

Our Superseding God

Grace Bible Chapel

Outline: The Acts of the Apostles – Acts 5:17-26
October 1st, 2017

Context: We continue in a narrative describing the amazing work of God through Christ's apostles following Our Lord's work on the cross. Our context is the preaching and miracles among the people showing the power of God following the act of God in removing Ananias and Sapphira because of their sin. God is demonstrating His requirement of purity and power.

Our text brings once again the jealous opposition of the religious leaders. These are men who are supposed to be doing what the apostles are doing – that is representing God before the people. They are doing just the opposite. The apostles are jailed, but then supernaturally released during the night by an angel who gives them instruction to return to the temple and speak “the whole message of this Life.” God supersedes, but the religious leaders still don't get it.

This entire text is a study of great contrasts. The Sanhedrin are exposed as being antagonistic to God, and although supposedly in control are shown they cannot thwart God's will. Yet stubbornly they press on jealously against those who are doing their job of representing God and His truth before the people. Although powerless before God, and cowardly because of fear, not of God but the people, they continue their foolish opposition. This narrative is instructive in understanding the foolish nature of unsaved man in his opposition to God, His Word, and His people.

Broad outline of Acts (underlined is the immediate context).

- VI. The Power Needed (Acts 2:1-6:7)
 - F. Second Message (Acts 3:1-4:22)
 - G. Sovereign forming (Acts 4:23-6:7)
 - 8. Standard of purity (Acts 4:36-5:11)
 - 9. Supernatural display (Acts 5:12-16)
 - 10. Supreme control (Acts 5:17-26)

Key Words

- Prison (5)
- temple (4)
- people (3)
- found (2)
- reported (2)

Introduction:

- A pure & powerful church will provoke a hostile reaction – we are in a fallen world, Satan is the prince of this world, & he will not stand idle but bring bitter opposition.
- Wherever the truth is proclaimed there will be friction.
- In fact, the greater the allegiance to truth, the more abundant it is proclaimed the greater will be the intensity of the opposition.
- Peter & the apostles have made a huge stir in Jerusalem.
 - People were everywhere talking about this new movement (Vs. 28) “filled Jeru.”
 - The Jewish leaders had in their opposition attempted to stamp out the movement by crucifying the leader, that didn't work – He rose from the grave.
 - Then the resurrected Jesus it seemed did them a favor, He disappeared to heaven, but His followers then boldly proclaimed His resurrection & did the same miracles & the movement is going on with even greater velocity.
 - These Jewish leaders attempts to stifle the message only causes it to multiply in God's miracles & testimony.
 - We could almost feel sorry for these Sanhedrin leaders – they are helpless before the movement of God. All who do not embrace Jesus as Lord are not only blind, but inconceivably foolish – it is a fight against God – cannot win! (John 3:36) context of God's love “He who believes...obey...wrath...on him.”

10. **Supreme control** (Vs. 5:17-26)

- **Sadducee power** (Vs. 5: 17-18)
- **Vs. 17-** “high priest” (Acts 4:6) Annas – the same person Christ stood before.
 - “the high priest rose up” – “rose up” –an is tay mee – lit – stand up – idea in modern figuratively “he put his foot down” – in his pride enough is enough. He will exercise his authority. It addresses his intense exasperation.

- “associates” sect of the Sadducees” – this would be the inner circle of the larger ruling side of the Sanhedrin – the more liberal side.
- What is their mindset? “filled with jealousy” zelos, zeo – the root of this word is “boiling hot” – in some places translated “zeal” - they are in a fury with the evil motivation behind it pure envy – they are overflowing with envious resentment.
 - Sometimes used as good zeal (John 2:17) “zeal for Your house” but as listed by itself (zealous in evil as man is evil) Gal. 5:19-21 – among the characteristics of “the deeds of flesh” of those who “will not inherit the kingdom of God,” or James 3:16 – “every evil thing” – top of the chart!
 - We also find in our context they have fear (Vs. 26), & bewilderment (Vs. 24).

Point: Their motivation is evil before God – these who are suppose to be representing God. Nothing is more hideous then those who claim God to be actually fighting against God. We need to be sure our motive is to glorify God in everything we do?

- **Vs. 18- What do they do?** “put them in public jail.” Like with Christ, there is no legitimate charge – they are exercising their jealous authority to silence them.
 - “Public” – common prison where offenders of all sorts are held.
 - They foolishly think that God’s message can be silenced.

Point: These kinds of prisons were terrible places of filth & misery. Their motus of operation is to flex their power, show their authority & intimidate, cause fear.

- **Supplanting power** (Vs. 5:19-21a)
- **Vs. 19-20** “but” – God had a different plan. Just as He supplanted their intentions with Christ & thwarted their intentions by raising Him from the dead – so He again shows Himself all powerful & supplants their wicked activity.
 - These leaders knew Christ was raised from the dead, they knew the healing thru the apostles, yet they are brazen in their sin against God – foolishly, arrogantly having no fear of God.
 - “An angel...opened...go” – who is really in charge? Who is in charge today?
 - What were they to do? “speak to the people...the whole message” – nothing is to get in the way of the message – God would see to it! & nothing is to get in the way of the message today! Do you see its importance!
 - We need to recognize the effort to silence God’s Word is the most significant effort being put forth in this satanic fallen world.

Point: the message can be silenced in many ways – any deviation from the Word of God and the true Gospel message is a type of silencing. We must be careful & wise!

- Where? “in the Temple” – the most conspicuous place – the very place of their arrest. This brings to mind all manner of thinking on our issues of boldness – shame on us when we are ashamed (Rom 1:16). Mat. 10:31-33.
- Presenting Christ is presenting God’s Word.
- By using the word “whole” we receive the understanding that partial, or almost, or incomplete, or different messages will not do – as ambassadors for Christ it must be the “whole message.”
- There can be no tinkering with, watering, or changing of the message!

Point: It is the message (God’s message), & only the message of the Bible God uses to save – it is essential. Nothing must stop, pollute, twist, usurp, or void it.

- “the message of this Life” – why does the angel use this phrase?
- The word “life” is used to express the whole of what God does in salvation (John 1:4) “In Him was life and the life was the Light of men.”
 - You will notice the translators capitalized “Life” because it is a reference not only to what it is, but who it is – that is the Spirit of God.

Point: Do you know how important life is? We cannot even define life – being alive. Here it is not merely being alive, but having God’s life – eternal life – glorious life – nothing compares with the value then of “the message of Life” it is the message and the only message that brings this life of God, eternal life.

- Think how crazy this fallen world is – nothing is more valuable than this message, & yet the world, the forces of evil, unregenerate men are giving all their energy to stop, prevent, & destroy this message!
- **Vs. 21a-** the apostles did exactly as commanded – no hesitation, even though jailed before (could have said – “I am not doing that again – we tried” – this by any stretch is amazing. It is the faith to serve God shown at its peak, & is a reminder to us of how nothing today must stop the message.
 - They are showing us not the fear of men, but of God.
- **Stupefied authorities** (Vs. 5:21b-24)
- **Vs. 21b-** “Now when” – see this story unfolding. The big wigs of Israel’s ruling Sanhedrin are smugly preparing for the morning - to exercise their authority – an authority given to them by God, but in which they are working against God.
 - “called the council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel” – the emphasis here is on the full council - the entire body (Sadducees & Pharisees – 70 leaders of Israel) are present. These are the same men who had dared seek the crucifixion of Christ (Mat. 26:59; 66-68).
 - “sent orders...to be brought” – this just drips with pride, self-confidence – who do these nothing fishermen think they are to defy us!
- **Vs. 22-** Now beginning here is Christian humor – it should make us laugh.
 - “Did not find them in the prison...reported back” – here is this whole group of self-righteous pious leaders and their plan is completely nullified, shamed by those they would shame, & by unexplainable means that only God could do.
- **Vs. 23-** “saying” – here are these officers, just trying to please –doing their job – notice their words: “we found...no one inside.”
 - This is a physical impossibility! But, may I remind you this is not the first of unexplainable events witnessed by these around the name of Jesus.
 - In John 9 – we had the healing of the man born blind – some of these same were actively involved – the man healed shamed them because of their activity against the true witness – they threw him out.
 - In John 11 – the resurrection of Lazarus – (John 11:47) same council knew the resurrection was real, but because they believed it threatened them – they instead plotted against Christ to kill Him.
 - Mat. 28:11-15 – the made up story after our Lord’s resurrection.
 - Acts 3 we have the healing of the man born lame – (Acts 4:5-7; 16).

Point: There is a sense in which these blind leaders should have expected the unexplainable – had they not been thwarted in ways so obvious so many times – oh, so we see here the depth of man’s rebellion, man’s blindness, rejection of God.

- **Vs. 24-** to me this is humor again – these are “stupefied authorities” – they are “perplexed.” And they should be – the God of glory has defied the laws of physics to show them their error – but they don’t get it! They don’t change!

Point: They are shown to be supercilious (next outline heading) – that is arrogant, disdainful, and contemptuous against God to the degree that God has chosen to defy physical laws to show them the error of the ways – stick their nose in it.

- Their misplaced concern is always how it will affect them in the immediate.
- **Supercilious authorities** (Vs. 5:25-26)

- **Vs. 25-** More humor – “came and reported” – can you begin to imagine this scene: Here again are all these self-righteous so-called august leaders who put these fishermen in jail (attempting to intimate) & they escaped supernaturally & are now back doing exactly what they did to be arrested!
 - Notice this wording “the men you put in prison” – in other words your effort to stop them is totally fruitless – totally thwarted – they are shamed & don’t see it.
 - And it is not like the apostles are hiding out, they are speaking out in the most visible place in Israel – doing exactly as they had been before being arrested.

Point: I called them supercilious – contemptuous against God – why? Well there is another similar account of jailing & supernatural release – look forward (Acts 16:25-30) – that should be the appropriate reaction of these leaders, but it wasn’t.

- We will see beginning in Vs. 27 – there has been no softening of the attitude of these terrible leaders – their hearts are so hard toward the truth, the reality amazingly being played out before them – they are blind leaders!
 - The patience of God toward rejecting obstinate men is amazing – it is no wonder that God, a few years later Israel would along with these leaders, completely destroy Jerusalem – not one stone left upon another!
- **Vs. 26-** “bring them back...might be stoned).” This whole scene is again humorous & incredible. Now the soldiers are afraid of the people – the people get it – they see God at work. It is almost like they are begging them to come back.

Closing:

- What does this account do for you?
 - Have you come to the full realization of the truth of God in Jesus Christ, and that knowing Him is the most important matter with any person.
 - Are you seeing the foolishness of setting yourself against God, and against His will? That is what we are doing when we fail to follow Him.
 - Is serving Him daily your ambition – serving Him by faith!
 - I haven’t seen God open any jails, but I know He can! What I have seen is peoples lives changed from living in the pit, living for self, living in the darkness and then supernaturally coming to the light!
 - Closing verse – John 3:36 - the union of faith & obedience or practice.