

Acts 10 – Difficulty & Response - Acts 5:12-42

What does it mean that the Word of God is LIVING ?

One thing it means - is that God's Word SPEAKS to the exact circumstance or situation that Each of us are IN - Right Now

This is a Supernatural Event that occurs Regularly  
Right Here on Sunday Morning

Very Often - This is how a sermon comes about

- 1) Either my own family is experiencing something  
Or I'm watching someone else experience something
- 2) As we're going thru a Book of the BIBLE  
God's Word Speaks directly to that exact situation
- 3) God ministers to me, thru His Word, for that situation
- 4) I share that with you, here  
& God applies the Word to YOUR life, & YOUR situation

& that is the Divine Miracle - of the LIVING Word of God

For example - The Message today - is about *Difficulty & Response*

Right now my family & I are experiencing some Serious Difficulties  
*AND* - I am also seeing Serious Difficulties in our Body

& because of what I'm Seeing - & Experiencing  
the Living Word of God SPEAKS to that subject  
Right in the text - we just happen to be going thru

. . . *which is incredible*

Our focus today - is on our RESPONSE - to the Difficulties & Trials that each of us, as Christians, WILL go thru

The question is NOT - *WHY??* do we GO THRU Difficulties

The question is - *HOW??* do we RESPOND to our Difficulties

Remember - in Ch's 3 & 4 - we saw this progression

Miracle → Sermon → Persecution → Response

In Ch 5 we're going to see basically the same thing

But we're going to simplify it a bit

God is Working → We Experience Difficulty → We Respond in Faith

God IS Working - & WHEN Difficulty comes - IF we will Respond in Faith

Then God will bring JOY into our lives - *AND*

He will continue to USE us for His Kingdom, & for His Glory

*AND* - The DIFFICULTY will *Always be* Temporary

But the JOY that comes from a *Response in Faith* Can (& should) Be Permanent

& what's truly amazing is that the DIFFICULTY - is often the VEHICLE *by which* - the JOY (from our Faithful Response) comes

So - Here's a Simplified Outline of Acts 3-5

& as we review this outline . . .

It's easy to see ONE of the reasons Jesus told the Disciples to WAIT for the POWER of the BAPTISM of the Holy Spirit before going forward as His Witnesses . . .

Because He KNEW they were going to face  
Strong Opposition & Serious Difficulty

& it's NO Different - for US

We need to be FILLED with the Power of the Holy Spirit  
before we face an OUTLINE like this one

ACTS Ch 3-5

3:1 - God Moves - *Healing & Salvations*

4:1 - Difficulty - *Arrested*

4:23 - Response of Faith - *Prayer for Boldness & more miracles*

4:32 - God Moves - *Supernatural Unity & Sacrificial Giving*

5:1 - Difficulty - *Hypocrisy in the church*

5:11 - Response of Faith - *Great respect for honesty before God*

5:12 - God Moves - *Signs & Wonders*

5:17 - Difficulty - *Arrested*

5:19 - God Moves (again) - *Supernatural Delivery*

5:21 - Response of Faith - *speak the words of Eternal Life*

5:26 - Difficulty (again) - *Rearrested*

5:29 - Response of Faith - *Speak boldly, w/o fear*

5:33 - God Moves - *Gamaliel influences the Council*

5:40 - Serious Difficulty - *40 lashes minus 1*

5:41 - Response of Faith - *The Apostles leave "Rejoicing"*

The Final RESPONSE in these 3 Ch's - is the Apostles REJOICING  
that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ

After FIVE separate, extreme difficulties (in just 3 Ch's)  
the Apostles are REJOICING !!

& their REJOICING is a *by-product* of their *Response of Faith*

to their “back-to-back-to-back” Difficulties

Does this sound *APPLICABLE* to our Lives ??

God WILL MOVE in our lives

There WILL BE Difficulty

Our RESPONSE in Faith - is what will bring True JOY

We’re going to see the Apostles *Respond in Faith*

THREE TIMES in our text today

& I really want you to see - that their JOY comes

from their *Responding in Faith* - to the Difficulties in their lives

Alright - On the heels of the attack from the INSIDE

(the Hypocrisy of *Ananias & Sapphira* - Last week)

We see the Church rebound

with God doing “*Signs & Wonders*” among them

Acts 5:12–16 (ESV)

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

exactly what they prayed for in Acts 4:29 - that God would stretch out His hand to perform miracles - & He did

*And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico.*

A Ref to the Supernatural Unity we saw at the end of Ch 4

*13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem*

This word “*JOIN*” means LIT “*A forced or unnatural union*” -

No one dared PRETEND to be one of them (*joined lightly*)

but instead - all the people held them in very high esteem

after the Ananias & Sapphira incident

*14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,*

right in the midst of the difficulties - “more than ever”  
believers were added to the Lord . . . *(big lesson)*

*15 so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.*

*16 The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

So - After *Responding in Faith* to their First Arrest (4:1)

& - After *Responding in Faith* to Hypocrisy in the Church (5:1)

God was continuing to *Move Mightily* among the church

& *more than ever* - Believers were being added to the Lord

& then - *Suddenly* - Right in the midst of the Miracles & Ministry  
the Temple Police show up

Acts 5:17–18 (ESV)

*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.*

The Sadducees were filled with “*jealousy*”

The word actually Implies - *religiously motivated rage*

But - being Sadducees, it’s safe to say;

they were NOT jealous for the “real” things of God

their reputation proves - they were really jealous

for political & personal benefit reasons

they just did it *IN THE NAME* of God

in any case they VERY ANGRY - & probably saying  
*"Hey - the people should be gathering around US - not THEM!"*

& so - they have the Temple Police ARREST the Apostles  
& put them in JAIL

Now - there's something I really want us to see in Vs 19

God CAN deliver you from;  
ANY Circumstance  
ANY Trial  
ANY Difficulty

God is ABLE - to Supernaturally Deliver you  
From Any Circumstance - Any Trial - Any Difficulty

*IF* - it is part of HIS Plan - & HIS Purpose - & for HIS Glory  
God CAN Supernaturally Deliver you

& He does it right here - for the Apostles

Acts 5:19 (esv)

*19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors  
and brought them out,*

It's interesting that God used "*an Angel of the Lord*"  
because the Sadducees didn't believe in Angels

& so - God was Sending a SIGN;  
FIRST to the Apostles - & THEN to the Sanhedrin (Council)

To the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin)  
This was a SIGN that God was Involved

Much like later - in Acts 16

When Paul & Silas were singing hymns in their prison cell

& God opened the prison doors & knocked off all the chains  
so the Philippian Jailer could see the power of God & be **SAVED**

This *SHOULD'VE BEEN* a Sign (like that) to the Sadducees -  
But it's *Sad-You-See* - that it wasn't

The **REAL** Sign however - is to the **APOSTLES**, & to **US**

& *that is* - God **CAN** deliver us - supernaturally

*IF* it is part of HIS Plan - & for HIS Purpose - & for HIS Glory

& Thru-Out Acts - we **SEE** God

Supernaturally Deliver the Apostles

& **YET** - every one of them (save John) died a Martyr's Death  
some by the sword - some by hanging  
some crucified - some stoned & then beheaded  
one thrown from a high pinnacle  
one drug thru the streets till dead

& **EVERY** one of them **KNEW** - that God **COULD** Deliver them  
**IF** that was what was **BEST** - for HIS Glory

**BUT EVEN MORE** - **EVERY** one of them **KNEW**

What Paul wrote in Phil 1:20-21

Philippians 1:20–21 (ESV)

*20 . . . but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored  
in my body, whether by life or by death.*

*21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

Being *SAVED FROM* our circumstances is NOT the Ultimate Goal  
HONORING GOD *IN* our circumstances - IS the Ultimate Goal

Which is exactly what we see - THRU-OUT Acts  
& we see this CLEARLY - as our Text Continues

(again) Acts 5:19-20 (esv)

*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."*

So FIRST - God Delivered them - to GO & SPEAK to the people  
all the *words of this Life* (eternal life in Christ)

Listen to R. Kent Hughes here;

*The language here suggests a command to exercise dogged steadfastness. They were to hold their ground, stand firm, and deliver the entire message of new life in Christ . . . even in the midst of persecution*

& God delivers US - for this Exact Same purpose  
that we would *Go, and speak - the words of Life in Jesus Christ*

Notice - God did NOT deliver the Apostles  
for their Personal Benefit or Personal Comfort

He Delivered them

to USE them further - for HIS Glory - to SHARE the Good News

V.21 is their FIRST Great "*Response of Faith*"  
in the Midst of their Difficulties

Acts 5:21(a) (esv)

*21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach . . .*

So Far - So Good . . .

Right up to when God's "OTHER Purpose"  
for delivering them - begins to UNFOLD

Acts 5:21(b)-23 (esv)

*21 . . . Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of the people of Israel (The Sanhedrin) 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."*

Doors LOCKED - Guards STANDING there . . .

*THAT* is meant to be - a little SIGN - that God is INVOLVED

& in the next Vs - these "Religious Leaders"  
were definitely caught off guard

& they had their chance - to "Reconsider"

Acts 5:24 (esv)

*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.*

But then (immediately) it was back to "Business as Usual"

- they MISSED their opportunity to reconsider their actions

Acts 5:25-26 (esv)

*25 And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."*

The Apostles were obeying God - in spite of the risk

*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.*

God is really "*Setting the Stage*" here

The Apostles were ARRESTED  
then Supernaturally DELIVERED  
then RE-ARRESTED

ALL for God's Purpose - & All for God's Glory

Acts 5:27-28 (esv)

*27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council (Sanhedrin) . 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."*

SIDE LESSON: Isn't it funny - that these EXACT same men who cried *CRUCIFY HIM* when Pilate tried to release Jesus

These EXACT same men who said; "*Let His blood be on us*" when Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' Death

These EXACT same men are now ACCUSING the Apostles of trying to *Unjustly BLAME Them* for Jesus' Death

Isn't it funny - how GUILTY people so often make everything "*Someone Else's fault*" ??

But never-the-less Peter & the Apostles  
are going to respond "*Directly*" to the same men who killed Jesus

knowing they could EASILY be killed - in the same way  
V.'s 29-32 is their SECOND Great "*Response of Faith*"  
in the Midst of their Difficulties

Acts 5:29-32 (esv)

*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."*

These are the FACTS :

God RAISED Jesus - after YOU killed Him

& God exalted Him SO THAT YOU Could *repent*  
& be *forgiven* of your sins

Now - they *COULD HAVE* responded well to this - but . . they *DIDN'T*

Acts 5:33 (esv)

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

The only other use of this word 'enraged'  
comes in the very next round of Persecution

when this same council becomes ENRAGED at Stephen in Ch 7  
& they *DO* kill him

They WANTED to start Killing the Apostles HERE

*But - - - as we read in the Next Vs - GOD DELIVERS THEM*

Acts 5:34 (esv)

*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.*

Gamaliel was a famous Rabbi - & a Pharisee, so NOT caught up in the political motivations of the Sadducees

He held a high position in the *Sanhedrin* (Governing Body) & SAUL of Tarsus was Gamaliel's disciple as a Pharisee

& God is going to USE Gamaliel to delay any Martyrdom - because it wasn't time - for anyone to give their lives - Yet

& here - In Gamaliel's Response is another Great SIDE-LESSON for us (*watch for it*)

Acts 5:35-39 (esv)

*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!" . . .*

## SIDE LESSON

Have you ever seen a Christian *“Take Matters Into their own hands”* when they get mad at a person - usually a Pastor

In the early days of this church - we had a group of people  
Work Extremely Hard to EITHER Remove me personally,  
or Take Out the entire church . . . (good Christian people)

& they did a Tremendous Amount Of Damage  
trying to REMOVE me - & put their FRIEND in this place

It was an Very Painful Time  
For my Family - & for the Body of Christ in Nuevo

Unfortunately - if these *“Christians”* had had as much Faith  
as this *“Pharisee”* named Gamaliel

They would have said - just what Gamaliel said in Vs's 38-39

*38 . . . 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!”*

Do you see the Side-Lesson there ??

If God wants to remove a leader  
He can do it a Hundred different ways

& - Contrary to our Opinion of Ourselves  
God DOESN'T Even NEED our help to get it done !!

END of SIDE LESSON - Back to our Primary Point

& So - the End of Acts 5:39 says;  
*So they took his advice,*

Unfortunately - that didn't mean the Apostles Escaped *Unharm*  
In fact - things are about to get - VERY DIFFICULT

Acts 5:40 (esv)

*40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them . . .*

This would've been the customary 40 lashes minus 1

This was no "*Slap on the Hands*"  
this was often a "*Near Death*" beating

In Ch 4 they were warned - - now they are beaten - Bad

The Persecution & the Difficulty - is increasing  
& so is their FAITH - & so is their JOY

V.41 is their THIRD Great "*Response of Faith*"  
in the Midst of Very Serious Difficulties

Acts 5:40-41 (esv)

*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.*

In the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5) - Jesus said;  
*Blessed are you when people Revile you & Persecute you Falsely  
on My account - REJOICE & be glad - for your reward is great in  
heaven - for so they persecuted the Prophets before you*  
Guys - after Every Difficulty the Apostles Faced  
their "*Response of Faith*" - brought REJOICING

& they always went away ANXIOUS to Continue *Serving God*

So - HERE'S THE LESSON for today:

Difficulty - Followed by a "*Response of Faith*" - brings JOY  
AND a Further Opportunity for God to Work Thru your life

Let's close with Acts 5:42 (esv)

*42 And (in spite of it all) every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

Every day - *Thru it ALL* - They DID NOT CEASE  
Teaching & Preaching Jesus as the Christ

NO MATTER WHAT - they Stood Firm  
On The ROCK of *Jesus Christ*

We've seen THREE Great "*Responses of Faith*"  
in the Midst of the Extreme Difficulty

in V.21 - After being arrested the 1st time  
& then miraculously delivered

The "*Response of Faith*" was to *Speak to the people*  
*all the words of Eternal Life*

in V.29 - After being arrested the 2nd time  
& under the threat of death

The "*Response of Faith*" was  
*"We must obey God rather than men"*

as they Spoke the Gospel to those who could kill them

in V.41 - After receiving 39 lashes for the Name of Christ

The “*Response of Faith*” was to leave the Sanhedrin  
*REJOICING* they were counted worthy to Suffer for His Name

I don't know What “*Response of Faith*” God is calling you to  
in the Difficulty you're facing today

But I know THIS - He *IS* calling you to a *Response of Faith*

TAKE A MINUTE - - LOOK at these 3 Examples in our text today

Maybe one of these 3 Examples from God's Word will speak to you

About How God is calling YOU to respond  
As you face YOUR Difficulty today

Let's Pray