

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 25 (June 18-24, 2017)

The early Church experiences tremendous growth under the leadership of the Apostle Peter. In this week's devotions, we will see some more of the events that take place.

Sunday, June 18 (read Acts 5:12-16)

Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. (Acts 5:14)

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit allows the apostles to perform miracles (v. 12). After hearing the story of Ananias and Sapphira, half-hearted believers are afraid to join the growing church (v. 13); however, the fear of accountability does not prevent sold-out Christians from coming into the ministry (v. 14). The last count in Acts tells us that 5000 men have come to the Lord (4:4). (The printed verse above is the first mention of women becoming a part of the new Church.) The presence of God is so strong in Peter that people are healed by his shadow passing over them (v. 15-16). All of this excitement is not setting too well with the religious leaders, however, as we will see in the next devotion.

Monday, June 19 (read Acts 5:17-20)

“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” (Acts 5:20)

The new church is a real threat to the established religious leaders (v. 17), because these men have become extremely wealthy by controlling the temple activities and by setting the rules. They arrest and jail the apostles, only to have an angel come during the night to open the doors and bring them out (v. 18-19). The angel tells the apostles to go into the temple courts to declare the **full message** of salvation through Jesus Christ (v. 20). In today's society, few ministries choose to preach the **full** message. They know that their members want to hear about the **love** of God, so they often omit sermons about the **judgments** of God. Knowing that each of us deserves hell makes the teachings about Heaven even sweeter. Make sure that your ministry is a full service provider!

Tuesday, June 20 (read Acts 5:21-26)

“We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” (Acts 5:23)

Upon being led from the jail by an angel, the apostles go to the temple courts to teach, just as they had been instructed (v. 21). The Sanhedrin assembles and sends men to bring the church leaders to trial. These men find everything in order except for one thing: The apostles are not behind the locked, guarded doors (v. 22-23). This event will occur again when Jesus calls His Church home in the rapture. Many imprisoned believers will simply disappear from sight. Another person arrives to inform the religious leaders that the men are teaching the people in the temple courts (v. 25). Out of fear of those listening to the apostles, the leaders bring the men to trial without using force. The religious leaders are about to meet their match, as we will see in tomorrow's devotion.

Wednesday, June 21 (read Acts 5:27-32)

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29)

In front of the entire Sanhedrin, the high priest reminds the apostles that they have been warned not to teach in the name of Jesus, yet they have not obeyed. In fact, Peter and the other apostles actually declare the religious leaders guilty of crucifying the Son of God (v. 27-28). Peter's bold answer is printed above (v. 29), so that you will learn how to answer those politically correct officials of today who will make the same demands as the Sanhedrin. Peter gives them the gospel story, including the death, resurrection, and glorification of the Lord. Those who believe and repent are forgiven of their sins, so that the Holy Spirit can abide in them, just as He does in the apostles. Until the members of the Sanhedrin realize that they, indeed, are guilty of the blood of Jesus, they will never understand the need for salvation.

Thursday, June 22 (read Acts 5:33-39)

"But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 5:39)

A wise Pharisee named Gamaliel, who is best known for having taught Paul in his early days, addresses the angry crowd. He reminds these religious leaders that others have appeared on the scene trying to change their way of worshipping God. Their efforts ended in death and dispersal of their followers (v. 33-37). Gamaliel declares, "Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail" (v. 38). The other side of the coin is printed above so that you will never forget it. It's a good reminder that our job is not to critique and criticize everyone's else's method of worship, but rather to be sure that we are worshipping in a manner that will honor and glorify God. That's the only ministry that will bring long-term results.

Friday, June 23 (read Acts 5:40-42)

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. (Acts 5:41)

For the first time, the apostles suffer physical persecution at the hands of the religious leaders. The verbal abuse and the overnight jail time now culminate in a flogging (v. 40). The Jews are allowed to flog a person up to 39 times (2 Corinthians 11:24). Don't miss their reaction to these unjustified beatings! Instead of marching and destroying property, these men rejoice over the privilege of suffering for Christ (v. 41). Without the Holy Spirit abiding in them, they would have become discouraged and gone back home. As Spirit-filled apostles, they continue to do the work the Lord has assigned to them (v. 42). Pray that we may do the same in the face of future persecutions.

Saturday, June 24 (read 1 Peter 2:21-25)

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

How were Peter and the other apostles able to praise God for their suffering? Peter answers the question in today's text. Jesus is always to be our example for facing adversity. He was completely innocent, yet He never opened His mouth to rebuke those who crucified Him (v. 21-23). In fact, He prayed to His Father, requesting that this sin not be held against those who were tormenting Him (Luke 23:34). Apart from the death and resurrection of our Lord, none of us would have any chance for redemption (v. 24-25). The power of His Holy Spirit within you will allow you to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to face trials and persecutions for your faith with steadfastness, perseverance and joy!