

Prison Doors Opened

Joseph Carty / General

Acts / Prison; Persecution; Praise; Preaching / Acts 5:12–42

Since the death of Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago, 43 million Christians have been martyred.

- Over 50% of these were in the last century alone
- More than 200 million Christians face persecution each day, 60% of whom are children
- Every day over 300 people are killed for their faith in Jesus Christ.

- Disciples shared Gospel
 - severe persecution
- In this story
 - Full gamete of emotions
 - Pride
 - Fear
 - Confusion
 - Joy

- Anxiety
- Excitement
- Surprise

Performing Prodigies

[Acts 5:12–16](#) (ESV)

Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord,

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multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

- Powerful Miracles
 - healed by shadow
- More and more believers

- multitudes converted.
- Satan not satisfied.
- cronies go to work.

Placed in the Pound

Acts 5:17-18 **ESV**

But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

- Sadducees
 - against
 - miracles
 - angels
 - resurrection
- Disciples
 - teaching
 - doing

- Stop them
 - or lose authority.

Penetrated Prison

[Acts 5:19](#) (ESV)

But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out...

- For God,
 - little brick and mortal
 - little bar
 - little guards
 - little shackles
 - no problem.
- God often allows prison
 - but if he was us out
 - not a problem.

- If we go to prison
 - that is God's will
 - for that time...
 - accept it...
- For Peter,
 - not his time.
 - other work.

Proselytizing Preaching

[Acts 5:20–21](#) (ESV)

“Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”
And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach...

- Important
 - Freed for what purpose?
 - escape out of town?
 - enjoy freedom?

- magic?

- Not for freedom

- Not for escape

- Not for magic.
 - Peter later in prison.
 - Peter later killed.

- Purpose of release
 - greater witness.

- Don't put God in box.
 - Testimony in temple.
 - Testimony in jail.
 - Testimony in death...

During China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900, insurgents captured a mission station, blocked all the gates but one, and in front of that one gate placed a cross flat on the ground. Then the word was passed to those inside that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted their freedom and life, but that any refusing would be shot. Terribly frightened, the first seven students

trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. But the eighth student, a young girl, refused to commit the sacrilegious act. Kneeling beside the cross in prayer for strength, she arose and moved carefully around the cross, and went out to face the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining ninety-two students followed her to the firing squad.

- Jesus comings soon.
 - first great persecution.
 - don't pray for peace.
 - pray for spiritual power.
- Jesus said,
 - "I came not for peace but with a sword."
 - True faith
 - is controversial.

Perdu Pastor

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[Acts 5:21–26](#) (ESV)

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the

prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported,

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“We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them,

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wondering what this would come to. And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

- Vanishing
- Disappearing
- Invisible
- Obsolete
- Perdu

- Imagine their surprise.
 - not in prison
 - in temple
 - preaching!!!

- Must have felt
 - little powerless.
- Miracle
 - could not accept.

Prosecuting the Prosecutors

Acts 5:27–32 **ESV**

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

- Prosecuting the Prosecutors
- Accusing the accusers
- Disciples are supposed to be the defendants

- Yet become plaintiffs

- Key Phrase

Acts 5:29 ESV

But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.

- Some people
 - create persecution
 - unnecessarily.
- Some want to be
 - persecuted
 - public martyr
 - about them...
 - not God.
- We should not try to
 - create conflict.

- Should not fear
 - standing for God
 - on truth
 - to the death.

When the emperor Valens threatened Eusebuis with confiscation of all his goods, torture, banishment, or even death, the courageous Christian replied, "He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow."

- True Martyrdom
 - on true ticket to heaven.
- Stand for God today
 - on issues that you can.
- Stand for truth
 - that is not popular.

- Stand against Sin
 - Treat LGBTQ individuals with love.
 - But don't condone sin.
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- Minister to those who have found themselves in horrible circumstances.
 - But uphold human life.
 - Stand against abortion.
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- Treat everyone with respect. Honor human free will.
 - While at the same time taking a stand against choices that degrade human self.
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- Silently and not so silently choose separate from immoral media or aggressive polarizing new casting.
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- Make a choice to have nothing to do with witchcraft regardless of the seemingly innocuous package it comes in.
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- If we cannot stand on these basic moral issues, what makes us think we will stand when it comes to our life???

What Became of the Twelve Disciples?

- (1) John died of extreme old age.
- (2) Judas Iscariot hanged himself.
- (3) Peter was crucified, head downward, during the *persecution* of Nero.
- (4) Andrew died on a cross at Patrae, in Achaia, a Grecian Colony.
- (5) James, the younger brother of the Savior, was thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple, and then beaten to death with a club.
- (6) Bartholomew was flayed alive in Albanapolis, Armenia.
- (7) James, the elder son of Zebedee, was beheaded at Jerusalem.
- (8) Thomas, the doubter, was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel, in the east Indies.
- (9) Philip was hanged against a pillar at Heropolis (Abyssinia).
- (10) Thaddeus was shot to death with arrows.
- (11) Simon died on a cross in Persia (now Iran). (*Source unknown*).

- Do we understand
 - what we are called to?
- I feel I

- take it a bit lightly...

Publicly Pardoned

[Acts 5:33-39](#) (ESV)

When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them,

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“Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census

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and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice,

- God intervened
 - Peter lived more years

- later crucified.
- Personal outcome
 - was the same.
- For God,
 - he had more work
 - to do,
 - then martyred.
- Most Christians,
 - pray to be relieved of
 - the persecution.
- Notice
 - not part of Peter's prayer...

Pleasant Persecution

Acts 5:40–42 ESV

and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

- Still beaten!!!
- Still public abuse...
- Their repose?
 - praise God.
 - I suffered for Him!!!
- Of all things
 - to be proud of
 - They were proud.
 - to be abused for Christ.
- I wonder
 - do I have my priorities

- backwards or what?
- Close with Poem

NO SCAR?

Hast thou no scar?

No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?

I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,

I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,

Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?

Yet I was wounded by the archers, spend,

Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent

By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned:

Hast thou no wound?

No wound, no scar?

Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,

And, pierced are the feet that follow Me;

But thine are whole: can he have followed far

Who has no wounds nor scar?

Amy Carmichael.

Appeal

- Coming
 - days
 - weeks
 - months
- Christ will provide
 - opportunity for sacrifice.
- Choose joyful way
 - take scar for Christ.
- Pray for way to
 - sacrifice for God.

- Pray for
 - disruption in ease.
- Pray for
 - a reason to pray.