

"Obeying God"
Pastor Wally Contreras
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"But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (Acts 5:17-42)

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Pastor Wally said that there were probably 50 or more sermons wrapped up in the text of Acts 5:17-42. Did any other message(s) speak to me from this passage other than my need to obey God and why?

So, an angel of the Lord showed up and provided the Apostles with two divine actions: protection and commission. The angel delivered them from the public prison and gave them the commission to go, stand in the temple and preach the Gospel message of Jesus. The disciples received the “Great Commission” in Matthew 28:18-20 and a summation of His commission was delivered to them at His ascension in Acts 1:8. And in the midst of the Apostles’ persecution in Acts 5, I see that the Church’s marching orders did not change. What does this tell me about our church’s marching orders in the 21st century? Explain.

In what way(s), if any, do I see the world today demanding that the Church “not [] speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18)?

Peter told the Sadducees that “[w]e must obey God rather than men” (emphasis added). It was said as an imperative they had no choice but to obey God. Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines it to mean “[t]o be obliged; to be necessitated. It expresses both physical and moral necessity.” When it comes to obeying His commandments...being obedient to His commands and His will, are they truly an imperative in my life or have I allowed them to become more like good suggestions for me to live by?

Check on learning...how much does committing a sin (violating one of His commands) truly disturb me?

Pastor Wally said that I am faced with the same decision that the Apostles faced...either to obey or disobey God’s command to go, stand and speak the Gospel message. Well, how am I doing with that? Explain.

In what way(s), if any, have I imposed caveats on God’s command for me to go, stand and speak the Gospel message (e.g., I’ll support sending someone else to do the speaking for me)?

Stephen Covey who wrote among others, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change," once said that "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing". I've heard that said of the church as well, the main thing being Jesus Christ and His gospel. How easy is it for me to get distracted in doing other "good" things for the Kingdom and to lose sight of the "main thing"? Explain.

Taken from R.C. Sproul's contribution in "The Mission of God Study Bible", R.C. Sproul said "The seeking of the kingdom of God is the central business of the church. Our Lord commanded that we should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all other things will be added unto us. So there is no higher priority for the church than the making manifest and bearing witness to the Kingdom of our Savior. This is an eternal destiny with eternal consequences and is of eternal importance. Everything that the church does today and tomorrow matters and counts forever." What do I believe is the highest priority of our church and why?

Do I really believe (not just an agreement with the idea) that "everything that the church does today and tomorrow matters and counts forever"? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Based on my own personal involvement, cite a few examples to support my belief that what our church does has "eternal consequences and is of eternal importance".

Does my prayer life and personal (daily?) study of the Scriptures support my belief that what our church does has "eternal consequences and is of eternal importance"? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Does my commitment to pray for my "Who's Your One" support my belief that the Church's main thing is telling others the Gospel of Jesus and the eternal consequences of their decision or has praying for him/her fallen off my radar...is the soul of my "Who's Your One" still a priority in my daily prayer life? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that obedience is rooted in love. What will it take for me to live life in the 21st century being obedient to God and keeping His main thing the main thing in my life?