

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading

Giving Time, Talents & Resources

of Discipleship

Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond
the Church

October 31, 2021

Day 1: Acts 5:25-26

Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

In the preceding passage the Disciples were put in jail. They escaped with the help of the Holy Spirit and went right back to preaching in the Temple. The Temple guards were afraid of the crowds so they treated the Disciples somewhat gently. The Disciples are now popular with many of the people because they had demonstrated that they were not advocating a violent overthrow of the Romans. They were concerned about the individual's relationship with God. They believed that our relationship with God was more important than anything else in life.

Question: How would you react if you met someone who was in jail?

Challenge: Research and read some of the articles about the civil rights marches in Cicero in the late 60's.

Scripture: Acts 3:1-44

Day 2: Acts 5:27-29

Having brought the apostles; they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!"

Even though the Disciples were gaining popularity with the people, the rulers of the Temple were still afraid that the new movement would weaken their power base and hold over the city. Fear of the power of the Gospel ends up causing the most acts of persecution against the Christians. The Disciples' response (we must obey God) to their threats is both courageous and powerful. They are simply telling the truth. When we find ourselves in a similar situation we need to simply tell the truth.

Question: Do you believe you are morally obligated to obey all laws passed by the state?

Challenge: Why would you think the Sanhedrin did not believe they were guilty of killing Jesus?

Scripture: John 14:12-30

Day 3: Acts 5:33-34

When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while.

The Disciples' response to the threat directly challenged the Sanhedrin authority over the religious life of the country. The Disciples' preaching was undermining the Sanhedrin's claim that they could bring about the blessing of God's new age. The Holy Spirit does work through established authorities but it is also true that the Spirit will work with whoever it wants to.

Question: In the last week, what person has made you really angry?

Challenge: Think about the death sentence. Do you believe it is effective at deterring crime? Do you think it is right or what?

Scripture: John 18:28-40

Day 4: Acts 5:35-39

Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 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."

Gamaliel's suggestion looks like he is sympathetic toward the Christian movement. But he may be offering his suggestion because he believes that the movement will fail. His examples of the two revolutionaries (see verses 36-37) show he believes Jesus is in their class and not the Lord of life. What ever his motives, his statement is true. If something is of God then no human organization can stop it.

Question: Do you think Gamaliel's reasoning is correct? Would it convince you?

Challenge: Can you think of some examples of "fighting against God"?

Scripture: Genesis 32:24-32

Day 5: Acts 5:40

His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The flogging was a proof that the Disciples' message was prophetic. In their time the prophets were abused and ignored. The Sanhedrin was demonstrating that they were not the spiritual leaders of the time, but the persecutors of God's messengers.

Question: Why do you think they had the Apostles whipped?

Challenge: Put yourself in the place of the court. Other than flogging, what punishment would you give them?

Scripture: Hebrews 11:32-40

Day 6: Acts 5:41-42

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 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

The Disciples do not get angry at being flogged but give thanks that they are worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake. This response (which would be very hard for most of us) completely disarms the Sanhedrin and takes away their power. Their only power is fear and the Disciples will not be afraid. The Disciples knew that the violent response by the Sanhedrin was a desperate act and totally without power to change minds. Their defiance showed the Christian community how to respond to persecution. We count it a privilege to suffer in Christ's name because our suffering is nothing compared to what Jesus did for us.

Question: Have you ever been hurt because you were a Christian? Have you ever been made fun of because of your faith?

Challenge: Do a little research and see if there is any place in the world today that Christians have to meet in secret.

Scripture: Acts 3:1-44