

The King's Highway

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In the fifth chapter of the Book of Acts there is a very interesting portion of the account of the apostolic ministry. Certain of the disciples had been brought before a religious council. A group of people who had more ritualism than revelation, and more egotism than experience, laid their hands upon the servants of God, and put them in the common prison, and treated them as if they were the offscourings of creation, and forbade them to speak or teach in the name of Jesus Christ. But when they had fastened them in the prison, the Lord God had the key to it, and He commissioned one of His angels to go down and open the gates. They swung back on their ponderous hinges, and the disciples walked out. When the council met and found out, to their confusion and everlasting chagrin, that God had delivered His servants, they called them before the council. The Scripture reading is Peter's answer to the council.

Notice Peter's opening words: "We ought to obey God rather than men." There are some statements of Scripture, and this is one of them, that for me hold such amazing implications that I revel just in what they imply, and in the possibilities that confront us as we view their great truth. When I read that statement, "We ought to obey God," I put a period there. What do you think would happen tonight if every man and woman here would obey God? We wouldn't need to have any more preaching services. We would be in a prayer meeting from now on. We wouldn't need to take any more offerings, but would have to tell you to quit giving, for we had enough. When you get back home, your grocer would be glad that you came to camp meeting and the pastor of your church would probably be very happy that you came here.

I am opening this passage by calling your attention to three sections of truth. Peter said that God had exalted Jesus Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour. The Greek word translated "Prince" is Sovereign, Leader, Governor; so my first proposition is that we are to obey the sovereignty of God—that is clearly revealed. It is revealed in His own redeeming Son. The second fact is that we should obey the Saviour, for God has exalted Him not only to be Prince or Sovereign, but to be Saviour, and to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel and to all who will believe in Him. Peter then announced that God had given the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him. Therefore we are to obey also the Spirit of God. We have the center of Peter's testimony in these three facts. Their obedience to the sovereignty of God, their obedience to the

Obedience to God

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TEXT

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him."—Acts 5:29-32.

Saviour who is God, and their obedience to the Spirit of God. Such obedience would terrify the devil, and dismay the wicked, and delight Heaven, and get you inside the gates of pearl. I can't answer for you, but I can answer for myself. I long ago settled it that I shall obey God.

Let us look a little at the pattern that Peter laid out. It isn't something new, it has been the pattern from the beginning; but I think you will recognize that there has always been a conflict between our allegiance to God and the claims on our allegiance by men. That conflict has existed since the day that Mother Eve sobbed out her misery, and got her husband to join her in the tragedy of the fall. And because Adam obeyed the voice of a person, a human being, we have the tragedy of sin, and the horror of Hell. All the way through the Scriptures, every prophet, every prophetess, every person who labored to be obedient to God was bedeviled, and beset with some group of human beings who wanted him to obey them. That has always been the case.

I give this out of my own experience. My mother, whom God in His mercy helped me to get saved and get to Heaven, did everything she could, in her ignorance, to keep me from being obedient to God and my call to the ministry. Every member of my immediate family, though they were members of the church, did everything they could to keep me from being obedient to God in regard to holiness, until I reached the place where I said to my mother, "I don't know what you are going to do about these things, nor what the boys will do (my father was dead), nor what my sister will do, but I am going to obey God. If I have to stand on a stump in

a vacant field and deliver my testimony to the bees and the bugs, I am going to obey Him." I got that settled. I have never since had to take that under advisement. It has never been up again for debate. I have never had to consult my wife about it, nor take it upstairs to pray about. When a wealthy man offered me \$25,000 a year to go with him into business, and quit the ministry, I didn't have to pray over that. I found it better to obey God than to look toward a salary of that size. That man died a bankrupt, but I still have the blessing.

I may be preaching to some tonight who would be everything God wants you to be, if you could just cut loose from the folks. Whether you would be willing to admit it or not, there is somebody somewhere whose face shapes your destiny, who dominates you, so that you do not dare to cut loose from everything and everybody, to launch out, and go alone with God, because you dread what that one will say. I may be preaching to someone who would get sanctified if you were not afraid of what your pastor would say when you get back home. I may be preaching to some young people who would get the blessing, and answer the call of God, if you were not afraid of what some of the crowd that you run with, or perhaps your ungodly people, might say about you.

If I may use a high school hyperbole I can tell you this—you can get to the place where what people think of you doesn't amount to any more than a gnat on the back of a rhinoceros in South Africa would affect the price of hot dogs in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can have fortitude and courage to stand on your own rights, and have a backbone that is something else than a knotted cord to hang your head on; and you can tell God Almighty and all the world, "I am going to be obedient to God. No matter what may come and what may go, I believe He will help me carry on that obedience." You need not be afraid of starvation under those circumstances. The Lord would put the angels on half rations to feed you, and stand the devil on his head and shake the money out of his pockets to pay your bills, if you will obey God.

The thing that terrifies and troubles me is this: Suppose you do obey men, suppose you do cater to their opinions, and compromise because of their views. Then when at last you stand in the white light of the judgment of an impartial God, do you expect that crowd to sponsor your case in that day? Do you expect them to come to your rescue, and stand up in the court of the eternal God and say to

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