

## Acts 5:12-42

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[ 0 : 00 ] First of all, thank you guys, because that was very powerful musical worship this morning. As always, I love that part of our morning when we get to sing together to the Lord.

! It's a very comforting and a wonderful time. It's an honor and a privilege to be with you this morning. And I would ask for you to open up your Bibles, if you have them with you, to Acts chapter 5.

Acts chapter 5. As I've been asked to preach from Acts chapter 5, verses 12 through 42, as we continue our verse-by-verse exposition of the book of Acts.

Just by way of review, as we took a week off from the book of Acts, for those of you who have not been with us, guests, or if you've just missed some weekends, through the book of Acts, we have seen the start of the Christian church.

We have seen the disciples go out as they start to preach the gospel, empowered by the Holy Spirit. And we also see beginning of persecution of the church.

[ 1 : 12 ] In chapter 4, we see, after the apostles heal a crippled man, that they are arrested as persecution starts, and they are put before the Sanhedrin, the Senate Council of Israel, and they are charged not to preach anymore in the name of Jesus.

The week before last, we saw Ananias and Sapphira who lie to the Holy Spirit, and therefore God pronounces judgment upon them, and they are killed for their lying to the Holy Spirit.

And that is where we pick up as news of this activity spreads throughout the nation of Israel, throughout the city of Jerusalem. And we pick up in verse 12 of chapter 5, and God's Word reads, beginning in verse 12, Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles, and they were all together in Solomon's portico.

None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 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.

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

[ 3 : 00 ] But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

When the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.

Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to, and someone came and told them, Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.

Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council, and the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name.

[ 4 : 10 ] Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men.

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin.

And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

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 man outside for a little while.

And he said to the men, Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theodos rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined him.

[ 5 : 14 ] He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 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. 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.

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. 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.

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 Christ is Jesus.

In his book entitled, Do Not Waste Your Life, Pastor John Piper writes, and I quote, If our single, all-embracing passion is to make much of Christ in this life and death, and if the life that magnifies him the most is the life of costly love, then life is risk, and risk is right.

[ 6 : 42 ] To run from it is to waste your life. He goes on, and he says, I define risk very simply as an action that exposes you to the possibility of loss or injury.

If you take a risk, you can lose money, you can lose face, you can lose health, or even your life.

And what's worse, if you take a risk, you may endanger other people, and not just yourself.

Their lives may be at stake. Will a wise and loving person then ever take a risk? Is it wise to expose yourself to loss? Is it loving to endanger others?

Is losing life the same as wasting it? He answers, It depends. Of course, you can throw your life away in a hundred sinful ways and die as a result. In that case, losing life and wasting it would be the same.

But losing life is not always the same as wasting it. What if the circumstances are such that not taking a risk will result in loss and injury? It may not be wise to play it safe.

[ 7 : 42 ] And what if a successful risk would bring great benefit to many people? And its failure would bring harm only to yourself. It may not be loving to choose comfort or security when something great may be achieved for the cause of Christ and for the good of others.

Close quote. And brothers and sisters, we are here this morning, many of us, if not all of us, having been born again by the Spirit of God and by the grace of God through the blessing of the fruits of the work, of the risk that many godly men and women have taken for the cause of Christ in the last 2,000 years.

Men and women who fully embody the very essence of that quote by John Piper. Men and women who have risked everything and who have paid the ultimate price and have lost their lives at the hands of enemies of the gospel.

All so that the message which was at first handed down to them would continue to spread so that wretched sinners in their generation and generations to come could know and come to understand the most prized, the most worthy, the most beautiful type of knowledge that any human being can ever possibly attain to in this life.

That is, the knowledge of Christ and the truth and the very fountain of truth from which all truth and every good and perfect thing springs up from, including the truth and the only way that sinners can ever come to a point where they can have peace with God.

[ 9 : 31 ] The gospel, brothers and sisters, is and has been a message that has been passed down to us and has been entrusted to us and looking back it has been a road filled and stained with much blood, sweat and tears but make no mistake about it that that is exactly how it was meant to be.

Tribulation and persecution comes as a result of living a godly life for it was the first born among many brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who promised his disciples that tribulation would

come to them while in this world, John 16, 33.

And also in John 15, 20, he tells them, if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And the apostle Paul also affirms this as he emphatically states in 2 Timothy 3, 12, and we've heard it before, indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

And so in our text this morning, we will be looking at some truths behind these foundational affirmations and extract some applications for ourselves for it is my prayer this morning that every one of us would come to live a life of risk in faith in order that we may live our lives without wasting them.

So I have divided this text into four headings, but we are only going to cover two of them. But let me give you all four and you can go back and consider the last two throughout your week.

[11:03] The four headings are, number one, the obedience of the apostles. Number two, the root cause of persecution. Number three, the proper perspective on persecution.

And number four, the root of Christian confidence. So for our first heading, notice the obedience of the apostles. Beginning in verse 12 through verse 16, we read, Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles, and they were all together in Solomon's portico.

None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 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.

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. Here, we see the apostles obeying and fulfilling that command of our Lord in Matthew 28, verses 18 through 20, when standing before his disciples after the resurrection, he commands them, saying, All authority has been given unto me on heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[12:35] We see in verse 12 that the apostles were together in Solomon's portico, which it was on the eastern side of the temple in Jerusalem, and we see many signs and wonders are regularly done by them.

The sick are being healed, those who are demon-possessed are being cleansed, and the news of this activity spreads like wildfire. We see in verse 16 that the people from towns all around Jerusalem were going to them and were also being healed.

Some of these healings appear to have unusually miraculous types of healings. As we see in verse 15, it states that some of the sick people were laid on cots and mats on the street hoping that Peter's shadow might fall on them so they could be healed.

Now, some commentators say here that this verse does not teach that people were actually healed by the falling of Peter's shadow upon them and try to make arguments to that end. However, I have no problem believing that people were healed in this manner, and I do believe that that is the very purpose of the very mentioning of that text in that chapter.

Elsewhere in the book of Acts, we see other miraculous healings through interesting objects. For example, in Acts 19, we see people healed by handkerchiefs and aprons that had simply touched the skin of the Apostle Paul and then taken to heal the sick.

[14:05] However, I don't think it really matters whether or not people were actually healed by Peter's shadow, and I believe it is rather inconsequential for our main purpose in our text this morning. Although we are told that all these people were being healed, and many signs and wonders were done among the people.

But the question that I believe we should be asking is to what end? For what purpose? What did these healings accomplish?

And how do these healings align with the Apostles' mission? The Great Commission. I think that there is certainly an amazement factor for us 21st century Christians when we read about incredible miracles and supernatural works of God in our Bibles, and we certainly believe them if we believe that God is and that He is who He says He is.

But let me ask you this question. How many of you, like me, often, when you read of these wonders, think to yourself, God, I wish I could witness something of this magnitude.

Something of this type of miracle. This power of yours in person today. And while I certainly believe that God is still doing miracles, I would agree with a cessationist point of view that miracles of this kind, ministries of healing of the kind that we see with the Apostles, ceased with the last of the Apostles in the first century.

[ 15 : 37 ] However, my goal is not to teach on cessationism, but I want us to look at the big picture of this text. So, to look at what the greater miracle is in the text that we still see to this day, but I think we often overlook and perhaps even undervalue that miracle which we still see to this day which is greater than healing miracles of the type.

And so, like I said, sometimes I read this stuff and I think to myself, God, I would just love to see some miracles like this. To see such a display of your power. And I say that without realizing that I have seen supernatural works of God, of this magnitude and power multiple times and have heard of many more even then.

And what do I mean by that? I'll answer with this question. Again, to what end were these signs and wonders done? Salvation. Salvation by regeneration through the preaching of the gospel.

The purpose of signs and wonders was to validate and authenticate the apostles as true ambassadors of God. who were preaching the true counsel of God, the gospel.

In Acts 2.22, Peter says, Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders, signs that God did through him in your midst.

[ 17 : 04 ] Miracles were done to bear witness to God to the end that people might believe and repent. In John 20, verses 30 and 31, John says, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Christ did not commission the apostles to go and simply provide temporary pain relief, to make a few fevers go away or to heal some broken bones, but rather to preach the gospel and make disciples so that people may have salvation, peace with God.

And to that end, they were obedient and preached as they were commanded. And the fruit of their labor is seen in verse 14 of our text where we read, And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

And that, brothers and sisters, is what I mean by the miraculous work of God that we ought not to fail, ought not fail to see and stand in awe and worship if you truly understand the level of your sin and extent of God's holiness and that in regeneration God takes you, his enemy, takes your heart of stone, gives your heart of flesh, imputes Christ's righteousness to you, adopts you, makes you an heir of Christ's inheritance, calls you a friend, a son, or daughter, all by his grace for his glory, no amount of miraculously healed bones could ever outweigh the miraculous salvation of one soul.

I love how Paul Washer puts it, he says, and I'm somewhat paraphrasing, but he says that regeneration is a greater display of God's power than his work of creation because he created the world ex nihilo, meaning out of nothing, but in regeneration he makes something holy out of a pile of depraved, sinful, God-hating humanity.

[ 19 : 19 ] So if these people in our text would have been healed but not saved, they would have simply gone to hell healthy. So Christians, be in awe and give thanks that you have to look no further than these walls of this building to see a miraculous, powerful work of God.

No further than these walls. Now we see on down in our text that the apostles are arrested and put in jail and in verses 19 through 21 we read, but during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

And when they heard this they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. The angel tells them to go and speak all the words of this life, meaning go and preach the gospel.

And they continue in their obedience by continuing to preach. And once again we see that they are detained and brought before the Sanhedrin again. Now the first time that they were arrested as I mentioned earlier was in chapter 4.

And in chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 we read, and as they were speaking to the people the priest and the captains of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

[ 20 : 46 ] And they arrested them. Did you hear that? They were greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

The Sanhedrin was not annoyed at them for healing. They were fine with the healing. I can assure you that they were okay with no longer having dirty crippled beggars being laid at the temple gate daily.

So in verse 18 of chapter 4 we read, so they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. They never charged them to stop healing.

So why the hostility and the opposition to the apostles? Let's examine this in our second point which I've entitled The Root Cause of Persecution. The Root Cause of Persecution as we read in verses 17 through 33 of our chapter, chapter 5.

But the high priest rose up and all who were with him that is the party of the Sadducees and being filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

[ 21 : 54 ] But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard this they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came and those who were with him they called together the council, all the center of the people of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came they did not find them in the prison so they returned and reported we found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors but when we opened them we found no one inside.

Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these words they were greatly perplexed about them wondering what this would come to. And someone came and told them look the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.

Then the captain with the officers went but not by force for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. And when they had brought them they set them before the council and the high priest and the high priest questioned them 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.

But Peter and the apostles answered we must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins and we are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

[ 23 : 22 ] When they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them. Now I really want to take some time this morning to examine with you the root cause of persecution and we will do so first by starting with a general cause of persecution specific to our text and then by digging deeper into the issue and looking at a broader more foundational cause of persecution.

So where does persecution come from and why should we Christians in a church service in beautiful and peaceful quiet Dahlonga expect persecution in our lives.

us. Let's start by looking at the general cause of persecution in our text. After the apostles are brought before the senate and questioned by the Sanhedrin Peter preaches to them and we read in verse 33 when they heard this they were enraged and wanted to kill them.

But where does that hatred and desire to kill come from? I think to better understand this scene it's beneficial for us to have a broader understanding of the historical context politically around this time.

And so I also want to take some time this morning to even navigate above and away from our text as we take sort of if you would in a bird's eye view of some of the history of the Jews.

[ 24 : 45 ] So to start let us understand first the Sanhedrin. You may remember Nathan telling us that they were like the Supreme Court of Israel. It comprised of 70 members plus the high priest.

The members were mostly if not completely made up of the two major parties. Those being the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the more conservative of the two. The Sadducees were the liberals.

At this point in time the high priest was under Sadducean control. The Sadducees were wealthy aristocrats. They were the elite class per se. They also believed only in the first five books of the Old Testament as being authoritative.

They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They did not believe in angels. They did not believe in the sovereignty of God or in his providential work in the world. They stressed the libertarian free will of man.

They denied most things supernatural. And we could say that they practiced religion more so as political opportunists. So understanding them, we read back in verse 17 of chapter 5, But the high

priest rose up and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy. [ 25 : 59 ] They were filled with jealousy. But why jealousy? What were they jealous about? And how does this emotion, this jealousy, lead to persecution and a desire to kill?

Well, it's interesting to note that jealousy throughout the Bible, when put in a list of sinful practices, is always paired up with things like strife, malice, hate, hostility, etc.

Always put together side by side. And we see this both in narrative illustrations throughout the Bible and also in epistolical exhortations. So, for example, a narrative illustration, we see in Genesis 37 that Joseph, he is given a robe of many colors.

And in verse 4 of Genesis 37, we read that his brothers hated him and could not even speak to him peacefully. Then down in verse 11, it says that they were jealous of Joseph, and we know the result of that jealousy.

In that case, they sell their own brother into slavery. As far as exhortative examples, we see in the epistles, here are a few, and listen to how they are grouped in this list.

[ 27 : 13 ] You do not have to turn here. I'm going to move through this pretty quick. The first one, Galatians 5, 19 through 21, it says, Now the works of the flesh are evident, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, division, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

2 Corinthians 12, 20. Perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder among you.

Also Romans 13, 13 through 14, and I'm going to skip that one, but James 3, 14 through 16. If you would, turn to that one with me. James 3, 14 through 16.

James 3, 14 through 16. James 3, 14 13 through 16.

We read, But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

[ 28 : 30 ] This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder in every vile practice.

Did you hear that? Every vile practice. Jealousy and self-ambition. This was the heart of the Sanhedrin. And what were they jealous of? Were they jealous that they were losing popularity to the apostles?

I don't think so. This was the great Sanhedrin. They were ambitious, power-hungry, prideful men who had the law on their side and the power to judge and control.

They were not afraid or threatened by the apostles. And how can I say that? Two reasons. The first one I would say is an educated guess. What I mean by that is, can you imagine how arrogant and prideful these men were?

Here stands before them, the disciples of Jesus, a man whom in their minds, only days after he had been welcomed into the city of Jerusalem by the people, as if he was a king, they, the Sanhedrin, managed to turn the entire nation against him.

[ 29 : 42 ] Right? To the point where those who were on Monday screaming out, Hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord, by Friday they had changed their chance to crucify him.

They, the Sanhedrin, were proud. And I think that in their minds, they took credit for all that. They managed to change the people's minds in a matter of hours.

They were proud. They felt strong. And here before them stood mere followers of a leader that they had already done away with. They were not scared of the apostles and they were not scared of the people.

Now we read in verse 26 that the captain of the police and his men were scared of the people, but not the Sanhedrin. They were not scared of the people or the apostles. They were corrupt and smart politicians.

They knew how to play the people. They knew how to get what they wanted. Now my second reason is from scripture. Because scripture tells me that they didn't even fear God. And if they didn't fear God, I don't think they feared his messengers.

[ 30 : 47 ] But I do believe that their jealousy towards the apostles stemmed from fear. Fear of the Roman Empire.

Now why do I say that? This is where I want to navigate above and away from our text and quickly brush over about 600 years worth of history, of Jewish history.

So bear with me. But I'm doing this because I want you to get a better feel for what the apostles were standing up against as they stood before that council of 71 politicians. And I hope that this doesn't feel too out of the way from our text, from our context. And I promise you that I believe it has its purpose well within our text this morning. So the history of the Jews, and I'm going to try to move kind of quickly here.

So you may not want to write notes. You may just want to sit and listen so you get a good picture. But if you want to write notes, it's up to you. So the history of the Jews is filled with a lot of war and violence.

[ 31 : 50 ] And starting in about 589 B.C., which is a little over 600 years before Acts chapter 5, where we find ourselves this morning, the Babylonian Empire under King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, killed many Jews, and took thousands captive.

We read about this in Jeremiah 52. And this is the same King Nebuchadnezzar who we read of in the book of Daniel who gets the dream of a great statue of a man who Daniel interprets for us as prophecy in the book of Daniel chapter 2.

The interpretation is given in Daniel chapter 2 that the statue represents five kingdoms. The first one, Daniel says, to King Nebuchadnezzar represents him in the Babylonian Empire.

Now throughout the rest of the book of Daniel, the other kingdoms are described, and Daniel lays out with such specific detail the course of events with world powers to come.

And it's just exciting to see the veracity of God's word through the course of history, as prophesied in the Old Testament, hundreds of years before any of this came to pass.

[ 33 : 03 ] Now, after being under Babylonian rule for some time, the Jews came under Persian rule after Cyrus the Great defeated the Babylonian Empire. And at the start of the intertestamental period, we find the Jews under Persian rule, which is the second of the five kingdoms.

Now, in the intertestamental period, which is the 400 years between the closing of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament, which is also referred to as the 400 years of silence, because God no longer spoke to his people in those 400 years, God continues, however, to sovereignly and providentially direct the course of history in the making.

And so in these 400 years, the rest of the remaining empires of the prophesied dream from Daniel chapter 2 are described and identified except for the fifth one.

Now, for about 200 years, the Jews continued under Persian rule. They were allowed to rebuild the temple and had religious freedom. Around 330 BC, the Persian Empire fell to the Greek Empire, which was the third of the five kingdoms under Alexander the Great.

After Alexander's death, his generals divided his empire into two, and two dynasties came out of that, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.

[ 34 : 34 ] Judea first initially fell under Ptolemaic rule for about 100 years. The Jews were economically oppressed, but had fairly good religious freedom under the Ptolemies.

The Jews at this time also were exposed to Hellenism. Hellenism spread, which was Greek culture, but they still had religious freedom.

Then for the next 57 years, Judea came under Seleucid rule, under Antiochus Epiphanes, and that level of freedom drastically, drastically changed.

Antiochus placed the high priest of his choosing, a man by the name of Jason, possibly a Greek, not even a Jewish man, or at the least a Greek supporter.

He then issues a decree that all nations under his rule should abandon their own customs and become one people. He launched a fierce attack against the Jews, plundered Jerusalem and set many buildings on fire, had any copies of the Old Testament that he could find burned, forced Jews to eat pork, prevented them from observing the Sabbath, prevented the circumcision of boys, to the point that they would go around and check, and if any boy was found to be circumcised, the mother would be killed, the child would be killed, and the child would then be hung around the neck of the mother.

[ 35 : 58 ] Pagan worship exploded in Jerusalem at this time. Antiochus even had the title, Theos Antiochus Theos Epiphanes, inscribed on the currency, which translates to Antiochus, God Manifest.

All this led to a 24-year war led by a Jew named Judah Maccabee. The war was called the Maccabean Revolt.

The Jews won and gained their freedom. The Maccabees then established the Hasmonian dynasty in Israel. The Jews had peace that lasted for a very short time, and the Seleucid Empire once again attacked Jerusalem, and this was around 129 B.C.

At this point, leadership of the Hasmonian dynasty had changed due to the first leader of the Hasmonian dynasty being assassinated by his own son-in-law. In a short period of time of about 37 years, the Hasmonian dynasty had four different kings.

The fourth one, Alexander Gennas, by that point, Hellenism had spread deep into the Hasmonian kingdom, which was the very thing that they fought against.

[ 37 : 18 ] King Alexander Gennas took upon himself both office of king and priest, high priest, and the conservative political party at the time, the Pharisees, demanded that he choose either or.

The king refused and sided with and was supported by the Sadducees. Shortly after, a disagreement during the Feast of Tabernacles led the king, Alexander Gennas, to have 6,000 Jews massacred in the temple courtyard.

This event was a cause to the start of a six-year civil war in Jerusalem, within Judea, where 50,000 Judeans were killed.

And Josephus writes that this Sadduceean king, Alexander, had 800 Pharisees arrested and then had their wives and children's throats cut in front of them right before executing them as well.

After Alexander died, his wife became queen of Judea. After she died, her son, Heracanus, became the rightful heir of the Hasmonian kingdom. And he was in favor of the Pharisees.

[ 38 : 30 ] However, his little brother, Aristobulus, who was more popular and was in favor of the Sadducees, rebelled against his big brother. In yet another civil war, Heracanus surrendered for the time being and Aristobulus became king.

Now, when we get to around 65 to 63 BC, the fourth kingdom of Daniel's prophecy, the one that is successor to the Greek Empire, comes to the scene as the Roman Republic, soon to become the Roman Empire.

So, the Romans conquer the Greeks and around this time, Heracanus starts another, another civil war, to try to get his kingdom back from his little brother. Now, there were so many moving pieces here and true conspiracies that led to this continued civil war between these Jewish brothers.

But for the sake of time, I'm going to have to skip all those details. However, the two brothers both ended up going to General Pompey, a Roman military general who just months earlier had marched into Syria, overpowered their kingdom and made it into a Roman province.

Pompey originally sided with Aristobulus, the younger brother, which led to a crushing defeat of Heracanus' allies' army. But then, Pompey changes his mind, decides that he wants to take over Judea, and thought that Heracanus, the older brother, would instead be easier to control than Aristobulus.

[ 39 : 59 ] So, Pompey changes sides and backs Heracanus now instead. Pompey then fights against Aristobulus, and Aristobulus surrenders to Pompey.

And in 63 BC, Pompey marched into Jerusalem, where he met more opposition from the Sadducees. And after a several-month siege, which resulted in a good bit of death and destruction, and as Josephus puts it, 12,000 Jews were slaughtered, with only a few Roman troops being killed. The Jews lost their short-lived independence and came under the rule of the Roman Republic. Pompey reinstated Heracanus as high priest. Now, within the Roman Republic at this time, there was also a lot of instability.

After his victory in Jerusalem, Pompey returns to Rome, and the first triumvirate was established by three men who became the most powerful men in the Republic.

Pompey being one of them, Marcus Crassus, and Julius Caesar. Not long after, there was a civil war which broke out between Caesar and Pompey. And the whole Heracanus and Aristobulus thing surfaced again because Caesar wanted to restore the kingdom to Aristobulus, the little brother.

[ 41 : 19 ] Pompey's people, knowing this, then had Aristobulus killed. Heracanus and his closest ally, Antipater, were ready to fight with Pompey against Caesar.

However, when Pompey was killed, they switched sides and helped Caesar. Caesar then became the sole dictator of the Republic. Caesar, thankful for the help of Heracanus and Antipater, allowed Heracanus to remain high priest and gave Antipater rule of Judea by making him procurator of Judea.

Now, one of Antipater's sons is known to you as King Herod, who was later appointed king of the Jews by the Romans and was the one who had all the young boys murdered at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Now, Julius Caesar is assassinated and his adopted son and heir, Octavian, joins forces with Mark Antony in what was called the Second Triumvirate.

Now, not long after, they turned against one another in yet another civil war. Octavian won the war and became Augustus, the first emperor and founder of the Roman Empire.

[ 42 : 35 ] Jesus was born during the reign of Augustus. So you can see there was much war surrounding and even within Judea up to this point and even more that I don't have time to get into.

So why am I telling you all this? A few reasons. First, history is important. Also, I hope it gives you a better picture, but more importantly, related to our text this morning to answer the question, why were the Sanhedrin afraid of the Roman Empire?

Now, here's where I was going with all this. In 63 BC, the year that the Romans took over Judea, perhaps the most powerful man in Rome was a man by the name of Cicero, being that he was the highest elected official of the Republic along with one other guy.

The Romans had a law that is referred to as the Edict of Religio Licita, which means the Edict of Permitted Religion. Listen to what Cicero writes around this time in his book entitled On the Laws. He writes, and I quote, Close quote.

[ 44 : 01 ] Close quote. Now, a few years later, listen to what Gaius Macenus, Emperor Augustus' advisor, said to Augustus, probably within a few years of Jesus' birth.

He tells him, Honor the gods in every way according to the usage of your ancestors and compel others to worship them.

Hate and punish those who introduce strange gods, not only for the sake of the gods, but because those who introduce new gods engage a multitude of persons in foreign laws and customs.

From hence arise unions bound by oaths and confederacies and associations. Things dangerous to a monarchy.

Close quote. Now, let me wrap up this bird's eye view thing and show you from Scripture why I've said what I've said. Turn to John chapter 11 for me. This is a text that Pastor Vodibach pointed out for me and we'll show you how all of this history comes together in our text in Acts chapter 5 this morning.

[ 45 : 17 ] John chapter 11. This is right after the raising of Lazarus and look at verse 45 verses 45 through 48.

So, John chapter 11 starting in verse 45 we read Many of the Jews therefore who had come with Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said what are we to do? For this man performs many signs.

If we let him go on like this everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. Do you see that?

Jesus and then the apostles were preaching Christianity a new religion that was not sanctioned and officially brought in by Rome.

[ 46 : 21 ] And because Rome saw new religions as the rise of unions bound by oaths and confederacies and associations things dangerous to a monarchy the great Sanhedrin wealthy and power hungry was scared that the preaching of a new religion would bring about the wrath not of God but of the Roman Empire and take their power and wealth away from them.

Brothers the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil but the root of all kinds of evil including the root of persecution is idolatry a violation of the first and second commandments.

The apostles here were preaching against the Sanhedrin sin so you now have I hope you now have a better picture of what they were standing up against. They all knew the Roman stance on their religion very well.

The apostles likely knew very well that this was what they were standing up against. They knew the risk. These men had crucified their Lord out of their own greed and idolatry and even so much blood had been spilled in the very ground upon which they stood to be tried yet they trusted and were obedient and they preached the truth in love and they put the mirror of God's law in front of the court's face and called them out on their sin.

Peter says Jesus whom you killed and the Sanhedrin hiding their guilt say you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

[ 47 : 57 ] For those of you who don't know I used to be a police canine officer I had an awesome mean looking beautiful German shepherd and when we did bite training we always trained the dogs that if the handler was attacked they were to attack back and that without even the need of a command to bite that's how they were trained it was partly out of instinct if the dog sees his master attacked he will attack the attacker and that's kind of what we see with persecution because unregenerate people are slaves to their sin their sin is their master and just like if you mess with a dog's master you are likely to get bit if you mess with someone's sin you are likely to be persecuted and so that brothers and sisters is the root cause of persecution and the apostles were obedient godliness was manifested in that obedience and persecution necessarily followed for persecution was birthed out of an idolatrous heart enslaved to sin and nothing has changed almost 2,000 years later if you preach the gospel people may still want to kill you and while they don't have the fear of losing everything to the roman empire they do fear the police and losing everything by going to prison but what has changed is in the political realm the lord has made our field so much easier to labor in he has provided so much protection for his workers in the institution of our government we can't be flogged or killed for preaching according to the law and we even have the law on our side when it comes to preaching in our right to freedom of speech so our field is easier to labor in yet the lord's words still ring true that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few now kind of out of time out of time so i will leave you with this i urge all of you to examine your hearts we should be bold in our proclamation of the gospel for our field to labor in it's not a particularly painstakingly arduous one to labor in i agree with what nathan said that at the very least we should be experiencing persecution in the form of persecution of our ego but i think nathan would also agree with me that your ego should not be primarily persecuted by others but should be primarily first and foremost persecuted by yourselves as you renew your minds as you die to yourself as you pick up your cross daily to follow him every one of us christians is called to live godly lives and to boldly proclaim that which we which we have been entrusted with and made ambassadors of and if we are obedient to this call then persecution will in some way necessarily follow but do understand that persecution is not the goal it is simply a byproduct of godliness may we all be found worthy to suffer for him who suffered all on our behalf and may we all live our lives without wasting them that is my prayer this morning and i close with this quote from john jawit a british preacher from the early 1900s he says it is possible to evade a multitude of sorrows by the cultivation of an insignificant life indeed if

it be a man's ambition to avoid the troubles of life the recipe is perfectly simple let him shed his ambitions in every direction let him cut the wings of every soaring purpose and let him assiduously cultivate a little life with the fewest correspondences and relations by this means a whole continent of afflictions will be escaped and will remain unknown but if we follow the way of sacrificial life and service it may bring us into a fiery furnace of suffering but in the midst of the fire there shall be one like unto the son of God let's pray