

Week 6: Strength in Persecution

Here on Earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world. John 16:33

Read:

Acts 5:17-42

Anytime Jesus or his disciples began teaching about the Good News – the news that Jesus was the Messiah – crowds would gather. But the high priest and his officials were extremely jealous people. Because of this, they decided to arrest the apostles and put them in jail for talking about Jesus. During the night, God sent one of his angels to release them from their cell. The angel told the apostles to go back to the temple courts and continue to share the Good News. The apostles followed the angel's instructions and went to the temple courts the next morning to continue teaching the people.

The high priest and his officials sent for the apostles to be brought from jail for trial, but when the guards arrived at the jail, the apostles were gone. Someone came to them and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." The captain and his guards then captured and brought the apostles back to the high priest.

After being reprimanded for teaching about Jesus once again, the apostles said "We must obey God rather than human beings!" The council was angry, but they feared God's power. They decided to have the apostles beaten and then set free. The apostles rejoiced for being worthy of suffering in the name of Jesus. Although they were told not to by the council, they continued to share the Good News in the temple courts.

Even though the apostles were being beaten and severely mistreated, they continued to rejoice and praise God! They were not afraid because they knew their powerful, strong God was on their side and would give them his strength. God will strengthen us, too. He will provide us the courage and protection we need to get through our own circumstances. Sometimes that means physical protection from harm, and sometimes that means wisdom or strength through Scripture to make it through. But we have no reason to fear because, in one way or another, he promises to strengthen us.

Questions to think about:

1. Is there a situation in your life that has left you feeling mistreated and bitter?
2. Even though the apostles were beaten for teaching others about Jesus, they rejoiced. How can you flip your trial to see God's hand and rejoice in the ways he is showing up for you?
3. Is there anyone you need to pray for right now that is being mistreated and needs strength? Do you need to pray that for yourself?