

9/20/15

Acts 5:33-40

The Dividing Line

33 When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. **34** But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. **35** And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. **36** For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. **37** After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. **38** So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; **39** but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, **40** and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

In the summer of 1945, WWII was coming to an end.

When Japan surrendered in August of that year, the 38th Parallel was established as a visible boundary between communism and democracy, between virtual enslavement and freedom. It's most visibly illustrated in our day as the line between enslavement in North Korea and freedom in South Korea. On one side of the line in North Korea is oppression; on the other side of the line in South Korea is freedom. And the greatest disputes always happen close to the border – Close to the line. There's always a dividing line between freedom and enslavement and as Christians we believe that dividing line, that place of hostility is at the cross of Jesus Christ and that truth is born out of this text. As long as it was just healings and miracles, the Apostles were just fine. Everybody loves a happy ending to the human interest story. But the moment Peter mentions the cross in v. 30, war was declared and the cross was at the center of it. As it always is even to this day. Everybody loves an active church so long as it's not a cross centered church because a cross centered church has a clear gospel driven message and

A Clear Gospel Always Gets a Real Response

People are never neutral about the cross of Jesus and forgiveness of sins. Let's take a look at the passage and see the responses.

Some Will Stand and Hate It

That's what is going on here. To see that, you need to back up and start in v. 30 and read to v. 33. *When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.* When they heard the Gospel and the need to repent and be forgiven, the text says in v. 33, they

were enraged and wanted to kill them. That word “enraged” in Greek is διαπρίω – to be *cut in two*. They were angry, a real visceral, emotive, reactionary response. Ungodly people hate to face Gospel truth.

All throughout the Gospel of John, we are told they tried to kill Jesus, the only perfect human ever to live. And before He was crucified, in John 15:20, Jesus said, “Remember the word that I said to you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

So let’s not be surprised. John MacArthur said, “It’s an exciting thing to make enough waves, to get somebody hostile. If it’s convicting enough to make people mad, it’ll be convicting enough to get people saved.” But there are some things to consider as we seek to be Gospel-centered. We are not trying to win *arguments*. We want to win *people*.

Here are a couple of things for you to consider as we live as salt and light in a dark world.

- **Make sure it’s the Gospel that is offensive and not you.**

The gospel of Jesus is offensive enough. It doesn’t need help convicting people. When you follow the story in the text, the Apostles have seen people healed, lots of them. There was indiscriminant healing and help for people. They were doing great things...mercy ministries. The offensiveness of the Apostles was found in the clarity of their message: A Holy God. Sinful Man. A cross where sin was judged, and the need for faith in Christ. Make sure it's the Gospel that’s offensive, not you.

- **Stay on Point**

After declaring the Gospel in v. 30-31, notice what Peter says in v. 32: “And we are witnesses to these things.” Witnesses is the Greek word *martureó*. It’s where we get the word “martyr,” but it originally meant someone who tells what they’ve seen and heard.

It’s what John said in 1 John 1:1: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life.” So the Gospel we share is something we have personally experienced and it changed us. So we stay on point about the holiness of God and how you saw your own sin and you saw the picture of the flowing blood of Jesus, blood from the cross, and you had your sins forgiven and erased by His blood. And it happened when you believed, and that becomes the point.

But people will hate to hear it, possibly not understand. Our job is to make sure that if someone is going to be offended, it’s the Gospel that’s offensive and not you, and we stay on point. And that point is the sharpest at the cross.

Some will stand and hate this message. Here’s another thing to think of:

- **Live With Affection**

The driving force behind a clear Gospel is real love. In the story of the prodigal son, the father saw him from afar and ran to him. When Jesus met the rich young ruler, the text says that He looked at him and He loved him. At the end of Acts Chapter 7 when Steven preaches and is killed by an angry mob, his last words were, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” In the face of intense and repeated hostility we live with affection. We do this, making sure that it’s the Gospel that’s offensive, not us. Stay on point – that is Christ, what we have seen and heard.

We live with real affection, real love. Jesus said it best in John 13:35: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”

- **Don’t Stop at a Culture War**

In the text, after hearing the Gospel in v 30-32, v. 33 says they were enraged, cut and wanted to kill the Apostles which was so strange because Luke tells us the same sort of thing in Acts Chapter 2. After Peter preached in Acts 2 v. 37, Luke tells us, “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' ”

What you have here in both places is conviction, and conviction goes deeper than most of us realize. The conviction is not just emotional conviction. It’s not you feeling sorry you told a lie or were ugly to your wife. Conviction goes deeper. Conviction is you understanding your guilt before God and your need for Christ.

If all we do is preach against pornography and homosexuality and abortion, then all we are is culture warriors. We must press through that to get to the bottom of what makes men and women sinners.

If all I do is tell you stories to evoke a response, your desire to sin will return when your tears dry and you will remain unchanged. In the text, Peter didn’t tell tear-jerking stories. He told them they had rejected Christ and were in rebellion against God. John MacArthur says, and I believe he is right, conviction is the Spirit of God using the Word of God to bring about change.

Remember what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit bringing conviction in John 16. In John 16:8 Jesus said,

“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement v. 9 Concerning sin because they do not believe in me. V. 10 concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you will see me no more. V. 11 concerning judgement because the ruler of this world is being judged.”

We must not stop at saying how terrible things are in the world today and get through the pawn sins and get to the king of sins.

Jesus said "the Holy Spirit comes to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment concerning sin because they do not believe in me." It's not the sin of adultery or drinking or abortion that's sending men and women to hell. It's the sin of unbelief that will send you to hell.

That's why I would say, don't compare yourself to anyone but Christ. See His perfect life and realize your sin. See His death on the cross and realize God's judgment. See His blood shed and realize the price has been paid, see His resurrection and believe, believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

Come to the cross, turn from your sin and believe Jesus Christ is Lord.

(Pastor Prays)