Jesus Christ. But you know, even though they were knocked down it didn't stop others getting up.

[29 : 23] And we'll see that in the next chapter. Even though there was, the apostles were knocked down, there was others who were getting up and they were taking their place so that the gospel would continue to move forward.

Spreading from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the world to Barba's. it spread here. And you know, that's what we need to be reminded in our day and generation.

That as a church and even as Christians, getting knocked down in life is a given. But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And that's how the chapter ends here.

Gamaliel, this Pharisee from the council, he gives advice to all these leaders. and he says that if these Christians really are who they say they are, then you won't be able to stop them.

And they knew that they couldn't stop them. Because despite all the knockdowns and the knockbacks, the promise of Jesus still stood. I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

[30 : 33] And you know, my friend, the church in the first century experienced healing. They experienced heralding. They experienced hindering. And they ought to be an example to us as the church in the 21st century.

Because as a church, getting knocked down in life is a given. But getting up and moving forward is a choice. And the choice that the early church made is actually how the passage concludes.

Because we're told, verse 40, when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus. And then they let them go. And they left the presence of the council.

How did they leave? Rejoicing. Rejoicing why? That they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus. And every day in the temple, from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

They knew that getting knocked down in life is a given. But their choice was to get up and keep moving forward. And you know, my friend, it should challenge us as a church.

[31 : 39] What are we doing when we're knocked down? Are we staying down? Or are we getting up? What are we doing every day?

Because it could be, it was said of the apostles, every day in the temple, they spoke the words of this life and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

go and stand in the temple and speak unto the people all the words of this life.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give thanks to Thee for the word of life that it is able to change us and heal us, renew us and quicken us.

And Lord, we pray that we would not keep it to ourselves, that we would not hide our gospel, but let our light so shine before men.

[32 : 44] O, we thank Thee and we praise Thee that there is a gospel at all and that it is good news, good news, good news, Christ died for me. And Lord, we pray that more would know it, that they would know it not only in their head, but that they would know it in their heart, that they would know it personally, that they would know it powerfully, that they would experience Jesus and what He's able to do for sinners.

Lord, bless us, we pray. Give to us that fearlessness in our faith to go forward with the gospel into our community, a community that we love, with people that we love, longing for them to come and taste and see that the Lord good.

Oh, and to trust in Thee and be blessed. Go before us and we pray and part us with Thy blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen. We'll bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing to God's praise in the closing words of Psalm 27.

Psalm 27 in the Scottish Psalter, page 237. As we said, Psalm 27 is a psalm that was written by David.

David is confessing the Lord to be His light in the midst of darkness. The dark circumstances that He faces because of His enemies. His enemies coming upon Him, just like it was for the early church.

[34 : 18] But David says in verse 11 of Psalm 27, O Lord, instruct me in Thy way, to me a leader be, in a plain path because of those that hatred bear to me. Give me not to mine enemies' will for witnesses that lie against me risen are and such as breathe out cruelty.

I fainted had unless that I believed had to see the Lord's own goodness in the land of them that living be. Wait on the Lord and be thou strong and He shall strength afford and to thine heart yea do thou wait I say upon the Lord.

These verses in conclusion of Psalm 27 to God's praise. Amen. O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord shall be leader than thy way, themear próxima, It the Lord, O Lord, and O Lord is O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord is O o Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, Let me not to my name be swelled, or witnesses that lie against me, risen not on such as breathed out cruelty.

I pay dear heart, unless that I believe it hard to see, the Lord's own goodness in the land of heaven that living be.

Wait on the Lord, and be thou strong, and he shall strength afford.

[37 : 04] Unto thy heart, yet to the weight, I say upon the Lord.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.