

Acts of the Apostles

19 – Sold Out but not for Sale

Acts 8.1-25

Sold Out

- God used persecution to scatter the church
 - Careful how you talk about events – describing them as hard may be accurate but describing them as bad may not be
- God’s people went as missionaries, not refugees
 - Identity didn’t change just because their circumstances did
 - 2 Cor. 5.18-20 – ambassadors for Christ, making the appeal
- Those who lived sold out lives saw God do amazing things
 - More secular the culture -> more miraculous the work
 - When God “needs” to use these things to grab attention and create curiosity, we can count on Him to do so
- We are *called* by Jesus and sent by *Jesus* into the world
 - Question that stains your life is “What do I have to do to gain Christ?” If it’s give something up, I know that what I’m gaining is far better
 - Philippians 3.7-11

Curiosity and true faith are not the same thing (v.9-13)

- Simon was curious enough to profess belief and be baptized but had no relationship (he was too in love with power)
- If your belief in Jesus isn’t THE shaping force of your life, you may be a fan but are probably not a follower
- A relationship with Jesus the King radically impacts your allegiances and affections

Not For Sale

- God cannot be bought or manipulated (v.18-20)
 - Those who tell you otherwise are liars
 - Those who try to do so are either messed up on who God is or hurt so badly that they think having help is better than having Him
- God wants your heart (v.21-23)
 - Shallow view of deep work of God if believe otherwise – money, rituals, bodies, obedience
 - Our obedience without our heart is what got the Pharisees in trouble with Jesus – but He knows if He gets our hearts He gets the rest too
- He sees where we are (v.21, 23)

- You don't have to pretend with God – who you wish you were, present yourself to be, once was, or tell yourself you are
- He knows all about us and still chooses to love us
- He wants to give us forgiveness and freedom (v.22)
 - This only comes through Jesus
 - Part of what this freedom looks like is the freedom to keep doing what He has commanded (v.25)

Questions for Discussion

1. What is one example from your life where you have encountered something “hard” that you wouldn't describe as “bad” because God used it for good? How long did it take you to get to that perspective? How did you turn the corner to get there? Thinking about what you know from the later chapters of the Book of Acts, how can you see the events of 8.1-3 as good?
2. In the sermon, we talked about how God's people went about preaching even as they were fleeing persecution (missionaries, not refugees). How were they able to do that? What do you need to learn from them to step into your world as a missionary?
3. If you were asked what three markers of a mature Christian would be, what would you answer? Read Philippians 3.3-14. How did Paul talk about Christianity in that passage? How did he talk about maturity? How is this different than the “Christianity” that Simon exhibited in Acts 8?
4. In the sermon, we stated emphatically that God cannot be bought or manipulated and those who tell you otherwise are liars. How do you see this being tried in our society? We also mentioned that sometimes people are so hurt they want help more than God. How have you seen that before? Why do you think it's important to have clarity on these issues?
5. What are ways that we pretend with God (and with God's people)? What's the most tempting way for you to pretend with God or with His people? Why is it important to live honestly with God? How do we give expression to that?