



WARM-UP

We recommend you choose 1 or 2 of the following questions.

Share a high and a low from the past week.

Can you name one person that you've envied or been jealous of? How did that jealousy make you feel?

Share an example of something bold that you have done, want to do, or have seen done.

WORD

"The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life." At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.



WORD CONTINUED...

Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. 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 furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: 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. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah."

- Acts 5:12-42 (NIV)



INTRODUCTION

The apostles continue doing many signs and wonders among the people to the point that crowds from surrounding towns and villages are bringing their sick and tormented to Jerusalem to be healed. The high priest and his associates are filled with jealousy at all the apostles are doing and have them jailed, but during the night God sends an angel to set them free. The angel commands them to return to the temple the next morning in order to continue teaching the people about Jesus (12-20).

The next morning the high priest calls together the Sanhedrin (the ruling body of Israel consisting of all the elders of Israel), and sends for the apostles to be brought from prison. No trace of the apostles is found in jail, despite the prison being securely locked and guarded. Someone reports that the apostles that they'd put in prison the night before were back at the temple teaching people about Jesus. When re-arrested by the priests and accused of disobeying their orders not to teach in the name of Jesus, Peter responds by boldly reaffirming their commitment to obey God over man (see 4:18; 21-32).

The priests are furious and want to kill the apostles, but one of their council members, Gamaliel (vs. 33-39) advises them to leave the apostles alone, pointing out that several other similar groups had failed after the death of their leaders. He reasoned that if this movement was the work of men, it would fail like the others, but if it was truly the work of God, they would only be fighting against God and nothing they could do would stop it. They heed Gamaliel and after beating the apostles and ordering them not to speak in the name of Jesus, they release them. The apostles rejoice that God counted them worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus and continue to teach in the name of Jesus publicly and from house to house (33-42).

DISCUSSION

1. Read vs.1, 3-4. Why do you think the religious leaders arrested Peter and John? How do you think the other believers felt when Peter and John got arrested?



DISCUSSION CONTINUED...

2. How did the priests respond to what the apostles were doing?
3. Why do you think the angel ordered the apostles to return to the temple and tell people about Jesus? (v.20)
4. Read verses 21-32. What did Peter declare about Jesus? (30-32)
5. Read verses 33-42. Why do you think the disciples rejoiced about being considered worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus? (40-41)

APPLICATION

1. How would you feel if you were sent to jail for your belief in God? How would you respond?
2. Is there anywhere in your life where your faith currently feels threatened or restricted? How should you respond?
3. What steps can you take to be a bolder witness for Jesus? What would help you respond better to pressure and opposition against sharing your faith?

PRAYER

Ask God to show you who around you might be open to God's help.

Ask God to move powerfully when you pray for people.



PRAYER CONTINUED...

Ask God for boldness to respond to the opportunities to share Jesus, whether through talking about Jesus, praying for someone's need, or reaching out through a simple act of kindness.