

was it that, having succeeded in escaping, they actually fell into the hands of those who had imprisoned them?

We have the answer to these questions given in the narrative, and summarized shortly in the Golden Text. "We ought to obey God rather than man." Obedience to God brought the twelve into prison; obedience to God caused their deliverance; obedience to God made them once more prisoners.

*Obedience to God brought the twelve into prison.*

Peter and John had been commanded "not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus." This was contrary to the instructions of Him who had said: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." They had to choose whether God or man should be obeyed, and they chose the former. So multitudes were healed, and multitudes were "added to the Lord." And upon themselves came this penalty—the prison. But they were ready to meet it. It was not a thing unexpected. Jesus had told it them before. Luke 21. 12. The soldier knows perfectly well, when he goes out to battle, that he must certainly meet with hardship, probably obedience to his captain will lead him straight into all these. So with the followers of Christ. They cannot obey him and yet live at ease. It is not every soldier who has the post of danger, but each one must be ready to take it, nor must any be surprised to find himself there. When the boy who seeks to follow Christ finds himself the butt of his companions' ridicule, and it may be of something worse—when the youth who refuses to do a dishonest trick finds himself out of employment—when any one who labours zealously for Christ discovers that he is misrepresented and slandered—he must not be surprised. These are some of the consequences of obedience to God.

*Obedience to God caused the deliverance of the twelve.* The prison was "shut with all force the doors." There seemed no way of escape. But what will the general do who sees his soldiers in suffering and danger? Will he not come to their relief? Is he not bound in honour to do so if it is in his power? And so the Lord's honour is bound up with vants. He will "show himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect with him." 2 Chron. 16. 9. So an angel is sent to open the prison doors, and the apostles go forth in perfect freedom. And just so, when God's time is come, he can and does deliver his servants now. No man who follows Christ is really the loser for it. Deliverance and

vindication are some of the consequences of obedience to God.

*Obedience to God made the twelve once more prisoners.* The apostles were not delivered that they might go home comfortably and live in peace. Had they done so they would probably have been molested no more. Or had they chosen to leave Jerusalem, no doubt they might have succeeded in escaping. But this would have been contrary to their orders. And for their encouragement the Lord's command was repeated to them by the angel. They were delivered that they might continue to bear witness for him. And now they were again seized and placed at the bar of the council, where they gave their unalterable reason for all they had done:

*"We ought to obey God rather than man."*

With their witness to Christ before the council, as the one "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," our passage concludes, leaving the story, as it appears, unended. It is, perhaps, however, a better conclusion than if we read on to the end of the chapter; for the history of obedience to God is not ended on this earth. The antagonism between God and the world, between God's command and the world's will, goes on through the whole of life. The apostles are delivered indeed, but allowed to suffer after the end. But taking their stand on the salvation wrought by Christ, their Prince and Saviour, his witnesses must be bold to suffer for him until they are called to be with him where he is.

## BEREAN METHODS.

### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Show the connection between this lesson and the last. . . . Explain high-priest; Sadducees; common prison; angel of the Lord; early in the morning; council and senate; captain of the temple, etc., etc. . . . Show the gradual progress in these appearances before the rulers: 1. In the apostles' testimony; 2. In the severity of their trials. . . . Show (Sadducees were skeptics;) 1. Unbelief, Cruelty; 4. Fear; 5. Consciousness of guilt. . . . The spirit of the persecuted Church: 1. Patience; 2. Testimony; 3. Consciousness; 4. Courage; 5. Faith. . . . Show how God helps his people in persecution. (See Analytical and Biblical Outline.) . . . Find in the Bible similar deliverances of God's people from danger. . . . General teachings concerning persecution (See Additional Practical Lesson.) . . . Our duty: 1. "Go, obey God," v. 29; 2. "We ought to