



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

Acts 5:17-32 ESV

The Apostles Arrested and Freed

¹⁷But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy ¹⁸they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. ¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰“Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.” ²¹And 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, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²²But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, ²³“We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” ²⁴Now 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. ²⁵And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” ²⁶Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

²⁷And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, “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.” ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

[INTRODUCTION]

My dad wasn’t much involved in my discipline in the home, and by that I would mean the day-to-day matters. He never enforced a curfew with me, never got on my case about grades, and didn’t really care much about who I hung out



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
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with. As I say this, I want you all to know I don't think that's right, daddies that is your job btw. No, instead he lived by a simple rule, it was rule of living by the value of one's name, let me translate that for you, **"Son you better remember your name, that means you better not bring any shame to it."**

Public obedience was a huge thing for my father, for even though Miami was a big town to grow up in, it was amazing how many people knew my dad.

Public obedience portrays what one thinks of the one that they fear. My behavior as a young man growing up in home was in no way exemplary. I did lots of wrong things, but I was smart enough not to get my dad involved in my life for I kept the family name out of the limelight. The fear of my father taught me how to keep out of trouble just enough so he wouldn't find out about it. I had this knack for dodging the authorities unlike my dummy friends. I valued my freedom, so it kept my behavior in check somewhat.

But in the Christian life you see the Gospel has changed my relationship with my heavenly Father. I operate not out of a fear of being caught, NO, I operate out of a fear of not portraying Him rightly and that upsets me!

The good news of the Gospel is that my Heavenly Father is already pleased with me, and I want to show the world in my obedience that He is worth me laying aside my earthly pleasures, He is worth me leaving behind worthless pursuits, and if it calls for it, He is worth suffering for if it makes His name known!

I wish I had loved my earthly father like that, but I didn't, but the good news now is I can for my Heavenly Father and what's more He is totally worth it! I have been given a chance in my public obedience to show the world He alone is worth living for, for He has loved me like no other.

That theme is played out over and over again throughout scripture:

Joseph and the denial of Potiphar's wife.

The prophet Elijah and his struggles with Jezebel.

Daniel's public demonstration of prayer.

Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego not bowing down to an idol.



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Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
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All examples of Israel and her call to be Holy among Pagan worshippers.

God is constantly **calling/revealing** to this world THROUGH the public display of His people, that He is worthy of worship. How we publically obey Him, Trust Him, Depend on Him, Consult Him, how we Run to Him, all of this is yet another part of **Evangelistic Zeal**, that is used to repel the hypocrites, the liars and deceivers, and call our lost brothers and sisters home.

This is the testimony of Jesus, He displayed so vibrantly and beautifully what public obedience from a heart that loved God more than anything looked like. It was what set the world on fire, it is what consumed us with a passion for God, in finding Jesus we finally found something worthy to emulate, our Lord. That is what public Obedience is all about, we show the world it doesn't matter what you do to us, you can't take us away from Him, He's too worthy!

And now instead of dreading the weight of having to obey Him, dreading the thought of having to bear His name, dreading the responsibility of representing Him **NOW true worshippers** hope to feel the weight of displaying Him, they long to get the chance to stand for Him, they pray that the Spirit supports them when they hopefully get the call! Is that you today!?

[CHALLENGE] As the world ever increasingly becomes harder to live in it will become more challenging for the believer to practice their public obedience to God rather than men. The world seeks to silence God's people more than ever and the challenge exists not just in the secular world. Again, the enemy hits us from both sides and comes at us from inside as well. More and more pastors/churches are making excuses for a person's sins, they are becoming more concerned about keeping an audience. They are removing away the responsibility, the privilege, and the honor of getting to live for God by softening worldly practices. Peter would have dropped dead:

³¹God exalted him (Jesus) at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Jesus was a public figure, acting as the right hand of God, leading out in how we should live for God gifting to His people **REPENTENCE; the chance to**



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
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TURN from their SINS! When a church and her teaching removes the weight of sin (homosexual lifestyles, abortion, substitution of Social and Political thought for theology), and its' consequences, then that church removes the possibility of repentance and the capability of the believer solidifying in their minds their faith!

Obedience is 2nd ingredient of Evangelistic Zeal, the testimony that there is someone worthy to REPENT TO, to die to self.

Let's learn now what this type of Obedience looks like, because I also want you to know there is a reward for His people, when they take on the same calling His Son had. **Persistent Obedience** will lead to **persecution**, **persistent obedience** will **provoke** the enemy, but **persistent obedience** will **authenticate and produce BOLD Proclamation**.

1. Persistent Obedience will often lead to Persecution, (if you are so blessed)(vs. 17-21).

The Apostles had just gone through a remarkable encounter. God had initiated the first act of church discipline with Ananias and Saphira, and being that the sin was so serious and unrepentive the HS Himself stepped in took their life as not to allow the sin of Hypocrisy to ruin the church. The church buried them and without missing a beat, continued on with their work.

This purification, this setting apart, of being made **Holy** (second ingredient), had brought power, it had given them an appeal. The common men, men who would have been enticed to get some of that recognition, were now scared off, but it had also called more believers, multitudes of men and women. They were witnessing the power of miracles and accompanying that was the preaching in Solomon's Portico, where the Lord Himself had been preaching on the Kingdom of God. This was definitely a good time to be a part of the church, and their fame was growing, their Evangelistic Zeal was becoming undeniable, and it is at this point where the enemy decides to kick it up a notch.



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
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He had already attacked them from without, through the Sanhedrin, and that didn't work. He attacked them from within and now that didn't work. AND since he never quits, he's a spirit, he doesn't tire, he goes back to the Sanhedrin and tries again, and this time he flames the fire of their jealousy and pride.

¹⁷ But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with **jealousy** ¹⁸ they **arrested** the apostles and put them in the **public prison**.

He rose up, it's like saying he is displaying his anger publicly. How many of you have had a dad do the proverbial removal of the belt, wielding it like Indiana Jones, with a "WHIP" sound? So, it's the public display of outrage coming from jealousy. The whole Sanhedrin, not just the High Priest were enraged, **those lousy backwoods, uneducated, smelly, uncouth, men from Galilee**, they have taken what they had killed Jesus for, the affection of the crowds. The Apostles, through Holiness, through HS power, were now attracting thousands of people, and not only that, but they were also backing up their stories of Jesus with miracles, and you will find out later, they had nothing nice to say about the Sanhedrin as well.

So along with their righteous indignation, their snubbing their nose at their political power, they arrest the Apostles and instead of quietly putting them away they put them in public prison. It is to make a scene of what happens to people who commit treason, to scare all the converts. BOY, this story sounds like to me something that happened on a **cold Jan 6th day**, once upon a time.

¹⁹ But during the night an **angel** of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go and **stand** in the **temple** and **speak** to the people all the **words of this Life**." ²¹ And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Ok inside joke by Luke to show the foolishness of his government of the day. The Sadducees, the majority of the guys in the Sanhedrin, did not believe in an afterlife, nor angels. So here as they have tried to kill Jesus, who came back from the dead giving to those who believe an "everlasting life" Luke



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal – Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

records that God sends an angel, another thing the Sadducees refused to accept by God, to physically open the doors, and the angel tells them to preach about what will give eternal life, belief in Jesus Christ and His forgiveness of sins. He's showing what happens behind the scenes when God is ready to elevate the public obedience of His people, God picks the fight, He sets up the arena, He's the one that's going to throw the first punch.

Now this is where God begins to develop the 2nd ingredient to making an Evangelistic Zealous church. The angel is not like, **go quick run**, instead **stand still and speak (v.20)**! The Apostles, have been here before, this is starting to get interesting, and what they have learned is that when they, stand and speak, when they are faithful, God does amazing things, so they decide to be **OBEDIENT**.

I want to share with you decades later when Peter has gone through this type of moment numerous times, and he relates to the church, as he learned what you and I are supposed to do in the face of **Persecution**, when the offer of **standing and speaking** presents itself.

1 Peter 4:12-19 ESV

Suffering as a Christian

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you (opening jail cells – giving opportunities to speak), as though something strange were happening to you (no coincidences). ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings (suffering for the cause of the Kingdom), that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler (not with shame). ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?
¹⁸And

"If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good (warning, is that your suffering is the way in which God preserves your soul).

There is so much good stuff here, but here's the jest of what we are learning:

The **Reward** for **Persistent Obedience** is the opportunity to **Glorify God**.
[Stronger Persistence = more Persecution = Greater Glory.]

In our next life, upon resurrecting you and I will not have these opportunities again. We get one chance to stand up and in Obedience face those that oppose the Gospel, face those that deny His existence, face those that defile His name. The call is the same, **Stand and Speak**, speak about your eternal life, speak about how Jesus has changed you, speak about how He can remove the desire for sin, speak about how He is worthy to be praised, speak about how He died for our sins, speak about the only path to eternal life is by turning from our sins and trusting Him to save us. **Are you able to stand and speak these things yet?**

Perhaps today is your day to ask Jesus for this opportunity, and I would tell you like the Apostles did, there is no other name by which we must be saved, everyone one of you, REPENT and be **BAPTIZED** in His name, as a sign of your forgiveness of sins. That is everyone's in here first obedient thing, have you been baptized as a believer in Him? Would you think about it today?

Persistent Obedience doesn't stop there, it does more...

2. Persistent Obedience will Provoke the enemy and Prolong the fight (vs. 21-26).

God calls us to obedience and many times after He gives us the direction for what to do, the result He is looking for is getting the enemy riled up! (The more an enemy gets riled up the more foolish they look and the more glorious God becomes, think of Pharaoh.)



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²²But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, ²³“We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside.” ²⁴Now 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.

How infuriating this had to be, they went to sleep, reliant in their power, to keep these men locked up and woke up to their powerlessness in the face of these men. No sign of escape, no sign of struggle, if I were them, I am starting to think these guards are actually for the Apostles, probably giving these politicians a real sense of insecurity.

That’s part of God’s plan you see, is to use His followers to not only call the lost but as we saw earlier it is to strike fear and dismay in the hearts of the enemy. It’s to throw them off, it is a part of turning them over to their own fear and self-deception, as Romans 1 spells out.

²⁵And someone came and told them, “Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.” ²⁶Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, **but not by force**, for they were **afraid** of being stoned by the people.

When we are persistent in our obedience provoking the enemies of God, we gain something that will be useful for all of life.

Persistent Obedience will Promote the Courage (Pluckiness) of the Believer.

When the captain came after them it was a different scene from the bravado of the yesterday. The scene is the guards are now afraid to put their hands on them. The Apostles through their obedience have shown who is running the show in the temple, they speak not by the whims or desires of the Sadducees but of God. I don’t know about you, but I am a little bit of a trouble maker, and if I were there I would have probably made a show of the crowd picking up



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal – Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

stones. C'mon here's an opportunity to get a little pay back, right? More importantly, they are tested by the Spirit, you can start a rebellion (**same temptation Christ had totally justifiable**) or you can use the opportunity to share the Gospel. Good news for us the Apostles chose as Jesus chose, they still portrayed the meekness of Christ, that's the ability to do harm but the power to choose not to, and they allowed themselves to be taken.

You see **persistent obedience** develops in a person the **COURAGE** to face your enemies head on. When we run from our challenges in our life, we never develop the spine to do the right things for the kingdom. That means your suffering, your persecution is produced to deliver you courage the day when you will need it. **Paul's example:**

2 Corinthians 11:24-31 ESV

²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Paul's persistent obedience throughout his life, through his sufferings prepared him. In Acts 20 Paul relates to the elders of the church that indeed he was headed back to Jerusalem where they were waiting to arrest him, to kill him, just like Jesus. But see this is Paul's chance to be **associated with Christ**. The same men that had originally employed him to stomp out the church, the same men that took Jesus' life, were now coming for Paul. Paul knew he had a God ordained meeting with them, for it might be his way to get to Rome. He had to take it, but he would have never had the courage to do it,



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

if he had not embraced his trials and tribulations first, these things had developed Paul's courage so that he would be ready for this day. And that's how it is with us.

[CHALLENGE] Today, what is that trial you are letting have power over you? Is there something or someone you are running away from that was set up by God so you can develop the courage for tomorrow, a bigger test? Maybe there is a co-worker, a boss, a friend, a family member that you have withheld confrontation from because you want peace more than you want correction. Brothers and sisters, Jesus did not come to make peace between us, He came to stir up the waters, He came to awaken people to sin, He came to offer repentance. Our call is to make people aware of their need for Christ, to speak **BOLDLY** for Him.

Let today be the day you practice courage so that you are preparing for your own "Rome" trip. Our story this morning also tells us today that when we engage in persistent obedience that what you need on the day when you get the chance to say something for Him you will not fail.

3. Persecuted and Persistent Obedience will Produce bold Proclamation (vs. 27-32).

²⁷And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, (This is the moment, there is no more ignorance of earthly law, the Apostles are now guilty of the same thing as Jesus.) yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

The Apostles, by their demonstrations of miracles in Jesus' name have shown His innocence. That's what speaking bold gets for you, you get to declare to this world that rejects Him, that He's the only person that deserves praise, He's the only person that can save you, He's the person that everyone should want! It drove the Sanhedrin to a murderous intent now, as it did with Christ. Are you willing to make someone that mad? Then in the face of that hatred listen to what Peter says:



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.
³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Boy this is a bad day if you are not ready, Peter is doing the talking and He’s invigorated by the HS, He makes some bold accusations against the Sanhedrin.

Restates **“We must obey God rather than men.”** Immediately starts out with a phrase that says you’re not in charge here, you’re not on the right side, you’re the one in the wrong.

“The God of our fathers raised Jesus” that which you don’t even believe in, God did it, so moving forward you’re whole basis for your theology is wrong, how can you trust what you believe.

“Whom you killed by hanging on a tree.” That guy that you crucified as recorded in the OT as a sign of a cursed man, a man that was dammed, a man that God had no love for, a man you tore down to make yourselves look better.

“ God exalted Him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” That guy you hated, God exalted Him, He has taken away your rule, He gave Jesus the power to lead and save Israel, you have been removed...

³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Peter is like on this day, we stand here as witnesses to your judgment. It is a mirror image of the day that Daniel, in **public persistent obedience** gave another declaration to another King that had gotten to big for his britches, Belshazzar:

Daniel 5

²⁵“This is the inscription that was written:



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal - Obedience
By Pastor Jody May 01/29/2023

mene, mene, tekel, parsin

²⁶“Here is what these words mean:

Mene^[e]: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

²⁷ *Teke*^[f]: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

²⁸ *Peres*^[g]: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

²⁹ Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians,^[h] was slain,³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.^[i]

Jesus is now clothed in His royal garments, He reigns on the throne of Israel meaning over all thrones, He has moved into Jerusalem in the Spirit, and He has removed all power from the old government. The Sanhedrin’s days had been brought to an end, they had been weighed, and they had been found wanting.

[CHALLENGE + APPLICATION]

We have to stop there today, this is such a beautiful thing to see. Peter was given the courage to condemn the authorities and to remove power publically from the Sanhedrin. They no longer had the power of life over death, but God has physically assumed the power through His church. The keys of the Kingdom had been given to the Apostles, there were new owners in town of the way to heaven, the church.

I want you invite you all to join me in prayer, that we too will come to know the joy and privilege of publically being obedient to God so that all may come to know the glory of our Savior Jesus.



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Wk. 18 Pt. 2 Recipe for Evangelistic Zeal – Obedience
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[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has orchestrated our lives giving us the honor to stand in front of the world proclaiming our Faith by Obedience.

Go in the name of the Son, that mastered death, sin, and corrupt government by His public Obedience to God alone.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that stands with us as with Peter, and will help us in our trials to boldly proclaim the Saving name of Christ.