

## Acts Part 13 – Wonderful Words of Life

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Tuesday, November 24, 2015

### **Acts 5:17-26<sup>1</sup>**

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

Last week we looked at verses 12-18 which dealt with the continuing acts of the Holy Ghost through his Apostles. We saw the miraculous healing power given to Peter and how people from all regions around Jerusalem were bringing in the sick to be healed. We also looked at 5 qualities of the early New Testament Church and discussed how those same qualities should be seen in our current New Testament Church. We finished up by discussing how even though there were a lot of healings that took place, not everyone that was healed trusted Jesus as Savior.

So we pick up tonight with where we left off las Wednesday with the religious leaders, specifically the Sadducees, getting upset again at the Apostles.

**17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,**

And, so, we see once again persecution coming from outside the Church. These so-called “religious leaders” were the ones doing the persecuting. They were so jealous of the power the Apostles had and the crowds they were gathering that they had to do something to try and stop it. **were filled with indignation** that word “indignation” means “with zealous envy and jealousy.”

Again, the Sadducees are specifically mentioned here. These guys were so upset at what the Apostles were teaching that they constantly watched them to try and find any excuse to have them stopped. It's too bad they didn't spend more time trying to find out the truth about Jesus instead of trying to keep others from telling people about him. But that is the way these religious nuts work.

Remember, the Sadducees did not believe in several things. We are told this later on in **Acts 23:6-8: But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.**

So the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead or angels or spirits. All of this comes into play when we are trying to understand why they did the things that they did.

**18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.**

So the Sadducees have the Apostles arrested again and this time they lock them up in the common prison. The common prison was the public prison, not a private holding room like they were in the last time. They have put them with the general population. This is where more hardened criminals were kept. There probably would have been murderers, rapist, thieves, and all assortment of criminals there. It was more secure and guarded. I'm sure they put them in this prison both for safe keeping and to humiliate them. Perhaps they hoped one of the dangerous prisoners would cause them harm while in there?

**19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,**

**Angel of the Lord** – we are not told a specific name for this angel other than an angel of the Lord. It could have been a general messenger angel that was sent by God to release the Apostles from prison. God could have used any means he wanted to release these men. Just as he did with Paul and Silas when they were in prison, he caused an earthquake and shook the prison to release them, but in this case he sends an actual angel to do the job and there could be a very good reason:

I like what John MacArthur says about why God sent an angel to release the Apostles, let me read you this from a sermon he preached back in 1972<sup>2</sup>:

This is the most defiant kind of miracle. You see God didn't use an earthquake and I'll tell you why. The Sadducees had two theological doctrines that set them apart. Number one they did not believe in a resurrection. What was it that the disciples were preaching all over everywhere? The resurrection. That's what burned them so much see. There was a second thing they didn't believe in and that was angels. They had always taught that there were no angels, so God very defiantly says okay, "Angel, show them." So this angel comes down and opens up the place and lets them out. And so the very being they denied God defiantly used to release to preach the very doctrine they didn't believe. Now that's what's known as defiance. And so the angel lets them out.

I think that is a pretty good explanation.

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur - The Early Church Pattern for Evangelism, Part 2

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

It is very significant that the angel instructs them to go back to the scene of the crime and speak. Most people would have preferred to go into hiding after something like that. I mean, if you escape from prison you don't normally go back to the place you were arrested and start public speaking!

But the Lord certainly works in mysterious ways and unlike most Christians today, the early believers were not afraid to share the Gospel despite the trouble it may cause them.

The angel tells them to speak "all the words of this life." What is he referring to? Simple, the life is in Jesus Christ. Apart from Christ we are all dead in our sins. He is the giver of life eternal. The teaching of the Gospel is the teaching of the good news that Christ came to save us from eternal death and to give us eternal life!

Of all of the Apostles, Peter understood the words of life more than most. Listen to what he said to Jesus when Jesus asked them if they would go away like the rest of the crowd that thought it was too hard to follow him:

**John 6:67-69:** Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Then in the next chapter of John, Jesus Himself says this: **John 7:37-38:** In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

I think Phillip Bliss captures the thought perfectly in the Hymn he wrote in 1874, I think everyone knows it, sing this with me:

### Wonderful Words of Life<sup>3</sup>

1. Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of life,  
Let me more of their beauty see, Wonderful words of life;  
Words of life and beauty, Teach me faith and duty.

**Refrain:** Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life;  
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of life.

2. Christ, the blessed One, gives to all, Wonderful words of life;  
Sinner, list to the loving call, Wonderful words of life;  
All so freely given, Wooing us to heaven.
3. Sweetly echo the Gospel call, Wonderful words of life;  
Offer pardon and peace to all, Wonderful words of life;  
Jesus, only Savior, Sanctify us forever.

So, the words of life the Apostles were instructed to speak is of the life that only Jesus Christ can give.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

The Apostles do exactly as the angel instructed, return to the scene of the crime and began speaking the words of life.

Meanwhile the high priest and the Sanhedrin court was assembling for trial. They were ready for a court case so they could decide what to do with their prisoners. They send a guard to retrieve them from jail.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

Well obviously when the angel of the Lord released the prisoners no one in the prison was aware of it. Again, another miracle by God that they escaped without even being seen. Much like we will see in Acts 12 when Peter is again arrested and even though he was chained between two soldiers and there were other soldiers guarding the outside of his cell, the angel of the Lord frees Peter without them even knowing.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

This verse may be slightly confusing when you read it mainly because of that word "doubted." But what it is saying is that these men; the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests were **perplexed** about what this was going to result in. They are realizing that they are dealing with something much bigger than just a couple of preachers stirring up trouble.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Wow, wouldn't you have liked to been a fly on the wall in that room? I'll bet these people were floored to hear that their prisoners were free and had went back to doing what they were doing when they arrested them. I mean that would be like a car thief escaping from prison and the police go back to where they arrested him and find him trying to steal another car.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

So they tread very lightly here. They know this is going to be big. Word has already gotten out about what has happened many people are gathered in the Temple listening to the preachers, so they must be very careful in how they re-arrest them. They certainly do not want to cause a riot or even worse, be stoned to death for going against these men of God. Things could get out of hand quick.

Bringing them **without violence** would mean that they probably took them aside and talked to them and asked them to please come and explain what is going on. They could not lay their hands on them like they did the first time.

<sup>3</sup> Phillip Bliss – Wonderful Words of Life, 1874 (Public Domain)