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Handstand. God's hand...Our Stand
Acts 5:12-42

Last fall I spoke at a men's retreat on the North Shore of Oahu. The winter waves were starting to come in and some of them were getting close to 20 feet high. The locals at the retreat decided I should try to surf but warned me about the big ones. The big waves can crush you and pin you down to the coral. Take a big breath if you get hit by one because it could hold you under for over a minute. I found the hardest part was just getting out past the breaking waves on shore...they were so strong and kept slamming back on the beach. One of them gave me a tip. You don't have to be a super swimmer to beat these waves, you just have to do something that doesn't come naturally. When you see the wall of the wave rising up toward you, dive straight into the wall and you will simply pop up on the others side,

The ocean wave word picture applies to our spiritual life as well. The evil forces threaten to oppress and suppress the church and try drown it and pound it into the reef and rip it to shreds, but as we will see in our study of Acts, the church seems to pop up, buoyant and strong as ever after the wave washes past. Acts 5 is instructive for us because if we are serious about living for Christ we are going to experience opposition. It will cost us something for obeying God and following Him. Most of us probably won't experience persecution to the this degree...but the waves that threaten to knock us down and drown us in life will hit far more deadly than the North Shore waves. And they will keep coming wave after wave, some bigger some smaller, each a test and challenge to our faith. What is the best way to approach these waves of opposition? I would like to suggest this morning the best way to challenge the waves of opposition

is to do a hand-stand. Affirm the power of God's hand and obey God by taking a stand. I'm going to lay out the main point of my talk this morning for you right up front. I don't want us to miss it. For *we will experience the power of God's hand when we stand up in bold obedience.*

When life gets tough. When the price of following Jesus begins to rise. When we get excluded or ridiculed. When the other guys in the business are playing by a whole different set of rules. When family members and friends insult us because we choose to obey God and live by truth and speak the truth. When we get opposed for following Christ the natural tendency for some of us is to shrink back in fear and worry wringing our hands and say, "Oh what a terrible thing. We are being opposed! What an awful thing. They just made fun of me because I'm a Christian. They just ridiculed my morals and values. They laughed and told me to loosen up. They excluded me from their conversation.

Others of us haven't seen God at work in our lives for a long time and for some reason we have made no connection to the lack of we experience and our lack of obedience to what God has clearly revealed for us to do. We see no connection to our failure to experience and see God move in great power and our unwillingness to stand up bold and speak and live for the truth. We simply scratch our heads and wonder why it is God seems so strangely silent in our lives.

Some of us step back in fear because the power of the forces in this world appear so strong. The evil seems so overwhelming. The number of people who could care less about righteousness is so pervading our schools and media and TV neighborhood and work places. The opposition seems so powerful and unbeatable...and yet this mornings passage reminds us a couple of things we need to know if we desire to not only pop through the waves of oppression, but actually get up and surf them.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the 5th chapter of Acts. The book of Acts describes a very exciting time to be alive. Jesus has promised his

believers that they shall receive power and the Holy Spirit shall come down on them and indwell them and they will then go out into their neighborhoods, counties, states, countries and beyond to tell of the Life giving freedom that can be found in Christ. Chapter 2 it happens as promised. The Holy Spirit comes down in power and indwells the believers. A group of men that were once hiding and frightened for their lives are now boldly speaking His name. They were uneducated nobodies from the middle of nowhere but are not afraid to tell the most powerful influential people in all that the same Jesus whom they crucified, God placed His stamp of approval on and raise him up from the dead and lifted him up to the right hand of the throne in heaven. And it is in Jesus alone that there is forgiveness of sin.

Many people respond to this good news that God in Jesus has come to provide forgiveness of sin. But as you can imagine there are those who are not pleased. They refuse to accept that God has worked anything through this man from Nazareth, Jesus. Despite the overwhelming evidence and miracles that scream out otherwise. The chief priest, leaders and elders in particular don't like this message because it threatens their position. It exposes the evil that lurked within them that they have dressed up in a Sunday suit. Chapter 4 the Jewish leaders toss Peter and John into prison after they have healed a man that's been lame for 40 years and then preach Jesus. They let them go after a stern warning never again to teach in Jesus name. What do they do? Go right back to teaching in the temple about how Jesus died and rose again and people can enjoy the freedom of forgiven sin in the name of Jesus. There is external opposition and opposition from within as chapter 5 recalls a couple named Ananias and Saphira how they wanted to appear more spiritual committed than they really were. They were far more interested in appearance than truth, concerned more that people thought they were spiritual rather than actually being holy. They were playing the religious game and God was clearly not amused. Waves of

external and internal opposition threaten to down the church...but it keeps on popping up by diving through the waves. And here again in Acts 5:12 we see the church has popped up again on the other side of a persecution wave and is thriving. Lets read Acts 5: 12-42 (READ)

In chapter 4:30 the people in the early church prayed that God would stretch out His hand to heal and move in signs and wonders through the name of Jesus. Here we see the hand of God working powerfully through the hands of the apostles. V.12 “And at the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were taking place.” There the thousands in that early church met in the temple area called Solomon’s porch. After the incident with Ananias and Saphira and with the threats of the priest, the hypocrites and folks just playing the religious games didn’t hang around v.13. Yet, God blessed anyway and the people of the city held the group in high esteem and many more came to faith in Jesus and were added to their numbers. The power of the hand of God and Holy Spirit in the apostles was so undeniable that people came for miles around to be healed. They even tried to position their mats so that Peter’s shadow would fall on them. It doesn’t say here that his shadow ever healed anyone, but that was the strength of their belief that the power of God resided in Peter and the others. The greatest miracle of all is the miracle of a changed life. The miracle of God transforming a sinner like you and I into a child of God. This is the power that Romans 1:16 speaks of, “For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.”

The hand of God’s power was evident everywhere, but not everybody was pleased with the success of the early church. Look at v.17 The high priest, associates, Sadducees were filled with Jealousy. They wanted the crowds coming to their church service. They wanted the adulation and applause the power that attracts people. If they couldn’t have what they had then they would snuff it out. They laid hands on the apostles. I presume they tossed all 12 into the public prison. They thought their hands were stronger than the hand of God but they had

something to learn...and we do as well learn about the power of the hands of God.

That night in prison v.19 an angel shows up and the first of several prison breaks mentioned in Acts. The eyes of the guards must have been closed because the angel opened up the gates of the prison and led them right out. Then the angel told them. Go your way. (which was really Gods' ways right...if our way is Gods way we are OK) Here is their way. Go and stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of life. Now we are going to come back to that phrase in few moments, but here if it were me I would be running as far away from the temple as I could. They will just arrest me again. Why would "my way" be to go back into the temple and do the very thing that got me arrested in the first place? Why? Because God's way had become their way and God's way was to be witnesses of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. They refuse to run and hide in the closet and not boldly speak the name of Jesus. They had been transformed by the power of God unto salvation and they wanted everyone to know about it. They refused to be afraid of the worlds power that appeared so strong. They knew where the real power lay. *Has God's way become your way?* When it does you will affirm the power of his hand and stand up in bold obedience.

They hear the angels message and boldly obey. V.21 upon hearing this they entered into the temple and about daybreak they began to teach in the name of Jesus.

Now the high priests still think they have all the control and power. V.21 they call a meeting of the council together in order to judge a group of prisoners they don't even have in custody. They sent orders to go get them. The officers in charge of retrieving the prisoners, the guards are all a bit bewildered. None of them are there. All 12 have somehow disappeared. The jail doors were still all locked up tight, yet they had spent half the night guarding an empty room. Of course the chief priest are very perplexed about the whole matter because they called together

this special early morning meeting and now they can't find the prisoners to judge. Then someone stops by and casually mentions that the ones they thought were put into jail yesterday. Yeah those guys. Now didn't you just put them in prison. Yes. Well they are right outside the window teaching that Jesus again. Take a look. There they are and a whole crowd around them again. Hilarious. I would have loved to see the look on their faces.

Now look who is afraid. V.26 The captain and officers went to respectfully ask them to come back into custody. The police were afraid for their lives that the people might stone them. When they get back into the council rooms, the first thing the priests say to the apostles is not. How did you get out of prison like that, you're making us look bad. But said, "Now we gave you orders not to speak the name of Jesus and you are filling up all Jerusalem with your teaching and intending to bring this mans blood upon us." Now look who is afraid of the real power.

What do we learn here about the power of God's hand? First, we see that God can deliver at anytime He chooses, in anyway he pleases and anywhere He has decided to deliver. He may at times choose not to delivers but its pretty obvious that the hand of God's power is plenty strong to set the captive prisoner free. It is no problem for God to get a man out of jail. God's message will not be held down captive. It will get out and thrive. God may not always choose to deliver as most of the apostles knew. 11 out of the 12 were killed for what they believed. Peter as he was crucified on a Roman cross upside down had experienced multiple deliverances from God...but not all. James who was tossed off the top of the temple tower and dashed, Mark who died in the streets of Alexandria by after being dragged through the streets...All these men knew and experienced the power of the hand of God and that He could choose to deliver anytime, any place and any way. In order to meet head on and dive through the waves of opposition, we need to affirm that the hand of God is far more powerful then the hand of any man on earth.

The priests think their hands of power are stronger and continue to try and flex their muscles in snuffing out the gospel message. But what is real is that truth is always strong, no matter how weak at times it appears. And falsehood is always weak no matter how strong it may appear at times. The priests and temple leaders can't even control God on their back porch. They can't even keep his messengers in prison for just one night. There they are outside their window preaching the name of Jesus. We face the opposition boldly and dive into the wave of oppression when we affirm the powerful hand of God instead of fearing what men may do to us. God is God. His truth is truth and His power is real. To challenge the waves of opposition, affirm the power of the hand of God.

First the hand now the stand. **Stand up and obey God rather than fear the opposition of the enemy.** How is it that we expect to experience the power of God's hand and yet we fail time and again to stand up in bold obedience? Persecution and waves of opposition draw a line in the sand for us. It is a challenge to get off the fence and make a choice. As Elijah challenge the people "Choose you this day whom you will serve. If God be God then follow him...if not then get off the fence. Joshua declared "as for me and my house we will serve the Lord." V. 20 the Angel tells the apostles to Go your way; **take a stand** and speak the whole message of this Life. Their marching orders were very clear. Go to the people and offer the greatest gift that God has to give. God take your stand. God doesn't want us to conceal the life he has given us. We are not to hide it under a basket. It amazes me the number of people I run into that it takes months before I find out they are Christians. And its only when no one is around and almost under the breath. Hey, by the way, "you know I'm like a Christian too you know." I think some of our work places could use a "see you at the pole" prayer time some morning just to kick some Christians out of the closet. Speak about it whenever

possible. Weave your Christ life into everyday conversation. Let it flow out of you and you will experience God's hand of power in amazing ways.

This is bold obedience. How can we possibly expect to experience the joy of the infilling of the Holy Spirit in our lives if we are not at least doing those things where God clearly asked us to be obedient in? Obedience is like a thermostat. It will open up the flow of warmth of the fire of the Spirit inside us. The cold world around us calls for the heat and the warmth.

Aida Skripnikova experienced the freedom and warmth of bold obedience in the cold dark place. She was born in 1941 in Leningrad where the Russian people were fighting to free themselves from the invaders. History tells us that the enemy was driven out, but that did not bring them freedom. In the fall of 1961, Aida came to know Christ as a 19 year old and was compelled in obedience to share her faith with others. She bought some postcards that pictured a beautiful sunrise over a harbor, picturing the sunrise of freedom in her own life, and then she wrote a poem on the back side that expressed her perception of life and need to find God. She took these postcards to Nevski Prospect which is Leningrad's equivalent of New York's 5th avenue and began to hand them out to passerby. She was arrested in April 62 and lost her job as a lab assistant. Arrested again in 1965 and sent to a labor camp for a year. Arrested again in 1968 and sent to labor for 3 more years. I wonder if Aida ever read our text this morning. She obeyed the instinct of her heart in the midst of oppression and shared her message of life and freedom that came that day in 1961.

In v.28 the apostles were accused of "filling Jerusalem with teaching the name of Jesus" If only we could be accused as a church with filling the entire valley of Yacolt with the teaching of Jesus. They refused to shy away or compromise the truth. Once again they take their stand before the council. Once again in bold obedience they declare they must obey God rather than run in fear for what man might do to them.

V.29 They lay out the facts again for them. Fact #1 God raised Jesus from the dead. Fact #2 God exalted Jesus to his right hand as Prince and Savior. Fact #3 Jesus has the authority to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins. They were all witnesses and so it the Holy Spirit. God is behind this whole thing.

They share this message of Life. And in most of your translations Life is capitalized because it refers to Jesus. He is the one who “I am the bread of Life” John 6:35. “I am the resurrection and the life” John 11:25 “John 10:10 “I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” John 1:4 “In Him was life and the life was the light of all people” I am the way the truth and the life, there is no other way to God except through me” John 14:6.

By determining to stand up in bold obedience and follow God’s wil, it means we are going to have to stand against man’s opinion, rather than with it. When you are determine to follow God in bold obedience, you will set yourself on a collision course with the world. Please will not like it and try to pull you off course. They may harass and threaten or they may simply whisper in your ear, “Come on take the easy way...that is so hard...its not worth it.” “Stop making me look bad.” Just this once it won’t really be that big deal. Stop being such a goody two shoes. Is that all you talk about. Look around you are totally out of it. And yes...we may be. The question is are you committed to a costly obedience that stands up and boldly obeys God? Are you willing to pay the price of that obedience?

As you can imagine the priests and leaders were none to pleased. They were gnashing their teeth and ready to strangle the apostles. When one of the Rabbi’s, Gamaliel speaks up in the council. He was easily the most prominent rabbi of the time and grandson of the famous Hillel rabbi. Gamaliel also had a student that would go on to become one of the most influential Christians of the early church, a guy named Paul whom we will here more about in the rest of Acts. Gamaliel cautioned the group

from acting too rashly. He reminded them of several men who rose up in power, claimed to be somebody, led a group with their ideas, and then the idea died along with them. V.38 Gamaliel warns them not to act too rashly, “if this isn’t from God its going to die away just like all the others, but if it is from God...there is absolutely nothing you can do to stop it and you certainly don’t want to be found fighting against God.”

The men were released after a beating. And with bloody ripped up backs they went home v.41 rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. V.42 “Every day they kept right on teaching and preaching the word of God...where??? In the temple and from house to house. No limits everywhere, everyday they take a stand.

There is no joy in suffering for doing wrong. No joy in suffering for doing foolishness. I have watched and listened as some Christians incite ridicule and do things and say things that are unwise. They get all the ridicule they deserve. Purposely going out of your way to incite the ridicule of unbelievers is not suffering in Jesus name, it is suffering in our own stupidity. Following the cross and a bold obedience to Jesus and yet experiencing great joy in the midst of it is a undeniable mark of the new life.

Richard Wurmbrand describes this kind of joy when he was in a Romanian prison, his tormentors ripped chunks of flesh out of him and he has the scars to prove it. Solitary confinement for weeks, even months at a time in his tiny cell. Yet, amazingly, during all that there were times when we was overcome with joy. He would actually stand up in his weakened state and dance around his cell for joy confident the angel were dancing with him. He was released from prison unexpectedly and left prison dressed like a scarecrow, rotting teeth and bone thin...he met a peasant woman on the road who was carrying a beautiful basket of strawberries. When she offering him one, he started to take it, but then said, “No thanks, I am going to fast.’ He went home to his wife, they

prayed and fasted as a memorial to the joy he had experienced in prison and asked God for that same kind of joy outside the prison.

How would you like to pop out of the other side of the waves of oppression like that...with uncommon joy? When we dive through the waves with a confidence that the hand of God is stronger than the powers of the this world. When we stand up in bold obedience to what God wants us to do we too will experience the power of God. We will experience that uncommon joy that defied logic because of the new Life that we have in Christ. (New Life in Christ)

Acts 5:12-42 A church that God blesses

Waves of persecution: Hughes waves at the beach you dive through them or risk getting flipped and smashed. Don't underestimate the power of the waves. P.83. Constant persecution sought to drown out the early church, only to have it pop back up alive and free and kicking stronger than ever. The ministry rose above the hostile world around it, not only floated but road the waves of persecution and the church flourished and grew fast as it sent its message out.

V12

And at the **hands** of the apostles

Many **signs and wonders** were taking place

among the people
and they were all with one **accord** in Solomon's portico.

But **none** of the rest **dared to associate** with them
(Annaias situation probably scared off the hypocrites and the unsaved
were reluctant to join the teaching, but in spite of all that numbers were
being added daily to them.

However, the people held them in **high esteem**.

And all the more believers in the Lord

multitudes of men and women,

were constantly **added** to their number

to such an extent that they even

carried the sick out into the streets,

and laid them on cots and pallets,

so that when Peter came by,

at least **his shadow** might fall on any one of them

and also the **people from** the cities in the **vicinities** of Jerusalem

were coming together

bringing people who were sick

or afflicted with unclean spirits

...and they were **all being healed**.

(Confidence in their healing power

and even superstitious

(power, healing, unity, ust believers met at the portico...everyone else
kept away due to the threats from the priests. Afraid but with favor.
Internal persecution corruption and harshly dealt with does nothing to
slow down the growth of the church.

The power attracts people. They know that Peter has direct access to this
power. The belivers are ignoring the elders threats. Blatant meeting
inside the temple.

Healed just by the shadow of the presence of Peter? Woah. Could be a
real power trip. Could be problems with Peter worship then God.)

Interesting that ALL were being healed. Thre were no failures and nobody
was sent away because he "did not have faith to be healed." These were
days of mighty power when God was speaking to Israel and telling them
that jesus was indeed their Messiah and Savoieur and there were many
signs to these unbelieving Jews. The greatest miracle of course was the
miracle of transforming a lost sinner into a child of God by the grace of
God. Through the greatest price the blood of Jesus. Rom 1:16 "for it is
the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believes"

It does not say that Peters shadow actually healed anyone, but people
believed that it might.

Signs and wonder happened everywhere undeniable, but not everyone
was pleased with the success of the early church.

v.17 BUT, the high priest rose up,

along with all his associates (Sadducees)
and they were filled with **jealousy**;
(the crowd should be gathered around us not them. Toss them in jail.
and they **laid hands** on the apostles
and put them in public jail.

(priests keep trying to snuff out the message and God continues to keep up his messengers. God's power is working through the hands of the apostles. The priests think their hands are stronger. Yet, Philip Brooks Truth is always strong, no matter how weak it looks, and falsehood is always weak, no matter how strong it looks) Divine humor as the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection did not also believe in angels. Their liberation was meant not only to free them but to encourage the early church and us as well. God can deliver us from anything, anytime, any where. All the apostles knew that God can deliver "if He wills" God doesn't choose to deliver everytime as they well knew. Except for John who was exiled to the island of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation, Every Apostle was martyred for his belief in Jesus. Peter who was crucified upside down knew that God could deliver at anytime. Mark who died in Alexandria by being dragged through the streets knew that God could deliver at any time. James who was tossed off a pinnacle of the temple knew...

Divinely delivered and divinely commissioned.
Anna Scripkova Huges p87 the freedom from sharing LIFE.
I am the bread of Life. John 6:35
I am the way the truth and the life. John 14:6
In Him was life and the life was the light of men. Jon 1:4

v.18 BUT an angel of the Lord, (during the night)
opened the gates of the prison
and taking them out, he said,
Go your way,
Stand and **speak** to the people in the temple
The **whole message** of this **Life**

v.21 and upon hearing this,
they entered into the temple about daybreak,
and began to **teach**.

(They listened they did exactly as told even when it didn't make a whole lot of human sense. Here were their marching orders to go and offer the greatest gift God has to offer. Go take your stand and Offer the gift of LIFE. God doesn't want us to conceal the life he has given us. Speak about it wherever possible.

How can we expect joy from the infilling of the Spirit if we are saying NO to what we know we are supposed to do. Obedience is like a thermostat.

It opens the flow of the spirit. The cold world around us calls for the heat and warmth of the fire of the HS inside us.

God delivers. Falsehood is far weaker than it sometimes appears. Take a stand and speak. If we were to determine the will of God solely by circumstances here...they would have quit a long time ago. Luke was making the point that when God calls...God empowers and we have no need to fear those who try to go against us. For God will accomplish His purposes in those who are willing to stand with Him.

Imagine the looks of the guards when they discover their most important prisoners were gone.

Irony

- 1) The guards were carefully guarding empty cells
- 2) The highest government officials in Israel were gathered together to judge prisoners they didn't have
- 3) While the frenzied leaders were trying to figure out what happened to their missing prisoners, they were right outside the door preaching in the temple courts.

...Now when the high priest and his associates had come,

They **called** the counsel together,

Even all the Senate of the sons of Israel

And **sent orders** to the prison house for them to be brought.

BUT... the officers who came did not find them in the prison;

And they returned and reported back, saying

“We found the prison house locked quite securely

and the guards **standing** at the doors; (guarding

emptiness. Orders that are impossible to fulfill. They think they have power but in reality have nothing)

BUT when we opened up, we found no one inside.”

Now when the captain of the temple guard

And the chief priests heard these words,

They were greatly **perplexed** about them as to what would come of this.

(The chief priests think they are the ones in control, calling meetings, sending out orders...but God is way ahead of them. They think they know it all and yet...they can't even control God in what they think is their own back yard. No. Even our back-yard is God's. There is a clash between human and divine authority. Men put the 12 into jail, but God simply takes them out. God will undo what man threatens.

??? Am I interested in God's plan, or simply working to preserve my own positions and agenda?

I will never be afraid, God is my Rock.

BUT...someone came and reported to them,

Behold, the men whom you put in prison

Are **standing** in the temple and teaching the people!

Then the captain went along with the officers
And proceeded to bring them back without violence
for they **were afraid** of the people, lest they be stoned
(look who is afraid now...)

And when they had brought them,
They **stood** before the council.
And the high priest questioned them. (now my first question
would be how did you get out of that prison with it all locked up)
Saying...."We gave you **strict orders**
Not to continue teaching in this name,
And behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching,
And **intend to bring this mans blood** upon us.
(look who is afraid now...)

v.29 BUT Peter and apostles answered and said,
"We must obey God rather than men"
The God of our fathers raised up Jesus,
Whom you had put to death
By hanging Him on a cross.
He is the one whom God exalted to His **right hand**
As Prince and a Savior
To grant repentance to Israel
And forgiveness of sins
And we are all witnesses of these things;...
And so is the Holy Spirit
whom God has given to those who obey Him.
(We've got the Spirit yes we do...

v.33 BUT when they heard this,
they were cut to the quick and intending to slay them.

BUT a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel,
A teacher of the Law,
Respected by all the people,
Stood up in the council and gave orders
To put the men outside for a short time.
And he said to them, "men of Israel, take care what you propose to do
with these men. For some time ago
Theudas rose up
Claiming to be somebody;
And a group of about 400 joined up with him
And he was slain;
And all who followed him were dispersed

and came to nothing
After this man Judas of Galilee rose up
In the days of the census,
And drew away some people after him,
He too perished,
And all those who followed him were scattered.

Gamaliels was easily the most prominent rabbi of that time . He was the grandson of another famous rabbi Hillel and was successor of the leader Of Pharisees. He was given the title Rabban instead of Rabbi. The Mishna speaks of Gamaliel “When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died. His most famous student was the apostle Paul.

(Sounds a lot like Jesus of Galilee, who was born during time of the census and then was slain. The census was an inflammatory event that induced some people to revolt against the Romans rule of taxation. Don't over-react guys. This is probably nothing new or from God. If it is simply mans ambitions then it will be overthrown...but implied. If it is from God nothing can stop it and you will be shocked to discover that you are on the wrong side. Do guys don't be so hasty to choose up sides against)

And so in the present case, I say to you
Stay away from these men and let them alone,
For if this plan or action should be of men, it will be overthrown
Or else you may even be found fighting against God.

v.40 And they took his advice;
and after calling the apostles in,
they flogged them
and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus
and then released them.

So they went on their way from the presence of the Council,
Rejoicing that they had been *considered worthy*
to suffer shame for His name.

v.42 And **every day**, in the **temple**
and from house to house,
they **kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus** as the Christ.

I Peter 4;13-16. The church rejoices in spite of persecution and even on account of it.

Evangelism is not limited to the church gathering. The church gather to worship and receive instruction, but is scattered to help and affirm and evangelize. People do not come to the church evangelize, they don't come

together to win the lost, they spread out to evangelize. It rarely happens in here. It happens out there. As soon as the meetings were over they went out and talked to their friends and brought them to Christ brought them to the place where they could worship. Church is not primarily for unbelievers or even seekers. Although we want to be friendly and available to them. Church is where people come to be fed the meat of the word and be challenged to share the gospel. Its like a huddle at a football game. OK what play are we going to try this next time. Sunday after Sunday we return to the huddle and get the plays.

Evangelism is initiated by the Christian. We have the feeling that if people want to know Christ they are going to walk up and tap us on the shoulder and say, "Hey could you tell me about knowing Christ as my Lord and Savior?" They rarely bring up the subject...we do.

Evangelism is not something anyone was forced into or manipulated to do. Nothing in the scripture says that we need to be manipulating or strong arming people to salvation. People were treated without exception with tact, respect dignity and intelligence. Certainly there was bold conviction spoken, but the early Christian gave out the message boldly then waited for the spirit of God to move. Last time I checked He has never ran out of power.

Oppostion may mean you are in God's will, not out of it. Just because the apostles were in prison didn't mean they had fallen out of God's will. If people rip on you because you are following God, don't give up, keep obeying and look how God will transform your trial into triumph.

By determining to follow God's will, it means you are going to have to stand against mans' opinion, rather than with it. When you are determined to follow God's will, you will set yourself on a collision course with the world. Some will say, come on take the easy way. Others will say quit that you are making us look bad. Then listen to the words "We must obey God rather than man.

There is no joy in suffering for doing wrong. No joy in suffering for doing foolishness. Purposely going out of your way to incite ridicule from unbelievers is not suffering shame for Christ's name. Following the cross of Christ is not a "cross of arthritis or petty annoyances. It is a badge of being a true follower of Christ and may take any form. Sickness, hunger, loneliness, persecution and even at times, death.

p.68 Ogilvie on LIFE is Christ.

Joy is the undeniable mark of a new life.
Incredible joy of one persecuted. Richard Wurmbrand. Huhes p.91 the joy in prison.

1. Am I living consistently in view of what I know about Christ?
 2. Am I living a life that is in accord with what I am learning in the scriptures
 3. Am I refusing to do what I know he wants?
 4. Am I refusing to share my faith because of fear of rejection or appearing unintellectual or uncultured or any other reason?
- How can we expect to enjoy the power of the HS if we say no to Him?