

# **“Persecuted For The Name Of Jesus”**

## **Acts 5:16-41**

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**Teaching Aim:** To examine the circumstances surrounding the second arrest and subsequent trial, this time of all twelve apostles. To recognize the unusual means in which the apostles were released from prison. To see the boldness they demonstrated as they returned to the temple and taught in the name of Jesus. To understand it is more important to obey God than the commands of evil men. To realize there will be times in life when we will have to suffer for our belief in Christ.

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)**

#### **Part I: The arrest and angelic release of the apostles from prison (Acts 5:16-23)**

1. What remarkable news do we find in **verse 16**? Was their prayer from **Acts 4:23-31** answered? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your personal prayer life? If someone were to ask you, *“How important is prayer to you?”*, what would your answer be?
  
2. Is it possible for demons to indwell true believers today (**vs. 16**)? (See **1 John 4:4**) Is it possible for demons to harass or torment true believers today? Have you ever experienced this? Why should Christians be careful as to what they allow into their houses? What are some ways that Christians unknowingly can open the door to demonic activity?
  
3. Shouldn’t the religious leaders have been praising God for the miraculous healing of people and the delivery of some from being tormented by unclean spirits? Why do you think the high priest and the Sadducees were filled with anger (**vs. 17**)? What can we learn about the spirituality of these men from their reaction? What did the religious leaders do as a result of their anger (**vs. 18**)? Note: This was the second time Peter and John were arrested, but the first for the other ten apostles.
  
4. Who released the apostles from prison that night (**vs. 19**)? In light of the Sadducees belief that there were no angels, what makes this story so humorous? What message did the angel bring to the now free apostles (**vs. 20**)? Why would obeying this order test their faith? (See **Acts 5:40**) According to **verse 21a**, how did the apostles respond to the angel’s directive?

5. As the high priest and the council met in the morning, did they have any idea of what had happened the previous night (**vs. 21b**)? What was their assumption? The religious leaders had had enough of Jesus and His apostles. Why? Sadly, church history shows a disturbing pattern: the most hostile people toward the purity of the gospel have been seminary professors and religious leaders. How has Satan used these religious leaders to destroy once faithful Bible Colleges, Seminaries, and churches? Why should church leaders be extra cautious in selecting their pastoral candidates?
  
6. What do you think the guard's reaction was when the prison cell was found empty (**vv. 22 & 23**)? Why would the empty cell be especially alarming to the guard (or guards) who were on duty?

## **Part II: The trial of the apostles and their subsequent punishment (Acts 5:24-33)**

1. How did the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests respond to the news that the apostles were gone (**vs. 24**)? Do you think the word "*shocked*" would describe them? What news arrived as "*they wondered what the outcome would be*" (**vs. 25**)? In **chapter 4** the apostles had prayed for boldness. Do we find that God had answered that prayer in **verse 25**? If so, how?
  
2. The religious leaders were furious. What made the captain and his officers act so cautiously as they went to the temple complex to retrieve the twelve apostles (**vs. 26**)? What stopped them from being violent? Do you think they would have been violent otherwise?
  
3. What charge did the high priest bring against the apostles in **verses 27 & 28**? Today many Christians seem to think the word "*doctrine*" is a bad word. Why? What is the meaning of the word doctrine? Why should every Christian do their best to be on solid ground doctrinally? What doctrine was the high priest so upset at? (See **Acts 4:1-4**)

4. The religious leaders were also upset about something else in **verse 28b**, what was it? Were the religious leaders responsible for the shedding of the blood of Jesus? (See **Matt. 27:20-25**) In reality, who spoke an oath bringing guilt upon themselves and their descendants?
  
5. How did Peter and the others respond to the charges brought against them (**vs. 29**)? What Great Commission had Jesus given to His apostles? (See **Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8**) Scripture commands us to obey the civil authorities. (See **Rom. 12:1-7; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14**) There are only two exceptions to this: 1) We are to obey the governing authorities unless they command us to do something that God forbids, or 2) They forbid us from doing something that God commands. Can you think of a contemporary example of each?
  
6. In **verse 30**, Peter & the other apostles identified themselves with the Jews. What is the significance of Jesus being “*murdered by hanging on a tree*?” (See **Deut. 21:22-23; Gal. 3:13**) Why was it imperative that Jesus be crucified and not killed in any other way?
  
7. According to **verse 30** who was responsible for raising Jesus from the dead? In **verse 31**, Peter told the religious leaders that God had exalted [*Jesus*] to His right hand. What is the significance of the ascension of Christ to this position? (See **Acts 1:9-11**) What did Jesus make available once He finished His work of redemption on earth and ascended into heaven to the right hand of God the Father (**vs. 31b**)? Have you repented of your sin and received Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not do so right now in prayer?
  
8. What did the apostles boldly declare to the religious leaders in **verse 32**? How had God empowered the apostles? (See **John 15:26-27**) How did the religious leaders respond to the resistance of the apostles (**vs. 33**)? What did they plan to do as a result?

### **Part III: The intervention of Gamaliel and punishment that followed (Acts 5:34-42)**

1. At just the moment that it looked like the apostles were going to suffer the same fate as their Lord, an individual stood up and addressed the council. Who was this man (**vs. 34**)? What do we know about this individual from history? What was the motive behind his intervention? What famous individual was a disciple of this teacher? (See **Acts 22:1-3**)

2. How do we see the cooler head of Gamaliel change the direction (**vs. 35**)? What was he encouraging the Sanhedrin to do? Why is it always wise to slow down and think before doing something rash? What two men did Gamaliel use as examples of insurrections that failed? What do we know about these two men from history (**vv. 36 & 37**)? (See Commentaries) What is an insurrection?
  
3. What advice did Gamaliel offer in **verses 38-39**? Does Gamaliel's counsel always hold true? How about in the case of Islam, Hinduism and even some Christian cults like the Mormonism? How did God use Gamaliel's advice save the lives of the apostles?
  
4. If Gamaliel really was sincere about not wanting to fight against God, why didn't he investigate the claims of Jesus in more detail? Wasn't this his chance? Note: Gamaliel wasn't sincere, his motive was that he didn't want to have trouble with the Jewish people, and he didn't want trouble with Rome. Did Gamaliel's disciple Saul of Tarsus have the same cool head as his teacher? (See **Acts 22:4**) What transformed Saul? (See **Acts 9:1-9**)
  
5. How did the council respond to Gamaliel's advice (**vs. 40**)? Instead of executing the apostles like they originally intended, what plan did they come up with instead? The NIV (New International Version) of the Bible interprets the word "*beaten*" in **verse 40** as "*flogged*." How severe of a punishment was a flogging? (See **Deut. 25:1-3; John 19:1; 2 Cor. 11:24**) Who else suffered flogging (or scourging)?
  
6. The experience and beating of the apostles accomplished two unexpected results: 1) It brought the apostles deep joy in knowing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus; and 2) It increased their zeal to reach others for Christ while there was still time. Are you joyful when you have to suffer (**vs. 41**)? Why or why not? Peter came to understand suffering in a very personal way. What can we learn about this topic from **1 Peter 4:12-16**?

7. Following the severe beating and threats from the Sanhedrin, how did the apostles respond in their ministry (**vs. 42**)? What is keeping you from sharing the Gospel (or Good News) of Jesus Christ with others? What steps will you commit to taking in order to become a stronger Christian and a better witness for Christ?

**MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- The high priest and the Sadducees were enraged at the apostles for teaching about the resurrected Jesus and for doing miracles in His name.
- People will be angry at you today when you teach the whole counsel of God and His Word.
- The Sadducees had the apostles arrested, and even though they denied the existence of angels, it was an angel of God who released the apostles from prison.
- Although commanded not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus anymore, the apostles realized that it is more important to obey God than the commands of evil men.
- The apostles continued to preach Jesus, no matter what the consequences.
- The apostles were severely beaten, but rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.
- As Christians, we are called to die to self and live for Christ.