

## THIRD LESSON

### THE BOOK OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES CHAPTERS 1-5

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**Why this book is important to learn?**

**How do we apply this book?**

**Who is the author?**

**Who is Luke? (Acts 1:1, 3/ Col 4:14/ 2 Tim 4:11/ Philemon 24)**

**What is his purpose in writing the book of the Acts (Acts 1:1-2)**

**Thematic Study and Explanation of the first five chapters**

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**Why is the book of the Acts of the Apostles so important to learn?** It is very important to learn because it is the connecting link between Christ's life and the life of the church, between the Gospels and the Letters. It is an accurate historical record of the early church. It is also a theological book. It serves as a bridge between the gospels and the letters. It speaks about the ascension of Jesus. It speaks about the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (promise fulfilment). It speaks about the birth and growth of the Christian church on the day of Pentecost. It speaks about the two pillars of the church: Peter and Paul. It speaks about the witness life of the early Christian community. It speaks about the persecution against Christians. It speaks about the hierarchical structure of the Church. It speaks about Jerusalem council under James (like Vatican council II). This council makes doctrinal clarifications (do's and don'ts). It gives a new horizon to the life, presence and mission of the church (world mission and Universal salvation (1:8)).

**How do we apply this book?** When we read this book, we put ourselves in the place of the disciples and we feel with them as they are filled with the Holy Spirit and we feel thrilled to see the responses of hundreds of people to the gospel messages of the Apostles. We see their commitment to our Lord. They rejoiced in their suffering for the spread of the gospel. How can we share the gospel? This question should ring through our mind as we page through the book of Acts. In virtually every chapter, apostles such as Peter and Paul powerfully present the gospel to individuals and groups of people. The apostles portrayed in Acts shine with evangelistic zeal, showing a striking transition from the disciples of the Gospels. Clearly the apostles' faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus produced a noticeable change in their hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. We struggle with fears over how others will react to our faith. we need to allow the book of the Acts to encourage us to walk more closely with God so that we might make Christ's name known with the boldness and the zeal of the apostles.

**Who is the author?** Luke wrote both his gospel and the book of the Acts of the Apostles. He is a historian with facts. Luke 1:1-4/ Acts 1:1. He dedicates this book to Theophilus (one who loves God). Both the books are addressed to Theophilus who may have been Luke's patron who may perhaps have helped to finance the book's writing. Why this book is called the Acts of the Apostles? Because it describes the great deeds of the apostles (Peter and Paul), James or other significant believers.

**Who is Luke?** Luke is a Greek and a Gentile Christian and a Doctor (Col 4:14). One of the essential qualities of a good doctor is compassion. People need to know that their doctor cares. Even if he/she does not know what is wrong or is not sure what to do, real concern is always a doctor's good medicine. If we read his gospel, we can easily see that Doctor Luke was a person of compassion. Luke's gospel is known as Gospel of Mercy and Compassion, writing beautifully Christ's compassion.

Luke as a physician knew some medicine. We find some medical vocabularies in his gospel . Lk 4/38: Simon's mother had a 'high' fever (Mt and Mk write as fever). Lk 5/12 Now there was a man full of leprosy (Mt and Mk just state as leprosy). Lk 22/44: Jesus was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. (No mention of sweat becoming blood in Mk and Mark) Lk 8/43: And a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years, who [had spent her whole livelihood on doctors and] was unable to be cured by anyone (Mk has same details but Mt omits details). Luke is also a travelling companion of Paul in his missionary journey (2 Tim 4:11/ Philemon 1:24).

**What is his purpose in writing the book of the Acts?** His purpose is to give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian church (Acts 1:1-2).

### **Thematic Explanations**

**1:8 But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

This verse describes a series of ever widening circles. The gospel was to spread geographically from Jerusalem, into Judea, Samaria and finally to the whole world. It would begin with devout Jews in Jerusalem, to spread in Samaria, a mixed race and finally to the Gentiles in the uttermost parts of the earth.

**What do we learn from the tradition about the apostles' mission after Jesus' ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost?**

**Peter** is traditionally believed to have first traveled to Antioch and established a community there as the first bishop and after that he may have visited Corinth before heading to Rome where he was ultimately martyred by Nero around 64 AD in Rome. Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is built on top of St. Peter's tomb.

**Andrew** (Peter's brother) became an Apostle to the Greeks. It is believed that he preached to Greek communities and was martyred at Patras on a cross in the shape of an X. His relics were eventually transferred to the Duomo Cathedral in Amalfi, Italy.

**James the Great:** James was the first apostle to be martyred by Herod the king with the sword" (Acts 12:1-2) in 44 AD in Jerusalem, but his tomb is nowhere near this location. After his death his body was transferred to Spain and is currently located in Santiago de Compostella. His tomb is the destination point of the centuries-old pilgrimage, El Camino, still popular today.

**John:** He is the author of the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation, the only apostle who had a natural death. In Revelation he writes from the island of Patmos, Greece (Rev 1:9). He died around 100 AD and is buried near Ephesus.

**Philip:** He ministered to Greek-speaking communities. He was martyred around 80 AD. His relics are located in the Basilica Santi Apostoli, in Rome.

**Bartholomew:** Various traditions have him preaching in different areas. It is believed that he was martyred and his remains are currently located at the church of St. Bartholomew-in-the-Island, in Rome.

**Thomas:** The "doubting" apostle, Thomas is widely known for his missionary efforts in India. There is a popular story about one of his adventures that focuses on the conversion of a local "doubting" king. He died around 72 AD and his tomb is located in Mylapore (Chennai), India.

**Matthew:** He is one of the four evangelists. He preached to various communities in the Mediterranean before his martyrdom in Ethiopia. His tomb is located in the cathedral in Salerno, Italy.

**James the Less:** Scholars believe that Saint James the Less authored the "Epistle of St. James" found in the New Testament. After the apostles dispersed and left Jerusalem, James remained and became the first bishop in the holy city. He remained there for several decades until he was stoned to death by the Jewish authorities in the year 62. Some of his relics can be found in the Basilica Santi Apostoli, in Rome. It is also believed his tomb is located at the St. James Cathedral in Jerusalem.

**Judas Thaddeus:** He preached the gospel in various places. He is revered by the Armenian Church as the "Apostle to the Armenians." He suffered martyrdom around 65 AD in Beirut, Lebanon. His remains are currently in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

**Simon the Zealot:** Simon is often depicted with Judas Thaddeus and some believe they preached together as a team. This is due in part because a tradition states they were both

martyred in Beirut in the same year. Some of his relics are believed to be located in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

**Matthias:** After being chosen as the "replacement apostle," one tradition states that Matthias founded a church in Cappadocia and ministered to Christians on the coasts of the Caspian Sea. It is believed that he died a martyr's death, and was beheaded with an axe in Colchis at the hands of the many pagans there. Some of his relics are said to have been brought to Rome by St. Helena.

**Ascension of Jesus (1:9-10):** After 40 days with his disciples (1:3) Jesus returned to heaven. The two men dressed in white were angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day Jesus would return in the same way he went bodily and visibly. He will return to judge and rule over the earth and we should be ready for his sudden return. When? Only God the Father knows the time and date. It is his authority (1:7) (Refer Mathew 24:36/ 1 Thess 5:1-8) we should be ready for his sudden return living faithfully and sharing the gospel message of Jesus. After Christ was taken up to heaven, the disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and had a prayer meeting. Jesus had said that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days so they waited and prayed. When we face a difficult task, an important decision or a baffling dilemma, let us not rush into the work right away. Instead, our first step should be to pray for the Holy Spirit's power and guidance.

**Plight of Judas (1:16):** how could someone who had been with Jesus daily betray him? Judas received the same calling and teaching as everyone else. Why would Judas want to betray Jesus? Very likely, Judas expected Jesus to start a political rebellion and overthrow Rome. As a treasurer, he certainly assumed that he would be given an important position in Jesus' new government. But when he slowly realized that Jesus' kingdom was not physical or political, his greedy desire for power and money was dashed and so he decided to betray him in exchange for money and favor from the religious leaders. He hardened his heart and joined in the plot with Jesus' enemies to put him to death. Judas remained unrepentant to the end and he finally committed suicide. Although Jesus predicted this would happen, it was Judas' choice

**Judas' death controversies (1:18-19):** There are two different versions about Judas' death.

*(Matthew 27:3-8) Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, deeply regretted what he had done. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? Look to it yourself." Flinging the money into the temple, he departed and went off and "HANGED HIMSELF". The chief priests gathered up the money, but said, "It is not lawful to deposit this in the temple treasury, for it is the price of blood." After consultation, they used it to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why that field even today is called the Field of Blood. (zechariah 11)*

*(Acts 1: 17-19) He was numbered among us and was allotted a share in this ministry. He bought a parcel of land with the wages of his iniquity, and **FALLING HEADLONG, HE BURST OPEN IN THE MIDDLE, AND ALL HIS INSIDES SPILLED OUT.** This became known to everyone who lived in Jerusalem, so that the parcel of land was called in their language ‘Akeldama,’ that is, Field of Blood.*

Matthew says that Judas hanged himself and Acts says that he fell. Which one is true? The traditional explanation is that when Judas hanged himself, the rope or branch broke, Judas fell and his body burst open. Therefore there is no controversy.

Some Bible scholars say the accounts don't conflict but are two events occurring in sequence. This point of view believes Judas hung himself, but because of the belief that his body was unclean and impure, he was left to hang there long enough to decompose and fall to the ground, thereby causing the eruption of “all his insides spilled out”

**Matthias was chosen to replace Judas (1:26):** The apostles had to choose a replacement for Judas Iscariot. They outlined specific criteria for making the choice. When the finalists had been chosen, the apostles prayed asking God to guide the selection process. This gives us a good example of how to proceed when we are making important decisions. We need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us in our decision making. We need to set up criteria consistent with the Bible, examine the alternatives and pray for wisdom. Making right choices in life is important like studies, work, and marriage and so on. No use lamenting life long after consciously making wrong choices.

**Transition from Disciples to Apostles (1:26):** Disciple means a follower or learner while apostle means messenger or missionary. These men “Apostles” had the special assignment of spreading the Good News of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is a pity that the bishops, successors of the apostles, often get stuck with administrative leadership and not pastoral leadership.

**The feast of Pentecost (2:1-13):** it is one of the three major annual feasts (Deut 16:16) a festival thanksgiving for the harvested crops. Jesus was crucified at Passover time, and he ascended 40 days after his resurrection and the Holy Spirit came 50 days after the resurrection, ten days after the resurrection. Pentecost means 50<sup>th</sup> day. Jews of many nations gathered in Jerusalem for this festival. Thus Peter speech in 2:14ff was given an international audience and it resulted in a worldwide harvest of new believers- the first converts to Christianity. This feast reminds us of the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send “another helper” (John 14:16) who would indwell believers and empower them for ministry.

This was a fulfillment of John the Baptist’s words about the Holy Spirit’s baptizing with fire (Luke 3:16) and the Prophet Joel’s words about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29)

**2:4 Why tongues of fire?** Tongues symbolize speech and the communication of the gospel. Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sent our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others. On Mount Sinai, God conformed the validity of the OT law with fire from heaven (Ex 19:16-18) At Pentecost, God conformed the validity of the Holy Spirit's ministry by sending fire. Fire came down on many believers, symbolizing that God's presence is now available to all who believe in him. Those gathered for the feast spoke in other languages. The apostles spoke in their own native language Aramaic probably or Hebrew but those who came from different places spoke their own language and they heard the apostles speaking other than their own language. God works all kinds of miracles to spread the gospel. Christianity is not limited to any race or group of people. Christ offers salvation to all people without regard to nationality.

**2:9 Who are these people?** These Jewish people lived in different regions and they had been dispersed throughout the world through captivities and persecutions and they returned to their homelands with God's good news of salvation and thus God prepared the way for the spread of the gospel.

**2:14-40 Peter addresses the crowd (:** He is a new Peter, humble and bold unlike the Peter of gospels. His confidence came from the Holy Spirit who made him powerful and dynamic speaker. Peter tells the people that they should listen to the testimony of the believers because of the fulfillment of the OT prophecies (2:17- 21) and because Jesus is the Messiah and Risen, he could change their lives. He began with a public proclamation of the resurrection at a time when it could be verified by many witnesses. Jesus' resurrection was the ultimate sign that what he said about himself was true. Without resurrection, we would have no reason to believe in Jesus. Peter supported his argument by quoting David's psalm (Ps 16:25-28) which speaks of Jesus' resurrection. After Peter's powerful Spirit filled message, the people were deeply moved and asked, "What shall we do? Like Peter's audience, every time we hear God's word, we have to ask, what should we do?"

**A huge harvest of believers:** Peter is known for big catch of fish, called a fisher of men by Jesus and now he became a great fisher of men by converting 3000 men by one powerful speech about Jesus Christ.

**2:42-46 Witness life of the Early Christian community:** Those new Christians were united with other believers. They were taught by the apostles. They spent in prayer and they grew in fellowship. Like early Christians, we need to be in groups to learn God's word, pray and mature in faith. This is a great way to grow in faith and helping others to grow.

Breaking of bread refers to the Eucharist Celebrations that were celebrated in the remembrance of Jesus who commanded to celebrate. Recognizing other believers as brothers and sisters in the family of God, the Christians in Jerusalem shared all they had so

that all could benefit from God's gifts. As part of God's family, it is our responsibility to help one another in every way possible. God's family works best when its members work together.

**2:46 Domestic churches:** the believing Jews were forced to meet in private homes for communion and prayer and teaching about Christ. By the end of the first century, many of the Jewish believers were excommunicated from their synagogues. The church grew in number because of all these witness elements.

**3:1-10 Peter heals the crippled beggar:** Prayer time for the Jews: The Jews observed three times of prayer – morning (9 am) afternoon (3 pm) and evening (sunset). At these times, the devout Jews and Gentiles who believed in God often went to the temple to pray. Peter and John went to the temple to pray at 3 PM. The beautiful gate was one of the favorite entrances to the temple and many people passed through that entrance to worship and the crippled man was begging there where he would be seen by the most people.

Giving money to beggars was considered praiseworthy in the Jewish religion. So the beggar wisely placed himself where pious people might see him on their way to worship at the temple. The crippled asked for money but Peter gave him something much better- the use of his legs. (In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – by the authority of Jesus Christ). By using Jesus' name, Peter showed who gave him the authority and power to heal. Jesus name must be used in faith. When we pray in Christ name, it is Christ who gives our prayers their power. The apostles were doing this healing through the Holy Spirit's power, not their own. Jesus already promised the apostles the gift of healing (John 14:12-14). The crippled man in his excitement began to jump and walk around and praised God and others too were awed by God's power. Let us not forget to thank people who help us and let us remember to praise God for His care and protection. Gratitude is the melody of a soul (Four blessed looks: Look back and Thank God/ Look Forward and Trust God/ Look around and Serve God/ Look within and Find God)

**3:11-26** Peter had an audience and he capitalized on the opportunity to share Jesus Christ. He clearly presented his message telling who Jesus is/ how the Jews rejected him/why their rejection was fatal and what they needed to change the situation. Peter told the crowd that they still had a choice. God still offered them the opportunity to believe and receive Jesus as their Messiah and as their Lord. The healing of the crippled man as an act of God's mercy and grace became a teachable moment for Peter. Pilate tried to release Jesus but the religious leaders were so adamant not to release Jesus and instead they opted for Barabbas, a murderer. The religious leaders thought they had put an end to Jesus when they crucified him but their confidence was shaken when Peter told them that Jesus was alive again and that this time they could not harm him. The content of Peter's message is: the killing of Jesus by religious authorities and the people/ God brought him back to life and the apostles were the witnesses to this fact

**3:18-24** Like Jesus gave the bible study to the disciples of Emmaus; Peter gave the religious leaders a bible study quoting Psalm 22, Isaiah 50:6 and Isaiah 53. These prophecies took place and Jesus came as a suffering servant, contrary to the expectation of the Jewish people who looked for a ruler against the Romans.

**3:19 Repent:** John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus preaching repentance. The apostles' message too included the call to repentance- acknowledging personal sin and turning away from it. Repentance at first may seem painful because it is hard to give up certain sins but God will give us a better way for our spiritual refreshment.

### **Peter and John before the Sanhedrin:**

**What is Sanhedrin?** It is a Greek word meaning an assembly or a council which formed prominent people from each tribe in the OT (Numbers 11:16). The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. In the Second Temple period (5<sup>th</sup> BCE -The sects of Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and early Christianity emerged at this time), the Great Sanhedrin met in the Temple in Jerusalem. The court convened every day except festivals and on the Sabbath. The Sanhedrin as a body claimed powers that lesser Jewish courts did not have. As such, they were the only ones who could try the king or extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem, and were the ones to whom all questions of law were finally put. The Sanhedrin was dissolved after continued persecution by the Roman Empire. Over the centuries, there have been attempts to revive the institution.

In the New Testament, the Sanhedrin is best known for their part in the series of mock trials that resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus. The Sanhedrin began with an informal examination of Jesus before Annas, the acting high priest (John 18:12-14, 19-23), followed by a formal session before the entire Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57-68). There the decision was made to turn Jesus over to the Roman authorities to be tried and crucified.

**Members of the Sanhedrin body:** These were the religious leaders: The influential chief priests, the captain of the temple guard who put order in the temple and the Sadducees, a small but a powerful Jewish religious sect. They were dealing with the Romans officially and they were responsible for the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. Peter and John spoke to these people during the afternoon prayer time.

Sadducees did not believe in resurrection of the body while Pharisees believed in it. When the apostles Peter and John convincingly spoke about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were disturbed because these apostles refuted one of their fundamental beliefs and challenged their authorities as religious teachers. Although the nation was under the Roman rule, the Sadducees had almost unlimited power over the temple grounds. Thus they were able to arrest Peter and John for no other reason than teaching something that contradicted

their beliefs. Not easy to preach the gospel. There is a risk involved in giving the gospel message and bringing people to Christ. The council gathered to investigate the case of Peter and John and questioned them by what power they had healed the man and by what authority they preached. Through the help of the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke boldly before the council astounding everyone in the council by being offensive and not defensive, telling them that Risen Jesus was the power and authority to teach people and heal the crippled man.

**4:11 The metaphor of corner stone:** The corner stone unites the two sides of the arch and holds it together. Peter said that Jews rejected Jesus who became the corner stone for the church. Without him, there would be no church because it would not be able to stand.

**4:12 Jesus is the only name and only savior for the salvation of the humanity.** Many react to this fact negatively. This claim is neither the proposition nor the decision of the church. It is the specific teaching of Jesus himself (John 14:6). No other religious teacher could die for our sins. No other religious teacher came to earth as God's only Son. No other religious teacher rose from the dead. Our focus should be on Jesus whom God had offered as the way to have eternal relationship with himself. There is no other name or way.

**4:13-18 Peter and John were uneducated.** The council was amazed at what they saw and heard in those uneducated men. This is the power of Christ. They were able to expound who and what of Jesus in detail with facts. Although the evidence was overwhelming and irrefutable (changed lives of the apostles and healed man), the religious leaders refused to believe in Christ and they continued to suppress the truth. Let us not be surprised if some people reject us or our witness for Christ. When minds are closed, even the clearest presentation of the facts can't open them. However let us not give up on them and we pray for them and we continue to spread the gospel.

**4:20 "It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard."** Sometimes we may be afraid to share our faith in Christ because people might feel uncomfortable and might reject us. (Rejection of religious identities in schools and public sphere. It is sad that we are being reduced to being nice to people instead of being right and truthful. This is the result of secularism, relativism and modernism...) but Peter and John's zeal for the Lord was so strong that they could not keep quiet even though they were frightened. If our courage to witness for God is weak, we have to pray for the increase of boldness. We need to remember Jesus' promise, "whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:32).

**4:32-35 Spiritual Unity:** Differences of opinion are inevitable among human personalities and can actually be helpful if handled well. But spiritual unity is essential – loyalty, commitment, and love for God and his Word. Without spiritual unity, the church could not survive. Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians to urge the church in Corinth toward greater

unity. None of the Christians felt that what they had was their own and so they were able to give and share, eliminating poverty among them. They would not let a brother or sister suffer when others had plenty. We should adopt the attitude that everything we have comes from God and we are only sharing what is already his. This is called responsible stewardship. The early church was able to share possessions and property as a result of the unity brought by the Holy Spirit working in and through the believers' lives. This way of living is different from Communism because 1) The sharing was voluntary 2) It did not involve all private property but only as much as needed. The spiritual unity and generosity of these early believers attracted others to them

**4:36 Barnabas was a respected leader of the church.** He was a Levite by birth although he did not carry out temple duties. In fact his name signifies "Son of Encouragement or consolation". His original name was Joseph and because of his encouragement he earned the nickname "Son of Encouragement" by Jerusalem Christians. In Hebrew this name is called as Bar Nabia. He was a respected leader of the church. Barnabas was very active and very influential member in the early church and wherever he went, he encouraged Christians to be strong in their faith and even non-believers flocked to become Christians. He helped the new converts to grow in their faith. He was called an apostle although he was not one of the original twelve apostles. We read in Acts 11:23-24 "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith and a great number of people were brought to the Lord". When Paul arrived in Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion, the local Christians were very reluctant to welcome him. They thought that Paul had come to arrest and persecute them as he was doing before. During that moment, Only Barnabas related with him and convinced others that Paul was not any more a persecutor but a believer in Christ. Barnabas also encouraged Mark to go with them on their missionary journey.

Paul and Barnabas disagreed sharply over Mark. Paul did not want to take Mark along with him in his journey. Because of that they had to part with. But the Lord did it such that they became two great preachers to form two teams. The Lord can work even through conflicts and disagreements. Later Mark became vital for Paul's mission. We can always agree to disagree but should not cause divisions and confusions.

**5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira:** we see both internal and external problems facing the early church. Inside there was dishonesty of this couple and outside the persecution. Even after the Holy Spirit had come, the believers were not immune to Satan's temptations. The sin of this couple is not stinginess or holding back part of the money. Their sin was lying to God and his people saying they gave the whole amount but holding back some for themselves and trying to make themselves appear more generous than they really were. This act was judged harshly because dishonesty, greed and covetousness are destructive in a church, preventing the Holy Spirit from working effectively. All lying is bad. Lying to God and His people is worse because we destroy our testimony about Christ.

**5:14 what makes Christianity or church attractive?** It is easy to be drawn to churches because of programs, good speakers, size, beautiful facilities or fellowship. Although they enhance the quantity of the church, the real attraction in the early church was God's power at work, the generosity, sincerity, honesty and unity among the members and the character of the leaders

**5:15 longing for Peter's shadow:** people who passed with Peter's shadow were healed, not by Peter's shadow but by God's power working through Peter.

**5:17-41 The apostles persecuted:** The religious leaders were jealous because Peter and the apostles were already commanding more respect than they had ever received. The religious leaders demanded respect and reverence for themselves while the apostles brought reverence and respect to God and people respected them because they deserved it. They were arrested and put in jail, beaten, slandered by the community leaders. Our faith in God does not make troubles disappear but it makes troubles appear less frightening because it puts them in the right perspective. Let us not be idealists but realists because anything can happen and not everyone will favor us always. Some will be jealous, some afraid and some others frightened. Expect some negative response and reactions

**Courage of the apostles:** after being treated badly and threatened by powerful leaders, arrested, jailed and miraculously released, the apostles went back to preaching. Their faith in Jesus could not stop them from preaching about Christ.

**5:34 Gamaliel:** Not all the Pharisees are bad. Nicodemus was a seeker. Some Pharisees invited Jesus to eat in their home. Gamaliel, a Pharisee, was a distinguished member of the council and a teacher. He saved the apostles' lives. His real intention was to stop division in the council and to avoid arousing the Romans. The apostles were popular among the people and killing them might start a riot. Gamaliel's advice to the council gave the apostles some breathing to continue their work. Gamaliel presented some sound advice about reacting to religious movements. Unless disciples in these groups endorse obviously dangerous doctrines or practices, it is often wiser to be tolerant than repressive. Sometimes only time will tell if they are merely the work of humans or if God is trying to say something through them. When a group proposes differing religious ideas, we need to consider Gamaliel's advice. Gamaliel is a model of a good leader with wisdom and grace to the apostles. He was a great Jewish scholar. "I operate and you cooperate" is very bad. Listening to colleagues without any prejudice, allowing them to express their opinion and being open minded to accept good suggestions if there are truly a mark of a good leader. Gamaliel was a great teacher and role model for Paul (Acts 22:3).

**5:40-41 Joyful suffering of Peter and John:** they were warned repeatedly not to preach but they continued in spite of the threats. Perhaps we may not be beaten or thrown in jail for our faith but we may be ridiculed, ostracized or slandered. What is our call to these kind of

situations? They considered persecution as a blessing and they rejoiced about it. Since they knew how Jesus suffered and rose from the dead, they praised God that he had allowed them to be persecuted like their master Jesus.

**5:42 Home Bible Study:** The believers grew in their faith because of the word of God. They went to temple courts for learning the word of God. Later on because of persecution, they could not go to temple or synagogues. Hence they stayed home and studied and learned the Bible. We need to use this approach at home. In the Holy mass, we cannot expound the Bible as it should be due to time factor but we have all the time at home and we can read the Bible at home. Will you read in your home?