

Sermon Discussion Guide:

Persecution and Perseverance

Sunday, May 15, 2022

Scripture: **Acts 5:33–42**

Series: **The Spirit & The Church**

OVERVIEW

The apostles had been imprisoned for publicly preaching about repentance and the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus, and for healing the sick and casting out unclean spirits in Jesus' name. However, God miraculously released the apostles from prison during the night and, choosing to obey God rather than men, they immediately began teaching about Jesus at daybreak the following day. When they were charged again by the high priest and the Sanhedrin to not teach in the name of Jesus, Peter and the apostles answered boldly (5:29-32). **The Christian life embraces the dishonor that comes from honoring Jesus** (5:41).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When they (the high priest, etc.) heard this (referring back to 5:29-32), they were enraged and wanted to kill the apostles. Why? Were the apostles saying anything that wasn't true? Can you think of other present-day examples of unwarranted murderous rage?
2. Why didn't the high priest and the Sanhedrin immediately put the apostles to death? Did God sovereignly intervene to save their lives? If so, how?
3. What was the point of the history lesson given by Gamaliel, the Pharisee and well-respected teacher of the law?
4. How does Gamaliel's point apply to our lives today? For example, how will we know if a leader is raised up by God and speaking for God or simply speaking for himself? Can God speak wisdom and truth through a Pharisee like Gamaliel?
5. How does verse 39 encourage your faith? What other verses make the same point?
6. The apostles were ordered again not to speak in the name of Jesus and then they were flogged (whipped severely on the back and chest) and released. Did the orders and floggings have the desired effect on the apostles? Why not?
7. Have you ever rejoiced for being counted worthy of suffering dishonor on behalf of the Name above all names? Describe a time when you rejoiced for doing good in Jesus' name, in spite of being mistreated for it. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 and then take time to pray for future opportunities to respond to persecution with joy rather than fear, to be emboldened, not embarrassed.
8. What else struck you from this sermon/passage?