

Acts (Quality:good)

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Preacher: Crowter, Harold (1923-2011)

- [0 : 00] As the Lord may help me, we will continue our meditation from the Acts of the Apostles. And I will direct your attention again this morning to the fifth chapter and the verse 29.
- The fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and the 29th verse. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.
- Most of you will appreciate that last Sunday evening we came to the 20th verse of this fifth chapter in speaking of the context wherein Peter was enabled to give such a bold exclamation of the faith of his heart that we ought to obey God rather than men.
- Peter and the apostles had no question in obeying the commandment given to them by the angel, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.
- We find that when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning and thought. So that whatever may be presented to their minds as to the consequence of obedience to the revealed will of God to their heart, they leave in the hand of God.
- [2 : 24] My friends, they do not apply their minds to the consequences of keeping the command of God.
- They apply their minds rather to their present responsibility than its future consequence.
- Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. We should be more concerned with our present responsibilities than the future developments.
- And we find that in the spirit of faith, these apostles were thus enabled to leave the future.
- A future, we might say, pregnant with foreboding as they looked forward in the light of the past.
- [3 : 39] It seems that the scales of faith, it seems that the scales of weight, to the advantage of the powers of evil, circumstantially considered, that twice these men had been apprehended and brought before the council.
- And my friends, it seems as though the forces of evil have the power to do this almost at will.
- So that they may say, naturally and reasonably considering the situation, well if we go and preach again in the temple, especially in the public place, obviously the council are going to be further upset with us, and they're going to send and apprehend us further, and that we shall suffer even more than we have suffered hitherto.
- Last night we were commissioned to the common prison, obviously doing the same thing again, in direct disobedience to the council.
- The council will exercise their powers further, even to our annihilation, possibly. Well now, the apostles didn't submit to the powers of reason within their own hearts and minds.
- [5 : 30] My friends, their one concern was to know and to do the will of God. They were serving the King of Kings, and they knew that all powers were inferior to that greatest power.
- Therefore, only by the permissive will of God could any inferior power act. Now you see, they therefore went into the temple early in the morning and taught that this had its effect.

But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. Now, the high priest shows himself as a very weak man.

He looks upon himself as the most powerful personality, with an authority second to none, given to him by God, as he supposes.

But my friends, the very thing that he does testifies of his weakness, because he calls the council together and all the senate of the children of Israel.

[7 : 04] you know, a man that is convicted of his authority and of the righteousness of his cause, has no need to co-opt this extensive support.

He must marshal forces to support him in the condemnation of the apostles.

And my friends, so often, by reason of weakness, men who seek to further an unrighteous cause will use means, extensive means, to co-opt the support of other men in their cause.

They go to frantic effort in bringing together powers, personalities, who will support their unrighteous cause.

Now, obviously, the high priest did this. He must get the council together and he must get the senate and, as it were, the greatest body of influential personalities should be congregated to unite together in condemnation of these men who were doing nothing more than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to their fellow men.

[9 : 08] God is not right. God is not right. My friends, if our cause is right, we can commit it to God and leave the issues in his hands.

If our cause is not right, though we may have the support of all the world besides, it is of no consequence.

God will finally vindicate the right to the consternation of all evil. And though all the world were united with us in an evil cause, it will not cause God to deviate from righteous judgment finally to our condemnation and the condemnation of all the universe if needs be.

Therefore, if our cause is right and we stand, as it were, isolated in that cause, though all men unite against us to our condemnation if God be for us.

Who then can be against us? So we see that the high priest manifests his weakness by co-opting the support of fellow men.

[10 : 44] And although he professes that his authority is from God, he does not appeal to God and leave his cause with God. My friends, he gathers together a lot of men whose judgment is weak, whose discernment is imperfect, and he obviously seeks to solicit their support in prosecution of these apostles.

and he said, now the council and senate being assembled, they sent to the prison to have the apostles brought.

And when they got to the prison, the prison was shut with all safety, the keeper standing without before the doors, and they opened the doors, and there was nobody.

What a moment that was, wasn't it? What a moment that was when those men under the command of the council and senate and high priests came to the prison and found an empty prison.

and my friends, just take this matter to the day of Jesus Christ. And think of the consternation that will be realized when the world, especially the religious world, that have looked down with discredit and disdain upon the poor, miserable disciples of Jesus Christ as they have considered them, these know-nothings in religion, who are possessed of a simple faith according to the spirit and according to the truth.

[12 : 51] my friends, these people that have been discredited and set aside, cast out as unprofitable, unlearned, simple folk, oh, that day of Jesus Christ when the religious world look on and see that all their judgment has been false, all their discredit of the meek followers of the Lamb, the simple folk in Christianity, that these are the ones whom Christ has loved, these are the ones who God has set at liberty eternally, condemned of men that owned and honoured of God through the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, it seems here in this case that a literal precursor of the final unfolding is enacted by the Spirit.

We look, it seems almost like a rehearsal of the great events yet to come, doesn't it? When the world is turned upside down, so to speak, when man is in confusion, that his wisdom is foolishness with God, and those that have been counted the fools and off scouring of the earth, are so honoured and blessed of God as to be exalted, set free, forever and forever.

But when the officers came and found them not in the prison, they returned and told, saying, the prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keeper standing without before the doors, but when we had opened, we found no man within, no man within.

You know, I think of the reproached and persecuted followers of Jesus Christ. We think, my friends, of men in Old Testament Scripture that suffered for the truth's sake, cast into prison and condemned, and some of them suffering martyrdom.

[16 : 00] We come into the New Testament, and we find there good Stephen, and we find Peter, and we understand from history all but one of the apostles of Jesus Christ suffering finally a death by martyrdom.

We come into our English history of the great persecutions, and we find there that many of the Lord's servants were cast into prison in 1662 and so on.

We find, do we not, up and down our country, monuments to martyrs in towns and villages wherein godly people suffered for the truth's sake.

they were cast into prison and condemned, considered unworthy of a place in the earth. And my friends, as far as man was concerned, they were cast into prison as wicked, seditious, evil persons.

prisons, and as far as history's natural reasoning is considered, those people are in prison, condemned.

[17 : 24] But my friends, the day will come when the people, when those that cast them into that prison will look into the prison. There won't be one there.

There won't be one there. having died for the truth's sake, having sealed their convictions with their own blood, the Lord brings them forth, every one, every one.

My friends, there will be none in that prison eternally. All the terrible confusion of those responsible for condemning innocent disciples of Jesus Christ for the common faith.

I say the confusion when they realize the blood of those innocent persons rests upon their head to their eternal confusion.

So they looked into the common prison and they found no man within, no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and chief priest heard these things, now wouldn't you think that these things, when they heard them, would stop them in their tracks?

[18 : 57] Surely if they knew anything of God and his power, they would weigh up the situation here and say, look, we're fighting against God, we're working against the most harm, the evidence is clear, we put those men in the common prison, we set the watch without, and everything was secure and safe.

now when our captain and soldiers go to bring them forth, now we see that they are missing, they're missing.

Surely God has intervened for their deliverance. My friends, sad it is to realise this, that such is the hardness of man's heart through sin, that he won't say, he won't say.

Though God by miracle may give him a very clear indication of his mind in a matter, man is obdurate, he won't say.

And this is you and I by nature if we're left to our natural hearts, we'll turn away from the truth, it doesn't matter how clear the evidence, it doesn't matter how wonderful the miraculous interpositions of God may be, my friends, we turn away from the truth.

[20 : 39] Oh, may God give us hearts to see and acknowledge his miraculous intervention intervention for the deliverance of his prisoners.

All the gospels in that, all the gospels in that, God's intervention for the deliverance of his prisoners, that's Jesus Christ in his incarnation, in his redemption, in his resurrection, salvation, all the gospels in that simple truth, the interposition of God for the deliverance of his prisoners.

And my friends, what was enacted here was typical of the whole plan of salvation. And this high priest and his council and senate, they wouldn't see it, they couldn't see it, their eyes were blinded.

Can we see, can we see God's miraculous interposition for the deliverance of his prisoners in the whole gospel plan?

Can we see the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, the pouring out of his heart's blood from the tree of Calvary, him descending into the grave, him dying the death of a malefactor and being buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, these all unite together in God's purpose to deliver his prisoners prisoners from their prison.

[22 : 46] Well now you see, these people didn't see, they didn't see, and so they continue in the face of this powerful argument to prosecute their evil designs against the apostles.

so they bring them again before them, and when they had brought them, they set them before the council, and the high priest asked them, saying, did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name?

And behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. the high priest immediately reveals the pride of his heart.

Did not we straightly command you? Did not we straightly command you?

Peter and his fellow apostles did not willingly contravene the command of the high priests, the council and the senate.

[24 : 18] my friends, on one ground and one ground only, did they disobey the command given to them by these powers, this authority, the ground of conscience, the ground of conscience.

We have only one ground under God upon which we are lawfully able to set aside the commands of those set in authority over us.

commandments, it is in so far as their commands are a discord with the commands of God.

And then, my friends, on the ground of conscience we have a perfect right to set aside the commandments of men and to obey primarily the command of God.

Now this brings us virtually to the text. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said we ought to obey God rather than men.

[25 : 52] We ought to obey God rather than men. A similar sentiment was expressed in the fourth chapter in the 19th verse.

But Peter and John answered and said unto them whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge give.

The burden of faith in the hearts of these apostles was obedience to God as their chief exercise.

My friends this was the prime concern of their hearts and it obtains to death.

One could say that it is one of the foundation principles of democracy. Something that we as a nation hold very near and dear.

[27 : 10] That we have a right of private judgment and liberty of conscience.

We ought to obey God rather than men. And anyone that seeks to trample beneath their feet the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience is a person acting absolutely contrary to one of the foundation principles of democratic government.

men. My friends, you and I are witnessing in our country today an encroachment upon some of the foundation principles upon which our nation has stood.

I think recently of the closed shop doctrine among the trade union movements.

Some would have all those who fail to subscribe to the trade union movement debat from earning a living.

[28 : 35] You must subscribe to this God if you're going to eat and drink. My friends, that's not democracy. That's not consistent with the principles of scripture.

It's something that absolutely violates a foundation principle of our faith. we would oppose it with all our powers.

Now, you see, it's a very great principle that the apostles here bring forth in their reply to the high priests and the council.

We ought to obey God rather than men. tekn hi and they tell you what is a another spiritual aspect whenones can go in in his perfect wisdom, then surely those things which he commands are binding upon our spirits.

If God is right, then everything opposed to God must be wrong.

[30 : 35] If, therefore, God gives a sovereign command and we acknowledge him as he has right to be acknowledged, we have one course and one course open to us only, that is to obey, to obey.

Peter says here to the Senate, to the High Priest and to the Council, we've got to disobey you because you do not speak, you do not command according to the command of God.

And we in all things obey God as a principle of our faith.

If God is not to be obeyed in all things, where is our standard? What are we working to?

What is the regulating principle of our faith? If God is not to be obeyed in all things? My friends, if we can pick out some of the things in the Scripture that are to be obeyed, and others that needn't be obeyed, if we're going to say, well, there are certain precepts which I'm going to take notice of, and other precepts which I discredit and discard.

[32 : 16] Well, then, where's your standard? Oh, you say, the standard is my judgment. I decide what I'm going to obey, and I decide what I'm going to set aside.

Therefore, you set yourself up above God, because God's Word is subject to your judgment. Therefore, you make yourself a God.

You worship your own judgment. You put it before the Word of God. My friends, there's such a thing as personal idolatry.

And if we live and die as personal idolaters, we shall have its eternal. The one position and place for you and I in recognition of the absolute God, the sovereign over all, and the perfection of His wisdom in all matters is to obey Him with all our hearts.

You may say, well, that's a terrible standard. That's a high standard. My friends, it's the scriptural standard. We ought to obey God rather than men.

[33 : 39] And the first man to guard against is self. Self. When Naaman the Syrian came to the prophet stricken with leprosy, the prophet gave him under God a command.

Now go and dip yourself in Jordan seven times, and you'll be healed of your malady.

Immediately, self-assertion finds its expression. And my friends, when I stand here and tell you the commandments of Jesus Christ, I fear that in many hearts there's self-assertion in reaction to this God-given authority.

Not that I tell you what you ought to do. What I want to do is convey to you the Word of God, the mind of God, as to what God would have you to do.

You see? And that self-assertion is pride.

[35 : 02] It's pride. It's exalting yourself above God in the spirit of it.

and my friends, that is abhorrence to God. I can't water it down, I can't present it in any other guise, lest I should be guilty of deceiving you eternally.

It's pride. And pride is an abhorrence, is abhorrence in the sight of God. the principle of faith is we ought obligatory, obligatory, not legally obligatory in that sense, but lovingly obligatory in the heart of one quickened by the spirit.

Peter wasn't speaking as if he was a man in another prison. he was Christ's free man. He was speaking out of the fullness of his heart.

We ought to obey God rather than men. We love to obey God rather than men. We know that God's way is always right. We know that God has given commands for our profit.

[36 : 27] We know that he's cast up his will and way that we should benefit in realisation of his favour, his love, his mercy, his grace toward us.

We ought to obey God rather than men. And my friends, where you and I have in life been brought to a humble submission to the will of God revealed, we've never lived to regret it.

we've never lived to regret it. In the keeping of his commandments is great reward, great reward.

We've never lived to regret it because it has a blessing in it. It has a reward with it.

God doesn't lead us in his wisdom into unprofitable places. He doesn't command us to do things which are without benefit to us.

[37 : 40] my friends, there is profit in following the revealed will of God in all matters.

We ought to obey God rather than men. You remember, I think it was at the end of the third chapter.

No, it was at the end of the fourth chapter. Barnabas, he came and he sold some land, having land sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

He laid his possession virtually at the apostles' feet. have you ever laid your wisdom at the feet of Christ?

Laid your wisdom at the feet of Christ? Not my will but thine be done. As it were, my friends, submitted to him without reserve, we ought to obey God rather than men.

[39 : 02] Ananias and Sapphira, they kept back part of the price. They were quite ready to lace so much at the feet of Christ, but not the whole.

Surely you and I are not identified with Ananias and Sapphira in this matter, are we? Have we an unreserved willingness brought in our hearts by God the Holy Ghost where we can embrace the will of God as the good way, the right way, the profitable way, the heavenly way.

We can embrace it and say, not my will, but thine be done. Now my friends, that's Barnabas portion, that's Barnabas portion.

But all we would turn, would we not, from even a 99% submission to Christ.

That 1% reserved is pride, is it? We think we know best. We can afford, as it were, to militate in spirit against the revealed will of Christ.

[40 : 26] Oh no, my friends. Now, choose thou the way and still lead on, nor leave me, till I say, Father, thy will be done.

We ought to obey God, rather than men. Well now, men have a great influence upon us by their example.

By their example. We ought to obey God, rather than men. Man's example. Oh, I've heard all sorts of arguments brought forward on the ground of example.

Some people have said to me, well, I don't do so and so, my father never did it, and he was a good man, and therefore there's no need for me.

So that we obey men by their example in preference to an unreserved obedience in the revealed mind and will of God.

[41 : 45] My friends, let's set aside man's example, if so be it violates God's commands, and let us attend to God's commands, commands, because man's example can lead us wrong.

You say, ah, but he was a good man, so was David. Follow David's example and you'll be guilty of adultery. Peter was a good man, but where would Peter lead you?

He'd lead you to deny your Lord with oaths and curses. And so you can go on, can't you, in Scripture? my friends, good people, they should be followed in so far as their conduct confirms the revealed will of God for us.

But where they leave God, we leave them. And that's hard work sometimes, but my friends, we ought to obey God rather than men.

Another thing is the precepts of men. You know, other people's opinions have a great bearing upon our minds. And some people are very ready to voice opinions that are contrary to the principles of Scripture.

[43 : 17] They think it's big. They won't always think it's big. Because the day will come when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God.

And my friends, those that have lived and died in arrogance will be in an awful condition of confusion when God comes to judgment. But some people, oh, they're big enough to be able to contravene the commandments of God and to testify and exhort that this is the thing to be done.

Well, now, do we follow fools to hell? Do we? Surely, my friends, we would listen to the still, small voice of the Most High, that one glorious leader that leads into paradise above wherein he says, follow me, follow me.

Him we would seek to follow, his example we would seek to emulate, his way we would seek to walk in because we know that the end is sure.

We know that the conclusion of the matter is eternally beneficial as well as the benefit that is also derived in time.

[44 : 53] We ought to obey God rather than men. We ought to obey God rather than men. So, my friends, I see the time has gone.

One thing is the Christian's rule of life, the will of God, the will of God. Whether it be self that militates against the will of God, may God give us grace to overcome.

If it be fellow men, may God give us grace to overcome. My friends, God owns, God honors, God blesses those who through his grace are concerned in every given situation to know and to do the will of God concerning them.

Obedience is a great price in our faith. For God has said, them that honor me, I will honor, but them that despise me shall be nightmare sleep.

Amen.