

## MAXIMUM IMPACT IN OUR WORLD

October 25, 2009

### SERMON TITLE- ACTS-traordinary: Riding the Waves of Persecution

#### NOTES BY BILLY GROSS

**ACTS-traordinary:** *Riding the Waves of Persecution*

(Acts 5:12-42)

A quick capture of Keith's analogy . . . the way you take on the ocean waves at the beach is not to ball up and brace yourself or even to try and outrun them but rather to dive right into the base of the wave so that the wave current will pull you through and you pop up on the other side . . . in even deeper water! ready to face the next wave when it comes. The first 2 strategies represent fear and desperation, the latter approach represents faith! This is how we want to face the waves of persecution and difficulty that come at us in life . . . to head straight into them with faith in the loving presence and power the Holy Spirit that he will see us through!

In the above passage, the apostles model this way of faith for us as they dive into the waves of trouble that they face again and again. The Holy Spirit strengthens them and brings them through, sometimes with miraculous protection and sometimes through pain and suffering (like a flogging of 39 lashes!)

Whether God moves miraculously **to alter** circumstances or He strengthens/comforts us **through** the circumstances, the constant is this: God is always in the picture, and He always "causes everything to work for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes." (Romans 8:28)

What do we see in this passage about facing persecution or trouble? . . .

1. God is always in the picture.
2. The apostles were radically focused on JESUS! (not people, or circumstances, or pain)
3. They refused to compromise. (There is tremendous power in **obedient faith** that does not compromise)
4. They rejoiced in their suffering and disgrace (huh?!). Review this principle of following Jesus in the following passages:
  - a. Matthew 5:11
  - b. Romans 5:3-4
  - c. II Corinthians 12:10
  - d. Hebrews 10:34
  - e. I Peter 4:13-16
  - f. **James 1:2-5** . . . "trials of any kind" – whether persecution for our faith, or attacks of our

enemy, or just the hardships of living in this broken world. Will we lock into God by faith, trust in His presence and power to bring us through, and “dive into the waves” of trial when they come? How can we “count it all joy” in the midst of suffering? . . .

i. Recognize that suffering identifies us with Christ. It reminds us that we are His. He told us “if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also – because you belong to me.” (John 15: 20-21)

ii. Suffering is normal and to be expected. We must reject the illusion that following Jesus insulates us from difficulty in this world.

iii. We must trust in the providence of God (again – Romans 8:28). God wastes no experiences of our lives (good or bad)

iv. We must pray for wisdom . . . to see God in the midst of our suffering.

v. We must keep eternal perspective . . . this world is not our final home, and absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God that is (eternally) ours in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:38)

Responses:

1. Perhaps read and discuss together the passages above in #4.

2. Spend time together, sharing the waves each of you may be facing, and pray for each other. Continue this same ministry to one another that we began in the services Sunday morning.