



## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Week of January 26, 2025

### Acts 5:17-42

*[17] But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy [18] they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. [19] But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, [20] "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." [21] And when they heard this, they entered the temple at 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 of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. [22] But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, [23] "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." [24] Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. [25] And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." [26] Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. [27] And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, [28] saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." [29] But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. [30] The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. [31] God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. [32] And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." [33] When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. [34] But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. [35] And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. [36] For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. [37] After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. [38] So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; [39] but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, [40] and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41] Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. [42] And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.*

1. Why do you think the unbelieving world was so opposed to Christ and His people? What crime or wrongdoing was the early church guilty of, that warranted the persecution against the apostles? Does the same kind of persecution exist against the church today? What do you think is at the root of persecutin against Christ and His church?
2. The Jewish religious leaders were jealous of the apostles. What do you think was at the heart of this jealousy (and all jealousy)? Why is jealousy such a powerful emotion? Why is jealousy incompatible with Christianity?

3. In our passage, when the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and freed the apostles, he told them to go right back to doing the very thing that got them thrown into prison in the first place - preach the gospel - and the apostles immediately obeyed! What do the apostle's actions tell you about the depth of their beliefs? Why do you think they were so willing to risk their lives to proclaim the "words of this Life"? Is the depth of your faith similar to that of the apostles? Are we willing to proclaim the "words of this Life" even if it means persecution? Why or why not?
4. As powerful as the council, the Senate of Israel, the officers, guards, captain of the temple and chief priests might be, they are still left perplexed and afraid. We see that real power and authority are found in Christ and His resurrection. How does the reality of Christ's resurrection embolden and empower the apostles to stand up to and oppose the powerful religious leaders of their day? How should the power of the resurrection embolden you to proclaim the "words of this Life"?
5. The apostles experienced persecution and torture, but in spite of their pain, they rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. Think about the reason for the apostles' suffering and explain how invincible joy is born out of suffering for Jesus' name. Do you have this kind of joy? If not, how can we experience this kind of joy?