

- **Intro:** Wobbly man toy: always rights itself, comes back to its true identity!

Recap

- Pentecost - **preaching** - a devoted, prayerful fellowship - powerful healings (lame beggar) - **preaching** - before Sanhedrin, told to be quiet - prayer for boldness - (interlude) shared possessions/God kept pure
- throughout recurring theme of **preaching with boldness!**
- Returning to the main narrative, we come again to an occasion of confrontation with the authorities:
 - last time the disciples were "**commanded ... not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus**"
 - following this warning the disciples went back and prayed - do you remember how they prayed? **Trusting God's sovereignty, they prayed for boldness to "speak your word"**
 - and their prayer was answered! In the summary section at the end of Acts 4, we read (v.33) "**With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**"
- So what happens next?
 - we are working our way through these early chapters of Acts in an attempt to learn from the character and priorities of the early church;
 - to ask ourselves not just "**what did they do?**"
- **but also to ask "what will we do?"**
- This congregation - as, in different ways, each congregation does - has a history of speaking for Christ in this community:
 - we may look to clear and faithful preaching of God's Word
 - we may look to a regular holiday club
 - we may look to special events, door to door work, special enquirers classes, and the like
 - we may look to other things that I am not aware of...
- But though the past affects the future, it does not determine it!
 - the question is always needing to be asked:
- **will we speak today for Jesus?**

Exposition

vs.17-18:

- **Into jail;** factions within Sanhedrin, Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection; arrested **apostles**; again tactic is to cut off the head... disperse the followers....

vs.19-21a:

- **Out again!** Angel releases them.... so they can go and **preach!**
 - "**full message**" - don't skimp on bits
 - obedient - despite the "**preach -> prison**" pattern that's becoming evident!

vs.21b-26:

- **Where did they go?** If you don't think God invented humour, then you haven't read your New Testament!! Looking in the prison while they are already out...!
 - I suspect "**puzzled**" (v.24) is a bit weak for the reaction of the guards!!
 - get a sense of the challenge the Sadducees were feeling to their authority in the carefulness not to start a riot (v.26)

vs.27-28:

- **Deja Vu!** from the Sanhedrin side, a sense of "this is not going according to plan, what are we going to do?"
 - we will shortly see the Sanhedrin "**furious**" - you can sense why they were ready to react in that way, **defied** by these Galileans, these simple men, these country folk....

vs.29-32:

- **In summary...** what a gospel summary!!
 - God's purpose and plan, not man's (v.30)
 - death is defeated in the resurrection, and the Sadducees dry orthodoxy is

confronted (v.30)

- Jesus' death as culpable act (v.30); sin put him there; emphasised by description of Cross as "hanging him on a tree" - cursed by God; Jesus bore the curse of sin for us!
- Jesus not just alive again, but triumphant, exalted, ruler, Saviour (v.31)
- he the one through whom salvation comes (implicit question - "will you trust him?" <black>, v.31)
- bore testimony to what they had seen (v.32); not fanciful imagination or interpretation, but grounded both in the reality of events and in the direct testimony of God's Spirit:
- *ie, we saw God working, and we continue to see him working in and through us now!*

vs.33-40:

• Fury... tempered:

- (v.33) they were furious; they felt the challenge of the gospel; were they prepared to admit they were wrong, and go the path of repentance, or not?
- *repentance (v.31) is a hard path - very hard to admit you've been wrong, to turn around!*
- what happened next was that someone spoke up and strove for the path of moderation;
- Pharisees & Sadducees were at odds; despite an impression we may have of them, Pharisees were the more liberal strand of devout Jewish faith; more open to the idea of personal faith & devotion rather than strict, strict ceremonial Temple worship
- Gamaliel a well known Pharisee teacher; he was Paul's teacher (it may well be Paul's memories of his speech that we have here, since the apostles were put out!)
- voice of reason and logic - not necessarily of support - and perhaps of expediency - "don't get fussed; if we get too upset we may bring the Romans in on this again"
- and there is Godly wisdom here - an open "wait and see" is often a wise response to new movements that claim God's hand
- Speech was persuasive; held off from killing apostles and from risk of directly opposing God
- but the repeated warning not to preach Christ was emphasised by a severe beating, one that would occasionally kill those thus flogged!
- no soft touch!

vs.41-42:

• Rejoicing to suffer!

• Apostles went out glad:

- because if they were flogged, persecuted then clearly they were following closely in their Master's footsteps, who himself was flogged
- and they go straight back to teaching and proclaiming, temple and home - *in other words, in every available context* - speaking of Jesus!

Will we speak today for Jesus?

- So we are left with the same choice they faced:
 - *we've borne faithful witness in the past*
 - *will that still characterise our life?*
- Words of Howard Guinness, whom God used to pioneer the student movements in Canada, Australia and New Zealand; an appropriate final challenge:
 - "Where are the men and women of this generation who will hold their lives cheap, and be faithful even unto death... who will lose their lives for Christ's sake - flinging them away for love of Him? Where are those who will live dangerously, and be reckless in His service?... Where are the men of prayer? Where are the men who... count God's Word of more importance to them than their daily food? Where are the men who, like Moses of old, commune with God face to face as a man speaks with his friend?... Where are God's men and women in this day of God's power?"