

## "If It Be of God, You Cannot Overthrow It"

Acts 5:17-42, Trinity Sunday V

July 8, 2007

Beloved of the Lord.....Sometimes it is not easy accepting God's will. Often God allows things to happen in our life that we do not like, or He permits hardship to befall us and we sinfully resent Him for it. Ever and always in the heart of man there is a constant questioning of God's ways. Why Lord, why have you done this, or allowed this to happen? Do you not love me? Do you not care for me? Why have you allowed me to suffer. Sometimes in life we also see or know people who are very angry with the Lord. They carry around anger in their heart from day to day as if it was their best friend. Their thoughts toward the Lord are continually evil. And sometimes we must confess, with the deepest and greatest of shame, that our own thoughts toward God have at times been evil. We have accused God of not being fair or just. Perhaps we have questioned or even doubted His love. In our lesson today there is a great contrast, a huge chasm or divide between those people who accept God's will, and those people who resist it. Yet it is foolish to fight against the living God and His Word. Those who fight against God will only bring ruin upon themselves. May we also learn, that there is joy and even peace, in the humble acceptance of God's will, God's Word. For when we humbly receive God's Word by faith, we are well able to endure all things, even suffering for the cause of Christ. For "we are His witnesses....and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

I. The foolishness of fighting God and His Word. Last week we remember that the apostles boldly preached God's Word, and all believers prayed for the fearless courage of God's ministers. Today we hear more of their boldness and courage. Under the shadow of Solomon's porch, they preached the Gospel. "They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch..... And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." Such was, and still is the power and graciousness of our Lord. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercies endure forever," as we pray daily at our table prayer. "The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works."

But just as God will preserve His Word and the preaching of His Gospel till the end of time, this world will try to stop it! When the high priest and Sadducees learned that once again the name of Jesus was being preached, there at the temple they arrested Peter and the apostles, putting them in prison. Their will, the will of

man, was to silence the truth. But this was not God's will. "But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors." The angel told the apostles, to "speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." The words of "this life" are the Gospel Words of salvation, which give spiritual life to the dead soul of man! Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly." There were still more men and women who needed to be saved. God's will is that all men will be saved, that they all come to repentance and the knowledge of truth. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Faith receives the forgiveness, which God has already given! And so the next morning, as soon as the temple doors were opened, Peter and the other apostles entered in, preaching and teaching the Gospel, God turning the hearts of sinners to repentance and faith!

Imagine the frustration of God's enemies! When the high priests, Sadducees, the council, the senate met the next morning, they called for their prisoners. But there were no prisoners! At the same time, another man interrupts their meeting to say that Peter and the apostles are again preaching at the temple! How did this happen, they wonder? What power is at work here! But of course, it is the Lord. God's will is at work, and no man is able to overthrow nor overcome God's power.

Such is the foolishness of men who fight against God. For God is all-powerful, He cannot be defeated! Neither Satan nor all his host can overcome the Lord.....nor can they cancel out even one word of God! For each Word of God reveals the will of God's heart, and "The Scripture cannot be broken". Therefore if man fights against God and resists God's Word, man's end will only be damnation. The enemies of the Lord in our lesson today therefore serve to illustrate the foolishness of resisting or fighting against God. No one can win such a battle! The words of Gamaliel, are true, "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

In our own lives, the life of a Christian, we must admit, or should admit, that we often have been guilty of fighting against God's will. Because our nature is corrupt, we often resist the will of God tooth and nail. For the will of natural man and the will of God are polar opposites. Man desires to live in sin, have all things his own way, and God desires that man live a holy and perfect life. Consider and remember the life of Saul who later became Paul. It was God's insurmountable will, that the pride and self-righteousness of Saul be crushed. Saul's angry and hateful heart against the Lord had to first be humbled. On the road to Damascus, suddenly a brilliant light blinded him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Acts 9 Saul was only

hurting himself. The man who fights against God and resists God.....the man who rejects God's Word, will only hurt himself. The picture of a man banging his head against a brick wall, is a picture of the man who is still fighting against God and His Word. No good will come of it. If we do not keep God's commandments in this life, He will punish us in the next. If we do not bow before God in this life, we will surely bow in the next.

II. Believers joyfully receive His Word and humbly accept His will. In our lesson today, all the efforts of the Jews against Christ and His Word came to nothing. Even when they apprehended the apostles the second time, they were still forced to do God's will and they released them. The words Gamaliel spoke, still ring true today. "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

Brethren in the Lord, God does not want us to fight against Him, nor resist His will. "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Man's exaltation only takes place through Christ. To joyfully receive His Word is to hear His Gospel message by faith. For it is not God's will that we perish and be damned, but it is God's will that we be saved. "God would have all men to be saved", the Bible says, and this means He desires your salvation. In life, often enough, we question this truth, we question the Gospel doctrine. Things happen, we get hurt, we suffer, we are injured or humiliated, bad things happen to us, and we feel God's wrath upon us. But when these things happen God desires that we turn to the Gospel Word. God's Word is God's will. And God's will is that we be saved - nothing else matters. That is why God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Through Christ Jesus, God loves us, even more than we as parents love our own children, more than a husband loves his own wife. If you want to know the will of God for you in your own life, always begin with the love of God, for God is love. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jer. 29 If you seek and desire the forgiveness of sins, you will find your forgiveness in Christ Jesus. For Christ Jesus will not turn you away. Jesus is a Friend of Sinners. He is your Friend dear sinner, as He is mine. The prophet Micah also knew this friend Jesus, for he said, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity, and passes by transgression.....? He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy. He will

turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities." God casts all our sins into the depths of the sea. Mic. 7 Is God angry with you dear sinner? No, He is not, for Christ Jesus has removed far out of the way, all of God's anger. As far as the heavens are above the earth, as far as the east is from the west, this is how far God has removed your sins from you. Now God's thoughts toward you are only of peace. His love for you will preserve you through your troubles of this world, and His love will bring you to the next. That is why we receive His Gospel Word with such joy! Our blessed Savior Jesus Christ has done it all for your sake. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

When we know and understand God's will for us, namely our salvation, then we humbly accept His will for us in our own life. The pieces to the puzzle fall into place. His love precedes everything He does. And wherever there is faith in His love, there is humble acceptance of whatever God sends our way. He never gives us more than we can bear. God's will is always best. If we look at the lives of the apostles, they had one trouble after another, yet they overcame all by faith. Even when the Sadducees and priests threatened and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, they fearlessly said, "We ought to obey God rather than men." God had His will, His plan for those apostles, and they followed their Lord even a martyr's death. So God has His will, His plan for you. He has things He wants you to do while you yet have life on this earth. But whatever His will and purpose for you, humbly accept His will, for there is joy even in suffering, when we suffer for the Lord. When the apostles were threatened and then beaten, "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Their afflictions, their trials, did not move them....they did not budge nor turn aside from serving the Lord, doing God's will. Outwardly their bodies were bloodied, beaten, and broken.... but inwardly, spiritually, their new man alive, renewed day by day by God. God made them whole. May we in like manner humbly accept God's will, even if it means suffering for the name of Christ. For "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." By His stripes we are healed. Amen.