

## **“But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it.”**

By: Lenny Chapman

*“And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”*  
(Acts 5:38-39)

***In the fifth chapter of Acts, we read of the mighty miracles that were being performed by the apostles. It was during this time that many more became believers and were being added to the church. It was quite a busy time in Jerusalem as loved ones were bringing the sick into the streets in hope that they may be healed by one of the passing apostles. “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.” (vs.14-16). All this attention and activity being directed towards the apostles was enough to thoroughly irritate the Jewish leaders. The scriptures tell us that they “were filled with jealousy” (vs.17), and this untamed emotion caused them to place the apostles in prison while they together tried to decide how to suppress their teachings of Jesus as the Christ.***

That night an angel of the Lord brought forth the apostles out of prison and directed them to go back into the temple to teach. As the chief priest and the leaders met the next day, they called for the prisoners to be brought to them. To their surprise, the apostles were not inside the prison. They were in the temple preaching and teaching Jesus. When the apostles were led out of the temple and set before the council, Peter and the others made the faithful proclamation that one must obey God rather than men! *“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”* (vs.27-29).

This is not the easiest thing to do all the time, and certainly it was not the easy path for the apostles this day. But by their example, we see that even when we are tested and are faced with very tough times, we must listen to what God has to say about the matter. We must also follow through on His direction, and not be persuaded by what a friend, author, teacher, boss, or anyone else may say. There may even be ridicule or persecution to follow. However, as we see by the apostles’ choice, doing what is right in the sight of God will bring lasting benefits far beyond the moment of ridicule and persecution. *“And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”* (vs. 40-41).

As the meeting of the council members was leading down the path to slay the apostles and be through with this dilemma (v.33), one of the Pharisees named Gamaliel spoke up, and his words have been recorded for our learning. He was highly respected by the council, as the scriptures teach us that he was “a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people” (vs.34). Gamaliel’s advice to the council was to give the apostles “a little space.” They had seen many that had come before claiming to be prophets and men of God, but were nothing more than a “fad” stirring up the people for only a short time before fading away. But this day Gamaliel’s words rang true as he spoke the following, *“And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God,”* (vs.38-39).

Today these words ring as loudly as they did that day when the apostles were before the Sanhedrin Council. God's work will not be overthrown! Man might do all he can to thwart God's eternal plan, but he will not be successful. God is in complete control of all things, and that includes our life if we choose to give it to Him. Why try to fight this world and Satan by yourself, when the hand of God is waiting for you to grab hold of? Comfort is waiting right outside the door, will you let Him in?