

Whom to Obey: God or Man?

Acts 5:17-33

Introduction

Whom to Obey: God or Man?

Several reasons why Christians don't always obey God:

1. *Fear*: Fear of man; fear of harm (intimidation); fear of loss (opportunity, job, loved one,)
2. *Approval seeking*: the favor of man; wanting popularity, recognition, or position.
3. *Lust*: sensual/sexual desire; cravings: food, drink, comfort, pleasure-seeking.
4. *Greed*: insatiable desire to have more; discontent with what you have.
5. *Covetousness*: a deeper form of greed; intense persistent desire to have what others have.
6. *Envy/Jealousy*: resentful longing aroused by someone else's talents, position, or possessions.
7. *Pride*: covering rather than confessing sin, mistakes, failures, error; lack of transparency: pretense.

The Apostles vs The Sanhedrin: A Study in Contrasts

vv17-18

"they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons."
Luke 21:12

Question: Why haven't the members of the high court brought any specific charges against the apostles?

They saw the popularity of the apostles and felt threatened and so they were "*filled with jealousy.*"

vv19-21a

God promises deliverance. That's is His commitment to the Church.

Deliverance comes with a divine directive: *Obedience.*

"*Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.*" (v20)

Ephesians 2:8-10

When God delivers us, He directs us: *where to go, who to speak to, and what to say*

The disciples are directed where to go: "*stand in the temple.*"

They are directed to "*speak to the people.*"

And they are told what to speak: "*all the words of this life.*" – i.e., the Gospel.

Time militates against obedience. When God speaks, act.

"*And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.*" (v21a)

Their obedience was instantaneous and unquestioning.

Obedience to the will and the Word of God should be swift, without hesitation.

vv21b-23

“Persecutors, clothed with a little brief authority, are strangely blind to the plainest indications of the truth spoken by their victims.” (Maclaren).

i.e., people with an evil, driving agenda believe what they want to regardless of the facts put before them.

Their agenda: *Silence Truth.*

Truth verified by undeniable demonstrations of divine power, nevertheless, threaten the lust for personal power.

vv24-26

Now the powerful religious leaders are being led by an even greater power!

“greatly perplexed”

“wondering what this would come to.”

This response stands in stark contrast to the apostles’ undoubting, unquestioning, unhesitating *action*.

The captain and his officers were stricken with fear of the people. They, with Annas, feared man not God.

vv27-28

“this name”

“your teaching”

“this man’s blood”

vv29-32

“We must obey God rather than men”

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (4:19-20)

“raised Jesus”

“whom you killed by hanging him on a tree” (cf Galatians 3:13; cp Deut. 21:23)

“God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior” Gk *archegos*, Author, Captain, Prince, Pioneer.

“to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins”

“When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.” v33

Ungodly fear (deception) can erupt into murderous rage when confronted by godly fear (Truth).

'You will recognize them by their fruit' (Matthew 7:16).

This is where the contrast is manifest.

Those who are zealous for Truth rely on Scripture and resort to persuasion. Those who are jealous for a lie rely on deception and resort to anger, threats, and intimidation.

They and all Israel had killed, and God had exalted, the Messiah Jesus Christ. And in Him only is forgiveness.

For all this, *they were enraged and wanted to kill them.*

These things being true, how can any of us who know and embrace this same Truth be silent?

The Prophet Samuel's Farewell Address: 1 Samuel 12:14-16

Jeremiah 32:38-41