

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, August 2nd, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Worthy for the Name
Proper 13
Acts 5:33-42

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, let us worship the Lord our God, who raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him as Leader and Savior.

We come to exalt the Name above every name

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Glorious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we come before You with hearts full of awe and praise. You are the Sovereign King over every council, every ruler, and every circumstance. Nothing can frustrate Your purposes or overthrow Your kingdom.

We adore You because You raised Jesus from the dead, exalted Him at Your right hand, and gave Him as Leader and Savior to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain! Worthy is the Name above every name!

We invoke Your presence now, O Lord. Send Your Holy Spirit to open our eyes, soften our hearts, and draw us near to Christ. Fill this place with Your glory. Let every heart be lifted to behold the risen Savior, so that we may worship You in spirit and in truth.

Prepare us to hear Your Word, to repent where we have resisted Your grace, and to rejoice in the honor of belonging to Jesus.

All glory, honor, and praise be to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen.

Call to Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Scriptures also remind us:

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Therefore, let us humbly confess our sins before Almighty God.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful Father,

We confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved You with our whole heart.

We have not trusted You as we ought.

We have feared the opinions of people more than we have feared You.

We have remained silent when we should have spoken of Christ.

We have sought comfort more than faithfulness and ease more than obedience.

Forgive us for our pride, our unbelief, our impatience, and our lack of love.

Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Teach us to delight in Your will, to walk in Your ways, and to live each day for the glory of Your Son.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The God of our fathers raised Jesus. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Your sins are pardoned. The penalty has been fully paid. You are now counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name—because Christ first suffered for you.

Thanks be to God!

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: "How Great Thou Art"

O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder,
 Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made;
 I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
 Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
 How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
 Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
 How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

When through the woods, and forest glades I wander,
 And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
 When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
 And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 34:1-10

¹ I will bless the Lord at all times;
 his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

² **My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
 let the humble hear and be glad.**

³ Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
 and let us exalt his name together!
⁴ **I sought the Lord, and he answered me
 and delivered me from all my fears.**

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant,
 and their faces shall never be ashamed.

**⁶This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.**

**⁷The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.**

**⁸Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!**

**⁹Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!**

**¹⁰The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.**

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Acts 5:33-42

³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But 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. ³⁵And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶For 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. ³⁷After 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. ³⁸So 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; ³⁹but 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, ⁴⁰and 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. ⁴¹Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Sermon

The Word of God says in Acts chapter 5:41–42, ‘Then 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 and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.’

That is the heart of our Scripture today: Men are beaten, and they rejoice. Men are threatened, and they keep preaching. Men are told to be silent, and they cannot stop speaking of Christ.

They leave the council wounded in body but strengthened in their souls, with backs that have been torn and at the same time hearts that have been lifted up, dishonored by men, yet honored by God.

This is not a passage about human stubbornness, or about religious excitement, or even about brave men finding strength somewhere inside themselves to carry on.

This is a passage about the risen Christ, about the power of the Gospel and about what happens when sinners have been forgiven, when fearful men have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and when ordinary Christians know that Jesus Christ is alive, reigning, saving, and worthy of everything.

Remember from last week we learned that the apostles had just preached the Gospel to the very council that had ordered them to stop. Peter had said those famous words, 'We must obey God rather than men.'

They had declared that the God of their fathers raised Jesus, whom the leaders had killed by hanging him on a tree, and that God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

That is the core message of the Gospel. Jesus was crucified. Jesus was raised. Jesus was exalted. Jesus gives repentance. Jesus gives forgiveness. And because Jesus is Savior and Lord, his witnesses must speak.

In today's Scripture we will see four simple truths that we need to remember daily in our walk with Christ.

First, the gospel exposes the heart.

Second, God can restrain his enemies in ways we do not expect.

Third, suffering for Christ is not shame but honor.

And fourth, the church must never stop teaching and preaching that Jesus is the Christ.

Today's Scripture starts.

Acts 5:33

³³ **When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.**

The word we see translated as 'enraged' is strong. The Greek word is *dieprionto*. It carries the idea of being cut through, even sawn through. Luke is describing something more than calm disagreement. This is not thoughtful debate. This is deep, violent, exposed rage.

That is important, because we have seen something like this before in Acts. In Acts 2, when Peter preached at Pentecost, the people were 'cut to the heart' and cried out, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'

And now again we see the leaders are also cut to the heart, and they want to kill the apostles.

Same Gospel. Different response.

In one place, conviction leads to repentance. In another place, conviction leads to rage.

The Gospel is always the aroma of life to some and death to others. It softens some hearts and hardens others. It heals some and exposes the hatred of others.

And we must understand why. Peter had not insulted them. He had not spoken with cruelty. He had told the truth. He basically told them, 'You killed Jesus. God raised him. God exalted him. And even now, forgiveness is offered.'

That is grace. But proud hearts often hate grace, because grace tells us we are sinners.

Grace tells us we cannot save ourselves. Grace tells religious people that religion without Christ cannot rescue them. Grace tells moral people that morality cannot wash away guilt. Grace tells powerful people that their authority is nothing before the throne of God.

The council's rage shows us that the human heart does not naturally want a Savior. Instead, it wants approval and control. It wants to be told that we are all basically good people, or at least better than most.

But the Gospel comes and says, 'You are more sinful than you know, and Christ is more gracious than you imagined.' It says, 'You must repent, but Christ gives repentance. You need forgiveness, and Christ gives forgiveness.'

That is both a humbling and beautiful message; and to a proud heart, it is offensive.

And because of that there is a warning here for us.

It is possible to sit under the Word and be cut but not converted. It is possible to feel conviction but turn it into anger or apathy. It is possible to hear the truth and, instead of saying, 'Lord, have mercy on me,' to say, 'Who are you to speak to me like that?'

That is why we must always pray for soft hearts. Every Lord's Day, every time the Scriptures are opened, every time Christ is preached, we must ask, 'Lord, do not let me merely hear Your Word. Do not let me merely react emotionally to it. Lord, bring me low and then lift me up in Christ.'

Like a doctor who puts pressure on a wound. The patient may cry out because it hurts. But the doctor is not the enemy. The pain reveals where the infection is. So, it is with the Word of God. When Scripture presses on pride, bitterness, unbelief, cowardice, greed, hypocrisy, or self-righteousness, the pain is not proof that God hates us. It is often the mercy of God showing us what must be healed. The council felt the wound, but they hated the physician and they rejected the cure.

Yet, even here, Christ is patient. The apostles are still standing there preaching forgiveness to the men who wanted them dead. That is the wonder of the Gospel. Jesus does not merely save respectable sinners. He saves guilty sinners. He saves religious sinners. He saves angry sinners.

He saves persecutors, soon we will see Him save Saul of Tarsus. So, if you see yourself in the council, if you see resistance, pride, anger, or fear in your reactions to some of the truths of God's Word, do not hide; Come to Christ. The same Jesus whom sinners killed is the Jesus God raised and exalted to give repentance and forgiveness.

Then we are introduced a surprising figure:

Acts 5:34-41

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.

Gamaliel was a respected teacher of the law, and in Acts 22 we will learn that he was the teacher of Paul. He was connected with the famous Jewish teacher Hillel and was highly regarded among the people. Later Jewish tradition remembers him with the title "Rabban," meaning "our master" or "our teacher," a title of great honor.

There is another beautiful reminder of God's providence here. None of the men sitting in that council could see what God was already doing. Gamaliel thought he was simply urging caution, but the Lord was quietly weaving together a much larger story. This respected rabbi would one day train a brilliant young Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus. At this point in Acts, Saul has not yet appeared, and no one in that room could have imagined what God was preparing. Yet the Lord was already arranging the education and training of the man who would become the great Apostle Paul. While God was preserving today's apostles through Gamaliel's counsel, He was also preparing tomorrow's apostle under Gamaliel's instruction. That is often how God's providence works. We usually see only today's crisis, but God is already arranging tomorrow's victory. He is always working on more than one part of His plan at the same time.

This matters historically and culturally. It reminds us that the Sanhedrin was not a simple group of men who all thought exactly the same way. There were Sadducees and Pharisees.

The Sadducees were closely connected with priestly power, and they were especially troubled by the apostles' preaching of the resurrection.

The Pharisees, while still often opposing Jesus, did believe in resurrection, angels, and spirits. So when Gamaliel, a Pharisee, stands to speak, God's Word is showing us that God restrains the fury of the council through a man inside the council itself.

Gamaliel orders the apostles to be put outside for a little while, and then he speaks with caution. 'Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men.' That sentence is wise, at least as far as it goes. Passion is a dangerous judge. Rage makes poor decisions. A heart full of anger can call murder justice and call cruelty zeal.

Then Gamaliel gives two examples from recent Jewish history. He mentions Theudas, a man who rose up claiming to be somebody, gathered about four hundred men, was killed, and the movement came to nothing. Next he mentions Judas the Galilean, who rose up in the days of the census, drew people after him, perished, and his followers were scattered.

Both examples are meant to remind the council that false movements often collapse without the Sanhedrin needing to stain its hands with blood.

Gamaliel then says, '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 even be found opposing God!'

And it is that last phrase that carries the real weight: opposing God. Fighting against God. Standing not merely against men, but against the Lord himself.

John Chrysostom, preaching on this passage long ago, observed how carefully Gamaliel framed his speech. He spoke to men 'intoxicated through passion' and tried to put fear into them by warning them not to act rashly.

Now, we must be careful. Gamaliel's advice is not the full response of faith. He does not say, 'These men are telling the truth; let us repent and believe in Jesus.' He does not bow before Christ. He takes a wait-and-see approach.

And brothers and sisters that is not enough. There are times when waiting is wisdom, but there are also times when waiting is unbelief.

If Christ is risen, we are not called merely to observe the church and see what happens. We are called to repent and believe the gospel.

John Calvin is helpful here. In his comments on Acts 5, Calvin says that Gamaliel draws a wrong conclusion from true premises when he applies this principle in a way that could encourage passivity. What is of God will stand, yes. The kingdom of Christ cannot be overthrown, yes.

But that does not mean the servants of Christ should be lazy in defending the truth or silent when God calls them to speak. God's sovereignty is not a pillow for disobedience; it is the foundation for courage.

That is a what a Christian must keep in balance.

God is sovereign and His kingdom cannot fail.
Christ will build his church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And because that is true, we do not sit back in spiritual laziness. We need to preach, pray, disciple, and endure what the world throws against us because we obey.

God's sovereignty is not a safety net for us to live in disobedience; it is the foundation of our faith and courage.

Think of a farmer who believes God controls the rain, the sun, the seasons, and the growth of the seed. But because he believes that, he plants. He does not sit on the porch and say, 'If God wants a harvest, he will grow one without me.'

No, he goes out into the field because God uses people.

In the same way, Christ will gather his people, and he uses the preaching of the Gospel. He uses ordinary witnesses like you and me. He uses parents teaching children, pastors opening the Word, Christians speaking across tables, saints praying in hidden places. The plan is God's, so the labor is not in vain.

And notice God's providence in this passage. The apostles are in danger. The council wants them dead. Then one man stands up, and one simple speech changes the outcome. The apostles are beaten, but they are not killed.

God does not need armies to protect his peoples. He can use an angel in the night, as earlier in the chapter. He can use public opinion. He can use a Pharisee's caution. He can use the words of someone who does not yet fully understand the Gospel.

The Lord reigns over friends and enemies, over courts and councils, over opened doors and closed doors.

We do not always know how God will preserve us. We do not always know what he will allow to happen. Sometimes he delivers His people from suffering. Sometimes he delivers them through suffering. Sometimes he opens prison doors. Sometimes he gives the grace to sing in prison. But always, always, he is Lord.

And the council takes his advice, at least partly. They did not kill the apostles. But they called them in, beat them, charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The Greek word translated as 'beat' is *derō*. It refers to a Jewish judicial flogging connected with the Old Testament limit of forty lashes, which was commonly given as thirty-nine lashes to avoid accidentally exceeding the law in Deuteronomy 25:3. This was not a mild warning or a slap on the wrist. It was a painful, public punishment meant to shame the apostles and frighten them into silence.

We should not skip past this too quickly. Sometimes, when we read the Bible, suffering becomes nothing more than words on a page. But these were real men with bodies like ours.

Their punishment would have involved repeated blows, severe pain, public humiliation, and very likely bruising, bleeding, and lasting scars. It was not a mild warning. It was meant to make them feel shame in their bodies and fear in their souls.

They felt every blow. Their skin was torn. Their muscles ached. Their backs burned.

They likely struggled to sleep that night and for many nights afterward. Every time they turned over, sat down, or embraced their families, they would have been reminded of their wounds. Christianity never pretends that pain is not real.

And yet verse 41 says, 'Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.'

Rejoicing. Not because the pain was pleasant. Not because injustice is good. Not because Christians enjoy suffering.

They rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for 'the Name'.

That phrase 'the name' is beautiful.

In the passage, the council keeps saying, 'Do not speak in the name of Jesus.' The apostles suffer 'for the name.' The name means Christ himself, his honor, his gospel, his person, his saving rule.

They are not suffering for politics. They are not suffering because they are rude. They are not suffering because they are foolish. They are suffering because they belong to Jesus and will not stop saying that Jesus is the Christ.

Here is one of the great reversals of the Christian life: shame for Christ is honor. The council says, 'We will disgrace you.' Heaven says, 'You are blessed.' The council says, 'We will make you afraid.' The Spirit says, 'Rejoice.' The council says, 'Stop speaking.' Christ says, 'You are my witnesses.'

John Calvin is especially pastoral on this verse. He says we should not think the apostles were unfeeling, as if they did not feel shame or pain. They had not stopped being human.

But when they considered the cause for which they suffered, joy got the upper hand. Calvin says believers may be touched by the bitterness of suffering and yet overcome sorrow with spiritual joy.

That is very important. Christian joy is not denial of the truth of reality. It is not pretending the cancer diagnosis does not hurt. It is not pretending betrayal is painless. It is not pretending persecution is easy.

Christian joy is deeper than the wound. It says, 'This hurts, but Christ is worthy. This is bitter, but Christ is sweet. This is shame before men, but Christ has welcomed me. This cross is heavy, but my Savior carried a heavier one for me.'

The apostles are living out the words of Jesus.

In Matthew 5:11–12, Jesus said,

Matthew 5:11-12

¹¹ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Paul puts it this way in Romans 5:3

Romans 5:3-5

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

These are not natural responses. These are resurrection responses.

And this matters because many of us are not going to face a Jewish flogging, but we do fear shame. We fear being thought strange. We fear being misunderstood. We fear someone saying, 'You really believe that?' We fear losing respect. We fear being labeled narrow, old-fashioned, too serious, too Christian. And fear of shame can silence us long before fear of death would.

Acts chapter 5 asks us: whose approval matters most? If Christ counts you worthy, can the world's scorn destroy you? If Jesus calls you blessed, can human mockery make you cursed? If your name is written in heaven, what can earthly shame finally take from you?

There is a well-documented story from the English Reformation that beautifully illustrates this truth. In 1555, two faithful ministers of the Gospel, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, were condemned to be burned at the stake in Oxford because they

refused to deny the truth of the gospel. As the flames were lit, Ridley understandably struggled as anyone would. The fire was real. The pain was real. But Latimer turned to his younger friend and spoke words that Christians have remembered for nearly five centuries:

"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

Those were not the words of a man pretending the flames did not hurt. They were the words of someone who believed that Christ was more precious than life itself. Latimer knew that men could burn his body, but they could not extinguish the Gospel. In fact, the very attempt to silence the truth only caused it to spread more widely.

That is exactly what we see in Acts 5. The Sanhedrin thought that thirty-nine lashes would silence the apostles. Instead, the apostles left rejoicing, and the Gospel spread even further. Throughout history the enemies of Christ have often discovered the same lesson: they can wound Christ's servants, but they cannot stop Christ's kingdom. The King who conquered death continues to build His church, and no earthly power can overthrow what God Himself has established.

That is the power of suffering for the Name! The world can break our bodies, but it cannot touch our joy, because our joy is anchored in the resurrected Jesus Christ. We may not face physical beatings, but we likely will face social rejection, job pressure, or family tension for Christ's sake. And when they come, we need to remember the apostles and rejoice that we bear His name. The same Spirit who filled them fills us and we need to live more like them, look at their response.

Acts 5:42

⁴² **And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.**

The council commanded silence. The apostles answered with daily witness. The lash said, 'Stop.' The Spirit said, 'Speak.' Their wounds did not end their ministry; in the mercy of God, their wounds became part of their witness.

They were teaching and preaching. The verb for preaching here is connected with proclaiming good news. They were evangelizing. They were announcing glad tidings. And the content was simple and glorious: 'that the Christ is Jesus.'

Or, as the Greek word order can emphasize, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the promised King, the Anointed One.

This is the message the church must never forget. We may speak about many good things. We may teach about family, suffering, prayer, holiness, justice, mission, and hope. But the center must always be Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the promised Son of David. Jesus is the suffering servant. Jesus is the Lamb of God. Jesus is the risen Lord. Jesus is the only Savior. Jesus gives repentance and forgiveness. Jesus reigns at the Father's right hand. Jesus will come again.

The apostles taught in the temple and from house to house. Publicly and privately. In large gatherings and ordinary homes. In formal spaces and around tables. That is a healthy picture of church life. The Word is preached when the church gathers on Sundays, and the Word is spoken as believers live together. Sermons matter, and conversations matter. Pulpits matter, and dinner tables matter. The gospel is too good to be locked in one hour on one day a week.

Parents, teach Christ in your homes. Do it simply. Do it patiently. Do not think you need to sound impressive. Open the Bible. Pray. Speak of sin and grace. Speak of Jesus as Savior and Lord. Grandparents, speak of Christ to your grandchildren.

Church members, encourage one another with Christ. When someone is weary, do not offer only vague optimism. Give them the promises of God. When someone is guilty, do not merely say, 'Do better.' Point them to the blood of Christ. When someone is afraid, do not merely say, 'Be strong.' Tell them the risen Lord is with his people.

And notice the Scripture says that they 'did not cease.' They kept going. Not because the culture was friendly. Not because the authorities approved. Not because it was safe. They kept going because Christ is worthy, the Spirit is present, and sinners need salvation.

There is a lesson here for weary Christians. Faithfulness is often daily. Verse 42 says 'every day.' We often want dramatic obedience, but the Lord calls us to daily obedience. Daily prayer. Daily repentance. Daily love. Daily witness. Daily forgiveness. Daily taking up the cross. Most Christian faithfulness is not seen by crowds. It is seen by God.

The Christian life is like a woodstove in winter. You do not put in one log in November and expect the house to stay warm until March. You keep feeding the fire. You rise in the morning and tend it. You add wood again and again. So it is with faith. We return to the Word. We return to prayer. We return to the gathered church. We return to Christ. And as we do, the Spirit keeps the flame alive.

This passage also gives us courage for mission. The apostles were not selling a product. They were not building a brand. They were not gathering followers for themselves. They were preaching Christ. That means the power is not in our cleverness. The power is in

the Gospel. We should speak clearly, graciously, and wisely. But we do not save anyone. Christ saves. We do not raise the dead. Christ does. We do not open blind eyes. The Spirit does. Our calling is simply to bear witness.

And let us be honest: bearing that witness may cost us. It may cost comfort. It may cost reputation. In some places, it costs freedom and life. But Acts 5 says Christ is worth it. The apostles were not reckless men looking for pain. They were redeemed men who had found a treasure greater than safety. They knew that Jesus had conquered death. Once death has been defeated, the threats of men become smaller. Still painful, yes. Still serious, yes. But no longer ultimate.

Gamaliel said, 'If it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.' He did not fully confess what he was saying, but we do. This work is of God. The apostles' courage is of God. The Gospel's advance is of God. The church's endurance is of God. The Name cannot be buried, because Jesus has already risen from the dead.

The council had great power, but not ultimate power. They could beat the apostles, but they could not silence Christ. They could command, but they could not convert obedience to men into obedience to God. They could shame the apostles, but they could not remove their joy. They could oppose the church, but they could not overthrow the plan of God.

This is the story throughout the entire book of Acts. Threats do not stop the Word. Prison does not stop the Word. Beatings do not stop the Word. Martyrdom does not stop the Word. Persecution scatters believers, and scattered believers preach. The enemy pushes against the flame, and the wind only spreads it.

Opposition to the truth is like wind against fire: it inflames it even more. That is a vivid image. Blow on a weak candle and it may go out. But blow on a great fire and it grows. The Spirit of God made the apostolic witness like a holy fire. The council blew against it with threats and lashes, and the flame rose higher.

That does not mean every local church will always grow. It does not mean every faithful Christian will be spared. It does not mean every earthly story ends comfortably. But it does mean Christ's kingdom cannot fail. It means the Gospel will accomplish all God intends. It means every act of faithful witness matters, even when results are hidden. It means your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

So, beloved, do not measure truth by comfort. The apostles were in the will of God, and they were beaten. Do not measure faithfulness by ease. The apostles were faithful, and they suffered. Do not measure God's love by whether men approve of you. The apostles

were loved by Christ, and the council dishonored them. Measure all things by Jesus Christ crucified, risen, exalted, and coming again.

So how do we live out today's Scriptural teachings in our own lives?

First, we must receive the Gospel with repentance and faith. Do not stand with the enraged council. Do not be cut by the Word and respond with anger. If the Word exposes your sin, come to Christ. He is exalted to give repentance and forgiveness. That means even repentance is grace. Ask him for it. Say, 'Lord Jesus, give me a soft heart. Give me hatred for my sin. Give me faith to rest in you.'

Second, we must always obey God rather than men. This does not mean Christians should be rude, rebellious, or careless. Including political leaders, we may not like. Remember that the Scripture calls us to honor proper authority. But when human authority commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, we must obey God. We do so humbly, not arrogantly; peacefully, not violently; courageously, not fearfully.

Third, we must learn to view shame through the cross. The world may call faithfulness foolish. Christ calls it blessed. The world may call obedience narrow. Christ calls it love. The world may call suffering for Jesus disgrace. Heaven calls it honor. Ask the Lord to make the approval of Christ more precious to you than the applause of men.

Fourth, we must keep speaking of Jesus. In the temple and from house to house. In gathered worship and ordinary life. To our children and our neighbors. To the weary and the wandering. To religious people and irreligious people. To those who are curious and those who are hostile. And the message is not complicated: Jesus is the Christ. Jesus died for sinners. Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus reigns. Jesus forgives. Jesus saves all who come to him.

And finally, we must rejoice.

Not in pain itself. Not in opposition itself. But in Christ. Rejoice that your name is known in heaven. Rejoice that your sins are forgiven. Rejoice that your Savior bore shame for you. Rejoice that the kingdom cannot be overthrown. Rejoice that one day every wound received for Christ will be swallowed up in glory.

The apostles walked out of the council with wounded backs and joyful hearts. That is not natural. That is grace. That is the work of the Spirit. That is what happens when Christ becomes more precious than comfort. And that is what we need as Bible-believing people.

May the Lord make us that kind of church. Not loud for ourselves, but bold for Christ. Not harsh in spirit, but unashamed of truth. Not lovers of suffering, but lovers of the Savior. Not stopped by fear, but strengthened by grace. May we teach and preach, in public and in private, in the church and in the home, in season and out of season, that the Christ is Jesus.

And when dishonor comes for the Name, may joy get the upper hand as we walk as Salt and Light in this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,

Almighty and merciful Father, we thank You for Your Word and for the Table we will share today. You have shown us how the apostles rejoiced to suffer dishonor for the Name of Jesus.

Write these truths on our hearts. Forgive our fear of man and our times of silence. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so we may boldly teach and preach that Jesus is the Christ — in church and in daily life.

Restrain every enemy of the gospel and strengthen Your persecuted people. Equip us to obey You rather than men and to count it joy to follow Christ, no matter the cost.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

In Jesus' Name, **Amen.**

Adapted from John Calvin

Communion

Invitation to the Table

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we have seen the apostles leave the council wounded in body yet rejoicing in heart. They suffered dishonor for the Name because they belonged to a Savior who first suffered for them.

And now that same Savior invites us to His Table.

We do not come because we are strong.

We do not come because we have been perfectly faithful.
We do not come because we have earned a place here.
We come because Jesus Christ lived for sinners, died for sinners, and rose again for sinners.
We come because His body was broken for us.
We come because His blood was shed for us.
We come because Christ still strengthens His people through His appointed means of grace.

This Table is not for those who trust in themselves.
It is for those who trust in Christ.
It is for those who know their sin and flee to the Savior.
It is for those who have repented and believed the gospel.
If you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation and are seeking to follow Him as Lord, then come.

Come humbly.
Come thankfully.
Come joyfully.
Come fixing your eyes upon Christ, who loved His church and gave Himself for her.

Let us pray.
Gracious Father,
We confess that we are weak and often fearful.
We confess that we have not always been faithful witnesses of Christ.
Too often we have feared the opinions of men more than the approval of our Lord.
Too often we have remained silent when we should have spoken.
Too often we have relied upon ourselves instead of Your Spirit.
Yet we thank You that our hope does not rest in our obedience but in Christ's perfect obedience.
We thank You that our acceptance before You rests not in our righteousness but in His.
Forgive us.
Cleanse us.
Renew us.
As we come to this Table, strengthen our faith, deepen our love for Christ, and fill us afresh with Your Spirit.
May this meal remind us that our crucified Savior is now our risen and reigning King.
And may we leave this Table encouraged to live faithfully for His glory.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.
Amen.

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
**It is right and fitting
 to give Him thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and our joyful duty to give You thanks and praise, O Lord our God.

You are the Creator of heaven and earth.

You are the Sovereign King over every nation, every ruler, every circumstance, and every moment of history.

Nothing lies outside Your providence.

Nothing frustrates Your purposes.

Nothing can overturn Your eternal decree.

When sinful men gathered against Your holy Servant Jesus, they did not defeat Your plan.

They fulfilled it.

At the cross, what appeared to be defeat became the greatest victory ever accomplished.

Through Christ's suffering came our salvation.

Through His death came our life.

Through His resurrection came our hope.

Through His exaltation comes our confidence.

And so we rejoice in Your saving work and gladly proclaim:

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ our Lord!

Let us together confess the faith of the church at all times and in all places:

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
 born of the Virgin Mary,
 suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried;
 he descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 he ascended into heaven,
 he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
 and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit,
 the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints,
 the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body,
 and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

Communion

On the night He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

We remember that His body was broken for us, that we might be healed, forgiven, and restored.

In the same way, He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

We remember that His blood was shed for us — the innocent for the guilty, the righteous for sinners.

Taking of the bread

This is the body of Christ,
 given for you.
 Given under the plan of God.
 Given in the face of opposition.
 Given so that sinners might be forgiven
 and brought near to God.

As you eat, remember—
Christ gave Himself for you.
Christ was broken for you.
Christ now unites you to Himself.

Let us eat together,
with faith in Christ,
and thanksgiving in our hearts

Drinking of the cup

This cup reminds us of the blood of Christ,
the blood of the new covenant,
shed for the forgiveness of sins.
Shed according to the eternal purpose of God.
Shed in the midst of humanity's rebellion.
Shed so that guilty sinners might receive mercy.

As you drink, remember:
Your sins are forgiven.
Your guilt has been removed.
Your peace with God has been secured.
Not through your works.
Not through your efforts.
Not through your faithfulness.
But through Christ alone.

And as you drink, remember that this same Christ who died has been
raised.
He reigns at the Father's right hand.
He intercedes for His people.
And one day He will return in glory.
Let us drink together, proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes.

Prayer after Communion

Our gracious Father,
We thank You for this holy meal.
We thank You for Christ, whose body was broken for us and whose blood was
shed for us.
We thank You that through His death our sins are forgiven.
Through His resurrection our hope is secured.
Through His reign we are upheld.
And through Your Spirit we are strengthened.

Lord, as we leave this Table, make us faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.
 Give us courage when we are tempted to fear.
 Give us wisdom when we face opposition.
 Give us joy when following Christ is costly.
 And give us grace to keep speaking of our Savior, just as the apostles did.
 May we leave this place trusting Your sovereign hand, resting in Christ's finished
 work, and walking in the power of Your Spirit.
 Keep us faithful until the day we see our Lord face to face and gather at the
 marriage supper of the Lamb.
 To You be all glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer **(Congregant Prepared)**

Closing Hymn: "Be Thou My Vision"

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
 Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
 Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
 Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
 I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
 Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
 Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
 May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
 Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious Father,
 We come before You with thankful hearts, praising You for Your unfailing love and Your
 faithful care over Your people. You have been our refuge in every generation, and You
 remain the Rock upon which Your Church is built.

We thank You for the privilege of gathering together this Lord's Day. Thank You for the fellowship of believers, for the preaching of Your Word, for the sacraments, and for the work of Your Holy Spirit among us.

We pray for Your Church throughout the world. Strengthen those who faithfully proclaim the gospel in places where following Christ is costly. Uphold pastors, elders, missionaries, and every believer who bears witness to the Name of Jesus. Give them courage, wisdom, humility, and joy.

We pray for our nation, our provincial and municipal leaders, and all who serve in positions of authority. Grant them wisdom, integrity, and a desire to pursue justice and peace according to Your righteous standards.

We remember those in our own congregation who are suffering through illness, grief, loneliness, anxiety, financial hardship, or family struggles. Be their comfort and strength. Remind them that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We pray for our children and young people. Establish them firmly upon the truth of Your Word. Guard them from the deception of this world and lead them into lives of faithful obedience.

We ask Your blessing upon every ministry of this church. May we grow in holiness, love, generosity, and faithful witness. Help us to encourage one another daily and to proclaim Christ boldly in our homes, our workplaces, and throughout our community.

As we gather for fellowship following this service, bless our conversations. May they be filled with kindness, encouragement, and gratitude. Deepen the unity of this congregation, strengthen old friendships, create new ones, and use our time together to build up the body of Christ.

We ask all these things through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Benediction

And now, as you go out into the world, do not measure truth by comfort, nor faithfulness by ease. Go forth rejoicing that you have been counted worthy to bear the Name of Christ. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. **Amen.**