

Sunday Service Sermons

07 February 2021

Obey God Not Men

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men”. *Acts 5:29*

Full text: *Acts 4: 1-20; 5:15-42.*

The text for today is the authorities attempting to stop the spread of this new emerging religious belief that was causing so much trouble for the established religion.

There was a new movement in religion that was not controlled by those in power.

Subversive truth is always a problem for the established power structure.

We must never forget that there are two powers at work in the world.

Evil and good.

Darkness and light.

God and anti-God.

It is a sad fact that power corrupts.

That is why God did not want Israel to have a king.

God himself would have directed Israel if they would have allowed him to do so.

God knew that power corrupts and he wanted to save Israel from this problem.

Power corrupts the same way money is the source of all kinds of evil.

It goes to self-centered behavior.

The constant battle is self or God.

Do we promote ourselves or do we promote God?

Christians, just by being Christ-centered, are a reproach to evil.

“For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest their deeds should be exposed.” *John 3:20.*

Jesus knew this battle and put it this way: “If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. *John 15:18-20.*

Jesus had this warning for his disciples: “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” *John 15:33.*

Our Lord’s final beatitude promises great reward for the disciples who suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake. *Matt. 5:10-12.*

Christians in the U. S. have had it easy for many years but that time just might be over.

Opposition by the Authorities (*Acts 4:1-4*)

After the infilling of the Holy Spirit the disciples became apostles and were ready to spread the God News.

They began preaching that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our Fathers, glorified his Son Jesus The Christ, in the healing of the lame man.

Peter charged the people and their rulers with the death of the Prince of life when they shouted for Pilate to release a murderer and crucify Jesus.

Those in power came against this preaching.

Peter and John were arrested and put in prison for the night.

They were arrested by the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees.

Most likely the High Priest, and the person in charge of the temple area.

The Sadducees were the powerful politico-religious party who dominated the council known as the Sanhedrin, which was the seventy-member ruling body of the Jewish nation.

They had compromised with the Roman occupation force in their land.

The authorities had arrested Peter and John for preaching the resurrection of Jesus.

Sadducees questioned their authority to teach in the temple as they had that of Jesus a few weeks earlier.

They were troubled by the popularity of this movement with the people.

On trial before the Sanhedrin the next day.

Acts 4:5

The Sanhedrin, before whom Peter and John were brought to trial, was mostly the same body that had condemned Jesus.

They were all there: rulers, the official representatives of the people; elders, older men of influence and position; scribes, copiers of the Scriptures who became expert interpreters; Annas, the former high priest whom the Romans had replaced with his son-in-law, Caiaphas; John, the son of Annas; Alexander, whose relative is unknown; and other kindred of the high priest.

They led off the inquiry by asking, scornfully, "By what power, or by what name, have you done this?"

How could men such as yourselves who have had no rabbinical training perform this healing?

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke boldly.

Jesus fulfilled his promises.

Peter preached to the Sanhedrin the same sermon he had been preaching to the people in Solomon's portico of the temple.

The Sanhedrin made a decision.

They were amazed by the boldness of Peter and John.

They knew these men had been with Jesus and could testify that it was really he who was alive.

They could not deny the miracle.

By a great leap of illogic they determined to do, by law and by force, what they could not do by reason.

The response of Peter and John.

"But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to harken unto you more than unto God, judge you".

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard". *Acts 4:19-20*

This was but one of the many occasions when a government has sought to legislate religion.

The Sanhedrin was saying in effect, "Keep still and we will not harass you."

But Peter and John could not keep still.

Truth must be proclaimed.

Experience is a divine imperative.

No law can silence the gospel.

The Sanhedrin threatened them and let them go.

"And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them". *4:23*

Christian fellowship is wonderful.

How praying Christians must have encouraged John and Peter!

Their prayer in *Acts 4:24* is rather remarkable.

They did not pray to be spared from persecution.

They prayed that with boldness they might bear their testimony.

Sometime later, while the apostles were preaching in the temple, the Sadducees arrested them.

On the later occasion the officers beat them, commanded that they not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”. vs. 41-42.

No person or group of persons, ecclesiastical or civil, has any right to command a person to do something contrary to God’s will.

Religion is a personal concern between each person and God.

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”. *Rom. 13:12*

When government stays in its appointed sphere, there is no conflict between obligation to government and obligation to God.

Jesus’ great word, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God” implies that one ought to be able to be a good Christian and a good citizen at the same time.

Whenever government steps beyond its bounds and commands disobedience to God Christians can do nothing other than reply, “We ought to obey God rather than men”. *Acts 5:29*.

Are you able said the master?

Each of us has to answer that question!