

THE PERSECUTION OF GOD'S CHURCH

Acts 5:17-42

Introduction: God's Church has always had to endure persecution. Sometimes it has been fierce, sometimes subtle, but it is always there. Most of the time persecution comes from sincere, religious people. The bloodiest persecutions in history have been executed in "God's Name."

Why did religious leaders want to imprison and even kill the apostles? They had broken no laws of the Roman government. They were not promoting immorality. They were persecuted for ONE reason - for **preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ!**

The Church's second persecution at Jerusalem reveals some truths we need to remember.

I. THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST IS OFFENSIVE TO PEOPLE (vv17-18)

1. The persecution was primarily instigated and carried out by the Sadducees.
 - They disapproved of pagans, idolatry, but were tolerant of both.
 - Yet when the apostles came preaching the Gospel, the Sadducees were ready to kill.
2. People will accept any form of religion that leaves salvation in the hands of other people, but the message of salvation by Grace alone through Jesus Christ is an offense to them.

II. GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS OWN (vv19-20)

1. Until a believer's work on earth is done, until his/her appointed days are fulfilled, while he/she is obedient to God, that believer can be assured of at least three things:
 - God will direct his/her path.
 - God will protect his/her life.
 - God will supply all his/her needs.

III. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY BELIEVER TO OBEY GOD (vv27-32)

1. The proof of faith in Jesus Christ is obedience to Him. (*Hebrews 11*)
 - Consequences are not to be considered.
 - Do what you know God wants you to do - that is FAITH in action.
2. Four things determine the believer's course of action:
 - What does the Word of God require of me?
 - What is the will of God in my present situation?
 - What will best serve the glory of God?
 - What is the best interest of God's people?

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES SOME THINGS ABOUT GOD (vv33-40)

1. God's truth cannot be silenced.
2. God's cause cannot be defeated.
3. God's kingdom cannot be overthrown.
4. God's plans are not in anyway dependent upon men and circumstances.
5. God's person in God's place, doing God's work will be maintained by God's hand.
6. There is no need for compromise, fear or hesitation.

V. IT IS AN HONOR TO SERVE THE CAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST, EVEN IF IT MEANS TO SUFFER FOR THE HONOR OF HIS NAME (v41)

1. Nothing is wrong with serving the Lord as janitor in His Church. It is an honor.
2. There is nothing wrong with serving the Lord in whatever position He chooses for us. Any place is a place of honor.
3. God has a place of service for every believer.

VI. THE BELIEVER'S ONE BUSINESS AND RESPONSIBILITY IS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST (v42)

1. You and I have the same commission the Apostles had.
2. Every believer is a missionary sent by God into the world to preach/spread the Gospel.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Church will be persecuted in some degree in every generation.
2. God has chosen to save sinners by using saved sinners to tell them of His great Grace in Jesus Christ.
3. You and I are numbered among those who are commanded to go and tell.
4. You and I may be among those numbered to suffer for the honor of Jesus Christ.
5. Any place God puts us to serve is a place of honor.