

Acts 5:17-42 “Obey God Rather Than Men”

Intro:

Three weeks ago, on April 7, 2024, during our study on Acts 4:13-22, we were introduced to the concept of Protestant Resistance Theology as Peter and John were arrested and rebelled against the authority of the Sanhedrin. They preached Jesus in spite of being told not to. Today’s text records a very similar and somewhat parallel subsequent event. This occasion is very similar to the last time Peter and John were put into custody by the Sanhedrin in chapter 4. What the apostles say in 5:29 is basically the same thing they said before in 4:19. The apostles didn’t back up, they didn’t back down. They stand firm. I will not repeat all of what was said three weeks ago about PRT but will refer you to the recording on YouTube. However, in this extended introduction, there will be an extension of the development of PRT and we will give additional insight as it relates to our current condition, here in the United States.

We will get to the text itself and answer some questions about it. Whenever we study a passage of Scripture, it is important to understand how Christians have used that passage throughout history. Today’s passage has a very rich history in Christian doctrine.

Concerning the text itself, verse 29 is the key verse. This is true whether or not one agrees with PRT. Within the last four years, more has been written on PRT than most of the time between WWII (1945) and 2020. Verse 29 is probably the most quoted or referenced verse in these writings. To say that much ink has been spilled over this single statement is itself an understatement.

However, this is not the first time such attention has been garnered on this verse. 248 years ago, the greatest political revolution in human history was based on this verse. What do we do when the government tells us to do something that God prohibits? What do we do when those in authority command what God forbids or forbid what God commands? This was the very question that the American forefathers wrestled with and subsequently determined that “disobedience to tyrants is obedience to God.”

In attempting to answer this question, there has been a renewed interest in the founding of our country and it’s godly heritage. The motivation and assumptions of our nation’s forefathers has been the subject of much investigation. For most of our history, it was assumed by almost everyone, whether Christian or pagan, that the founding of the United States was an exercise in the establishment of a Christian nation. It was only about 40 years ago that the idea even began to be challenged. As a result, Christians have clapped back, especially in recent days with papers, book, sermons, and lectures on the issue and the term being debated ends up being “Christian Nationalism.”

Unfortunately, the attack on America's godly heritage has not only come from the political left, but even within evangelicalism, the term Christian Nationalism has garnered a lot of very negative press these days. The term has been greatly misunderstood by its critics. They generally live in an echo chamber of soft manhood and practice the exercise of missing the point.

What we mean when we say that we believe America to be a Christian nation is that we believe that America's Declaration of Independence and subsequent constitution, were not only derived from a Christian worldview but it was universally assumed that America was a Christian nation. Bruce Gore's 33 lectures entitled "Presbyterians and the American Revolution" (available on YouTube) are extremely helpful in this regard. We do not mean that the state saves. None of us believes that so the crybaby so called Christians need to quit saying that. It is academically dishonest to engage in straw man arguments.

Perhaps the reason that they all whine and complain so much is that they are afraid that the strong male leadership that God has commanded will disqualify them from service. Many of these guys have hardly hit a lick. They have very little familiarity with male culture or manly men in general. Many are conformist book nerds that have never been in a fight, never shot a gun, and cleaned an animal, never done substantial labor, never been talked to in an outside voice. They are soft handed and while claiming to be sober minded. However, the truth is that they would have us all in the gulag before we ever fight back. They, like the French, wouldn't fight if someone slapped their mom. They have no metal, no strength, no gusto. Only submissive arguments. They enjoy the protection in a world that strong Christian men have created but oppose the means by which it was fashioned.

Unfortunately, there are men in the church who are some of the worst offenders in this regard. They constantly moan about the tone in which things are said. They insult us by calling us "plain spoken" trying to establish themselves as an elite scholastic class. They say that Christ was never harsh or loud. They only want the gentle and lowly Jesus. They want the hippie, lamb petter Jesus. They don't want the Lord of glory or the one who confronted and condemned the Pharisees in Matthew 23. They don't want the one in Revelation who is coming with a sword. They only want the Jesus who wept. As Voddie Baucham points out, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the the tone they don't like is the *male* tone.

During 2020, our own government locked us down in our homes, mandated masks, social distancing, and so-called vaccines. They shut down churches and have classified views on Biblical sexuality as hate speech. They subverted our first amendment rights and published propaganda on social media while banning dissenters. THEY are the ones who violated the constitution. They are guilty of treason against our nation. They continue to promote the

global homo trashworld agenda while seeking to silence anyone who disagrees. They have weaponized the unelected alphabet agencies to investigate and persecute those who do not bow the knee to their authoritarian wokism agenda. Anyone who does not agree with them is considered a racist oppressor guilty of hate speech. They claim that everyone should be tolerant while they themselves are intolerant of anyone who does not whole heartedly accept their ideas.

This is about power, authority and rule. We say that those things belong to God. Jesus is Lord. Christ is King. Now and forevermore. We are commanded to make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to obey all that He has commanded. This is not some sort of suggestion. It is our mission. It is our reason for existence. We live to promote His agenda, His word, His Kingdom.

The west was built by men who understood the great commission and embraced not only the magisterial reformers but the result was to create a place for men to be free. This is our tradition. This is our heritage. This is our home. Jesus is our Lord. We want everyone to know and follow Him. Everyone. But that starts with our households, communities, states and country.

I. Apostles Jailed and Freed

II. Gamaliel's Counsel

Questions:

1. What was the motive of the Sanhedrin (v17)? Why is this important to understand? Jealousy. They wanted the popularity and the power that came with it. We need to understand this because what was true then is true today. It is always about influence and control.
2. What was the command (given by the angel) to the apostles in v20? What did they do (v21)? They were told to "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." Notice they were told to give the whole message. This is part of the problem today. We have weak preachers picking and choosing what they want to talk about. They tickle the ears of the hearers and as Jeremiah said, heal the wounds of the people superficially. They say peace! Peace! When there is no peace.
Jesus gives life. He is life. There is no life apart from Him. He is the way, the truth and the life. That life makes men bold. That life, even though the body may be killed by tyrants and despots, that life, will live. Even though he die, he shall live, Jesus says.
They preached the whole counsel of God with boldness and unswerving clarity.
3. How did the Sanhedrin describe the apostles actions in v28?

They had filled Jerusalem with the teaching. Amen! Amen! Let it be said of our town as well that Midland is filled with the teaching of the life changing power of King Jesus.

4. Where did the apostle's allegiance lie (v29)? What was their attitude towards the Sanhedrin (v30)? We've already addressed this, so I won't belabor it anymore.

5. According to v31, where does repentance come from?
God grants repentance. It is a gift from God. See Ephesians 2:8-9.

6. According to v32, who does God give the Holy Spirit to?
Those who obey Him. The fruit of the tree of life is obedience. It is a life that is generally consistent with the clear commands of Scripture. The Spirit's work is fueled by obedience. Sometimes people wonder why their Christian life is so anemic and powerless. It may be that they need to repent of sin so that the Spirit

7. What was the intent of the Sanhedrin (v33)?
To silence the apostles and regain their influence.

8. Was Gamaliel right in his evaluation in v39?
Generally, yes.

9. How did the apostles respond to this encounter in v41 & 42?
"They went away rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for the Name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house they did not cease teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer. Not sad or sullen. Happy to do whatever needed to be done.

Every day...

Everywhere "temple and house to house" Publicly and privately, big groups and small groups
All the time "did not cease" they were not deterred or thwarted.

10. How does Protestant Resistance Theology relate to our current situation?
We say the same thing that our forefathers said. We should resist ungodly commands of the state. We should obey God rather than tyrants. We should proclaim the Lord Jesus

11. In regard to this issue in particular, who should we not be listening to? Who to avoid: Mark Noll, Tim Keller, Kevin DeYoung, Rod Dreher, Russell Moore, Ligon Duncan, John Piper, and Christianity Today. That doesn't mean that everything these guys have ever written is bad. I still

think that Keller's Reason for God is one of the most helpful and accessible books on basic apologetics. Kevin DeYoung's Just do Something is by and away the best book I know of for people making everyday life decisions. I deeply love and appreciate John Piper and have been greatly edified by his Desiring God. But, their understanding of politics and the historical engagement of the church with the state is to a greater or lesser degree anabaptist. Keller and DeYoung explicitly deny their presbyterian heritage in their approaches to this subject. The Presbyterians were undeniably the ones decrying tyranny and leading the charge in the rebellion against England in the revolution. We are not passivist Anabaptists. We are Biblical Christians, equipped with the word of God, convinced of the Reformed faith and believe that the entire earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the seas.

12. Who should we read? Who to listen to ON THIS ISSUE: Glenn Sunshine, Andrew Isker, CR Wiley, Doug Wilson, Stephen Wolfe, the Davenant Institute; Midland's own, Joe Rigney

Again, be discerning. I absolutely do not agree with Doug's historical association with Federal Vision. But, Canon Press, the publishing house established by those guys is putting out some really good stuff.

Application:

Glenn Sunshines' "Slaying Leviathan" outlines the history and application of PRT in a general sense. Isker's book "Bonafice Option" is a more detailed and hands on approach to dealing with the current culture. It seeks to offer a counter offensive to the current onslaught of secular humanism in our society. I highly recommend both and welcome your engagement with those works.

I'll close with a quote from the end of Isker's book...

The Personal Call

What does it look like for you personally to confront these great evils and to chop down the great oaken shrines of bugworld? The way forward will look different for each person, but there a few things I suggest:

You must honestly and accurately recognize where we currently are politically, culturally, and economically.

You live in a dying apostate empire, an empire that is a wounded dying wild beast. It will not die quietly and will tear apart anything that threatens it. The regime that rules over you is filled with incompetent midwits—but this does not mean they are not dangerous. If anything, it means they are extremely dangerous. They have massive power that they can wield against you, but you must not fear. Instead, you must recognize the strength of your enemy that you know exactly what you must overcome.

The greatest practical need of the present is to restore an ethos of Christendom from a grassroots way. We cannot expect the orange billionaire to appear and to descend on his escalator to restore Christian civilization. His tumultuous term as president showed just how entrenched the regime is and how even the most modest attempt at reform, setting the clock back to merely a mid-90s era liberalism, was resisted with ferocious religious zeal. The right president is not going to fix he right Supreme Court justices is gs. Electing the right Congressmen... p155.

Prayer:

Lord God of Truth, give us the gift of faith and repentance. Make us men of Issachar, who know the times and walk in your ways. Let us be circumspect in our dealings as Jesus said to be innocent as doves and sly as snakes. Glorify yourself here in our families, in this church and in this city, In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.

Christian Nationalism: "...(A) Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ who seeks to take dominion in all areas of life by obeying His Commandment in the Great Commission to disciple all the nations. A Christian loves his country -his place in the world- and because he loves his neighbor he seeks to take dominion and disciple it for the glory of God." -Christian Nationalism pg xxiii

We must recognize that Christian Nationalism in its most pure form is indeed idolatrous. It looks to political power as the thing that will truly save us. It identifies a particular set of social policies as the Christian view—all others are not just mistaken, but evil heresies. It assumes that America now has replaced Israel as the chosen people and the world's "Redeemer-Nation." It is true that these ideas are not usually stated out loud, but they dominate the movement as often unspoken assumptions, as unquestionable "givens." And they must be rejected as unbiblical and idolatrous...Christian Nationalism matters because it supports authoritarian rule and because it can justify violence by using the trappings and rhetoric of religion and of the sacred. "It co-opts Christian language and iconography in order to cloak particular political...ends in moral and religious symbolism" (153). This means it undermines commitments to patience, respect, and civility toward opponents, to freedom of speech, debate—all things necessary for a free, democratic society." — Tim Keller "A Book Review on the Topic of Christian Nationalism [Taking America Back for God by Perry and Whitehead]," Gospel in Life, 24; Quarter 1, 2021. The page reference in the quotation is from Perry and Whiteheads book.

"Christian Nationalism, to the degree it is influential, means the death of Christian witness. The ethos of Christian Nationalism is to not in any way try to persuade, win, or evangelize their opponents. Their attitude toward unbelievers is: "They are evil—what does their opinion matter? Sure they hate you—just hate them right back. Own the libs." The motivation of witness—a desire to see all people come to know Christ—has been completely eradicated in Christian Nationalism, which proves that it is not ultimately a religious movement at all, just one more political movement using the power of religious language." — Tim Keller³⁹