

WARM-UP

- Recall a challenging situation that you couldn't get out of. What did you do to move forward?
- Have you ever been called out or confronted on something you've said or done? How did you respond?
- What's one thing you can't stop talking about? Why do you believe in or like it so much?

WORD *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

ACTS 1:8

*¹⁷But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. **ACTS 5:17-18***

(Read also **ACTS 5:19-32.**)

After the Holy Spirit filled and empowered the apostles and disciples, the gospel was preached, miracles were performed, and the church grew rapidly. However, it was not without opposition and challenges. The apostles would face persecution from the religious leaders of their time and were imprisoned because of their jealousy. But God's word cannot be stopped, even in difficult situations. Today, let's look at how God's miraculous intervention opened the door for the gospel to spread to the rest of Jerusalem.

1 | An angel set the apostles free after being imprisoned for preaching the gospel.

¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰“Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”

ACTS 5:19-20

When the high priest heard that many sick people were being healed in Jesus' name, he was filled with jealousy and had the apostles arrested. This may have seemed like a hopeless situation to the believers. But God turned this around in His favor and sent an angel to open the prison doors and set the apostles free. This miracle became a powerful testimony for the apostles and propelled the apostles to continue telling others about Jesus. How do you think you would have responded if you were sent to prison for believing in Jesus? How about if you experienced this miracle?

2 | The apostles were unhindered to preach again the following day.

²¹And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. . . . ²⁵And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” **ACTS 5:21, 25**

As soon as the angel instructed the apostles to preach about Jesus in the temple, they began doing so first thing in the morning. Even after facing persecution and prison, they were strengthened by God to immediately speak His word again. It is the first time the book of Acts records that the apostles publicly preached inside the temple, as they had initially

preached on the temple steps and in people's homes. What does Peter's response in Acts 5:29 say about whose authority we should hold on to when placed in a similar situation?

3

They filled Jerusalem with their teaching and the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. ACTS 6:7

Despite initial apprehension by the priests, the apostles did not stop preaching the gospel. Whether it was a corporate gathering in the temple or a family gathering at home, they continued to fellowship and speak about the redeeming work of Jesus. The church grew throughout Jerusalem that even some of the priests *became obedient to the faith*. From persecuting the apostles to proclaiming the gospel, they too became witnesses to the people around them. This was a fulfillment of Jesus' promise that His name would be known to different kinds of people. Why do you think the early church continued preaching the gospel despite the dangers and challenges they faced? What challenges do we face as a church today and how can we learn from the example of the early church?

APPLICATION

- Jesus encouraged His disciples to take heart even in the midst of tribulation (John 16:33). What does persecution look like in your community and world? How do you respond to this?
- What are some possible challenges we may face in preaching the gospel? How do you think these challenges can be overcome?
- Is there someone in your family or group of friends who is apprehensive about the gospel but needs to hear it? Ask God to empower you through the Holy Spirit to be His witness to them this week.

PRAYER

- Thank God that the preaching of the gospel remains unhindered to this day, despite the challenges and persecution believers may face.
- Pray that God would strengthen your faith in Him in both favorable and difficult situations. Ask God to help you trust in Him more and believe for greater things.
- Ask God for the boldness in preaching His word to the people around you. Pray that God would empower you to be His witness through your words and actions.



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