

The Whole Armor of God *Ephesians 6:10-20*

Sword of the Spirit
Prayer and Supplication
The Apostles Persecuted
Acts 5:12-42

The Sadducees (*SAD-you-seez*) were a group of Jewish priests who, during New Testament times, were loyal to the Roman government. The high priest was usually a Sadducee, he would be appointed by the Romans and he would serve as president of the Jerusalem Council. When the New Testament speaks of the “chief priests,” it is referring to the Sadducees. The Sadducees were small in number, but great in influence. They were also among those who sat on the Jerusalem council. Another name for this council was Sanhedrin (*san-HEE-drun*). The Sanhedrin in New Testament times was the highest council of men who governed the Jewish people. There were approximately seventy men who served on the Council. They were subject to Roman rulers, but they had final say in religious matters, collecting taxes and in some criminal cases. They had the authority to pass a death sentence on a prisoner, but they needed the permission of the Roman ruler to carry it out. This is why Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin and Pilate. Pilate was the ruler of Judea during the time of Jesus’ death. He did not get along with the Jews because he did not understand them or their religion. Josephus, a Jewish historian wrote that the Jews disliked Pilate because he used temple money to build an aqueduct. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent, but he did not want to get in further trouble

with the Jews and so allowed them to execute Jesus. After Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., the power of the Sanhedrin came to an end.

Introduction

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, thousands of people in Jerusalem were becoming Christians. The apostles were teaching and preaching Christ and many were seeing a need for forgiveness. When Peter and John healed a lame man they were brought before the Sanhedrin. The men were warned to stop the preaching and they were threatened. Afterwards they were let free. Many continued to come from surrounding areas to hear the truth and bring the sick for healing.

The high priest did not like what was taking place and so he decided to take action. He had the apostles thrown in prison. An angel of the Lord came and released them. They were arrested again and taken before the Sanhedrin. The members on the council wanted to have them killed. However, there was one member who did not, a man named Gamaliel. Gamaliel belonged to a distinguished line of Jewish leaders. Why Gamaliel came to the defense of the apostles is not known. Maybe he read enough of history to know that God sometimes moves in mysterious ways. Perhaps he saw and heard enough of Christ to realize He is the Son of God. Whatever the reason, the Christians had an ally. God does indeed provide help sometimes in the most unexpected places.

Progression of Events

Persecute means to harm, destroy, injure or torture someone. Individuals are usually persecuted because of their beliefs.

- Peter and John taught that Jesus is God. As a result, many came to believe in Christ. The people would bring their sick to be healed by the apostles. To stop Peter and John from teaching about Jesus and the resurrection, the Sadducees put them in prison overnight and warned them not to continue speaking about Jesus (Acts 4:1-31).
- The apostles did not heed the warning, and continued to preach. More and more people turned their lives around and followed the teachings of Christ. Once again Peter and John were put in prison.
- During the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison door and led the apostles out.
- The angel said, “Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people the full message of this new life.” The apostles knew very well that if they went to the temple to teach about the resurrection they would be persecuted.
- Early the next morning Peter and John began teaching in the temple. When the high priest arrived they called the Sanhedrin together and sent officers to the jail for the apostles. When the officers arrived, the prison doors were locked and guarded, but the prison was empty!
- When the officers reported back to the Sanhedrin, someone said, “Look, the men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.”
- The captain along with his officers arrested the apostles, but they did not use force because they were afraid the crowd would stone them.
- The apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. “We gave you strict orders not to teach in His name. Yet you have filled

Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” You see, the Sanhedrin told Pilate a lie about Jesus—that He taught people that He was the king and they should not pay taxes to Rome. Consequently, Jesus was crucified. These rulers are not the only guilty ones. The Bible says, “All have sinned” (Romans 3:23). When you do things that don’t please God you sin. Jesus is the Son of God and He never sinned. Yet, Jesus paid the ultimate price for the sins of all mankind. When Jesus died, all of man’s sins were put on Him. After He took the punishment, He was buried and resurrected (I Corinthians 15:3,4). The rulers did not believe that Jesus is the Son of God nor did they believe in His death and resurrection. Therefore, they did not want to have it taught. They especially did not like hearing that they had a role in the death of Jesus Christ.

Climax

Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men.” When the rulers heard this, they were angry. They were so furious that they wanted to put them to death. A Pharisee named Gamaliel advised the council to let the men go. He said, “Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” His speech persuaded them. The apostles were beaten and warned not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then they were let free.

Conclusion

The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for Jesus. Every day the

apostles continued to teach and proclaim the good news that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died and rose again.

Sword of the Spirit

Prayer and Supplication

A Roman soldier had a sword that was made of steel and was very sharp. This type of sword would become dull after awhile and would be in need of sharpening. You have a spiritual sword that helps you with your battles against Satan. When you study your Bible and understand what God is telling you to do, you are keeping your spiritual sword sharp. If you don't do these things, your spiritual sword becomes dull. God's Spirit working in you is your spiritual sword that helps you to overcome your enemies by not breaking God's laws and commandments. How can you keep the Sword of the Spirit sharp? Read your Bible daily, memorize scriptures and keep God's laws and commandments.

A Roman soldier would always keep in constant contact with his commander. This is especially true when a soldier is in battle. You need to keep in constant contact with your Commanders--God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are your spiritual leaders and will help you at all times. They will help you keep your spiritual armor in place. How do you keep in constant contact with your Commanders? Pray daily, stay close to God in prayer and read the Bible so you will know what God wants you to do.

Memory Verse

"We must obey God rather than men."
(Acts 5:29)

Questions

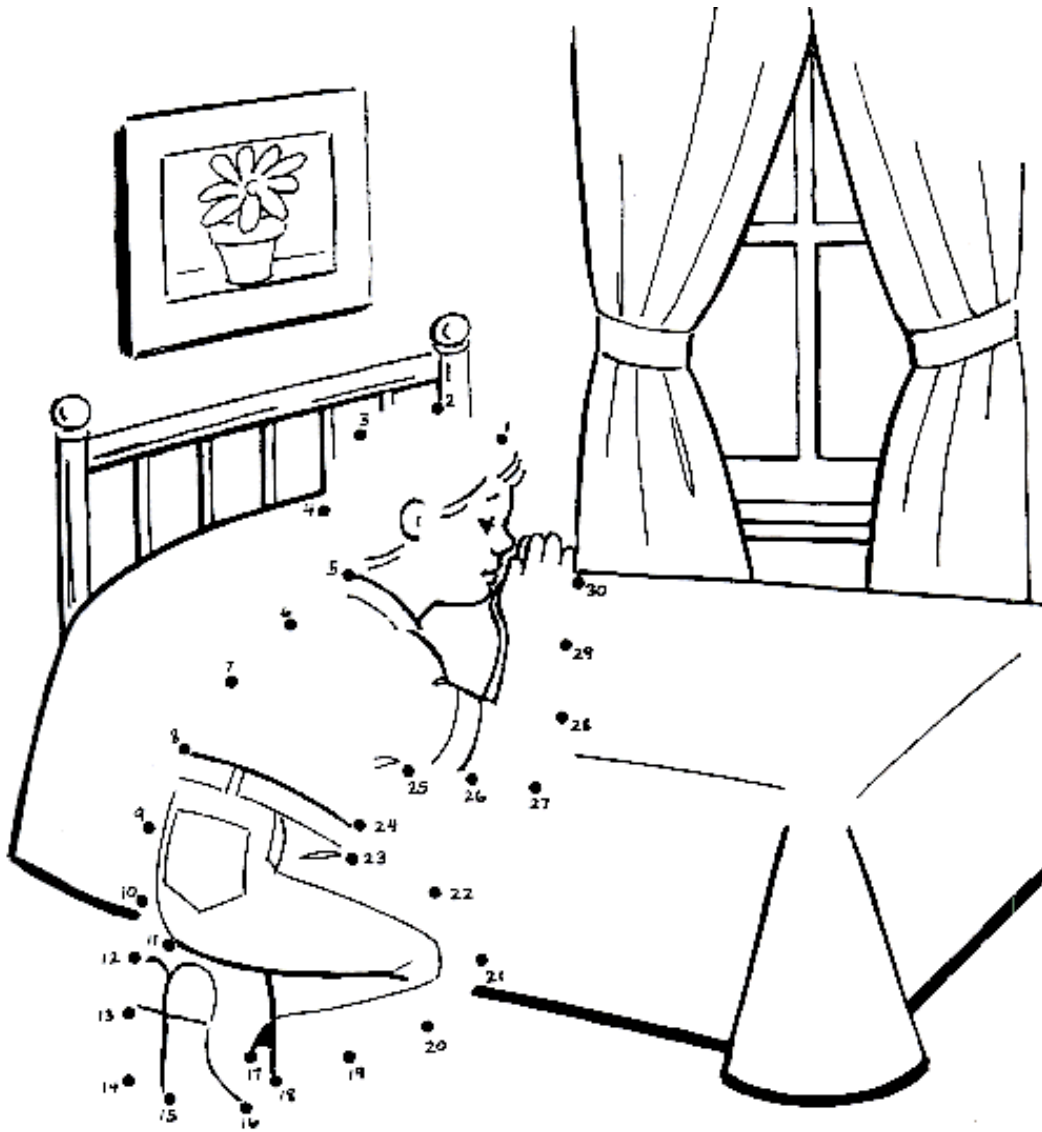
For class discussion ask your students any of the following:

1. What was the Sanhedrin?
2. Who were the Sadducees?
3. What does persecution mean?
4. What were Peter and John doing that the Sanhedrin didn't like?
5. How did the apostles get out of prison?
6. Who was Gamaliel and what was his reason for letting the apostles be free?
7. How do you keep your sword of the spirit sharp?
8. How do you keep in contact with your commanders?
9. Who are your commanders?
10. Explain in your own words what faith is.

Lesson 5

Activity

Sometimes people try to hurt other people because they believe in God. Has anyone ever done something mean to you because you believe in Jesus? Connect the dots to show what you should do when this happens.



"I will call on You, O God, for You will answer me" (Psalm 17:6) NIV

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Lesson 5 Craft

Materials

- A pencil and a half sheet of typing paper for each student
- Tape and markers

Directions

1. Hand each student a piece of typing paper and markers.
2. Have students fold their typing paper in half and draw prison bars on one side and a face on the other side.
3. Distribute pencils and have students tape their folded papers over the top of the pencil.
4. They may also want to tape the outside edges together.
5. Show students how to roll the pencil between their palms. The face should appear to be behind bars.

