

# Ministry of the Apostles and Liberty of God's Children: Acts 5:12-42

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm grateful you are here to worship the Lord today. I pray that you have had a wonderful Christmas. And if you are a guest of ours today, we are walking through the book of Acts and we find ourselves today in Acts chapter 5.

If you want to turn there and be ready, we'll be looking at verse 12 in a moment. Before we get there though, last Sunday we saw that Satan has really been now attacking the church.

At first Peter has been preaching the gospel and people are coming to Christ and there is all of these wonderful things. There is extraordinary unity and generosity that has been expressed in the church.

And then all of a sudden Satan finds its ways and clenches in the church. And in the story that we looked at a couple of weeks ago with Ananias and Sapphira, internally within the church there began to be some deception.

And internally there was this causing others to perceive something that isn't true about Ananias and Sapphira and the Lord struck them dead.

[ 1 : 15 ] Today we will see that Satan is now working on the outside of the church, putting pressure and oppression on the church. And so today we're going to see that. And opposition to the gospel is inevitable.

If you have never experienced this opposition, whether that be in Sunday school class or a ministry with friends or family, serving Jesus at your place of employment or in school, there may be something wrong with your approach.

Because opposition will inevitably come as we walk in the light that is in the midst of this dark world. As one follows Jesus wholeheartedly, opposition will come and hostility is to be expected.

As we have walked through the book of Acts, we have seen this intensifying as we see that when Peter proclaimed the gospel and healed this blind man, the Sanhedrin threatened them. And then they were thrown into prison.

And ultimately in a few weeks we'll see that Stephen will be martyred. Opposition is increasing. Today there is a blatant hostility to the gospel all around the world.

[ 2 : 29 ] D. A. Carson says it this way, within the last century and a half we have seen more converts and more martyrs than the first 18 centuries combined.

Then the most 18 centuries combined. The first 18 centuries combined.

Emphasizing the point, faithful gospel ministry results in both opposition and blessing. There is a hostility toward Christianity in America.

At this point hostility expresses itself in the forms of intimidation, threats and increasing levels of negativity toward anything Christian. I recently read a column of the Chicago Tribune. I don't often do that, but there's an Ask Amy section where people write in to ask this lady Amy, who's his first name.

Just random questions and then she chooses to respond. And people do this every week, every day that they write in. And so Amy is a very busy lady. But here's the question that was posed to Amy.

[ 3 : 35 ] This person writes in and she asks this, I am curious to know what you think about. Ask this of a semi stranger to me asking this question.

What church do you go to? Or even worse, do you go to church? It seems like it's an intrusive question like asking how much do you weigh or how much money do you make? Or are your kids gay or straight?

Maybe churches today are trying to have a growth in their membership, but the way they're raising some of these, but the way I was raised, someone's personal relationship with God was personal. I know people like to categorize, but to me the question is rude. Am I just out of step? I'm offended. And that was the question this person wrote in to Miss Amy at the Chicago Tribune. But do you hear the little bit of animosity? This opposition to Christianity, it's increasing and it's becoming more public.

[ 4 : 35 ] If you decide to live your faith publicly, be prepared for similar responses. By the way, your Christian faith is not a private faith. Remember, Jesus was crucified publicly.

He was humiliated publicly. He rose from the grave and shown himself to others publicly. And then Jesus commissioned the church to go make his name known publicly.

Don't miss this incredible reality while for some the knowledge of Jesus incurs hostility and angers, but the other side of the coin is this, public faith and people coming to faith in Christ bring salvation and blessing.

The Gospel ministry we will see today does several things and for which I'm first going to read the first section. The Gospel ministry firstly enriches the poor who are in spirit.

If you would read with me Acts chapter 5, 12 through 16, we will see this reality come to fruition.

Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.

[ 5 : 45 ] 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 in multitudes, both men and women, so that they would even carry out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats.

And Peter came by and at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from towns surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

This is an amazing time for the church in Jerusalem. Notice the boldness that we first see in verse 12. And they were in the bottom line of verse 12, and they were all gathered together on Solomon's portico.

If you remember this image that I showed a few weeks ago, the colonnade that surrounds the Temple Mount is called Solomon's Portico. So there they were. And if you remember, this is where they were first arrested.

Remember Peter was preaching his message and in comes the leaders of the Sanhedrin, and they arrest him there on the spot as he was giving his own, the gospel message, preaching to the crowds. And they were arrested at that very spot.

[ 7 : 07 ] And so what do these apostles know to do? What are they going to go do? They're going to go back to the scene of the crime and keep preaching the gospel. Even after they were warned and spent a night in prison and told never to do that again or else, they go back to the same location.

And there they are preaching. What boldness they have. Imagine the courage and the boldness to return to the same scene, preaching and teaching to the very thing that they were told not to do by the religious leaders.

I want us to look at what was being done. This is the signs and wonders on the top of verse 12.

Many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people at the hands of the apostles.

These 12 apostles were doing miraculous things, healing the sick, etc.

Casting out demons we see in verse 16. Miracles, they validate the message and the messenger. So what are these miracles doing?

That they're validating that Jesus Christ sinless death, His death for sin, His sinless life that is, His death for sin, and resurrection, overcoming sin and death, that it's true, that that message is true and it is validated through the signs and the wonders, the miracles and it validates the apostles, that these are genuinely people of God.

[ 8 : 31 ] And so what is clear is that these healings that are being performed are drawing attention to this gospel message. People were going to great extents to be healed.

We see that people were bringing them from houses among Jerusalem, they were even going to towns surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the lame and the poor, the sick, and bringing them so that they may be healed and the demons may be cast out of them in verse 16.

The church is now soaring. It's probably over 20,000 people. And if you remember in Acts chapter 2, there was great awe in the church. Chapter 4, there was great power demonstrated in the apostles.

There was great favor among all the believers and then last week or two weeks ago with Ananias and Sapphira, there was great fear that came upon the church and the church is now exploding numerically.

People are coming to faith in Christ, trusting Him with their life. But notice not all are that way. In the top of verse 13, we read this, None of the rest dared join them. So here we have to make an interpretive call.

[ 9 : 45 ] And not all are in agreement. When I was looking at this text, I was thinking, well, who are the rest? And there are not all commentators, not all theologians are in agreement about this, but I'm going to make this distinction to understand who the rest are.

Notice in verse 12, we read the bottom line, they were all together in Solomon's portico, or that is that they were all in one accord in Solomon's portico.

So there they are, the church is gathered, they're all in one accord, but it does say none of the rest dared to join them. So I take that that there's some in the church that didn't go to Solomon's portico. They didn't go with the apostles and all those who had, for the gospel sake, they didn't do that. And then I make it the distinction between those the rest and the rest of the people, the Gentiles, those who had not come to faith or the Jewish people who had not come to faith, because the latter part of verse 13 reads this, but none of the rest dared to join them, but the people, that is the rest of the people who had not come to faith in Christ, held them in high esteem. So you have the residents of Jerusalem holding what's happening in high esteem, but there's some in the church, let's assume, who choose not to join them at this time.

Why would that be? There's a recognition that this is a tense environment. If you are living in Jerusalem, the animosity that the Sanhedrin has, those in religious authority that they have for you, it's palpable. You feel it.

[ 11 : 22 ] In fact, today, I hope in this message, you'll get, you'll feel the tenseness that is in Jerusalem between the religious leaders and the apostles, what they're up to, and these Christians who are coming to faith in Christ, they're coming in conflict in a big way, and it's so palpable, there are some in the church that they say, why would we want to put ourselves necessarily in harm's way?

They're reading the situation rightly. It is a tense situation. Believers were hesitant to join the apostles in the ministry. They were afraid of the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrin.

They had heard of their threats. They were afraid that their actions may be taken out against them. Why should they place themselves in unnecessary risk? It's one thing to be an object of persecution and be prepared for it.

It's quite another thing to knowingly seek it when it is not necessary. Perhaps they were thinking. Regardless, there were timid believers, and they missed, and here's what I want you to hear. They missed witnessing the hand of God.

They missed witnessing the hand of God. Sometimes I am saddened by, sometimes we'll have a church service.

[ 12 : 42 ] God will do something. We'll have an evening of prayer and praise. We'll hear a testimony of what God is doing in the midst of our church, and then I will have a conversation with someone who obviously missed it.

They weren't here to witness that. I'll have a conversation and it's like, oh, I wish you were there.

The very thing that you're questioning, the very thing that you're hoping to see, the very thing you're hoping for God to validate, you missed being there.

Oh, how I wish you were there. But all too often, I'm saddened by what sometimes individuals miss, and they missed it. What did they miss?

And people were gathered towns surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the sick and the afflicted and unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Can you imagine how encouraged you might be to witness, to be a part of that?

But some missed it. Some missed it.

[ 13 : 51 ] What we're seeing here is perhaps a repeat of a ministry that Jesus had. Let me read from Matthew real quick. Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the

people, and news about him spread throughout all Syria, so that they brought them all the afflicted and those who suffered, and various diseases and intense pains, those who had been possessed by demons, epileptics, paralytics, and they healed them, and a large crowd followed him throughout Galilee, and the decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

And immediately after that, in Matthew 4, in Matthew 5, you have this, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Who are the recipients of God's favor and grace, the poor in spirit, the desperate, the poor, the humble? And that same dynamic is happening here in Acts, the new church, the beginning of this church, the humble, the lame, the sick, or healed.

The oppressor delivered from demonic hosts, and undoubtedly many are saved. And in America, the temptation is to come to Jesus with a middle class spirit, not a poor in spirit, but a middle class spirit.

I can take care of myself without Christ, but it's always good to have God as a backup plan. The problem here is that we all must come to Jesus who are in poor in spirit, and be ministers to those who are also poor in spirit.

[ 15 : 29 ] Let us be those people, because the gospel ministry enriches the poor in spirit. Secondly, we have the gospel ministry enrages the prideful.

This is our next section. I'm going to break this next section into different waves of persecution. The first wave is going to, we're going to find is an imprisonment. So read with me in verse 17, and we will conclude this part in verse 25.

Read with me starting in verse 17. But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees, filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in public prison, but during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, go and stand in the temple and speak to all the people the words of this life.

And when they had heard this, they entered the temple at the daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate and the people, and they sent the prison to have them brought.

But the officers came and they did not find them in prison, so they returned and reported. We have found the prisoners, the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we could not find anyone inside.

[ 16 : 53 ] Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them and wondered what this could come to. And someone came and told them, look, the men whom were in prison are standing in the temple teaching the people.

Notice the motive of the chief priests and the Sadducees. What was it in the bottom of verse 17? Jealousy.

They were moved by the lowest and most contemptible motive possible. Jealousy. Proverbs 6, 34 reads this, jealousy makes a man furious, and furious jealousy did make these high priests and Sadducees leaders.

It is the very nature of jealousy that is destructive. Sadducees were wondering, the crowds should be gathered around us, not them.

They were not trying to prevent heresy. They were not trying to protect the people. They were not trying to maintain an honor of God. No. The Sadducees leaders were envious of the popularity of the apostles and were self-protective of their own prestige.

[ 18 : 17 ] And when their malevolence poured out, the apostles found themselves in the city jail. All 12 of them. There must never be tolerated in the Church of Jesus Christ any jealousy.

Jealousy of one another. Jealousy will always destroy relationships. We can be tempted to be jealous of another's ability to teach, to sing, and a desire to minister to another. Any thought you ever have of, I wish those people would follow me, or rather than them, or I wish I had the popularity of that person over them and it should be on me, we have to destroy that thought quick.

And I'll just be massively honest here. You know this teaching model, this preaching team model, where we have different people standing in the pulpit delivering God's message.

While it is great in principle, there is a high temptation in all of us who teach to be jealous of one another. I love Pastor Eric's prophetic voice.

I love the way Jay puts words together and he applies God's word. I love the Kamesh's precision in word choice and clarity in which he teaches.

[ 19 : 39 ] And I could be jealous. And we have to work hard in the Church. Not just, I have enough jealousy and pride in me to destroy this Church, and as do you, all of us do.

Let that never be the case named among 4th Memorial. Let's fight hard against that temptation. Jealousy can grow in each of us.

How do we fight jealousy? I find it interesting in Scripture what individuals do. And there's biblical principles that help us with this.

We praise God for the gifts that he has given to others. We praise God. Lord, thank you for this individual for how they do that. Lord, thank you. I see that gift in their life that you have given.

Lord, praise your name. Second, be edified by the gifts given to others. Lord, thank you that you've given that gift to that person for how they edify me.

[ 20 : 48 ] Lord, thank you. And pray for those God is using to shape the Church, elders, deacons, pastors, worship leaders, children's teachers, youth leaders, nursery workers, and adult teachers.

Thank God for these individuals. And may we never be jealous. Churches also sometimes can be jealous of one another. I'm grateful for the many relationships that I have with many pastors in the area.

We meet monthly through the school year. We meet the summer off. And I'm grateful to be in those meetings and hear from the men and pastors in this area in the city of Spokane who we share.

And there's no jealousy that even belongs among the Church in the world, but especially in Spokane where we minister closely with one another. I am grateful for the gospel partnerships we have with many churches.

And I want us to be a church that speaks well of them and well of other churches. It's nice for me to sit in a room and hear from another pastor. And I think, how dare I ever speak poorly of that church or that man.

[ 21 : 56 ] Jealousy does not belong in the Church of Jesus Christ. What I find humor, there's a hint of divine humor here in verse 19.

First, let me draw your attention to verse 17. You see the word seven, Sadducees. That is, party of the Sadducees. They were jealous chiefly among, there says, the high priest rose and with him a party of the Sadducees.

The Sadducees denied a few things. Number one, they denied the resurrection even happened. Number two, they denied that the fact that angels existed. So you don't believe in the resurrection, you don't believe in angels, and yet who opened the prison doors?

Oh yeah, something they don't even believe exists, an angel. So if you're looking for divine humor in our text, let me just point that one out. I love that the Sadducees were probably very perplexed as to try to answer what just happened when you don't believe in something that doesn't exist.

I love that. I love divine humor. Why an angelic intervention?

[ 23 : 01 ] God is teaching that he can deliver his servants from the world's oppression anytime he sees fit. There are two other occasions in the book of Acts when God has delivered individuals from prison.

Angelic liberation wasn't meant just to free them, but to encourage them and us. Thus the apostles knew God could deliver them from the world's clutches anytime, anywhere.

And think how that would have encouraged you as the apostles. Let me read the latter end of the individual's lives that is taught from church tradition.

Let me share with you what Matthew incurred. Matthew knew the reality of the angelic presence when he suffered martyrdom at the sword. Mark? So did he. He understood the angelic presence when he died in Alexandria after being dragged through the streets.

Luke experienced the same when he was hung in a large olive tree in Greece. John realized the same. God could deliver him anytime, anywhere when he was scarred in a cauldron of boiling oil and lived his last day on the island of Patmos.

[ 24 : 10 ] So too did Peter when he was crucified upside down in Rome. James was beheaded in Jerusalem. James the less when he was thrown from a high pinnacle and beaten to death with a club.

Bartholomew, he was scourged and then beaten until he died. Andrew, when he was bound to a cross and he preached at the top of his lungs to the persecutors until he perished.

Thomas, he was run through with a lance. Jude, he was killed by his crucifixic executors with arrows. Matthias, he was stoned and beaten to death.

Barnabas, he suffered the same fate on Salonica. And Paul, he was beheaded in Rome. And on and on it goes throughout church history. And yet God can deliver anyone at any time, at any place. And they knew it as they faced their own fate.

[ 25 : 09 ] Ada, Scripnikova was born in 1941 in Leningrad. When Russian people were fighting to free themselves from the Axis powers specifically Germany in World War II.

Germany was ultimately driven out but that did not bring true freedom for the people of Russia. In the fall of 1961, Ada came to know Christ as a 19 year old.

With her newfound faith in Christ, she was compelled and had an impulse to share her faith with others. Ada purchased postcards and she wrote a poem on them and the poem expressed her perception of life and one's need for God.

And the poem was entitled, Happy New Year, 1962. I'm not going to read the entirety of the poem. I will just read the last paragraph.

She shares Christ and then she says this. Think deeply about this, for you are not on this earth forever. Perhaps tomorrow you will break forever your links to this world.

[ 26 : 21 ] Seek God while he may be found. So she stood at what is the equivalent of the Fifth Avenue in New York but in Leningrad and she handed out these postcards to everyone who had passed by as many as she had made.

And of course she was arrested. And in 1962 she was tried by a communist court and she was exiled from Leningrad and lost her job as a lab assistant.

She was arrested again in 1965 and was sent to a hard labor camp for a year. In 1968 she was arrested again and sent to a hard labor camp for an additional three years.

Perhaps Ada Scripnikova in her short Christian life never read our text but she obeyed the instinct of her heart in the midst of unbelievable oppression, shared the message of life.

And that day in 1961 at 19 years old when she came to know the Lord Jesus Christ perhaps she was the freest of all souls in Leningrad.

[ 27 : 28 ] Regardless of how hostile and oppressive our surroundings no matter how Philistine the workplace or callous the students at your school or neurotic your neighbors we are meant to share Jesus Christ example with our life and also in word.

Humorously while the Sanhedrin were getting out of bed Christ's ambassadors were already hard at work proclaiming his name.

We come to the second wave of persecution and that is the trial. So now they have been in prison the angel has released them they go preaching and we find we're going to pick up our text in verse 26 through 30 through 28 maybe.

Then the captain of the officers went and brought them not by force for they were afraid of being stoned by the people and when they had brought them they set them before the council the high priest questioned them saying we strictly charge you not to teach in this name and his yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

I want us to observe something in verse 26 that fear is both the method and the reward of tyranny. The Sanhedrin were afraid of being stoned it says in verse 26 they wanted to bring them but not by force for why for the Sanhedrin was afraid of being stoned by the people.

[ 29 : 03 ] Tyranny uses fear as a method to remain in power but also fear is also the reward of tyranny meaning that those in power are always afraid of a coup or being usurped in some way or even assassinated.

Fear is both the method and the reward of tyranny. It's an interesting charge that they have in verse 28 we strictly charge you not to teach in this name yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood against us.

It's interesting that they're accusing the Sanhedrin is accusing the apostles for trying to bring the blood of Jesus against them, right? Bring upon them and yet they are the ones in Matthew 27 who said let him that is Jesus be crucified.

The Sanhedrin said to all the people and let him be crucified and they secondly said this and let his blood be upon us and our children.

Who is the one who brought Jesus's blood against them? Themselves and yet they are accusing the apostles for doing the same. And then we read the response of the apostles reading in 29 through 32 let's read that at this time but Peter and the apostles answered we must obey God

rather than man.

[ 30 : 32 ] The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at the right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel the forgiveness of sins and we are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given you given to those who obey him.

I love the apostles response to the second wave of persecution this spiteful opposition and they have this incredible buoyancy about them.

It's a magnificent response they exalt Christ as leader and savior they can obey no other. I know Sanhedrin you think you're the religious elite and you think you're in charge but I need to declare the power of Jesus Christ who is leader and savior.

We can't help but obey him. Number two they make no attempt to alleviate the Sanhedrin's guilt. They say God verse 30 and God our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

So if they are already fit to be tied they are already very angry they know it is not the truth and so it's you who killed them and you can see the blood beginning to boil in these individuals you can feel it.

[ 32 : 09 ] I want us though to see verse 20 or 31 and 32 God exalted him at the right hand as leader and savior and he said to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins for we are witnesses to these things so that so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given those who obey him.

I want to share that this witnessing power of the Holy Spirit is released upon those through obedience to Christ to the word and this inner voice of the Holy Spirit as he gives guidance.

So these are some good self-check questions that I'm going to give you that I was bothered with for a week and so I'm going to give them to you to also now be bothered by. So here's the questions.

Am I living consistently in view of what I know to be true of Christ? To be this witness and guided by the Holy Spirit obeying Christ.

Am I living consistently in view of what I know about Christ? Am I living a life that is in accord of what I am learning in the Scriptures?

[ 33 : 27 ] Am I living a life that is in accord with what I am learning in the Scriptures? And this is why I want to encourage you to have a time with the Lord that you spend a time with the Lord that you enjoy his word to enjoy what the Scriptures teach so that you know how to live a life pleasing to the Lord.

This is also why we encourage Melissa in her announcement she said on January 9th we'll begin a whole new four classes that we're going to offer to teach God's word in a smaller group environment.

We encourage everyone to participate. Why would we do that? Because we want to ensure that we're growing as disciples and we know what the word of God says and how to live pleasing to him. Thirdly, third question.

Am I refusing to know what I know the Lord wants? Am I refusing to do what I know the Lord wants?

And fourthly, am I refusing to share my faith because of fear of rejection and appealing as for the fear of rejection and the fear of maybe appearing unintellectual or uncultured in it for any reason?

There is now a third wave of persecution. The third wave of persecution is physical beating and so if you could read with me verses 34 through 40.

[ 34 : 54 ] But a Pharisee of the Council of first, sorry 33, and when they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee of the Council named Gamaliel a teacher of the law held in high honor by all the people stood up and gave orders to put these men outside for a while.

And he said to them, men of Israel, take care about what you do with these men for in these days, Thudeus rose up claiming to be somebody.

A number of men, about 400, joined him and he was killed and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. And after him, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away the people after him.

He 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 the plan, 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 be able to have found opposing God. So they took his advice. And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and

charged them not to speak the name of Jesus and let them go.

[ 36 : 14 ] The Sanhedrin's blood was boiling. They wanted, in verse 33, they heard this, they were enraged. It's the word, literally it's the word, they were sawn through.

They were enraged and they wanted to kill them, that is the apostles. Their blood was boiling, they wanted blood. They were overcome with this violent mental anguish and this indignation that is aimed toward the apostles and on site happened to be this man whose name was Gamiliel.

And to help frame who Gamiliel was, he was the grandfather of a famous rabbi whose name was Hillel and Hillel was revered by many, many people and Gamiliel is Hillel's grandson.

Gamiliel is still well thought of, that he is found in the Mishnah and in the Mishnah it says this, Rabbi Rabban Gamiliel, the elder died and there has been no more reverence for the law and purity and abstinence also died out with him.

Gamiliel was thought of very, he was esteemed very highly and so when he speaks, the people listen.

[ 37 : 36 ] And so he says, listen, and Gamiliel just recounts history. He says there's been two people who have gone before this new uprising that have also come just like him.

There's this guy, Thudius, he was a self-proclaimed prophet who approximately had 400 followers. The Roman Calvary met him, history tells us and he was slain and captured and Thudius himself was decapitated.

So we know what came of Thudius. Also there is a Judas of Galilean and he was a leader of an insurrection as well and he died in his revolt and all those who followed him were disbanded.

Listen guys, if this is of man, this is going to come to nothing and this is just another little recent uprising. Leave him alone, is Gamiliel's counsel. And he says, is the essence of what he is saying. And so he says in the bottom of verse 38, if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail. It's going to come to nothing. Just like Thudius, just like Judas of Galilee.

[ 38 : 43 ] But if this is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God and how prophetic his words are to be.

And so they took his advice. And if you were an apostle, you would be saying thank you for listening to his advice and yet, okay, you were spared your life but you were soon taken out and beaten until your flesh parted and that's what happened.

And they beat them and charged them not to speak in Jesus' name and they let them go. One by one, the apostles, all 12 of them were whipped.

One by one, they were told not to speak in his name and then one by one, they all experienced supernatural joy. And this brings me to my last point and we'll be done.

Gospel ministry enriches the poor in spirit. It enrages the prideful and energizes the minister. Verse 41 and 42, then they left the presence of the council rejoicing.

[ 39 : 59 ] You were just beaten. You were just told not to speak in Jesus' name and 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 from house to house they were not ceasing teaching and preaching that Christ is Jesus. They left rejoicing.

Why? They were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for his name. Dishonor, in their case, was brought beating, a verbal lashing and restraint from speaking in his name.

Dishonor, what could that look like for you, for me, in our context today? What do the waves of persecution and opposition look like for you? Could opposition and humiliation look like people withholding their friendship and not including you, invitations, because you were a Christian?

Could opposition and humiliation look like people making fun of you because you speak as if Jesus is real? Could opposition look like not getting a promotion or being looked over for your faith in Christ?

[ 41 : 16 ] Could opposition look like people using you as the butt of their jokes because you speak of Jesus? Could opposition look like people raising their voice at you because you are compelled to speak the truth of Scripture and on and on it could go?

You know what humiliation and opposition may look like in your context. To be warned, yes, jail time is coming to America for those who name Christ and financial compensation, probably in the form of a lawsuit that will be required of Christians soon.

Regardless, rejoice. Rejoice. Have joy and continue to speak of his name.

We have nothing else that is worthy of our speech. Nothing, no one else to point people to than the God of the universe who came, who condescended to earth, who lived a sinless life, who died for sin and rose victoriously over sin and death that people may know him and not have their sin beheld against them.

I don't know of any other good news that is worthy of my speech or someone else to declare of. And so we will rejoice.

[ 42 : 39 ] Richard von Brant, born in 1909, died at the age of 91 in 2001. He authored and entitled a book, Tortured for Christ, which also has a docu-drama by the same name.

I read about him and he experienced this kind of joy. When he was in communist Romanian prison for eight years, he was tortured and they would rip chunks of flesh out of him in which he would have the scars to prove it.

He was sentenced to solitary confinement for three years, 12 feet underground, no light, no windows. And for weeks and even months on end, no one would even speak to him in his tiny cell. And to give him no stimulus, they even put felt on the guards, put felt on the bottom of their shoes as to not make a sound. So that he would be months and years without any sound.

Amazingly, during all of these times, he was overcome with joy. He would actually stand up in his weakened state and dance around his tiny cell, confident that God's angels were dancing with him.

[ 43 : 57 ] He was released from prison unexpectedly and he left his prison barely dressed, barely had enough strength to stand. His teeth was rotted out, he was in terrible shape, and he met a peasant woman on the road and she was carrying a basket of recently picked strawberries.

She offered him one and he was about to take it, but then he said, no thanks, I'm going to go and fast. Barely making it home to his wife, they then prayed and fasted as a memorial to the joy that he had experienced in prison.

He asked that God, he asked to God, Lord, please give me the same joy outside of prison that I experienced with you in prison.

We are not expected to live perfect and faultless lives, but we are expected to live joyfully. We are expected to persevere. And I love the last line every day in the temple and from house to house. They did not cease teaching and preaching that Christ is Jesus.

[ 45 : 10 ] The apostles were buoyant in the waves of persecution, resilient in the threats from authorities, liberated in their hearts while yet in prison, victorious while the world saw them as the most to be pitied and joyful for being counted worthy, for being humiliated on the count of Christ.

My prayer in 2022 would be that we would speak of Christ and experience the humiliation from others and consider it joy to be considered worthy to be found and identified with Christ.

Would you pray with me? Our gracious Lord, the supreme example of one who was humiliated before men who experienced wave upon wave of persecution.

Lord, thank you for your disciples' example to us as they surfaced so buoyantly after each persecution. Lord, would you give us how they obeyed your command to speak, how they determined to obey God rather than men and they rejoiced in their sufferings above all of this? It is truly supernatural. God, we pray that you would teach us how to live out our faith in the midst of opposition, however it comes, and to be buoyant, to always surface, to always be joyful.

[ 46 : 50 ] Lord, thank you for the together today to hear from your word and to be encouraged. Your name is to be praised, Jesus, and it's in your mighty name that we pray, Jesus, amen.