

## v (12) Power shown through miracles and unity.

Miracles done- reputation for purity- church multiplied – **expectation of the Lord working**

### v.17 **They were filled with indignation:**

v.18 **Put them in the common prison:** Seemingly, this included all the apostles (**on the apostles**). It wasn't the first time that Peter and John had been imprisoned (Acts 4:3).

## v (19-20) Angelic intervention frees the apostles.

a. **An angel of the Lord opened the prison doors:** This was easy for God to arrange. Angels are *all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation* (Hebrews 1:14). God sent forth this angel *to minister for* the apostles. Locked doors are nothing for God or those who He uses.

Their rescue from prison was wonderful, but for a purpose – so they could continue their work. God didn't set them free primarily for their safety or comfort. They were set free for a reason; and after this they were not always delivered.

The later history of these apostles – and others associated with them in the early church – shows that sometimes God delivers by a miracle, sometimes He does not. According to fairly reliable church history and tradition, miraculous angels did not always deliver them.

- Matthew was beheaded with a sword.
- Mark died in Alexandria after being dragged through the streets of the city.
- Luke was hanged on an olive tree in Greece.
- John died a natural death, but they unsuccessfully tried to boil him in oil.
- Peter was crucified upside-down in Rome.
- James was beheaded in Jerusalem.
- James the Less was thrown from a height then beaten with clubs.

- Philip was hanged.
- Bartholomew was whipped and beaten until death.
- Andrew was crucified and preached at the top of his voice to his persecutors until he died.
- Thomas was run through with a spear.
- Jude was killed with the arrows of an executioner.
- Matthias was stoned and then beheaded – as was Barnabas.
- Paul was beheaded in Rome.

This reminds us that we should trust God for miraculous things and wish to see them more and more; but knowing that He also has a purpose when He does *not* deliver with a miraculous hand. We also see that we, like the apostles, are set free for a purpose – not merely to live for ourselves.

**v.21 They went to the most public place they could (the temple), and as soon as they could (early in the morning).**

**v.22-23 They returned and reported:** There is humor in all of this. The religious establishment solemnly gathers to deal with the troublemakers who teach about Jesus. They intimidate them with a prison stay, and bring them to **the council** to put them in the proper place. Yet when the officers looked they saw the prison door as it should be, the guards as they should be, but no apostles in the cell.

**V.24 They wondered what the outcome would be:** At this point the religious leaders had to wonder just what they were dealing with. There was the repeated evidence of supernatural power at work with the followers of Jesus.

**v.26 The captain went with the officers and brought them without violence:** The apostles were soon arrested again. It was perhaps tempting for them to think that since they were miraculously released that God would keep them from being arrested again, but that wasn't the case.

When the apostles went back into custody, they knew how easy it would be for God to release them again if it pleased Him to do so. Their past experience of the power of God had filled them with faith for the present

v.26 They **feared the people**, but they did not fear God who clearly showed that He was at work among the disciples.

## 5. (27-28) The accusation against the apostles.

**Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?** They had commanded Peter and John to no longer teach in the name of Jesus ([Acts 4:17-18](#)). Yet Peter and John openly told them that they would continue, in obedience to God ([Acts 4:19-20](#)).

c. **You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine:** The accusation of the high priest was a wonderful testimony to the effectiveness of the message preached by the apostles. Their message had **filled Jerusalem**.

d. **Intend to bring this Man's blood on us:** By calling Jesus **this Man**, the religious leaders were obviously avoiding the name *Jesus*, but they could not avoid the power of Jesus; it stared them right in the face.

i. The charge that the apostles did **intend to bring this Man's blood upon us** is interesting. The high priest no doubt meant that the apostles intended to hold the Jewish leaders responsible, in some measure, for the execution of Jesus (as in [Acts 2:23](#)). Yet, we know that the apostles must have desired for the high priest and the other Jewish leaders to come to faith in Jesus, even as some other priests did ([Acts 6:7](#)). For certain, the apostles wanted to **bring** the covering, cleansing blood of Jesus upon the high priest and others in the council.

## (29-32) The testimony of the apostles before the Sanhedrin.

a. **We ought to obey God rather than men:** This was a testimony of *great boldness*, in contrast to the Sanhedrin, who were more concerned about man's opinion than God's opinion.

We should obey rulers, but not when they contradict God:

b. **The God of our fathers raised up Jesus:** This was a testimony *faithful* to the foundation of the Christian faith. Peter spoke of:

- Man's guilt (**Jesus whom you murdered**).
- Jesus' death (**hanging on a tree**).
- Jesus' resurrection (**Him God exalted to His right hand**).
- Man's responsibility to respond (**to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins**).

Peter referred to the cross as a **tree** because he drew an association from Deuteronomy 21:22-23, where it says that a person hanged from a tree is cursed by God. Peter brought attention to the magnitude of their rejection of Jesus, pointing out that they killed Him in the worst way possible, both from a Roman perspective (the cross) and a Jewish perspective (the **tree** association).

ii. “While *xylon* [tree] was used in antiquity and in the LXX variously for ‘a tree,’ ‘wood’ of any kind, ‘a pole,’ and various objects made of wood, including ‘a gallows,’ it is also used in the NT for the cross of Jesus.” (Longenecker)

c. **We are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit**: This was a *reliable* testimony, because it was based on eyewitness testimony, which was also confirmed by God. And more than that, witnesses of the gospel by recounting these things

v. (33) **They were furious: why do we seek the world’s approval?**

“Luke graphically describes them as ‘being sawn asunder (in heart).’” (Williams)

“Since they were unable to contend with the disciples on the level of truth, they resorted to naked authority and force. First, threats. Second, a beating. Ultimately, death.” (Boice)

v (34-39) **Gamaliel’s advice to the Sanhedrin.**

a. **A Pharisee named Gamaliel**: This was the grandson of the esteemed Hillel, the founder of Israel’s strongest school of religion. **Gamaliel** was given the title *Rabban* (“our teacher”), which was a step above the title *Rab* (“teacher”) or *Rabbi* (“my teacher”).

i. The Mishnah wrote of **Gamaliel**: “Since Rabban Gamaliel the elder died there has been no more reverence for the law; and purity and abstinence died out at the same time.”

ii. Significantly, Gamaliel was a **Pharisee**. Though the Sadducees had more political power (Acts 5:17), it was politically foolish for the Sadducees to ask the Romans to execute the apostles without support from the Pharisees.

c. **If this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest you even be found to fight against God**: Gamaliel spoke for himself and not for God. There are many movements that may be considered successful in the sight of man, but are against God’s truth. Success is not the ultimate measure of truth.

**When they had called for the apostles and beaten them:** The leaders thought they could intimidate and discourage the apostles with a beating. Instead, they left **rejoicing**. They were not **rejoicing** that they suffered, but that they **were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name**. It was a privilege to be associated with Jesus in any circumstance, even to **suffer shame**.

**Beaten** can also be translated *skinned*; the beating they received stripped the skin off of their backs. “It was no soft option; people were known to die from it, even if this was exceptional. It was meant to be a serious lesson to offenders.” (Marshall)

This challenges each of us as followers of Jesus. They continued where we may have stopped. We often find the threat of social rejection enough to make us keep quiet about who Jesus is and what He did for us. We need to have the apostles’ courage and determination to stand firm for Jesus Christ.

ii. Spurgeon spoke of this kind of bold heart: *“Now, I charge every Christian here to be speaking boldly in Christ’s name, according as he has opportunity, and especially to take care of this tendency of our flesh to be afraid; which leads practically to endeavours to get off easily and to save ourselves from trouble. Fear not; be brave for Christ. Live bravely for him who died lovingly for you.”*

Your personal witness/testimony

Can you articulate how you came to Christ?

Can you effectively give someone the gospel?

- *Rom 3:10 (NKJV) As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one;*
- *Rom 3:23 (NKJV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
- *Rom 6:23 (NKJV) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- *Rom 10: 9 (NKJV) 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*