Trials and Tests

CHARACTERS: Peter, John, Barnabas, Ananias, Sapphira, Annas, Caiaphas, Alexander, Gamaliel, lame man, extras as Sanhedrin and CROWDS
COSTUMES: Biblical
PROPS: none specified
SETTING: none specified
RUN TIME: 9 minutes, can be broken into 3 scenes
SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Acts 4 & 5
FK reading level:4.8

PRIEST 1: How did you cause this man to walk? What power do you have or whose name did you use?

PETER: Leaders of the people and elders: if we are being questioned today about the good deed done to the lame man and how he was healed, then you should all know that this man stands here before you completely well through the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth—whom you crucified and whom God raised from death.

Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.

PRIEST: Leave us. *(LAME MAN, PETER & JOHN step to far side of stage)*

ELDERS and PRIESTS confer

ELDER 1: *(aside)* How bold they are!

ELDER 2: *(dismissively)* They are nothing but unschooled, ordinary men.

ELDER: 1: Yes, but they were companions of Jesus.

PRIEST: What can we say? The man who was healed is standing there. *(Points toward him)*

ELDER 2: What shall we do with these men? Everyone in Jerusalem knows that this extraordinary miracle has been performed by them, and we cannot deny it.

PRIEST: To keep this matter from spreading any further among the people, let us warn these men never again to speak to anyone in the name of Jesus. *OTHERS nod in agreement. PRIEST motions PETER, JOHN and LAME MAN back to them.*

PRIEST: Under no condition are you to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus.

JOHN: You yourselves judge which is right in God's sight—to obey you or to obey God.

PETER: For we cannot stop speaking of what we ourselves have seen and heard.

PRIEST: *(sternly)* We will not warn you again. Nothing more in the name of Jesus! Be gone!

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LEADER: All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own

ALL: but they shared everything they had.

LEADER: With great power the apostles continued to testify

ALL: to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

LEADER: And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all

ALL: that there were no needy persons among them.

LEADER: For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them

ALL: brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet

LEADER: It was distributed to anyone who had need.

PETER: Thank you, Barnabas. We'll distribute this to those in need.

JOHN: Your name means son of encouragement and that fits you perfectly.

ANANIAS: I too have sold a field. Here is all the money from that sale.

PETER: Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.

Ananias falls down dead. Some young men come forward, cover his face and carry him off stage. SAPPHIRA enters from opposite side.

PETER: Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?

SAPPHIRA: Yes, that is the price.

PETER: How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.

SAPPHIRA falls down dead. Some young men again cover her face and carry her off stage.

The Apostles Heal and are Persecuted

LEADER: The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people.

ALL: The believers were highly regarded by the people.

LEADER: More and more men and women believed in the Lord

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ALL: and were added to their number.

At rise: PRIESTS are meeting, agitated. GUARDS stand by.

CAIAPHAS: Something must be done! These Jesus followers are gathering huge numbers of disciples.

ANNAS: They are in jail, Caiaphas.

ALEXANDER: Not anymore. They are teaching in the temple courts.

ANNAS: Bring them here but do not use force because I fear that the people may stone you. *(guards exit)* Gather up the rest of the Sanhedrin. *(CAIAPHAS exits)*

GAMALIEL: People are saying an angel released them.

ALEXANDER: We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside. *Guards enter with apostles, CAIAPHAS from opposite direction with Sanhedrin members*

ANNAS: We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.

CAIAPHAS: You are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.

PETER: We must obey God rather than human beings!

JOHN: The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

PETER: God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.

JOHN: We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

CAIAPHAS: They should be put to death! *(general shouting and chaotic confusion)*

GAMALIEL: *(to guards)* Put them outside. *(Guards obey and exit)*

ANNAS: What think you, Gamaliel? You are a respected teacher of the law, honored by all the people.

GAMALIEL: Consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean led a revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.

Therefore, in the present case I advise you: *(forcefully)* Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. *(looking straight at CAIAPHAS)* But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God. *(general consensus that this makes sense)*

ANNAS: Have them flogged and order them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then let them go. *Lights out*

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LEADER: The apostles left the Sanhedrin,

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

LEADER: Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house

ALL: they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

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