

Small Group Guide - 4/3/22

Acts 5:17-32 - Fear God, not Man

Sermon Outline/Notes

Introduction:

- * The gospel encourages the poor in spirit (5:12-16)
- * The gospel enrages the prideful (17-42)
- * Intellectual, social, family
- * Buzz going around
- * 2 groups of people:
 1. Feared God and not man
 2. Feared man and not God
 - *one leads to freedom the other to bondage
 - *power / weakness
 - *effectiveness / useless
 - *hope / despair
 - *honor / humiliation
- * Sadducees
 - didn't believe in miracles like the resurrection
 - didn't believe in the existence of angels
 - worked to keep the Romans and Jews happy

Take Home:

- "When men forbid what God has commanded or command what God has forbidden, we have but one option: We must obey God rather than men!"
- "All authority belongs to God"
- "When earthly power and heavenly power are in conflict, our allegiance is to God"

1. Freedom in Fearing God (5:17–21)

- * The High Priest and Sadducees were filled with jealousy. (17)
 - jealousy = zeal
 - frustrated with their authority being challenged
 - they were fighting against the very purpose of the universe, Jesus' exaltation
 - v.17- tells us the root of their actions: jealousy
 - Beware of jealousy, it leads to all types of sins.
 - What were the apostles doing? (Helping, loving, healing)
 - The religious leaders would rather people remain sick or possessed than lose their power or the lack of power they had to become more evident.
- * All of the apostles arrested and put in public prison (18)
 - public prison to publicly humiliate the apostles
- * God's plan would not be spoiled (19)
 - This public arrest would come back to haunt them.
 - What they intended to humiliate the apostles with would humiliate them.
 - Sadducees taught there were no such thing as angels, and one is a fool to believe God would appoint a spiritual being as His messenger.
 - You can see the irony here in v.19.
 - Who is humiliated now?

- “This is the ultimate cosmic overrule of Jewish leadership as the Sovereign God acts to free the apostles by sending an angel to open the prison door the Sadducees shut”
- The Lord accomplishes His purposes again and again = Freedom to serve Him
- * The apostles are freed to go preach. (20)
 - “words of this Life...” - the resurrected Jesus and His gospel
- * The apostles obeyed the angels orders. (21)
 - They were more concerned with God’s desires than man’s desires.
 - They were freed to do the will of God.
 - The public arrest now becomes public testimony.
 - Who’s authority is in question now?
 - Not only were they freed by an angel, but now they are preaching the resurrection. (both denied by the Sadducees)
 - Any plans to overthrow God are futile.
- * To fear God brings freedom and blessing
 - The apostles exemplify what it means to fear God and not man.
 - They were driven by deep-seated desire to please God and not man.
 - They did what was right in God’s eyes regardless of what or who wanted something else, and they experienced a type of freedom that many never know.

2. Bondage in Fearing Man (5:21b–26)

- * The leaders sent to bring the apostles before them (21b)
 - couldn’t find them (irony) (no idea what happened that night before)
 - Securely locked door but no one inside
 - Irony again here: planning for a speedy trial but can’t find those on trial
 - They were greatly perplexed (baffled / angry)
 - Brought them in not by force, for they were afraid to be stoned by the people.
 - There it is...fear of man
 - They do what they do, not because it’s the right thing to do, but because they are afraid of the people.
 - They are driven by the fear of man.
- * The apostles were more free than those who were enslaved to the fear of man.
- * Contrast: The apostles feared God, not man. Israel’s leaders feared man, not God.

3. Obeying God in the Power of the Spirit (5:27–32)

- * Sat them in front of the leaders
- * “Didn’t we tell you not to do this?”
 1. “This name” - couldn’t even say the name Jesus
 2. “You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us”
- * Peter and the apostles answered (29)
 - I told you who I was going to obey
 - yes, you did kill him (30)
 - Jesus killed, raised, exalted, reigning
 - Leader and Savior (author / originator) (31)
- * The Sadducees are finding themselves working against God.
- * But Peter offers them hope
- * This Jesus gives repentance (gift of God)
- * Forgiveness of sins (gift of God)
- * The apostles are witnesses because the Spirit is a witness. (32)

- * The Spirit always points to Jesus
- * By the power of the Spirit, the apostles obey God and not them.
 - Ultimately Peter says, I can only witness to Jesus because the Holy Spirit within me witnesses to Jesus.

4. Fear of Man, Yesterday and Today

- * Biblical examples of fear of man
 - * **1 Samuel 15:24**
 - * **John 12:42–43: “Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”**
- * Counter to the fear of man
 - * **Matthew 22:16: “And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances.’”**
- * Are we swayed by appearances or opinions?
- * What determines what you do? Do you act based on what you perceive will make others like you, or do you act based on what God has said?
- * Do you need man’s approval?
- * What or who controls you?
- * If the opinions of people drive your behavior, you will never constantly obey God.
- * **Proverbs 29:25: “The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”**

Small Group Discussion

1. What spoke to you in the Bible passage or the sermon Sunday morning?
2. What does it mean to fear God? How does it bring freedom?
3. What does it mean to fear man? How does it bring bondage?
4. The Bible says that jealousy is what lead the religious leaders to act the way they did. How does jealousy lead to sin?
5. Once again, we see that God’s plan will not be spoiled. How does that comfort you? How does that free you to live for Him?
6. Peter said in verse 31 that Jesus gives repentance. What does this mean?
7. How does the Holy Spirit bear witness of Jesus? If the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer bears witness to Jesus, then how can Christians not bear witness about Jesus?