

Worthy of

Արժանի Եղան

Acts 5:12-42

We love achievements.

I have the highest score in math: “Wow, bravo!”

I exercise every day: “Wonderful, Good Job!”

I have four university degrees: “Man, that is crazy!”

I have worked here for 40 years: “I am worthy of respect.”

We work hard on our academics and pass examinations.

We will say: “Bravo, good job, you are worthy of receiving this diploma, this trophy, this scholarship, this retirement package (in Armenian արժանի էս)

-Today we are moving forward with Luke studying the book of Acts, and I find an attitude that made me rethink twice before I can identify with that. Here is what happened:

They were in prison, beaten, and eventually were released. The Bible says:

rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. (NIV)

rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (NKJV)

rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (ESV)

rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus (NLT)

overjoyed because they had been given the honor of being dishonored on account of the Name. (MSG)

Question: Can you rejoice because you experience shame, dishonor, disgrace for Christ’s sake?

Let us go to the passage:

After the shocking news of death of **Ananias and Sapphira**, Luke continues describing how the disciples were continuing to heal people. God’s presence was working in their life. **Even in their shadow** there was the power of God. Many were coming with their needs, and the disciples were teaching and caring for these people. God was adding their number more and more. We read:

“more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.” (Acts 5:14 NIV11)

The mission started to move outside Jerusalem. **“Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem.”** (Acts 5:16 NIV11)

-You expect everyone will be content and follow them. NO, the opposition was growing as well.

The High Priest and the Sadducees, arrested the apostles for a second time and put them in jail.

-**But God** sent an angel and rescued them, and told them:

“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.” (Acts 5:20 NIV11).

1. Don't you love this? The rescue mission from God had a purpose: “go back and continue preaching...”

-This is a good reminder to all of us: “all blessings and miracles that we receive from God are not for our personal gain. They are given to us, so we bless others.”

2. the apostles learned that **locked doors had no barrier** for the resurrected Lord.

-Now they experience it first-hand. During the night an angel **“opened the prison doors and brought them out.”**

Open Doors ministry. Brother Andrew, God's smuggler, no doors were close for him. He came to Lebanon and I met him. He inspired me very much as young boy.

-Two weeks ago, listening to Rick and Rebecca, God reminded me no door is closed for His Message....NO DOOR

There are no “locked doors in the kingdom of God.” (AMEN)

Next day, **the accusers** were **confused** when they saw the jail was empty, the doors were locked, and guards were there at the door.

They were confused more when they heard that the apostles were back in the Temple teaching.

Well, **then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.** (26)

Comedy...tragedy... who is guarding who?

²⁷The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸“We gave you strict

orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” (Acts 5:27-28 NIV11)

One more time order to apostles **to be silent**; apostles refused saying **they will obey God**, and they will continue to speak about **Jesus Christ who was crucified, and now He is risen.**

Lesson: do you see consistency in their answer and teaching?

They were bold with their faith. It would be costly as you will see later on.

Again, the High Court people (Sanhedrin) were furious and wanted to kill them.

(But GOD) One more time We see God’s hand over this situation.

a. God sent an angel to release them from the jail.

b. Now God is going to use a man by name of **Gamaliel.**

-A Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who **was honored by all the people**, (5:34) had some wise words.

Do you know that even Paul studied under this man?

“I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.” (Acts 22:3)

Gamaliel said, there are many teachers (my words) who had followers. But after their death, the group was dissolved.

He added:

“Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” (5:38,39)

Well, he was right and wrong.

Yes, when false teachers died the movement died. Right, in those days, but until now we have false prophets and their followers.

-Yet, he is wrong about Jesus. Jesus died and but He is risen, Mr. Gamaliel. And he has followers.

But he is right about one thing. If God is doing something in this movement, nothing can stop it. **“But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men.”**

Brothers and sisters, I see God is going to use an unbeliever to deliver the apostles.

⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

Next:

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (Acts 5:40-42 NIV11)

What happened:

They were beaten,

(*dero*, “to beat, skin, flay” – probably “forty lashes minus one”) and let them go.

What strikes me is their attitude:

rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

What kind of attitude is this?

Can you imagine they go back to their families most likely beaten badly, yet rejoicing?

Maybe they will remember what Jesus said to them:

“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged (*dero*) in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them.” (Mark 13:9 NIV11)

We are called to be witness (Martyrs) for Jesus Christ.

Who can do it?

We search for signs and wonders. We want big changes in people lives. The blind can see, the lame can walk, and I believe God did use the apostles in performing miracles.

But GOD

Yet,

“This is the ‘real miracle’ of the text, the reality for which the signs and wonders were ultimately pointing to—a new creation with a new and restored humanity that magnifies the name of Jesus and loves their enemies in the face of violent abuse and injustice.” (Brian Morgan)

I am not encouraging you to go and seek suffering, no.

I am preaching to you and to me, that our faith in Christ must not be cheap grace; it is costly. The world going to reject us. We will be ridiculed and persecuted. We will face suffering, not any suffering, suffering for Christ's sake.

-Once Kevin's theology professor was teaching third world pastors.

He asked to a pastor who comes from a country where the church is persecuted; he asked the pastor "how do you survive with all of that persecution going on around you?"

The pastor responded: "how do you survive without it?"

Blood of martyrs...

The church grew under persecution.

In the coming weeks, we will see **Steven**, the **first martyr**, we will see **Saul**, who became **Paul**, who persecuted the Christians.

Paul said:

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:10 ESV)

This is what Christ is expecting from his followers.

The apostles performed miracles as did their teacher Jesus. They also shared the sufferings of Jesus. We like the first one, miracles, but when suffering comes, are we ready to stay firm in our faith?

Am I worthy of suffering disgrace for his name?

Instead of cursing and shouting unpleasant words, the apostles came back praising God for the honor of suffering for HIS NAME'S SAKE.

I want that Christ-centered attitude when I face suffering for Christ's sake.

Application

How do we suffer now for His name's sake?

What kind of opposition our students face in the school and university?

Are your boss asking you to cheat and you refused because of your faith? Maybe he will fire you from the job...

³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:13 NIV)

Illustration:

In 1956 five missionaries were killed with spears in Ecuador while trying to reach a tribe. The five men between the ages of 27-32 were:

Jim Elliot, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, Nate Saint, Roger Youderian

Jim's wife, Elisabeth, and Nate's sister, Rachel, returned to live among the tribe offering them forgiveness and continuing the task.

This led to the conversion of many people in the tribe.

This is a Cross made from the home of Nate Saint by the grandchildren of the first believers.

It is amazing how Grace of our Lord is powerful.

Come to the table

Maybe you are hurting, maybe you have been suffering, I don't know where you stand with the Lord.

Come to the table in humility and brokenness, Bring your sins to Jesus. He can redeem you from shame, guilt, and give you new life.

Come to the table.

"There is no higher honor or glory for human being to receive on this planet than that of partaking in the humiliation of Christ. This is the only part of his glory he will share with us in this world. In heaven, the rest of his glory will be showered upon us, but now we glory in his cross." RC Sproul

1988 I met the poet Traian Dorz who spent 16 years in prison. After the secret police burned all of his poetry in an ox cart, Dorz recreated poems one per day from memory using a piece of glass as his palette a toothpick for a brush wiping lime off the stone wall for paint. In the end he recovered 4500 poems sung by 300000 Romanians (when I arrived)

When I met him I showed him a photo I took in Jerusalem of the pavement with a crown on thorns carved into it where Jesus was flogged

He took the photo and kissed it with loving tears in his eyes and said to me, You teach about the cross..... we.....live under the cross

I was so moved I smuggled one of the hymnals out hidden in my sleeping bag and we published 20000 copies at \$100 per book

My friend drove them in a semi truck across Europe and was able to get them miraculously across the border in the chaos of the revolution. (Brian Morgan)