

Chapter 7

Maintaining Being Consistent

“... they ceased not to teach and preach
Jesus Christ.”
– Acts 5:42

MAINTAINING BEING CONSISTENT

In Acts 5:25, it says, *“Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.”* Acts 5:42, says *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”* Overall we've seen that in order to be the church that people need, there must be a maintaining of the distinction that God has given to His churches. The church must never become the world under any circumstances. With that being said, I'd like to show that there must be a maintaining of biblical consistency if we're going to be the church that people need.

Consistency speaks of that which is constant, regular, steadiness, dependability, reliability. The Lord's churches, of course, are put here to do the Lord's business the Lord's way. They ought to be consistent in doing the Lord's business. There never ought to be any wavering, when doing the business of the Lord. As the church goes through the process of time and through the various circumstances that a church will experience, they must with regularity, with steadiness be found doing the Lord's business the Lord's way. God's people and the lost world ought to be able to depend and rely upon the Lord's church to be doing the Lord's business as usual, no matter what. No matter what happens, the Lord's church is to just continue to do the Lord's business as usual.

In the book of Acts, the Jerusalem church, serves as an example of this consistency that we want to speak upon in this message. Leading up to the verses that we read in Acts 5, we see Peter and John healing a lame man in the temple. In Acts 3:11, we see them in the temple at Solomon's porch. Further on in Acts 4:1-4, Peter is seen speaking to the people. The people he's speaking to are those who were curious about the miracle of the lame man being healed. We see that he preaches to them in Acts 4:3, we see that Peter and John are arrested for preaching the word of God.

They are then brought before the Sanhedrin and in Acts 4:7 we read, *“And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done*

this?” That is, “Where do you get your authority to do what you've done, by what name, by what power.” In verse 10 they answer, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.” Verses 12-14, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.” If you go verse 18, the Sanhedrin called Peter, James, and John, and “... commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak ...”, that is we can't help ourselves, “... the things which we have seen and heard.”

They tell Peter and John don't go back there, do not preach, do not teach, do not mention the name of Christ again. Then in Acts 4:23, they've let Peter and John go and “... they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.” We see the people there praising the Lord. Then in Acts 5:12, we see them back in Solomon's porch, “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.”

Then in Acts 5:17-20, “Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.” They're cast

into prison, the Lord sets them free, tells them you go back to the temple, and you preach Jesus Christ. Again, the Sanhedrin has commanded them not to do so.

Then in verses 22-25, *“But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.”* They are back in the temple, and they are doing the very thing they were commanded not to do. This man comes and he says, “You know those men whom you warned, whom you commanded not to preach Jesus Christ, those men that you arrested, those men you punished, well ... they have escaped and those very same men are right back in the same place, doing the same things, preaching the same message.” That's consistency. A church, if it's going to continue to be what people need, must be the same people, in the same place, doing the same things, preaching the same message. That must always be so.

Then in Acts 5:27-29, *“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”* Verse 40, *“And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.”* They again give command, they beat them, they let them go. Verse 41, *“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they*

ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Over and over again, under very trying, very difficult circumstances and in the face of ferrous hostility and opposition, we see the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message. They could not be deterred nor distracted. They were consistently doing what God had told them to do. If we are going to be the church that people need, then we, just like these apostles, need to be the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message.

These apostles that we've read of, continued to do what God had commanded them to do. In spite of all the warnings, opposition, threatening, beatings, and inconveniences, they just kept on doing what God would have them to do. They were consistent. I believe it got to the point where even the Sanhedrin began to realize “We can't stop these people. There's nothing we can do. They're going to continue to preach this name of Jesus.” If any of the Lord's churches that have been around a few years, were to consider their church history, they would find that through the years, there were some people who continued in the same place, doing the same thing over and over again. Listening to and preaching the same message no matter what. That's how you continue to be the church that people need.

Consider some characteristics of these apostles who would not be moved from doing things God's way. There are many things that we can gather from these individuals, but we just want to consider the most obvious. They, no doubt, were a people of conviction. What they believed was more than an opinion or a preference to them, it was all more than just some conceived idea that they had. What they had was a deep seated belief that what they knew was the absolute truth, and was what every man and woman, boy and girl needed. Therefore they could not be silenced, because in their hearts and minds they knew that what they believed was true. It was a conviction. It was something that had a firm grip upon their hearts. These were men who did not just

merely have a firm grip on the truth. I want you to know that the truth had a firm grip on them. It had a firm grip upon their hearts, their minds, and upon their lives. They had a conviction. In other words, they had something that was worth living for, suffering for, dying for. That's why, every day, they were the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message. They were consistent. That's what we need today. We need that consistency. What you and I say we believe, is it not worth living for, suffering for, and dying for? That's a conviction.

A lot of people will say, "Oh I would die for such and such." But, the problem is they're not willing to live. We must be willing to live, suffer, and die for the truth. The truth must have a firm grip upon us, upon our lives. This was the case with the apostles. Therefore, no matter what happened, no matter what changes took place all around them, no matter what others thought, no matter what others practiced, no matter what the authorities said, none of that mattered. They continued to be the same people, in the same place, doing the same things, preaching the same message. There was consistency. After a while anybody who watched these men, knew what they were going to do, because they were consistent. The lost world, that knows anything about us, may say, "I don't agree with them, but I guarantee you on Sundays and Wednesdays, there they are, the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message." That's consistency.

They were also a people of great love. No doubt they loved their country, their homes, their families, and their friends. But, they loved the Lord and they loved the truth more than any of those things. In Acts 4:20, "*For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*" Acts 5:29, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" You see those two verses declare this truth, that the Lord was a priority in their life. Doing God's business was the number one priority in their life. They were willing to risk

everything to be in the will of the Lord. A church must be willing to risk everything just to be in the will of the Lord.

They also were a people who were not governed by the world's principles or the world's standards, but by God's precepts, by God's command. They did not allow the secular world, nor the religious world to determine what they believed and practiced. They refused to be controlled by the secular and the religious world and to buckle under their circumstances. No matter what direction the world took, they continued to be the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message. They were simply governed by what God had told them to do.

We see also that they were a people to whom God and the truth was very real. This wasn't something that they could just take or leave. God, truth, and the blessings of salvation were real to them. Therefore no matter what happened, they just continued doing the same thing, day in and day out. As a result of all of this, they were a people that were consistent. They were not on again off again, hot one day and cold the next, up one day down the next. They were just doing the same thing every single day. Daily they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

They did not sit back and wait see what anybody else was going to do. It didn't matter to them, because they knew what God had told them to do. They didn't sit back and wait to see what anybody else believed. They didn't take an opinion pole. They didn't see which way the wind was blowing. They simply did what God told them to do. There is something drastically wrong with any church that takes a pole or survey, and to see what people want. We're not here to give people what they want, we're here to give people what they need and what they need is the truth. "Well they don't like the truth." That doesn't change the fact that it is what they need. We're not here to tickle the worlds ears, to please the world. We're here to please God. We're here to do God's business God's way.

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These individuals they were firm. They were steadfast, resolute, determined, very decided, adamant, unwavering, unbending, and committed to the Lord. All of those things are considered awful today by the religious world. God expects us to be firm, steadfast, resolute, determined, decided, adamant, and unwavering in the things of God. But, as far as the world is concerned, they think you're out of touch and uncaring.

We see that threats, inconveniences, and persecutions could not move them. In the Acts 20:22, Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders and he tells them his plan, he says, *“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem,”* that is I have to do this God's leading me to do this, *“not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.”* He's saying, “I don't know exactly what's going to happen when I get to Jerusalem but I do know this, that there will be imprisonments and afflictions for me.” Then he says in verse 24, *“But none of these things”,* that is bonds and afflictions, *“move me”,* these things do not deter me, *“neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”*

We see these apostles could not be moved, we see that Paul was not moved. Which leads us to ask the question of ourselves, “What does it take to move us from the things of God? What does it take to deter us from the things of God?” We need to be a people that will not be moved, that will not be moved but will remain firm. We need to be a people that will not give in to the world. I promise you, the world is not interested in you giving in in just one area. You give in one area, they're going to want two and three and four. Where does it stop? It doesn't stop. Look at individuals lives. Look at some churches. It does not stop. Therefore, we simply must not give in to the world's ways.

We must not adapt to the worlds ways. We must simply cleave to the Lord.

In Joshua 23:7-8, God's people have always been called upon to be steadfast. *“That ye come not among these nations”*, you do not give in to them, you do not adapt to their ways, *“these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.”* Cleave, hold on to the Lord your God. 1st Thessalonians 5:21, *“Prove all things”*, that is, examine all things, examine what is preached, and if you find it to be true, *“hold fast”*, hold firmly, get a grip, do not let go, of, *“that which is good.”* No matter what happens, no matter how many threats there are, no matter how many deaths there might be, you hold on to the truth. That's consistency.

2nd Thessalonians 2:15, *“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word,”* that is, whether by the spoken word, *“or our epistle.”*, or our writings. Revelation 3:11, *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”* What ever truth you have, hold it firmly. You do not let go. Paul told the Corinthians, in 1st Corinthians 15:58, *“be ye steadfast”*, that is be relentless, unchanging, unwavering, uncompromising. *“be ye steadfast, unmovable”*, that means that you are not effected by opposition, you are not effected by obstacles.

Peter and John were beaten and let go, and they went out and did the very thing they were beaten for. They were unmovable. They were not affected by the threats, by the opposition. I'm afraid today that many are scared to death of what the government might do. Does it really matter? I mean is it going to change anything? I realize it could change our lives, but does it change our mission? Not one iota. It does not change doing God's business. People say, *“Well you know in years to come we might not be able to do this.”* What are you saying? Are you saying that if there is a

threat you're going to stop? Or are we going to be the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message? What if they do come and say, "You're no longer allowed to meet." Will we be, the very next Sunday, the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message? That's consistency. This church at Jerusalem had that consistency.

In Galatians 5:1, Paul said to the churches of Galatia "*stand*". That is be situated, remain, "*Stand fast*", that is, stand firm, constant, and unswerving. To the Philippians he said, "*stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*" The word of God lays down, in no uncertain terms, the mission of His churches. We know what our individuals obligations are and we know our church obligations are collectively. If we're going to continue to be the church that people need, no matter what happens, no matter the circumstances, no matter what others are doing, we have to be like these apostles, just doing the same thing over and over and over again.

You think about those who've gone away. Some have been gone 5 years, some 10, some 20. What if they came back after 5 years, after 10 years, after 20 years? Will they still hear the same thing? They ought to. They ought to expect that. You know every time there's a new pastor, some who have gone away, they'll show up. You know why? Because they want to see if things are going to be different. "Maybe this guy won't preach such and such. Maybe this guy will do it a little differently. Maybe I'll like him." They usually last a week or two, and they find out it's the same people, in the same place, doing the same thing, preaching the same message. Amen. That's exactly what it ought to be.

When people go away and they come back 10 years from now, they ought to say, "You know that's the same church it was 10 years ago when I left. Some of the people have gotten older, some may have passed on, some new ones may have come in, but they're still doing the same thing, preaching the same message, singing the same songs, doing

the Lord's business.” They may go away angry. We ought to thank God that there are places, those of the Lord's churches that you'll be able to go to, if the Lord doesn't come in 20 years, and they'll still be doing the same things, still preaching the same message.

For the sake of this church, future generations, the truth, and the Lord's glory, we must continue to do the same things, preaching the same message. When these little ones grow up 20 years from now, they'll find out, “You know, it's the same church that I grew up in. They haven't changed. They're still preaching the same message.” They may not like it. We pray that they will. But it will be able to be said, “Those people do the same things every Sunday.” Amen.

I want to do the same things every Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and any other time that we meet. I don't want people to come in here wondering, “Well, I wonder what they're going to do this week?” They know there is going to be singing of the old songs, scriptural songs, and preaching from God's word. If they don't like that, there's plenty of other places that they can go that will meet their wants. They don't need to stay here and try to change us.