

Leaders to the heart. This phrase is used only one other time in the New Testament. That was when Stephen proclaimed the gospel before the Sanhedrin and they dragged him out of the city to stone him to death (Acts 7:54-58). This phrase indicated murderous rage in the person. Peter had touched on their sin and made them look badly. By displaying that they had murdered the Messiah, Peter exposed the wickedness in their hearts. Nothing irritates a wicked person more than being exposed for who they are. Considering who these men were as well as how they had already treated Jesus, their rage was what would be expected. What is amazing is not the rage of the Sanhedrin, but that they did not follow through on their intent to kill the apostles.

Saturday, October 28, 2011

Daily theme: God may bring protection from unexpected places.

Questions

Read Acts 5:34-42

1. Why would a Pharisee defend the apostles?
2. Why would the Sanhedrin have followed Gamaliel's advice?

Consider

The chief priests were irritated not only that the apostles had pointed out their wickedness, but had also discredited their beliefs. On the other hand the Pharisees upheld the belief in a resurrection from the dead and the existence of angels. Although the Pharisees did not acknowledge Jesus, they didn't have problems in principle with Jesus' being raised from the dead. Furthermore there existed animosity between the Pharisees and Sadducees. So it probably did not trouble them much that the Sadducees' teaching was being discredited, even if it was followers of Jesus doing the discrediting. However, Gamaliel's argument would have been attractive to the Sadducees because it implied that the apostles would eventually be discredited without their involvement. According to Gamaliel if they were patient, the apostles would pass away all by themselves. The two men that Gamaliel mentioned, Theudas and Judas, were eventually discredited and killed. It probably never crossed their minds that the message of Jesus was actually from God and would continue to spread beyond Jerusalem and that even one of their own number Saul of Tarsus would eventually become one of Jesus' leading spokesmen. In contrast to the wicked Sanhedrin, the apostles patiently endured the punishment given. A public flogging was meant not only to physically punish, but also to humiliate. However the apostles realized that they had no reason to be humiliated, because the Sanhedrin had actually honored them by treating them like Jesus. For a Christian there is no greater honor than to be treated in a manner similar to that of Jesus, even being humiliated for Jesus' sake. Since they had been honored to be humiliated for Jesus' sake, the apostles rejoiced and praised God. If this is true, have you ever wondered why many Christians in the United States do not rejoice when they are mistreated?

Jealous men oppose Jesus, but end up promoting Him.

Acts 5:17-42

Sermon Series: You will be my witnesses.

Devotional Notes October 24-29, 2011

Monday, October 24, 2011

Daily theme: Men of the world become envious of the power and popularity of the kingdom of God.

Questions

Read Acts 5:17-18

1. Why would the Sadducees have been jealous of the apostles?
2. For what reason did they arrest the apostles?

Consider

It is somewhat unusual that the Sadducees became so jealous of the apostles. Even though thousands had come to know Jesus, the gospel had not gone much further than Jerusalem. The Sadducees had a much broader influence than that. In a way it seems like they were overreacting. As we saw in chapter 4, the Sadducees opposed Peter and John because they were proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. The fact of Jesus' resurrection contradicted the teaching of the Sadducees that there is no resurrection from the dead. This conflict explains why the Sadducees forbade Peter and John from teaching in Jesus' name. The apostles continued teaching about Jesus would have been a threat to the Sadducees. The more the gospel expanded the more the Sadducees' influence decreased. This lack of influence would have caused the envy that the Sadducees felt toward the apostles. The apostles also displayed a power that the Sadducees did not have. All the Sadducees could offer was their explanations of Scripture. However the apostles were revealing that in the name of Jesus all kinds of diseases were being healed. In what ways have you felt persecution for your identification with Jesus and his kingdom? Having already warned Peter and John not to teach anywhere at any time in the name of Jesus, the action of the apostles was in violation to that command. Even though Peter and John had already told them that they could not obey that command (Acts 4:19-20), the apostles were in violation. Even though the Sadducees were jealous, it would have been for the apostles' violation to the order given that was the reason for the apostles being arrested. The apostles did not oppose being arrested, just as Jesus had not opposed his arrest. In so doing, even though the Sadducees were abusing their authority, the apostles did not sin by disrespecting the governing body. In their actions they honored Jesus. Have you ever had to endure disrespect because you followed Jesus? What was that like for you?

Tuesday, October 25, 2011

Daily theme: Jesus empowers his followers to accomplish his purpose.

Questions

Read Acts 5:19-21

1. Why did God rescue the apostles from prison?
2. What message was God giving to the apostles and to the Sadducees.?

Consider

Usually the Lord does not rescue his people from prison or unjust situations, rather he upholds them through their ordeal. However, in this situation the Lord sent his angel to release the apostles. One thing that we do know, that the Lord did not release the apostles for their personal comfort, because the angel told the apostles to return to the temple and continue to teach Jesus to the people there. By telling them to do that God was setting them up to be arrested again. They were not to use their freedom to go and remove themselves from a dangerous situation, but to continue to do what they had been doing. In other words, Jesus did not rescue the apostles so that they could find a safe place, but so that they could continue to expand the kingdom of God, even if that kept them at risk. Through their release, the apostles experienced the power of God in their lives. Even though they were arrested, the Lord could free them. As death could not contain Jesus, no prison could contain the message of Jesus. This episode revealed the apostles' commitment to follow Jesus no matter what the cost. The Sadducees should have learned the lesson that they cannot oppose God and win, but they refused to perceive it. The Sadducees of the New Testament remind us of Pharaoh in the Old Testament. God told Moses and Aaron that Pharaoh's disobedience would display the power of God (Exodus 11:9; 14:4). Many people oppose God, but they do not defeat the plan of God. In their disobedience they give opportunity for the obedient Christian to magnify Jesus. The Sadducees had used the power of men to arrest the apostles, but God freed them. The Sadducees tried to kill Jesus by crucifying him, but God raised Jesus from the dead. Can you identify times in your life in which Jesus has been glorified through someone's disobedience?

Wednesday, October 26, 2011

Daily theme: Enemies of Jesus are confused by his tactics.

Questions

Read Acts 5:22-26

1. Why were the chief priests perplexed about the apostles?
2. Why did the officers arrest the apostles with extreme caution?

Consider

We can imagine the confusion of the chief priests. They had placed the apostles under arrest, but the following morning when they summoned them, there wasn't anyone in the cell. Luke wrote that the chief priests and the Sadducees were perplexed by the situation. The Sadducees refused to admit that the apostles were from God, but they couldn't explain what the apostles did either. The Sadducees could have easily determined that the apostles did not get out of prison in the normal way. Since the Sadducees denied the existence of angels, once again the Lord revealed the deficiency in their understanding. The Sadducees taught that angels did not exist, but God sent an angel to release the apostles from Sanhedrin. The theology of the Sadducees did not allow for supernatural events. Have there been times in your life when your understanding of Scripture was challenged by your experience, conversations with Jesus followers from different traditions or what you discovered from your study of Scripture? The officers needed to use

caution in arresting again the apostles, because of the popularity of the apostles. They were healing people from all over Jerusalem and Judea. Multitudes were becoming followers of Jesus. Arresting the apostles who had become very popular would have been a challenge for the officers. They did not want to display any violence toward the apostles for fear of upsetting the crowds that were probably present to hear their teaching or perhaps be healed by the apostles.

Thursday, October 26, 2011

Daily theme: Enemies of God do not care about honoring him.

Questions

Read Acts 5:27-28

1. What was the complaint that the Sanhedrin had against the apostles?
2. What fears are implied by the Sanhedrin's response to the apostles?

Consider

The Sanhedrin's immediate concern was that the apostles disregarded the order that they no longer teach about Jesus. Not only had the apostles disregarded the command, but had filled Jerusalem with teaching about Jesus. Although the apostles had been teaching in the temple, the statement about filling Jerusalem with the teaching of Jesus indicates the impact that the gospel was having. Word was spreading about Jesus. The healings would have attracted further attention. The Sadducees feared that the teaching would spread even further. It is ironic that at Jesus' death the Jewish leaders and the people had declared to Pilate that the responsibility for Jesus' death would fall upon them and their children (Matthew 27:25). Here the Sanhedrin is trying to distance themselves from Jesus' death. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, it was only after death that Jesus became popular. It is not surprising that the Sanhedrin, who was trying to maintain its influence with the people, would desire to silence the apostles with threats.

Friday, October 27, 2011

Daily theme: The commitment to honor Jesus at all costs, irritates his enemies.

Questions

Read Acts 5:29-33

1. How did Peter describe Jesus?
2. In what ways would Peter's response have irritated the Sanhedrin?

Consider

The Sadducees had made a demand that the apostles could not follow. Peter and John had already told them that they could not, so again Peter more forcibly tells them why. Peter revealed how God the Father had overturned their attempt to get rid of Jesus. They thought that they had solved the problem by killing Jesus, but instead they had provided the opportunity for Jesus to be displayed in an even greater way. The Sadducees and other Jewish leaders had opened the door for Jesus' resurrection which the apostles preached. Peter also reminded them that the Sanhedrin had been directly responsible for Jesus' death. God not only raised Jesus from the death, but he exalted Jesus as Prince and Savior. The titles Prince and Savior were terms reserved for the Messiah, so Peter implied that the Sanhedrin had executed the Messiah as well. Luke wrote that Peter's response cut the Jewish