

No Pain, No Gain

Mark 13:9-13

INTRODUCTION

- A. Nobody seems to like a whistleblower. Even when they seem to be doing right, we are uncomfortable with the idea of "ratting" on someone else. Parents discourage their children from being "tattle tales." By many methods we reinforce the notion "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."
- B. All of which means it is possible to speak the truth, to do what is right, but not be appreciated for doing so. When those in the military point out such fiascos as \$6,000 coffee pots and \$400 hammers, you might think they would be rewarded for their honesty. But more often than not, these whistleblowers are drummed from the ranks of military service. You can cheat the tax-payer and be protected. But *uncover* the cheating and you're in for real trouble! Nobody likes a whistleblower.
- C. These people are being hounded, fired, and abused not because they've done something wrong but because they will not be quiet about other people's wrong doing. Our world does not appreciate others being let in on the secret. That world wants everyone to live by the motto, "Live and let live" with the emphasis on "let live." It teaches us not to make waves, to keep our mouths closed, to mind our own business.
- D. Christians, however, are in the whistle blowing business. It is not our duty to be quiet or to look the other way or close our eyes. Rather, having confessed our own sinfulness, we find ourselves in the unenviable position of pointing out the sins and lostness of others, **Ephesians 5:11**. We blow the whistle on the evil of our world, on the deceptiveness of the human heart, on the depravity of fallen man. We cannot just live and let live - we must call people to an honest appraisal of their future.
- E. That task will keep Christians in perpetual hot water. When we speak for God, we will speak words which will always get us in trouble. If we will not risk blowing the whistle, we cannot claim to be disciples of Jesus.

I. The Life of Paul: From Persecutor to Persecuted

A. Saul's Career as a Persecutor

- 1. Death of Stephen (robes and hearty agreement) - Acts 7:57-8:1.
- 2. ..."destroying the church" - Acts 8:3.
- 3. ..."breathing out murderous threats" - Acts 9:1-2.
- 4. **Acts 26:9-11** – hostile to Christ.
- 5. In chapter 9, as we saw last week, Saul saw the Lord on the Damascus road and committed the remainder of his life to the preaching of the gospel. At that moment, Saul made the transition from hunter to hunted, from persecutor to persecuted. Much of the last half of Acts chronicles Paul's suffering.

B. Paul's Experience with Being Persecuted

- 1. Following his conversion:
 - a. *Damascus* - the Jews conspire to kill him - 9:23-25.
 - b. *Jerusalem* - Grecian Jews try to kill him - 9:29.
 - i. His friends send him to his hometown, Tarsus.

- ii. Saul is not mentioned again until Barnabas goes to Tarsus to look for Saul (11:19-26). He needed help with the dynamic work going on in Antioch. It is from here that they begin the first missionary journey.
- 2. **First Missionary Journey:**
 - a. *Pisidian Antioch* - The Jews spoke abusively against Paul (13:45), stirred up persecution against him and expelled him from the region (13:50).
 - b. *Iconium* - Paul learned of a plot by the Jews and Gentiles to stone him and escapes to Lystra (14:5-6).
 - c. *Lystra* - Jews from the two previous cities come to Lystra and succeed in having Paul stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead (14:19).
- 3. **Second Missionary Journey:**
 - a. *Philippi* - Gentiles of the city have Paul severely beaten, thrown in jail, and then expelled from the city (16:23).
 - b. *Thessalonica* - The Jews started a riot after Paul spoke in the synagogue (17:5). Paul escaped to Berea.
 - c. *Berea* - Jews from Thessalonica travelled to Berea and started a riot there, forcing Paul to Athens (17:13).
 - d. *Athens* - the Athenians scoff at Paul when he talks about the resurrection from the dead (17:32).
 - e. *Corinth* - Jews became abusive (18:6) and brought Paul before the civil authorities (18:12).
- 4. Other Examples:
 - a. *Ephesus* - Idol-makers caused a riot (19:28-31) that almost resulted in Paul being lynched.
 - b. *Jerusalem* - Paul causes two riots by his preaching, and so infuriated the Jewish leaders that 40 of them vowed not to eat or drink until Paul died (**23:12-13**).
 - c. Acts ends with Paul in prison at *Rome*, waiting his audience before Caesar.
- 5. Paul seemed to make people mad. He kept getting himself into trouble. *All he had to do was be quiet*, and all the trouble would have stopped. All he had to do was stop talking about Jesus.
 - a. **2 Corinthians 6:3-5**
 - b. **2 Corinthians 11:23-26**

II. Those who Speak for God will Always be Persecuted

A. The Example of Jesus

- 1. If anyone could have done what was right without giving offense, it would have been Jesus.
 - a. If it was just a matter of saying things in the right way, with the right words and in the proper tone of voice, Jesus would have known how to speak the truth in a way that did not offend people.
 - b. *The reality is that you cannot speak the truth and avoid giving offense.* Even Jesus could not do it (John 6:60-66).
- 2. Because he spoke the truth, they killed him.
 - a. He had any number of opportunities to save himself:
 - i. If he had just kept quiet in the Temple.

- ii. If he hadn't admitted to being the Messiah to the Sanhedrin or to Pilot.
- b. All Jesus would have had to do to live a long life would have been to simply keep quiet, just not speak. When he chose to speak up, he doomed himself.

B. The Example of the Apostles

1. Jesus warned that all those who taught about him would be similarly treated.
 - a. He warned them of imprisonment, beatings and even death (Matthew 10:17-39; Mk 13:11-13; Lk 21:12-17).
 - b. Jn 15:20 - *"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also."*
2. The fate of the apostles - (according to tradition)
 - a. Peter - crucified
 - b. Andrew - crucified
 - c. Matthew – axed to death
 - d. James, son of Alphaeus – thrown from temple tower – clubbed to death (94)
 - e. Philip - crucified
 - f. Thaddaeus - shot with arrows
 - g. Thomas - spear thrust – burned in oven
 - h. James, son of Zebedee - beheaded
 - i. Bartholomew – beaten, flayed, and crucified

C. The Example of the Early Christians

1. Stephen - stoned after preaching to the Sanhedrin
2. Persecutions of the early Christians
3. Later persecutions

CLOSING: Counting the Cost Today

A. Coming to Terms with Suffering Today

1. Historically, suffering has gone hand in hand with following the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
2. **2 Tim. 3:12**, *"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."*
3. Is suffering a part of contemporary Christian living?

B. What are We Willing to Suffer for Christ?

1. To speak or not to speak - that is the question.
2. The decision to witness measures not only the level of our commitment but also the level of our courage.