



# SERMON NOTES

US N°. 100

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Title: Fear God & Keep His Commandments

#8 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

1. Conflict as a result of the Word and Power of God
  - a. Judgment within the church
  - b. Signs & wonders in the streets.
  - c. Indignation by the Sadducees; the High Priest was indignant (how dare they continue to preach) and jealous (all the world is going after them)
  - d. Arrested
2. Angelic intervention
  - a. God's mercy
  - b. Affirmation of the Life of Christ; v.20 "*words of this life*" the resurrection
  - c. Cause of wonder
3. The Trial
  - a. The accusations:
    - i. Not obeying the command to no longer preach in the name of Jesus;
    - ii. Filling Jerusalem with their teaching;
    - iii. Fixing the blood guilt on them for crucifying Jesus. This is their own conscience was speaking; v.28 "*this man's blood upon us*"; Mt.27:25, "*And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'*"
      1. Wherever repentance is wrought, remission is granted without fail. None are freed from the guilt and punishment of sin, except those who are freed from the power and dominion of sin; they are turned from it, and turned against it. Christ gives repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work sorrow for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life.
  - b. The defense, this is the beginning of a larger theme.
    - i. We are His witnesses.
    - ii. The apologia (this is who we are, we're not a danger to your society)
    - iii. The martyrdom (if you tell us to do things that Jesus tells us not to do, we're going to stick with Jesus.)
  - c. The unexpected friend in Gamaliel, mentor of Paul and a Pharisee who believed in the resurrection; God provides friends in surprising places. Acts 5:34-39, "*Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. And he said to them: 'Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He*

*was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”*

4. The punishment and the reward

- a. The usual amount of “lashes” which were inflicted on offenders was 39, 2 Cor. 11:24. “Beating,” or “whipping,” was a common mode of punishing minor offences among the Jews. It was expressly foretold by the Savior that the apostles would be subjected to this, Mt. 10:17. The reason why they did not adopt the advice of Gamaliel altogether doubtless was, that if they did, they feared that their “authority” would be despised by the people. They had commanded them not to preach; they had threatened them Acts 4:18; Acts 5:28; they had imprisoned them Acts 5:18; and now, if they suffered them to go without even the “appearance” of punishment, their authority, they feared, would be despised by the nation, and it would be supposed that the apostles had triumphed over the Sanhedrin. It is probable, also, that they were so indignant, that they could not suffer them to go without the gratification of subjecting them to the public odium of a “whipping.”
  - i. MLK’s “willingness to be imprisoned” as the highest respect for law.
- b. Rejoiced that they had been considered worthy of suffering shame.

5. Civil Disobedience

- a. MLK, there’s a “moral obligation to disobey unjust laws... because non cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. That when one breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust he must do it openly, he must do it cheerfully, he must do it lovingly, he must do it civilly, not uncivilly, and he must do it with a willingness to accept the penalty. Any man who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and willingly accepts the penalty by staying in jail in order to raise the conscience of the community on the injustice of the law is at that moment expressing the very highest respect for law.”
- b. Examples of justly disobeying civil authorities
  - i. From the Bible...
    - 1. Jochabed and the Hebrew midwives (cf. Ex. 1:15-17)
    - 2. The soldiers of Israel refuse to kill Jonathan (cf. 1 Sam. 14:24-30, 43-45)
    - 3. Queen Vashti refuses to show her beauty (cf. Esth. 1:10-12)
    - 4. Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego refuse to bow (cf. Dan. 3:1-7)
    - 5. Daniel refuses to stop praying (cf. Dan. 6:6-11)
    - 6. Peter & John refuse to stop preaching (cf. Acts 4:17-21, 5:17-18)
  - ii. From extra-biblical history...
    - 1. Socrates - freedom of thought and speech.
    - 2. Martin Luther – freedom of religion.
    - 3. John Bunyan – freedom of religion.

4. William Tyndale – freedom of scriptures to the common man.
  5. American Revolution – the Boston Tea Party tax protest.
  6. The Abolitionists with the “*Underground Railroad*” – freedom of every man and racial rights.
- c. Civil authorities biblical mandate
- i. Webster’s 1828 Dictionary definition of POL’ITICS, “*n. The science of government; that part of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a nation or state, for the preservation of its safety, peace and prosperity; comprehending the defense of its existence and rights against foreign control or conquest, the augmentation of its strength and resources, and the protection of its citizens in their rights, with the preservation and improvement of their morals. Politics, as a science or an art, is a subject of vast extent and importance.*”
  - ii. Rom. 13:1-7, “*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*”
    1. Christians are subject to the civil authority to pay taxes, respect and honor;
    2. The purpose of the authority is to punish evil and condone good, thus...
    3. The authority must be able to know the basis for discerning between good & evil
  - iii. 1 Peter 2:17, “*Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*”
- d. What happens when the State steps outside its divine bounds?
- i. Injustices
    1. Jochabed and other mid-wives were blessed;
    2. Ahab stealing Naboth’s vineyard.
  - ii. Deified
    1. King Saul’s offering of the sacrifice and losing the kingdom;
    2. King Uzziah offering incense in the Temple and struck with leprosy;
    3. Nebuchadnezzar gold statute and prohibition against praying to other gods.
- e. Humanism and the State with the West.
- i. The problem of the origin of evil.
    1. Carl Rogers; influential American psychologist and among the founders of the humanistic approach to psychology. “*For myself, though I am very well aware of the incredible*

*amount of destructive, cruel, malevolent behavior in today's world – from the threats of war to the senseless violence in the streets - I do not find that evil is inherent in human nature... Experience leads me to believe that it is cultural influences which are the major factor in our evil behaviors."*

2. Abraham Maslow; an American psychologist who was best known for creating Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory of psychological health predicated on fulfilling innate human needs in priority, culminating in self-actualization. *"As far as I know we just don't have any intrinsic instincts for evil... If you think in terms of basic needs; instincts, at least at the outset, are all 'good, 'careful study of instincts will provide the values we need by which better societies can evolve... Since this inner nature is good or neutral rather than bad, it is best to bring it out and to encourage it rather than to suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy... Sick people are made by a sick culture; healthy people are made possible by a healthy culture."*
- ii. Solving the problem of evil. Hegel wrote, *"The Universal is to be found in the State... the State is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth... We must therefore worship the State as the manifestation of the Divine on earth, and consider that, if it is difficult to comprehend Nature, it is harder to grasp the Essence of the State... the State is the march of God through the world..."*
- f. God shall go before us. *"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities."* [Voltaire]
  - i. Man is a sinner; evil lies in disobedience from God's command.
  - ii. The continuing lie of Satan *"you shall be like God"* in the philosophies of self-actualization.
    1. Rom. 8:13, *"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*
    2. Col. 3:5-10, *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"*
  - iii. Eccl. 12:13, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all."*
- g. Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 1946 listed five attributes of Rome before its fall, *"a mounting love of show and luxury, an obsession with sex, freakishness in the arts masquerading as originality, enthusiasms pretending to be creativity, and an increased desire to live off the state."*

- h. NT political theology exists. We've been taught that democracy is the counter-balance against anarchy or tyranny. Rather, it's the lordship of JC that does it. We need to re-think what it means to be disciples of Jesus and western democrats at the same time.