



We Must Obey God Rather than Human Beings
Acts 5:12-42
August 18, 2019

Our society has rules, both written and unwritten, about when and how it is okay to talk about Christ. Sometimes we go along with these rules. Other times we reshape the gospel in ways that we hope will make it more acceptable to them. While doing these things may decrease the offense somewhat, they may also offend God! The apostles' encounter with the Jewish religious leaders in Acts 5 shows us how to navigate a course between what people want and what God has told us to do.

The short, frank way to state the proper course is that “we must obey God rather than human beings” (v. 29). It's not really a compromise. We should just do what God told us to do. This principle of pleasing God led the apostles to an ...

... Unfiltered communication of the message. The message they spoke, in sum, was that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ, King, v. 42). More fully, they taught that people killed him on a cross but God raised him from the dead and exalted him to his own right hand as Leader and Savior. All need to repent and obey him, and those who do, will be saved, forgiven and receive the Holy Spirit (vv. 30-32). Other similar aspects of the message are mentioned on other occasions (2:22-24, 36-41; 3:13-26; 4:8-12).

Notice that they boldly (4:29, 31; 9:28; 13:46; 18:26) told the frank truths that people reject God (5:30; cf. 3:13, 15; 4:11; 10:39;

13:46), that Jesus is the rightful authority for their lives (5:31, 42; cf. 2:36; 3:22-23), and that all need to repent (v. 31; cf. 2:38; 3:19, 26; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). The gospel will offend some people (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Galatians 5:11), but they spoke the unfiltered message anyway. It was the gospel itself that was offensive, however, not their attitudes or manner.

... Unwavering commitment to speaking the message. Jesus himself commissioned the apostles to tell the good news (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; cf. 4:29-31). The divine commands to speak superseded people's demands for them not to (4:18; 5:20, 40; 5:29). Indeed, they had been changed so profoundly by what they had seen and heard in Jesus that they couldn't help but speak (4:18-20). They made the most of every opportunity to tell others about Jesus (2:12ff.; 3:9ff.; 4:7ff.; Colossians 4:5 in context of vv. 2-6). They even spoke the message while being called on the carpet for speaking the message (5:28ff.)! Their commitment to boldly speaking the unfiltered message was unwavering regardless of whether it found a favorable (2:37; 8:6; 13:48), neutral (17:32) or hostile reception (5:33; 7:54). No other message can save people from sin and death.

... Unshakable confidence that God was at work. It was God who gave the apostles the opportunity to speak (5:17-20, 27-32), and his Spirit bore witness to the message (5:32). God works to spread his message in many other ways, too (4:8, 23-31; 8:26; 11:20-21; 13:1-4; 14:3, 27; 16:6-10, 14; 18:9-10; John 16:7-11; Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 3:1-6; 4:6; 1 Peter 1:12), although we may not fully understand just how he does so (Mark 4:26-29; Ecclesiastes 11:5). The apostles' confidence in God's working is the reason why they had an unwavering commitment to an unfiltered communication of the message. Conversely, their commitment and communication shows their trust in God's working.

What are the implications of this for NorthWest?

