

## 6. The Apostles before the Jewish Council

Acts 5:12-42

After the deaths of Ananias and Saphira, the apostles continued to do many signs and wonders. They were meeting at a gathering place beside the Temple, and many believers were added to their number, both men and women. Many people were coming from surrounding towns bringing the sick and demon possessed, even laying them in mats in the street so that the shadow of Peter could pass over them as he walked past. And they were all healed.

At that time the high priest rose up along with the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, saying, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

When the high priest and the Jewish council gathered the next day they called for the apostles to be brought to them.—They could not find them at the prison, although the guards were there and the doors locked. They were greatly confused when a report came to them saying that the apostles were at the temple teaching others. The soldiers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

At this time the high priest questioned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are making us guilty for this man's blood."

Peter answered him, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

When they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them. At that time a Pharisee and teacher named Gamaliel stood and spoke to the Jewish council after having the apostles placed outside. He reminded them about other people who rose up claiming to be the Messiah and how each of their movements had failed. He then warned the other leaders, saying, "Keep away from these men, for if this plan is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"

The council took the advice of Gamaliel, called the apostles back inside and beat them, and commanded them to not speak in the name of Jesus.

The apostles left the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name of Jesus. They then continued teaching and preaching in his name in the temple and also house to house.

**INTRODUCTION:** (Ask a pre-story question to discuss in pairs or as a group.) **Think of a time in your life when you experienced jealousy? Why were you jealous?**

**THE STORY:** Tell the story and learn it together as a group through many repetitions.

**POST-STORY DISCUSSION:** Lead a discussion guided by these questions:

### **OUTLINE VERSION (for teacher to use when teaching)**

**Details: What happened? To see what truths we can learn.**

- **What things were happening with the church after the deaths of Ananias and Saphira? What does this teach us?**
- **What do you know about the Sadduces and their party? What about the high priest?**
- **What was the response of these religious leaders? What was not their response? Why do you think they were jealous and angry?**
- **How did God help the apostles in the midst of persecution? What did he have the apostles do? What did he not have them do? How did they respond to his instructions? What does this teach us?**
- **What were some of the different responses to the miracles God was doing through the apostles?**
- **How did the soldiers treat the apostles the second time - after they were found teaching at the Temple instead of in their cells and people? Why?**
- **What accusations did the Chief Priest make of the apostles? How were their accusations hypocritical?**
- **How did Peter respond? What was his attitude? What were his words? What can we learn from him here?**
- **How did most of the Jewish leaders respond to Peter's words? Who did God use to temper their wrath? What does this teach us about God?**
- **When the disciples were called back, beaten, and warned again not to keep speaking about Jesus, how did they respond? What does this teach us?**

**Summary: What do we learn here from the early church? What commandments or examples to follow are found in this story. Which ones still apply to us today?**

- **Share the Words of Life:** Speak God's Word clearly.
- **Expect persecution.**
- **Listen to God rather than men.**
- **Depend on the Holy Spirit.**
- **Live / speak boldly even in the midst of persecution.**
- **Build the church on the foundation of**
  - **God's Word**
  - **God's Spirit**
- **Expect God to build his church and grow it.**
- **Meet together & preach/teach-** whole church also **small groups.**

**General Application:** (discuss with whole group)

- **What type of persecution do Christians face today? What about near you?**
- **What situations can lead Christians to the kind of anger and jealousy we see in the religious leaders in this story? How can the gospel message of repentance and faith help us battle anger and jealousy?**
- **When do we value our safety and security more than the Gospel and the Great Commission? How can this story encourage us to be bold for the Gospel?**

**Personal Application:**

- **Where do you face persecution in your own life? Have you ever rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ? In what ways can the truth of the gospel help encourage you?**
- **Where do you see jealousy or anger in your life? How can the gospel message of repentance and faith help you?**

## FULL VERSION (for teacher to use for study in preparation)

Let's look at the details that we observe describing what happened in the story in order to see what truths we can learn.

- **What things were happening with the church after the deaths of Ananias and Saphira? What does this teach us?**
  - The apostles continued doing signs and wonders. Many people were coming to be healed and putting their faith in Jesus.
  - God was continuing to establish his church. He did miraculous things through the apostles as a way to back up and enforce the gospel message as a way of helping establish and strengthen the early church. It is a pattern repeated throughout Acts.
  
- **What do you know about the Sadduces and their party? What about the high priest?**
  - Sadduces were considered to be more liberal than the Pharisees, accepting only the Torah (first five books of OT) as Scripture. They did not believe in angels, supernatural gifts, the resurrection, eternal life, heaven, or hell. (See Acts 23:8)
  
- **What was the response of these religious leaders? What was not their response? Why do you think they were jealous and angry?**
  - They did not believe or even tolerate the movement of believers.
  - The high priest and Sadducees were jealous.
  - They arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.
  - Proverbs 6:34 says that jealousy makes a man furious, unmerciful. So maybe the leaders were thinking, "The crowd should be gathering around us instead of them." Feared losing reputation, honor, influence.
  - Religious leaders are filled with jealous anger because their beliefs are being challenged and they are losing power.
  
- **How did God help the apostles in the midst of persecution? What did he have the apostles do? What did he not have them do? How did they respond to his instructions? What does this teach us?**
  - They were put in prison but at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out. He did not have them hide to protect themselves. Instead he said,
  - "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." **What is the Life he was talking about?**
    - Salvation and forgiveness of sin through repentance and faith in Jesus. And all the blessings that come with it.
  - They obeyed and entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach, to do the very thing that got them arrested at first.
  - They saw how God was faithful to protect them and empower them, and instead of hiding in fear, they trusted him with their lives and immediately went right back out into public to proclaim the Good News!

- God used the very thing that the Saducees did not believe in, an angel, to rescue his people. God was teaching his disciples that he can deliver his servants from the world's oppression anytime he sees fit.
  - Scripture says that when waves of persecution or trial come, God can deliver us if he wills so. Not only were the apostles divinely delivered, they were divinely commissioned. They were to hold their ground, stand firm, and deliver the entire message of new life in Christ.
  - They were living lives of dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- **What were some of the different responses to the miracles God was doing through the apostles?**
    - Many came for help. Many others believed the message of the Gospel.
    - Others, like the soldiers and leaders, were confused or angry or fearful.
- **How did the soldiers treat the apostles the second time - after they were found teaching at the Temple instead of in their cells and people? Why?**
    - The soldiers brought them to the leaders, but not by force. The apostles had the support of the people and were afraid of being stoned by them.
- **What accusations did the Chief Priest make of the apostles? How were their accusations hypocritical?**
    - They accused them of refusing to obey their orders to not preach this new doctrine and accused them of blaming them for Jesus' death?
    - It actually was the religious leaders who said- "His blood be on us and our children" back in Matthew 27:25, but now they are refusing to take responsibility for his death.
- **How did Peter respond? What was his attitude? What were his words? What can we learn from him here?**
    - Peter answered him, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." What does it teach us that Peter said these words?
    - Peter has great courage to obey God instead of fearing man because he knows what is true. He is willing to stake his life on the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he was called by God to offer people repentance and forgiveness of sins through Jesus.
    - In the face of danger and opposition, they did not negotiate or compromise with the high priest for the sake of their own personal comfort or even for their lives.
    - He also claims to be a witness to these things along with the Holy Spirit. We see that the Holy spirit is given to those who obey him. **We know that it is by grace through faith that we become believers and now it says we get the Holy Spirit for those who obey. How can we better understand this?**
      - For those who have truly placed their faith in Jesus it will lead to obedience. Faith leads to obedience. So if you do not have any

obedience, then it may show you that you never truly placed your faith in Jesus. Our life should show a sort of change through our faith.

- Ephesians 1:13 tells us when we believed in Jesus we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.
- **How did most of the Jewish leaders respond to Peter's words? Who did God use to temper their wrath? What does this teach us about God?**
  - They were angry and wanted to kill them. But then a respected religious leader named Gamaliel stood up and spoke to them, telling them, "Keep away from these men, for if this plan is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!"
  - God used Gamaliel to speak wisdom and calm the leaders down. We see he did it by putting Peter and the apostles outside why he did this. He was not trying to shame the leaders in front of the apostles but corrected them separately
  - Gamaliel was wise enough to know and understand that God's plans will never fail. He is faithful and will fulfill his promises.
- **When the disciples were called back, beaten, and warned again not to keep speaking about Jesus, how did they respond? What does this teach us?**
  - They rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Christ. They ignored the leaders' threats and continued teaching in the name of Jesus, obeying God rather than men.
  - Knowing Christ was so precious to them that the disciples were willing to be beaten instead of compromising on the truth of the gospel. They suffered their beatings with deep joy of the chance to serve Jesus, the Savior to whom they owed their very lives.
  - Matthew 5:10 - "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake"

**Summary: What do we learn here from the early church? What commandments or examples to follow are found in this story. Which ones still apply to us today?**

- **Share the Words of Life:** Speak God's Word clearly. The angel commands and tells them, "**Go and stand in the temple and speak** to the people all the words of this Life."
  - Not only were the apostles **divinely delivered**, they were **divinely commissioned**. They were to hold their ground, stand firm, and deliver the entire message of new life in Christ.
- **Expect persecution.** Satan and the world will always resist the Spirit led proclamation of and living out of the Word of God.
- **Listen to God rather than men.**
- **Depend on the Holy Spirit.**
- **Live / speak boldly even in the midst of persecution.**
- **Build the church on the foundation of**
  - **God's Word**

- **God's Spirit**
- **Expect God to build his church and grow it.**
- **Meet together & preach/teach-** both as whole church but also in **small groups** in our homes.

**General Application:** (discuss with whole group)

- **What type of persecution do Christians face today? What about near you?**
- **What situations can lead Christians to the kind of anger and jealousy we see in the religious leaders in this story? How can the gospel message of repentance and faith help us battle anger and jealousy?**
  - Jealousy when visiting pastor seems to get a greater response than yours has done for years.
  - Comparison with other peoples' ministries, missions, churches.
  - Seeing other pastor being better treated by his congregation - better pay, giving a car or school fees.
  - Comparison of education or title.
  - Others get opportunities in ministry that I don't get
- The Gospel helps! The disciples were stand firm and not be jealous **because of the object of their faith, Jesus.** They knew that Jesus had taken the anger of people on himself and also the jealousy already. They were following Christ....and in following Christ they experienced persecution.
- **When do we value our safety and security more than the Gospel and the Great Commission? How can this story encourage us to be bold for the Gospel?**

**Personal Application:**

- **Where do you face persecution in your own life? Have you ever rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ? In what ways can the truth of the gospel help encourage you?**
- **Where do you see jealousy or anger in your life? How can the gospel message of repentance and faith help you?**