

God's Providential Care

Grace Bible Chapel

Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 5:33-42
November 12th, 2017

Context: Peter and the apostles are standing before the Sanhedrin, and instead of being intimidated have boldly proclaimed the truth of the resurrection of Jesus as the Messiah & the Sanhedrin guilt for His murder. He further re-emphasizes the miracles they have seen as the supreme witness to the truthfulness of their proclamation.

Verse 33 informs us the Sanhedrin intended to kill Peter & the apostles because they are controlled by hate & anger. But, verses 33-42 demonstrate God's providential care for His own under this most severely desperate situation. God uses Gamaliel, a non-Christian of the Sanhedrin, to prevent the killings (verses 34-39). Gamaliel has a form of wisdom, yet not complete wisdom – otherwise he would have embraced the Savior. But, God uses Gamaliel's form of wisdom at just the right time to prevent the extreme intentions of the council. This account is a reminder that God uses the abilities & positions of unregenerate men to accomplish His sovereign purposes – here care for His own. This is why we are to pray for all in leadership (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Although they are released, they are persecuted (verse 40). This is a further reminder of the cost of serving Christ, & what to expect in the fallen world. In verses 41, the apostles do not complain, but instead rejoice they were worthy to suffer in the name of Christ. Then, instead of cowering or giving up, in verse 42 the wording is very specific “they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” Their attitude of trust and obedience in the Lord is not diminished. The care of the Lord was with them to bless and accomplish what He had commanded them to do.

Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).

- VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)
 - F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:22)
 - G. Sovereign forming (Acts 4:23-6:7)
 - 10. Supreme control (Acts 5:17-26)
 - 11. Superseding obedience (Acts 5:27-32)
 - 12. Sovereign care (Acts 5:33-42)

Key Words / Phrases

- Intended to kill
- take care what you purpose
- overthrow them
- fighting against God
- considered worthy to suffer

Introduction:

- In Chapter 5:32-33 a more clear, concise, & non-compromising statement of the reality of Christ in association with this council could not be made.
 - To make such a statement what are the apostles doing? They are speaking the truth & trusting the Lord with the consequences.
- One of the most pressing questions for any of us surrounds what I am living for – what is my purpose for existing? All of us are different, we each have our own track – our unique sphere of living, responsibilities, obligations – but we are similar in this – ultimately, what is my main concern or should be my main concern? That is clearly from Scripture - to glorify God in my life & decisions!
- Choices are a big deal. Choices can be life or death. We have a great contrast in our lesson today – there are individuals on two separate roads – two paths, two very different ways of thinking & living, two different destinations – yet both are under One God, & controlled by One God, accountable to One God – will God use you or I as (Rom. 9:21) “a vessel of honorable use or for common use?”—common is unsaved & tragic—the context is the sovereign mystery of God in relation to man.
- 12. **Sovereign care** (Vs. 5:33-42) These apostles are resting in the sovereign God. Their concern is to glorify God in every decision, no matter what. The Sanhedrin are on a different mindset & path – their mindset is self preservation!
 - Keep finger here Mat. 16:25 – theme of the activity of these apostles & should be our theme!
- **Satanic response** (Vs. 5:33) we now see the direct contrast to the self serving philosophy of the Sanhedrin.

- **Vs. 33** – “but” – provides a contrast with the previous Vs. 32 – where Peter & the apostles explained their enthusiasm & why they preach & follow Jesus.
 - The “but” shows the contrast with the thinking & reaction of the Sanhedrin.
 - There is no affiliation of heart, purpose, direction – no understanding (1 Cor. 2:12-14). - the reaction is either reception or rejection – which could be anything from silence to murder depending on the weight of circumstance.
 - “cut to the quick” – diaprio – means so deep it cuts in half – this is the power of God’s Word – truth (Heb. 4:12) – it pricks them, but does not change them.
 - Same as with Stephen (Acts 7:54) – where it was so offensive they murder.
 - Here it is the same in their heart “intended to kill them.” They are raging within.

Point: Never think the world is a friend of grace – recognize what you are up against.

- The true Gospel is confrontational – this is one of the main reasons many churches have either sought more attractive ways to present the Gospel, or abandoned it from their purpose. Often what is being taught is pleasantries & man centered ideas, even pep talks.
 - It is one thing to seek ways to make the Gospel more effective.
 - It is another to tinker with its content, or necessary message, or seek to disguise it – the outcome of such is another gospel not the Gospel.

Point: The true Gospel makes a separation among people – to the one who embraces it, it transforms; but to the one who rejects it – it hardens & angers!

- These Sanhedrin are enraged to the degree of intention of murder – why?
 - The doctrine of Jesus denies them of their own ability to earn salvation.
 - It denies them of their self righteousness & therefore means they are guilty.
 - It charges them with the greatest sin of all – crucifixion of the Savior.
 - It threatens their importance, their authority, & position over the people.

Point: Christ predicted this for the Jewish nation (Mat. 23:34), but it continues to this day for every nation for it is a sin problem among all peoples.

Point: Just because the Gospel will be rejected does not mean we can change it, or close our mouths, or meet secretly – it is only the true Gospel that is the power of God to salvation. We must confront the world – with its sin, its desperate condition, & the need for faith in Christ Jesus!

Point: We are commanded to go & preach the Gospel.

Point: We must sacrifice in the present for the future! People need the Lord.

- **Shepherding intervention** (Vs. 5:34-39)
- **Vs. 34** – “but” – once again we have a contrast. Here they were intending to do one thing, but God intervened thru Gamaliel, a highly regarded teacher.
 - Who is Gamaliel? - Acts 22:3 – history records he was the most respected Jewish Rabbi of his time. Amazingly used of God in life of Saul, & here!
 - The Mishna – the Jewish systematic theology of the Torah (law) says the following of Gamaliel “when Rabban Gamaliel the elder died, the glory of the law ceased & purity and abstinence ceased.” – he was highly regarded.
 - By God’s providence over the world He will use non-believing men to bring blessing, & protection of His people – think of the writing of constitution, Luther by Frederick the wise (elector of his province), King Artaxerxes with Nehemiah.
 - This is why we are commanded to pray for those over us (1 Tim. 2:1) – God moves thru **men to accomplish His will, even non-believing men.**

Point: God uses all means to accomplish His purposes of protection & circumstances. Acts 13:36 – so revealing about who is in charge, & so comforting.

Point: God uses Gamaliel (his position of respect) to keep the apostles from murder.

- **Vs. 35** – Gamaliel uses cool counsel rather than emotions - it is a mixture of truth, wisdom, & falsehood – like many today in churches & cults – dangerous!
- **Vs. 36** – Beginning here, Gamaliel (who did see God was in control of events) gives two insurrection examples that ended of themselves. The 1st is Theudas – an otherwise unknown

person, but Josephus (the historian) writes of “innumerable tumults & insurrections in Judah following the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC.”

- **Vs. 37** – His 2nd example is “Judas of Galilee” – history does speak of this one as leading a revolt against the census ordered by Quirinius (AD 6-7).
 - Then, as now, there was a lot of discontent in the world. Like Theudas, he also “perished and all of those who were following him scattered.”
- **Vs. 38** – “So in the present case” – following the same pattern, in the same world he states “stay away from these men & let them alone” – no better words could be spoken on behalf of these presenting Christ. This is free speech 101.
 - Gamaliel by his influence convinced the council there is nothing to worry about – trouble makers come & go – be patient – wait & see!
 - He says “for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown” – seems logical, but is it? – ultimately that is true when Christ returns at the end of time.

Point: But not true within the fallen world – success is no test of truth – think of Islam, or the many cults that have arisen & prosper with millions of followers.

Point: What is the true policy? Search the Scriptures – it is not what appears to be prosperous, popular, or of value, but the truth of God that is eternal from His Word.

- **Vs. 39** – “but if it is of God....overthrow it” – this part of his speech is absolutely true, & is the history of Christianity. Christ stated “He will build His church!”
 - He further makes this most profound statement: “or else you may even be found fighting against God” – this is of course precisely what they were doing.
 - Yet, even with that, God uses their opposition to accomplish His will.
 - We cannot think to ourselves, I am so glad I am not like that! I am not fighting God. Anyone, unsaved is an enemy of God (Rom. 5:10).
 - Think about it - anyone acting contrary, at any given time, to the revealed will of God in His Word – that person is fighting against God.

Point: Just because God gloriously uses even the rebellion of men to accomplish His will, does not mean men are let off the hook – all our guilt is called sin!

Point: Only those in Jesus Christ have an advocate for their sin – only in Christ can we be forgiven eternally & blessed forever as He separates our sins from us as far as the east from the west.

- **Suffering for Christ** (Vs. 5:40)

- **Vs. 40** – Just because God used Gamaliel to temporarily spare them from death thru this unusual means does not mean everything is now roses.
 - They “flogged them” – flogged – dero – to flay, scourge, beat – this was commonly 39 lashes – designed to be painful, humiliating, even debilitating – historically, it would sometimes result in death – this is no hand-slap.
 - Christ spoke prophetically of this (Mat. 10:17). When serving Christ we cannot expect pity, understanding, or kindness from the unsaved world.
 - Likely, the Sanhedrin thought these beatings were severe enough with their threats to change the mind of these speaking in Jesus name.

Point: Luke gives little detail here of the physical suffering. Most people are motivated by fear of such – but, these men were different – they were filled up with God and were ruled above the physical circumstances! They were overcomers!

- **Steadfast overcoming joy** (Vs. 5:41-42)

- **Vs. 41** – What was their response? So strange, so contrary to what is natural – had you just been unjustly beaten, what would you have in your heart & head?
 - Anger, foul language, bitterness, revenge? These instead are rejoicing!
 - This is otherwise nuts – there is no human explanation – what is going on?
 - Their attitude, their understanding – “rejoicing that they For His name.”

- This is an act of faith – this is an attitude of true understanding – Mat. 5:10-12. What appears as the supreme negative (a humiliating debilitating painful beating) is an act of the greatest blessing – note the words Christ uses – blessed, the kingdom of heaven, rejoice, be glad, reward is great!

Point: To providentially be put in a position where we are persecuted, not because we did something wrong, but because we honored the Lord & we are persecuted for it is the greatest privilege on the earth! Nothing is better – these understood that!

- **Vs. 42** – So did this intimidation, this beating & threats alter their obedience to God in what He commanded them to do?
 - Not at all, in fact there is no hint of that – no hiding, no underground or stealth activity. Instead this verse serves as the pattern for evangelism.
 - What was their agenda? God’s agenda – doing all they can to get the word out.
 - Notice the words “every day” – these are relentless in their obedience to Christ & the priority of the Gospel.
 - Where? “in the Temple” – the public place where God was to be honored & proclaimed, but also where they had been arrested.
 - “from house to house” – they went wherever necessary, every opportunity.
 - I love this “kept right on teaching and preaching” – they would not be deterred. What did they preach – “Jesus as the Christ” – the only hope!

Point: I must make a point here – today, compare our comfortable places of worship, every convenience, & with that wide open opportunities, & yet many of these same places are not declaring Christ’s Gospel – they are entertaining, compromising, presenting falsehood, & humanism!

- And where truth is taught – sadly we are often so spoiled, if there is the slightest inconvenience, slightest deterrence, or excuse many fail in their commitment.
- When I see these early apostles example – what excuse do we have?

Closing: I began with the verse – “he that will lose his life for My sake will find it.”

- Are we in the process of living where our life is lost in Christ? What is our attitude & priority?
- We speak a lot here about faith – this study is a study in faith – we are called to live obedient to Christ, be His ambassadors & trust Him to take care of the circumstances – just as he did with these early faithful!
- God help us to see that living in Christ is dying to self – this is true faith, a faith that carries on daily in the activities of life.