

Go, Stand, and Speak (September 14)

Scripture: Acts 5:17–33, especially verse 20: “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”

Introduction: This little story is simple, yet so profound. It tells of deliverance and revival, of deep courage and high goals, of world-changers inflamed for Christ. In the early days of the church, revival fires were setting Jerusalem aflame. Thousands were embracing the Nazarene; the number of disciples was multiplying. No sector of the city was untouched. The streets, markets, schools, and homes were buzzing with the latest news. In Acts 4, the high priest called an urgent meeting of the Sanhedrin, Israel’s seventy religious politicians. This council functioned both as a Senate and a Supreme Court. They met in a chamber somewhere in the temple complex, sitting in a semi-circle with the high priest, Annas, serving as moderator. He hated the church. Peter and John were censured and forbidden to preach. But in chapter 5, they are preaching anyway, and it was becoming clear that Christianity was not a passing fad, but a permanent faith. In fury, Annas sent the temple police to arrest all twelve apostles and to put them in the common prison. The Jerusalem jail must have been filthy. The rattle of chains and the moans of prisoners reverberated in the darkness. But suddenly the chains fell from their wrists, the angel of the Lord opened the door, and the disciples were delivered. An old song says: ‘Tis the grandest theme through the ages rung. . . . Our God is able to deliver Thee.” God is in the delivering business. He delivers from sadness, sorrow, and sin. He can deliver you from addictions and afflictions. He can deliver you from guilt and shame:

- The LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you (Deut. 23:14).
- He shall deliver you in six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you (Job 5:19).
- The LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him (Ps. 37:40).
- Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me (Ps. 50:15).
- Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Luke 11:4).

Charles Wesley said: “My chains fell off! My heart was free! I rose, went forth, and followed Thee!” What, then, are we to do after we’ve been delivered? What are our instructions? The angel’s words are short and sweet: “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”

1. **Go.** These are the first letters of the “gospel.” It was one of Jesus’ favorite words. He told the missionaries in Matthew 10 to GO to the lost sheep of Israel. He told John’s disciples to GO and tell John what they had heard and seen. He told the demonic to GO home and tell his friends what Christ had done. He told the seventy in Luke 10 to GO as lambs among wolves. He told the wedding servants to GO into the highways and byways, inviting others to the banquet. He told those at the tomb to GO with the news. He tells us to GO into all the world. Where does Christ want you to go with the gospel?
2. **Stand.** This is a favorite New Testament word, occurring 47 times. We’re to stand firm in the faith, to stand against the schemes of the devil, to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has set us free, to stand girded with truth, to stand fast in one spirit—and having done all, to stand. The angel meant: “Plant your feet, your shoulders back, your head high, your jaw set. Don’t be intimidated, but take a stand.”
3. **Speak.** We live amid unprecedented communications technology, but the most effective way of spreading the gospel is still one teenager sharing with another, one homemaker with another, one golfing partner telling another about Christ. Have you shared your message with anyone recently?

Conclusion: These twelve escaped convicts walked, leaped, and praised God through the pre-dawn Jerusalem streets. As the sun rose, they were back in the temple, preaching Jesus crucified and risen. They were arrested and whipped for it, but nothing could stop them. Do you need to be delivered? From anxiety? From addiction? From a messed-up life? Jesus is the great Deliverer. Come to Him. Have you been delivered? Then go, stand, and speak to the people all the words of this life. Tell them, “Our God is able to deliver you.”