

## **Worthy to Suffer**

The Gospel in Motion

Acts 5:17-42

In this passage from Acts 5, the apostles are thrown into prison by the very jealous high priest. Thin spaces are often referred to as places we encounter God – in solitude, nature, reading scripture. In this case the “thin place” where God shows up to the apostles is through an angel in their prison cell, to break them free.

- Where have you experienced God’s presence from inside a place that felt like darkness, confusion, or limitation?
- Why do you think God so often chooses to reveal himself in the spaces we do not choose?

The angel breaks them out, and instead of escaping, the apostles go right back into the temple to preach. They run toward the calling that might cost them more suffering.

- We so typically assume that freedom from difficulty means that God will deliver us from a particular situation. How does this story challenge us in this way?
- Where might God be calling you to go *back into* something that is hard – not to escape it – but to be faithful within it?

Gamaliel says something powerful: “If this plan is of God, you won’t be able to overthrow it – you may even be fighting against God.” In other words, the suffering itself isn’t proof that God is absent. The story may still be God’s story.

- When have you looked back and realized that opposition or failure you faced was actually part of how God was forming you?
- How would your faith look different if you believed God’s plan often advances *inside* hardship and not outside of it?

The apostles were flogged – and they rejoiced! They believed they were sharing in the life of Christ by sharing in his wounds. This is what total union with God looks like: not just comfort, but communion.

- What would it require for you to trust that God is present and working *inside* the painful parts of your life right now?
- Is there a suffering in your life that could become – instead of something to escape – a place where you ask: “Lord, teach me who You are here”?