

1. The Release From Prison: **Freed and Established to Speak the Word of Life**

- a. It wasn't an escape, it was a release
  - i. “Angel of the LORD”
    1. This is a label of authority, one sent in the place of YHWH
    2. Most often it is seen in the covenant promise/fulfillment points of history
  - ii. The angel ‘opened the doors’ and led them out
    1. Authority and ability
    2. This is the same word used of the officers who led the apostles to the jail and will come later to ‘lead them out’
  - iii. He came by night
    1. Under the cover of darkness, unseen, unknown, quietly
    2. God is not desiring to bombastically display power in the way the world thinks
- b. They were given orders from “the LORD”, through His messenger
  - i. Go!
    1. Freedom comes with commands – absolute freedom doesn't exist
    2. This release wasn't just to go into freedom, but into a different bondage
      - a. It was to go and complete the task which Christ Jesus had given to them
      - b. It was to do the following:
        - ii. Speak!
          1. They were not to go into hiding, to run away in their freedom
          2. This speaking was particular in its locale, its audience, its content, and its goal
            - a. Locale: in the Temple
              - i. Where they had just been arrested
            - b. Audience: to the people
              - i. They were to speak to the worshippers in the Temple
              - ii. Those who were seeking the Lord
            - c. Content: Words of this life
              - i. They were not to speak out against the leadership of the Temple, the Sanhedrin, the authorities, etc.
              - ii. They were not to defend their righteousness pertaining to their unjust treatment
              - iii. They were to speak the good news of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection life, authority and impending return
                1. They were to proclaim hope to the oppressed, the reality that all men are dead in sin and that Jesus Christ has come to regenerate dead hearts
            - d. Goal: Life!
              - i. “This” life
                1. The life of true freedom and fearlessness in the face of opposition (freed from public prison)
                2. The life of true peace and inner rest (they were not dominated by hatred or fear or anger, but of hope in Christ Jesus)
                3. The life of reconciliation with God (an angel was sent to vindicate their cause as God's cause)
  3. The hope of the teaching and speaking was that people would believe and live!
    - a. Reminiscent of the Valley of dry bones – preaching in the Spirit of God brought dead bones to life!
    - b. Ezekiel 37:1-14
  - iii. Note the two commands given in the midst of being treated unjustly

1. They are not to fight, or march, or work to overturn the government, but to go and speak the gospel of life
  2. They are “to teach” what this life in Christ is and the promise for “all who call upon the name of the Lord”
  - c. These orders are given in the midst of a promise
    - i. **“Having been firmly established” (to stand)**
    - ii. This is a *passive* aorist participle, “being caused to stand”
      1. The emphasis is not on the apostles ability to stand firm, to establish themselves in this subversive endeavor, but upon someone else empowering their stand
      2. It is, therefore, a promise pronounced by the angel that the Spirit of God would “stand them up” in the Temple, would “establish” them there to speak the words of His life
    - iii. When they go and speak, they will go and speak in the authority and power of the LORD who has established them firmly for such a purpose
      1. No enemy can thwart them, even a prison door or a corrupt judicial system
      2. “I will always be with you.” (Matt 28:20) & “Do not be anxious...for the HS will teach you what to say in that very hour.” (Luke 12:12)
  - d. They trusted the Lord and obeyed the orders in a way that was sure to bring wrath
    - i. As soon as dawn arrived
      1. This is when the Temple would have been opened for the morning sacrifice
    - ii. They went and they were teaching in the Temple
      1. Back to Solomon’s Portico
        - a. Having been publicly thrown in prison, they were now publicly proclaiming the words of this life in Christ Jesus
2. The Discovery of Their Release: **The Authority of the Establishing Christ Jesus Revealed Gently**
    - a. The Sanhedrin gathers the whole leadership of Israel
    - b. They send to get the apostles from prison
    - c. The apostles have disappeared
      - i. The doors were shut tightly
      - ii. The guards were at the door at attention
      - iii. When the doors were opened, they were gone!
    - d. They are “at a loss” about “what this might mean” when they find that they have disappeared
    - e. The apostles are reported as “taking their stand, teaching the people in the Temple”
    - f. The apostles are “led out” by the officers
      - i. Without violence
      - ii. The officers still feared that the people would start throwing rocks at them
        1. The people still respected the apostles and the teaching
        2. The leadership, however, were stung by the accusation that they were on the wrong side of God by crucifying Jesus
3. The Interrogation and Defense: **The Words of Life are the Words of the Triumph of Jesus**
    - a. The authorities “**establish**” them in their midst for judgment: This is an authority showdown.
    - b. Authorities opposed to the authority of Christ will judge you to be in the wrong (florist in WA)
      - i. “Did we not command you?”
        1. Have you questioned our authority over you?!
        2. “command” is used twice, once verbally and once nominally
          - a. The emphasis is on the authority and significance of their command
      - ii. “not to teach *on the basis* of this name?”
        1. First, they won’t even say Jesus’ name.
        2. Secondly, they understand that Jesus is the claimed authority
          - a. “on the basis” is a preposition of authority



2. Enemy kings are hung from trees to show their absolute animosity towards God
- b. Thus, the apostles state that the Sanhedrin and leadership of Israel deemed Jesus an enemy king, opposed to God and Israel
- c. Peter, then, is accusing them of working against the God of the covenant, the God of their fathers, the God of the Exodus and the nation of Israel because He is the God who spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the covenant receivers
  - i. “The Christian faith is the fulfillment, not the contradiction of Judaism, if Judaism is rightly understood.” (C.K. Barrett)
- iii. They speak the truth that God exalted Jesus over all (supreme authority)
  1. This exaltation made Him the prince (ruler) of Israel and the Savior (Champion) of Israel
    - a. Peter analogizes the OT saints here, particularly the Judges, making Jesus the great Savior-Judge of Israel
      - i. Like Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson
      - ii. One who redeems His people from the oppression and slavery of their foes
    - b. He calls to mind Moses and David, the princes and champions who were forerunning types of the Greater Prince and Savior who could grant repentance and forgiveness from sins
    - c. Remember the Ezekiel-like prophetic Word of Life, too
      - i. What we see here is that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the ancient types – the Ruler over Rulers, the Judge over Judges, the Savior over Saviors
      - ii. For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells
  2. This greater Messianic salvation, redemption, and freedom is from the foe of sin and the consequent wrath of God
    - a. It is Jesus who grants
    - b. He grants repentance
    - c. He grants forgiveness
  3. Jesus has been given more authority than any king of Israel, any priest of Israel, and any prophet of Israel
    - a. He has the power to change a heart, from dead stone, dry bones, to living flesh by the gift of repentance
    - b. He has the power to forgive sins
- iv. There is the offer of grace to those who repent and come to Jesus as the Christ
  1. Even with the conviction above, there is the offer of mercy and grace
  2. The apostles testify to Christ Jesus’ authority to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins
    - a. They witness the resurrection as the evidence of this
  3. They claim that the Holy Spirit is with those who are “persuaded of His rule”
    - a. Compound word: “persuade + rule”, commonly translated “obey”
    - b. Yet, this obedience is the carrying out of a command as one who is persuaded of the authority of the commander
  4. In other words, it’s as if Peter is saying, “We aren’t persuaded that your commands are the commands of God, but we are certainly persuaded that Jesus’ commands are the commands of God...and He gives the Holy Spirit to all who come to Him...even to you if you would repent.”
- d. The leaders become murderous at hearing these accusations
  - i. So, accusing the apostles of “determining” to “bring his blood on us”, they now are “determining” to “kill them”

1. Do you see the irony, the suppression of truth, the inconsistency of principle here?
    - ii. Because they were “cut to the quick”
      1. In other words, these words cut them deep in the heart
        - a. Their “inner thoughts and motives” was laid bare by these words
        - b. This offer of grace through Jesus infuriated them to violence
    - iii. **How do you respond when God’s Word lays bare your heart and actions?**
  - e. God uses opposing systems and people to work wisdom
    - i. Gamaliel prophetically stops their violence
    - ii. Gamaliel was Paul’s rabbi
      1. This is how we know this part of the story...Paul was probably there
      2. We see the reasoned, thoughtful, and consistent application of wisdom from Gamaliel, and his influence, by God’s grace, cannot be denied in the later apostle
    - iii. There is a deliberate contrast between the High Priest and his Sadducee party and this man, Gamaliel, who is a Pharisee
      1. Both sections begin with “rising up” and mentioning their particular sect
      2. God uses these political/social divisions to work His own will
    - iv. He provides wise advice about previous so-called Messiahs
      1. Previous ‘messiahs’ had “persuaded followers” who scattered at their deaths
    - v. He concludes that they ought to let God handle these followers, whom he assumes will scatter as well
      1. Because their cause will fail it is only of men
      2. If it is from God, however, you don’t want to be on the wrong side of that argument
    - vi. His advice, however, is fatalistic and pragmatic, not a serious examination of the truth
      1. He persuades the leadership not to kill the apostles, but to ‘depart from them’ and to ‘loose them’, but he does not repent of executing Jesus.
      2. So they beat the apostles and warned them to stop teaching on the basis of the name of Jesus, then released them.
4. Joy of the Persecuted: **This Life is Union With the Suffering and Triumphant Christ**
- a. Being oppressed and persecuted for the sake of the gospel is cause for joy
    - i. The apostles left this beating rejoicing
    - ii. They rejoiced because their suffering was evidence to them that God counted them worthy to be dishonored
  - b. This dishonor was sharing in the life of Christ
    - i. ὑπερ – “in the place of”
    - ii. Jesus views your persecution as His own! He is with you and for you and will never leave you in it.
    - iii. It is a participation in fullness, just as Jesus’ life is granted to you, you also have received His dishonor...and that is a glorious thing b/c of resurrection and glory
  - c. They were not ceasing to teach and “announce”, that Jesus is the Messiah
    - i. First use of the word, “εὐαγγελιζῶ”, or “announcing the good news” (evangelism)
    - ii. Every day and everywhere (Temple, public, homes, private)

Do not be afraid, O Church, when the world bears its teeth at you for sharing the gospel. It bore its teeth at your Master, too. Go and speak the words of this life. Work for the wholeness of the afflicted, tell the truth of guilt and hope in the resurrected and reigning Jesus. You have been established, not by your righteousness, but by His. You are established not in your own power, but in His. You will be vindicated. He who lives, loves you and chose you. He is building His Church, and the gates of Hell cannot overcome it.