***Acts 5:19-21 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.” 1 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.***

For the last two Sunday’s, we have been in the Old Testament with Moses and Jehoshaphat. In that time, we saw that believers in God must not fear nor be dismayed, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. We’ve been told clearly that God fights for His people, and, from a place of Trust, Obedience, and Praise, we’re witnesses of His Great Salvation, Jesus.

This morning, we’re going to join Peter and other apostles, as they stand before the high priest of Israel and the Sanhedrin council. The apostles were thrown into prison for speaking the name of Jesus. Likely, the high priest at this time is Caiaphas or Annas, both involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. This council thought they’d fixed the problem of Jesus by trying to silence Jesus. Now, they’re trying to silence the witnesses of Jesus. Evil seeks to silence the Word, hide the Light, and deny the Truth.

Then, God. Then… God. God sends an angel. Verses 19-20 *But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”* An angel opens the prison doors. Down in verses 22-23, we learn that the doors of the prison were still shut, the locks still locked, and the guards were still standing guard; yet, the apostles had been delivered. Perhaps as with Jesus in Luke 4:30, they passed through the midst and went their way. But this angel gave the apostles a charge. This charge was to Go. Just as the children of Israel last week were told to Go Forward, Jehoshaphat was told to Go out tomorrow, the apostles are commanded to Go, stand in the Temple and speak. They’re instructed to go witness to the people. This takes trust. They’d just been delivered from prison for speaking. Surely, this command will result in them being imprisoned again, or worse! The council had shown itself capable of murderous thought. Yet, the angel says Go. Likewise, when we are delivered from the prison of our own making, the sin that binds us, the yoke that burdens us, when, by the Grace and Mercy of Jesus, our sentence of Death is reversed and we are instead given Life as a child of the King, we are commanded to Go, stand, and speak the words of life to all people. We know that our jailer, Satan, will come looking for us. We know he won’t be happy that we’ve been delivered. Yet, we must Go and witness, we must shine in our Temple, so that, as in Acts 5:14 *And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.* But, we must Go.

Verse 22 *And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught.* When Peter and the other apostles heard the angel, they trusted God and obeyed. Early in the morning, they’re back in the Temple teaching. I want us to notice something here. The remaining part of the verse says - *But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.* If the Apostles are in the Temple early in the morning teaching, this tells us something about the religious leaders of Israel, the very ones who were to be the defenders of the Temple. It tells us that the apostles of Jesus were there… and the religious leaders were not. One group was up early seeking the One True God. One group was up pursuing evil. The apostles obeyed their calling. Where does the morning find us? Is our first thought in the morning, as our eyes flutter open, Thank You God for another day. Thank You Jesus for delivering me from my prison of sin, opening the door and commanding me Go. In this verse, we see those that know of the work of God and those pursuing the work of God. Are we pursuing God, even as Satan is surely pursuing us, seeking to silence our witness? That’s Trust and Obedience.

Let’s fast forward. The Apostles are found, brought to the council, asked why they refused to be silenced and here is the answer. *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”* It is critically necessary that we obey God. Make no mistake, our obedience to God is witness before people, whether we know they’re watching or not. The council is furious at this. Murderous thoughts consume their minds. Gamaliel, the teacher of a Pharisee named Saul who will soon become the Apostle Paul, speaks - *if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.* The Egyptians would have agreed, the people coming against Jehoshaphat would have agreed, the Apostle Paul will soon agree – we agree – we must never be found fighting against the Will of God. The Apostles are then beaten, commanded to never speak of Jesus again, and let go. Verses 41-42 *So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.* Daily, they did not cease teaching, preaching Jesus.

The wages of sin is death. Without Jesus, our eternal prison awaits. He offers to open the door. When we accept, we are told to Go, don’t cease. Trust God, Obey His command, and Praise, Rejoice that we are counted worthy to be suffering representatives of our Deliverer. May our light so shine that multitudes see, and those still suffering in prisons of sin come to believe.