

# The Challenge to Obedience

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Date: 26 May 2024

[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to begin by singing to God's praise in Psalm 33. It's not from verse 18, as marked on the bulletin sheets, from verse 15. And we'll sing from verse 15 down to the end of the psalm. Page 246 of the psalm books, Psalm 33 at verse 15.

He forms their hearts alike and all their doings he observes. Great host saves not a king much strength, no mighty man preserves. Then from verse 19 there, from death to free their soul and dearth, life unto them to yield. Our soul doth wait upon the Lord. He is our help and shield.

We'll sing from verse 15 down to the end of the psalm and the tune is Irish. He forms their hearts alike and all their doings he observes.

Great host save not a king, but strength no mighty man preserves.

And hordes for preservation is a deceitful thing.

[ 1 : 34 ] And by the greatness of his strength can no deliverance bring.

Behold on those that do him fear, the Lord doth set his eye.

Heave those who on his mercy do, with confidence rely.

Heave those who on his mercy do, with confidence rely. From death to free their soul and dearth, life unto them to yield.

Our soul doth wait upon the Lord. He is our help and shield.

[ 2 : 53 ] His heart is a god's sin.

If there is a burden being soMan çaigneur near me. As we do hope in thee.

Let's join our hearts together in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we come before you this night thankful for every opportunity we have to call upon your name, to praise your name and to give thanks to you as our Lord and as our God.

And to come even as the psalmist from the psalm we've sung, waiting upon you. As he said, our soul doth wait upon the Lord. He is our help and shield. Help us to come with these words in mind, recognizing who you are, that you are indeed our help and our shield, the one who preserves us, the one who keeps us.

For the psalm warns us too that there is no preservation in a horse, as it is put. For there the psalmist is thinking of putting their trust in the armies and the strength of armies, that they might find protection in that way.

[ 4 : 30 ] But ultimately, they knew and we know that our only protection, our only salvation, is through the Lord as our God. And so we pray, Lord, this evening that as we come, we will come acknowledging you as that Lord, the Lord of our lives, the Lord of our hearts, the Lord of all that we seek to do.

For apart from you, Lord, we can do nothing. And so help us to come and worship you in that way, to put our trust in you, that our hearts may be joyful, that we might know your mercy upon us as we put our hope in you.

And Lord, we pray for your word to be blessed to us, that all that we hear would speak to us of the wonder of your salvation and your love and your grace towards us, of the challenge to obedience to you, and that your spirit would work in all our hearts to build us up in our faith, to help us to trust you more, even to come and know you for the first time, to know that joy of salvation, to know what it is to have our hearts opened and to receive you in that way, to understand you, to understand your word, to understand your grace and your love, to understand all that it means for our lives just now and all that it means for eternity that's before us all as well.

So help us, Lord, that your spirit would be with us to prompt us in that way, to know you and to understand you as you are. And we thank you, Lord, that your word is powerful to that end, that your word is the word of truth and the word of life, the word that sets us free.

And we pray, Lord, that as your word is proclaimed here and around us in so many different places in our communities, in our island, our nation and the world, in the many different languages it's

proclaimed in.

[ 6 : 32 ] We thank you, Lord, that it goes out with your power and your spirit and that that is a word that is able to convince people of who you are, to convict in their hearts and to convert them to you.

And so we pray, Lord, for your spirit to move around us and among us and bring life to those who are dead, bring life to those who are lost in this world, not realizing the eternity before them.

But, Lord, we pray for your salvation, your saving power, the light of your salvation, to go out and bring that light of hope. And so we pray, Lord, that today and each day that you allow your word to be among us, Lord, for we do not know the number of our days, we do not know when the Lord will return.

But we pray that until he does, your voice will be heard and that you will save many people. And we know, Lord, that we live in a world that is full of so many challenges, so many difficulties, so many trials.

We know around us, Lord, so many who are going through them in different ways. Even ourselves, Lord, although on the outside things may seem calm and right, we know that within, Lord, and even in our own hearts there can be troubles that are maybe only known unto you.

[ 7 : 54 ] And we thank you that that is so, that you are the one who is able to calm our souls and to calm our hearts. You are the one who is able to, as we heard this morning, to call us to come and put our trust in you, that you are the one who reaches down your hand to us when we feel that we are sinking under the waves and that you are able to lift us up and to give us that security to take us into that secure place with you.

And so, Lord, we pray that you will help each of us to know that security and to know that hope and that that hope would be known among many around us.

We pray for those in particular needs just now, Lord, thankful for the power of prayer, thankful for the way that you hear our prayers and that you are able to answer and so often in ways that go beyond our understanding and beyond what we ask or imagine, as Paul says in Ephesians.

We thank you that you help us to marvel at the way that you remind us of the power that you have, that you remind us, Lord, that you are able to do abundantly more than we ask or imagine.

And so, we thank you, Lord, for prayers heard and answered and we pray, Lord, that whatever your answer is, whatever your will is for us, that we will always be content with that and that that would be our prayer.

[ 9 : 23 ] And so, hear our prayers, Lord, for those around us, for those who are unwell at this time, for those who are mourning at this time, for those who go through so many different challenges, Lord, we pray for you to surround them, to uphold them, to strengthen them.

Remember those who struggle with addictions at this time as well, Lord, we know so much of our community is bound up in that way, so much of it is perhaps hidden from us at times and yet it's around us in so many different ways.

And we pray, Lord, that in the silence and the hiddenness of it, that in your knowledge Lord, that you will draw near to all who need you in these ways and help them, Lord, give them hope, give them security, give them the knowledge of your grace and your love, give them to know, Lord, of the joy that is found in you and not in anything else that this world offers.

And so we pray, Lord, for your help to break these bonds. We pray for your church, we thank you for a week of General Assembly in Edinburgh for our denomination and we pray that your blessing will follow it upon all that was done and upon all that goes on going forward from here as well, that your hand will be upon us for good, to lead us, to guide us, to help us in all our different needs, that ministries will go on, Lord, throughout our nation and throughout the world, that there will be a sense of your blessing and your building your church in these days.

And we thank you, Lord, that there are so many encouragements from different places around the world as well as our own nation. We are reminded that you are the one who builds this church and that there is nothing that will overwhelm it or overcome it.

[ 11 : 15 ] And we pray, Lord, for a day of your power, a day of your salvation in our midst. We pray too, Lord, for our communities at this time, Lord, we think of the needs that we have, Lord, we think of our homes and our families and our ignorance of you in so many ways.

Lord, even as your people, even as your church, we can be blind to what you call us to, what you call us to be, what you ask of us, Lord, and all of these things we can go on in our own wisdom.

But help us, Lord, to look not to our own wisdom but to yours. To recognize, Lord, that as a people that we are here but for a time.

And we pray, Lord, that to have that spirit of Esther when we hear these words for such a time as this. And we pray, Lord, that you would remind us that that is our providence just now.

For such a time as this, Lord, you have placed us here. You have given us opportunities. You have given us moments. You have given us so many different blessings and kindnesses.

[12:26] And help us, Lord, not to take them for granted but to use every good and perfect gift that you have given to us. Whether they be as a collective people or individually, help us, Lord, not to bury our talents but to use them wisely and to use them richly for your glory.

That your blessing may be upon us. That we might know your favour upon us as a people. So, Lord, hear our prayers, we ask, and remember us in all of these things and help us even this evening as we prepare ourselves and look ahead to the week before us and especially to a communion weekend to seek your blessing upon us, to seek your good in our midst, to seek encouragement, Lord, to seek that our hearts will be built up and strengthened in our faith for those who have professed Christ that they will know once more that overwhelming power of what Jesus has done for us.

That we will not grow weary of it, that we will not lose our sense of awe and amazement and wonder of the one who gave us life for us, that we might know life through him.

Lord, for some we might cry, restore to us salvation's joy. And we pray, Lord, for others to come, to come and put their trust in you, to come and know you in that way, to come and know, Lord, your saving power and to know the blessing that there is in obedience to your command.

And so we ask, oh Lord, that you will go before us, that you will bless us by your word and by your spirit in all that we do and all that we see. As we come, we come confessing our sins before you, knowing, Lord, that you alone are able to forgive, but you, Lord, are able to do so much that we so often forget, that you have paid the ultimate price, that our sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus who gave his life for us.

[14:33] So hear our prayers, Lord, and continue with us as we ask it all in his precious name and for his glory. Amen. Amen. Let's praise God again by singing in Psalm 25, the first version of the Psalm in page 231, the Scottish Psalter version.

Psalm 25, we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 6 in Tunes Surich. To thee I lift my soul, O Lord, I trust in thee.

My God, let me not be ashamed, nor foes triumph over me. We'll sing from verse 1 to verse 6 to God's praise. to thee I lift my soul, O Lord, I trust in thee.

My God, let me not be ashamed, nor foes triumph for me.

Let none that wait on thee be put to shame at all, but those that without cause transgress, let shame upon them fall.

[16:14] Show me thy ways, O Lord, thy paths, O teach thy me, and do thy lead me in thy truth, therein my teacher be.

For thou art God that does, to me salvation send, and lie upon thee all the day, expecting to attend. thy death, thy death, thy mercy, Lord, I pray thee to remember, and loving kindnesses for thee have been all for forever.

God. Amen. Amen. We're going to read together God's word in the book of Acts, in Acts chapter 5. We're going to take up our reading at verse 12. Acts chapter 5, reading from verse 12, and we read down to verse 32.

[17:58] Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles, and they were all together in Solomon's portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.

And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out their sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats.

And as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns round Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

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

But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison and doors and brought them out and said, Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

[ 19 : 06 ] And 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 them, they called together the council and all the senate of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought.

But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported. We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.

Now 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.

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

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, 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.

[ 20 : 22 ] But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

God exalted him at his right hand as leader and saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things.

And so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we turn back to look at this passage, we'll sing from Psalm 48a in the Sing Psalms version.

Psalm 48a on page 63 of the psalm books. We'll sing from verse 4 down to verse 11. When kings joined forces to attack as one, they marched ahead.

They saw her and they were amazed. They all in terror fled. Like women giving birth in pain, they trembled in dismay. You wrecked them like a merchant fleet by tempest blown away.

[ 21 : 31 ] As we have heard, so we have seen. God's city will endure. The Lord Almighty evermore his city keeps secure. We'll sing from verse 4 down to verse 11.

And the tune is Paisley. Paisley. When kings joined forces to attack, as long they marched ahead. They saw her and they were amazed. They all in terror fled.

Like women giving birth in pain, they trembled in dismay.

You wrecked them like a merchant fleet by tempest blown away.

[ 22 : 42 ] As we have fled, so have we seen. God's city will endure.

The Lord Almighty evermore has set deep keeps secure.

we contemplate your steadfast love within your hearts, O God.

For like your name your grace extends through all the air abroad.

Lord. All that you do is righteous, Lord, Mount Zion's joyous great.

[ 23 : 52 ] And Judah's towns rejoice as they your judgments celebrate.

we can turn back to our reading in the book of Acts chapter 5.

We're looking at this section that we read. We'll just read again at verse 29. But Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men.

The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

And we are witnesses to these things. And so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. We must obey God rather than men.

[ 24 : 59 ] men. When you think back in your life, what's your earliest memory? What's the first thing that you can remember as you think back?

I'm sure the more you think about it, the more different things might come back to you. And sometimes it's hard to distinguish just what was the earliest memory, because there would be a number of different memories that kind of merge together.

But how many of these memories involve people, and especially how many of these involve people telling you what you should or what you shouldn't do.

It might be the memories of your parents, it might be the memories of a school teacher, it might be the memories of a minister or a Sunday school teacher, but the message that they've been giving

you is to do something or not to do something.

And very often it's in light of you having done the opposite of what was being asked of you. And these memories stand out because very often they instill in you maybe a sense of fear.

[ 26 : 06 ] There can be a sense of fear that you've let somebody down or that you've done something wrong. And letting someone down is often something that just stays with us.

But when we think about God and what he wants of us, you think of maybe a minister or a sermon you've heard and it's stuck with you for a reason.

Because the minister was saying something that just really resonated with you. And it's still maybe lingering there in your mind just now. It still comes back to you often and you're thinking what that minister said, what that message was saying, what the Lord was saying was powerful.

And God speaks to us in different ways like that, in ways that can often remain with us all our days. A word from the Lord that sticks with us.

And it's a word from the Lord that so often is calling us to obedience to him, to listen to him. When we think of parents or teachers or Sunday school teachers, they wanted what was best for us.

[ 27 : 14 ] They wanted us to be obedient to what they were saying because they knew it was for our good. And God ultimately is the one who knows what is best for us.

And that's why his word calls us to obedience. And as you look through the book of Acts, you find it's full of so many ups and downs, the acts of the apostles, the things that they were doing as the Lord had gone to be with the Father, and as the church was in its infancy, as its church was just small in number as you see at the beginning of Acts, and then expanding and growing as it went out from Jerusalem and to all the ends of the earth.

You see the amazing ways that the Lord was working, and all the time God calling his people and a people to obedience. And what you find as you go through the book of Acts is that obedience to God, yes, it can lead you to a place of quiet and calm and joy, but there's also so many times when obedience to God takes you into a place that's uncomfortable, a place that you maybe didn't expect to find yourself, but a place where the Lord reminds you that he wants what is good for you.

We don't always understand maybe parents who are telling us what they know is good for us. We don't understand or see it at the time, and it's only when we look back. Well, in the same way, we think of what God says to us.

We don't understand at times, we don't see it for ourselves until ultimately we look back or see God does know best. And so he is calling us to obedience, because obedience is the way to God's peace.

[ 29 : 09 ] And that's what we see with Peter and the apostles as they answered there in verse 29. in all the troubles and trials of prison and persecution that they were facing up to here, what was their response?

We must obey God rather than men. Those who are telling them to be quiet, not to proclaim the Lord Jesus, not to show him publicly, they must obey God rather than men.

So obedience as you go through the book of Acts, is challenged. And it's challenged in two different ways. It's challenged in are we being obedient to God ourselves?

And it's also challenged when you see the persecution that arises. Will you go on in obedience even when the way is difficult? John Calvin once said, we must realize that God is longing to shower blessings on his church.

but he still allows it to be harassed by the ungodly. So we must be ready to battle. Do you feel harassed today?

[ 30 : 28 ] Remember, that's how Jesus often saw the people around them. In the Gospel of Matthew, he speaks of the crowds that he saw around them as harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

are you feeling harassed today? Are you feeling that your obedience is being pulled one minute towards God but then tugged in a way you think, well, I can't go on like that, and then you're being pulled in a different direction.

And especially as we think of this week ahead of us and as we approach another time of communion in our midst, it's often a time when that harassed feeling can fall upon us.

We haven't been obedient as we should have been. We haven't done as we should have done, and we can feel harassed, we can feel in the midst of a battle, but we are coming to remember the Lord's death.

We are coming to remember, as we read here in the book of Acts, the one who the God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging on a tree.

[ 31 : 38 ] God exalted him at his right hand as leader and saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. So as we feel harassed and helpless, we have a place to look, and one to look to, our leader and our saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In his obedience, in going to the cross, we see the ultimate obedience, and we ask ourselves, are we obedient to him?

Are we being obedient even in the midst of all that harassment that comes our way? Obedience that will ultimately lead to peace with him.

And so we want to just think about this obedience as we see it before us this evening in this section. And the first thing we're going to think of is there is blessing that follows obedience.

obedience. It's maybe a phrase you've heard, blessing follows obedience. But what is blessing?

The blessing that follows obedience isn't always everything going swimmingly and everything going straight forward, but it's a blessing and the comfort and the assurance that you're right with God, that you are doing as Peter says here, we must obey God rather than men.

[ 33 : 07 ] Whatever the consequences are, we must obey God rather than men. And when we look at this section, we didn't read at the beginning of chapter 5, but what we're reading of is in light of what comes at the beginning of chapter 5, which is Ananias and Sapphira and their disobedience to God.

And if you read through it when you go home, you'll see that for yourselves, but Ananias and Sapphira, they were disobedient to God. They kept back for themselves, it says in verse 2, some of the proceeds and brought only part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

They had sold a piece of land and what they were going to give to the Lord's cause, they held back for themselves. And look at what happens as you read through it, both of them died almost instantly.

within moments of having been called out, they both died instantly, the two of them, this husband and wife, and they were buried that day.

They were disobedient to God. And you say to yourself, how harsh is that? But it stood as a warning, it stood as a warning then and stands as a warning to us that ultimately disobedience to God, the consequences are serious and the consequences are deadly.

[ 34 : 38 ] An eternal death is the ultimate consequence of disobedience to God. So it's in light of that disobedience that we're reading on when they're calling them to obedience to God rather than men.

But what kind of outcome would you have expected after this has happened to Ananias and Sapphira? Do people just turn away? Do you think what kind of cruel God is this or would allow this to happen to them?

What kind of God are we coming to if the slightest mistake is going to strike us down in this way? Is that the kind of God that they're coming to?

Did it make them re-evaluate how they would go about preaching the word of God? What they might say? Do they start thinking, well this is too cruel a God to follow and how are going to people come and follow and we'll have to change this.

We'll have to maybe just mark this incident out, leave it out. And yet here we are reading of it today as well. It's there to stand as a warning to us.

[ 35 : 49 ] We don't change the message of the gospel. We don't change anything that it says to make it more appealing by dropping some bits out as many are tempted to do this day.

We are to preach the whole counsel of God as it says. And we find even in the midst of this challenge that the wonder of it all was that they continued to come and to hear the message and see the wonders and signs that were being done.

the awesome power of God was there in their midst and they didn't turn away from it in fear but instead they feared the Lord. In verse 13 it says none of the rest dared join them and it seems like there was this fear over the people.

What will God do with me? They feared to join them and yet in verse 14 more than ever believers were added to the Lord.

So there was a fear of joining yet there was a realization that where else can we go? Disobedience to God has serious consequences therefore we must come to him.

[ 37 : 15 ] And so we too are not to be afraid or ashamed of the gospel. we are not to be afraid of what it says. Don't be afraid of the fact that the Bible talks about hell and sin and the consequences that lie behind all of these things because you need to see that and see the balance that there is of grace and salvation.

When Peter says we must obey God rather than men it's in light of the God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed and God has exalted him as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

So the disobedience of sin there is a way out of it by repentance and to forgiveness of sins. And it is only in obedience that blessing will come in being obedient to him.

And we live in a world where everyone is so easily offended. It's something we hear so often now. That people are afraid what you say in case it causes offense.

And yet before us we have something that will cause people to be offended. Maybe it even causes you to be offended tonight when you hear the word of God.

[ 38 : 42 ] When you hear things being said like you are a sinner. sinner. People are offended by that. How can you call me a sinner? I'm a good person.

But that's what the truth says. That we are sinners. That we fall short of the glory of God. And we shouldn't be ashamed.

We shouldn't be afraid of that. Because if we see that in light of what the gospel is teaching as a whole, it brings us to the point where the offense that we see is against God and against Christ. The fact that our sins killed, put to death the Lord Jesus, it is what brought him to the cross. And we're afraid sometimes of the truth.

But behind what causes offense is the beauty of the gospel. The blessing of seeing that in obedience to God, though we are sinners, there is hope of the forgiveness of sin.

[ 39 : 54 ] Because it is the truth that sets us free. Blessing follows obedience.

As somebody once said, it's a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it.

It's a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it.

He is calling us to obedience. There are consequences to not doing that. Obedience will be hard at times, as we'll see in a moment, but ultimately the blessings will follow obedience.

So, secondly, we see obedience leads to trials. God blessing his people is not without its own consequences. consequences. And as you continue to read through these verses, and as you see the apostles arrested and put into prison, you see the challenge that comes to their obedience.

[ 41 : 17 ] They are saying in verse 29, we must obey God rather than men. And where has this led them? Well, it's led them to this trial. They were arrested, and they were put into public prison in verse 18.

So, you get thrown into prison. There's fear, there's questions being asked there. Why are we here? We're doing as God has commanded us, and yet here we are in prison.

And yet we see that although there is blessing following obedience, obedience can lead us into different trials and different places. But in that, God has a purpose as well.

God is strengthening his apostles and his people through this. He's making them realize where their devotion lies, where their devotion rests, who it is that they are going to be obedient to.

The easy answer would be to turn away from God, stop preaching the gospel, deny the Lord. Peter has already done this in his own life, and he's seen the consequences of it, the pain and the anguish that brings as he denied his Lord at the time of his crucifixion.

[ 42 : 29 ] But here is Peter restored again, as we read in verse 29, but Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men. And he's speaking through experience.

He's denied his Lord in the past. He's been disobedient to the Lord in the past, but he's learning, and he's learned now obedience is the answer. Even when it leads us to prison and to suffering and to all of these things, we must obey God rather than men.

And what's causing their trials here? Well, we see it's the jealousy of those around them. The high priest and the Sadducees filled with jealousy, it says in verse 17.

This is the attack that came upon them. They were standing up for the Lord, they were seeing wondrous things happen, and they were seeing many being added to their number, and now the high priest and the Sadducees, they're jealous.

But how do they respond? In the midst of their trials, how do they respond? Well, we go back to verse 12.

[ 43 : 49 ] In the middle of verse 12, it says, they were all together in Solomon's portico. people. And this is the way that they went on. And this is a word that we often find throughout the book of Acts.

Together, one accord. It's a Greek word that's difficult to translate, and translators have tried to put it across in different ways.

But it's a sense of unity. And it's a sense of unity no matter what. You see it in Acts 1, verse 14.

There, that very same word is used. All these were with one accord. Were devoting themselves to prayer. One accord is the word that's used there.

Together is the word used in verse 12 here. But behind it is the same thing. They are together in unity for the Lord here.

[ 44 : 51 ] And somebody has described it in terms of a musical term. It's like everyone with a different note, but together making beautiful music, making a beautiful song.

It's like what we heard in the children's address this morning. The party rings. They can look different in some ways, but yet they're all the same ingredients, and they've all got the same thing behind them.

And as Christians, we can all look different. We can all behave differently. We can all have different things about us, but we're together in this sense of united and making a beautiful song for the Lord. In the midst of obedience, it leads to trials, but we have this wonderful togetherness, together for the gospel.

people. And this is what provokes the Sadducees and the high priests. This unity provokes them to jealousy and to ask what is going on among these people.

[ 46 : 02 ] And it causes a provocation against different people in different ways. And it makes us ask what kind of reaction does our life provoke of others around us.

Do others look on us and see this unity of body, this oneness in Christ, this wonder at what we have? As people looked on here, we see three different reactions that people had.

The response of some of the onlookers was wonder and awe. And they came into the fellowship. They were brought in more than ever.

Believers were added to the Lord. Multitudes of both men and women, it says in verse 14. They were provoked to obedience, to love the Lord.

But there were others who were provoked to jealousy, the high priest and the Sadducees among them. And that was what our unity, our love for Christ will do us while it will provoke others to jealousy, to anger.

[ 47 : 13 ] And we shouldn't be surprised at when this comes. If you are obedient to God, it will lead to challenges from even family and friends around you.

But you always remember what Peter says, we must obey God rather than men. So there's these responses.

It provokes some to come to the Lord. It provokes others to be jealous and angry towards those of the Lord's, but it also provokes a response from God.

More than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. As they were together, as they were obedient, the Lord was working in their midst.

And so that is how we are to go on ourselves as well. To be obedient to God. To obey God rather than men and to know that yes, it will provoke.

[ 48 : 18 ] It will provoke jealousy and anger, but it will also provoke others to questions, ask, can I have that Lord? Does he love me?

And to move others and to provoke God by seeing that unity that we enjoy in adding to our number those who are being saved.

And God had a purpose for them here. Where there is unity, trials come, but blessings follow as well.

And God is able to give us blessing upon blessing. There was a wonderful story told of a man, a Christian man, and he met with a friend in the morning as he was out for a walk.

And a friend asked him, how are you today? And he said, I'm burdened this morning. And the man looked so happy.

[ 49 : 18 ] And his friend was thinking, I wouldn't expect you to look so happy if you're burdened. And he said, are you really burdened? You don't look it. And he said, yes, I'm wonderfully

burdened.

And it's an over abundance of blessing, he said. I can't find time or words to express it. And his friend was just looking confused.

He was wondering, what is this man talking about? Burdened and yet full of joy? And he said, I'm referring to Psalm 68 verse 19. And that, he says, describes my condition today.

Because in that verse, the Father in heaven reminds us, he daily loads us with benefits. That is a burden that he was feeling. That was the blessing that he knew in obedience to God.

If we have these words in the Psalter version, he daily with his benefits as plenteously doth load. He burdens us with blessings.

[ 50 : 22 ] Obedience leads to trials, but it never leads to the absence of God with us. And the last thing we just want to take from this is that trials, they lead to opportunities.

And when we look at the believers here as they were together in this way, as they had this unity, as they were seeing God's hand upon them, even in the midst of challenges, what did it do for them? Well, it gave them great opportunities to speak among these high priests and Sadducees and all the people around them. They were called into their midst.

Even though they'd been put into prison, they still had an opportunity to witness to those around them. And today we live in a world that more and more we need to take these opportunities to witness to those around us, to provoke them to response.

Even if that response is anger initially, we still need to stand up for the Lord, to show our unity, to show that we enjoy the blessing of God no matter what, that he is with us.

[ 51 : 34 ] They had been thrown into prison and then remarkably this angel came to them and they were released from prison in an amazing way. But what did they do when they were released?

It says in verse 21, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. They were not ashamed of the gospel.

They were not ashamed of what it stood for. They were not afraid of the consequences that might come their way. We must obey God rather than men. The opportunity was there for them to proclaim the gospel of Jesus, the forgiveness of sin that comes through him.

You might expect after being released from prison, they would run away from the situation they were in. They would see it as a close shave, a close escape, but no. They go right back into the heart of where the trouble was and they proclaim the Lord Jesus as the way to salvation.

salvation. If we were told today as they were not to teach the Bible, not to stand up for the truth, not to proclaim the Lord as Savior, what would you do?

[ 53 : 00 ] Who would you be obedient to? Would you have the response of Peter and the apostles, we must obey God rather than men?

If you say yes to that, what do you say to every command that the Lord gives to you? Will you stand up on the side of your Lord?

You say to yourself, but I'm not qualified, I'm not gifted. And we look around us and we see some great apologists, defenders of the faith, gifted men and women who are able to express themselves and stand up for the faith in amazing ways.

Men like John Lennox, professor of mathematics at Oxford University, he's able to stand and speak on the side of Christ in powerful ways.

It doesn't seem to matter what question comes at him, he's got an answer immediately and you're thinking to yourself, if only I could do that. Or Rosaria Butterfield, an American professor, was an atheist for so long and amazingly saved by the grace of God and now speaking out on the side of Christ.

[ 54 : 16 ] Powerful speaker. They come under attack for their faith, but they will always stand up for their saviour because they have that heart.

We must obey God rather than men. But just because we're not all gifted or prominent like these people, just because we don't always have all the answers or maybe we don't even know what to say at times, God still asks for obedience from us.

When the angel came to the apostles here in verse 20, the angel said, go and stand in the temple and speak. The angel wasn't going to speak the message.

They were to go. They were to speak. And you ask yourself, how can I witness for the Lord? If only I could witness for the Lord in this way.

Well, the Lord calls us to obedience. And we can all proclaim the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 11, verse 24, words no doubt we'll hear, next Lord's day God willing.

[ 55 : 38 ] It says there, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is a new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

You can proclaim God. You don't have to be gifted like John Lennox or Rosaria Butterfield. You don't have to have all the answers, yet you can still proclaim God in a powerful way.

How? By eating the bread and drinking the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. You are showing your obedience to God and not men.

And in so doing, you will provoke a response. A response of those around you of more thankfulness. A response of those around you to think maybe of their own salvation.

[ 56 : 55 ] A response to others who will maybe rebuke you and challenge you. But you must obey God and not men. Because it will provoke a response from God.

A blessing that follows obedience. An assurance. A joy. A comfort. It will stir up an attack of Satan, no doubt as well.

But God will be with you. We were reminded of that this morning. proclaim the Lord's death till he comes.

Is there any more powerful thing that you can do than to show you love the Lord with all your heart by being obedient in that? Richard Baxter wrote a hymn, Lord, it belongs not to my care.

I'm sure many of you have heard the last verse quoted. It's a beautiful verse, reminds us of what's to come. The last verse says, my knowledge of that life is small, the eye of faith is dim, but tis enough that Christ knows all, and I shall be with him.

[ 58 : 08 ] Beautiful words of what is to come. But how does it start? The first few verses go like this, Lord, it belongs not to my care, whether I die or live.

To love and serve thee is my share, and this thy grace must give. If life be long, I will be glad that I may long obey. If short, yet why should I be sad to soar to endless day?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms than he went through before. He that to God's kingdom comes must enter by this door.

The blessing that is to be with him. It starts by obedience to him now. He has his kingdom.

And he that to God's kingdom comes must enter by this door. The door of faith. The door of obedience.

[ 59 : 15 ] The door of trust. As we go into the week ahead as we go on with all that we've heard today this morning and this evening.

This morning there was the invitation come. Come. And this evening it's about obey.

Be obedient. Trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

May he help us to come and trust and be obedient to him that we might know his wonderful blessing. Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we rejoice in your gospel that it is a word to all, that there is no one who is left out of it, young and old, men and women, boys and girls.

[ 60 : 16 ] It speaks to each one of us and it challenges us to come and put our trust in you. It challenges us to obedience to you, to come and do this in remembrance of you.

And so we thank you, Lord, that it is a powerful invitation and something that demands our obedience. For to say no or in another time is to be disobedient.

But Lord, we pray that you will help us in our hearts to hear your word and to know your spirit, the one that says to come to me. Lord, hear us we pray and forgive us our sins as we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 24 in the Sing Psalms. Page 28 of the Psalm books.

Psalm 24 we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 6. The world and all in it are gods, all peoples of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath.

[ 61 : 26 ] And verse 5, he will find favour from the Lord and from his saviour grace. Thus are they blessed, O Jacob's God, who truly seek your face.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 6 to God's praise, and the tune is Jackson. The world and all in it are gods, all peoples of the earth, for it was founded by the Lord upon the seas beneath.

Who may ascend the hill of God or in his temple stand, the one who shuns false gods and lies,  
whose pure in heart and land.

He will find favour from the Lord and from the Saviour grace.

Thus are they blessed, O Jacob's God, who truly seek your grace.

[ 63 : 09 ] I should have intimated earlier the YF meets tonight as well. That's immediately after the service and that's going to be up at the Francis Street Mance. You'll hear from James and Donna about their life in ministry, so young folks are invited up there just now.

After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right here. We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.