

Delivered to Serve.

Acts 5:17-21.

Sunday, November 1, 2009.

I. No prison so dark...

- A. We see with the growth of the church that the opposition in the hearts of its adversaries grows as well.
- B. Before it had been Peter and John who had been put in prison; now it is all the apostles, at least all of those who could be found and arrested.
- C. Once again it is the ruling party of the temple, the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection or in angels, who put them there, and ironically, it is an angel of the Lord that lets them out.

Applications:

1. This incident teaches us that there is no prison so dark or God can visit us with His mercy.
And there are prisons of many different kinds; there are those imprisoned in bodies racked by disease; those imprisoned by adverse and difficult circumstances in their own homes or extended families or in their place of employment or school. Those imprisoned by addictions of various kinds, and those enslaved by the sinful tendencies of their own hearts such as greed, bitterness, anger and a bad temper.
Do not lose hope when you find yourself in a prison house, rather, like Joseph, humble yourself under God's mighty hand and seek to serve Him in that prison.
2. This incident also teaches us that there is no prison so deep or God's grace can deliver us. He has promised to be with us always Matt. 28:20. And that He will never leave us nor forsake us Hebr. 13:5. And that His grace is sufficient for us 2 Cor. 12:9.
3. This passage teaches us what the purpose of such a deliverance is. What would you do with your new found freedom if God set you free from your prison house? Do you see why the Lord might have great reluctance to set us free?

II. Delivered to serve.

- A. It is not a deliverance out of danger; not a deliverance out of the hands of their enemies.
- B. It is not a deliverance to personal freedom and to the enjoyment of personal comforts; in fact the very next day they would incur a severe beating. It is not a restoration to the pursuit of personal ambitions. It is none of these things.
- C. Note the words of the angel: "Go stand in the temple and speak to the people..."
"Stand in the temple..." of all places, why there?
"Speak to the people..." why, was it not time to move out of Jerusalem yet?
- D. This was a deliverance; it was a being returned to the people of Jerusalem, so that they might hear again, or for the first time, "all the words of this life."
- E. Underneath this deliverance, and this being returned to the people, we are to see God's great love and forbearance with His Old Covenant people, where He goes after them yet again with "all the words of this life."
- F. Here too we are to see the fellowship and the union the Apostles shared with the

great love and forbearance of God. In fellowship and in union with the Lord they willingly return to the temple the next morning, to serve their people, bringing to them again “all the words of this life.” It is as if they were saying: “Lord if you love these people this much then we will too.”

Applications:

1. Here we are given insight into the purpose for which the Lord sets us free from our prisons. It is so that we might be given as humble servants to the lives of people around us. Always bearing testimony in word and in deed to “this life.”
2. If the Lord set you free from your prison what would you do with that freedom?
3. God’s great love for a lost and fallen humanity is always at the bottom of all His redemptive dealings with us. He sets us free to serve others.
4. Our fellowship, our union and our walk is with the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - He freely and willingly emptied Himself of personal privilege and ambition.
 - He made Himself a servant to a lost and fallen humanity in coming to earth.
 - In so doing, He revealed to us the nature of the life lived in union with Him.

III. “All the words of this life...”

- A. This is an unusual description of the gospel. We are more used to hearing the gospel in terms of the significance of the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Here the gospel is set before us in terms of a life that is lived. “All the words of this life.”
 1. “All the words...”

Here we have the teachings, the doctrines that under gird the life lived in union with Christ.

Our justification; our sanctification; our adoption into God’s family; our reconciliation and our glorification; the presence of the Living Lord as Prophet, Priest and King in our lives; the Author and finisher of our faith, among other teachings.
 2. “Of this life.”

Here we have living vitality worked by the Holy spirit in our hearts.

Here is our love for the Lord and His people; the admiration of Him; the devotion to Him; the hope that is grounded in Him; the joy of His presence, inexpressible and full of glory; the fear to grieve or lose Him; the zeal to follow and serve Him; the rest found in Him and the peace that flows from Him; the contentment that His presence brings to our souls; the grief and sadness also for those who are heading headlong for their destruction.
 3. Here is the relationship between doctrine and life:

Doctrines without life are so many empty propositions. It leads to dead Orthodoxy; a Christianity that is no more than a corpse.

Life without doctrine is a groundless and blind hope, joy, peace etc. It makes you a spiritual airhead, characteristic of New Age religion.
 4. In our lives as Christians our doctrine must catch up to our life, or our life must catch up to our doctrine in order to be healthy, living Christians.