

The Miracles of Christ - Peaceful Resistance - A Slight Departure

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[0 : 00] Last week we departed just briefly and we're still actually departing somewhat from the subject of the miracles, although we intend to continue those and we will resume them next week, dealing specifically with the miracles of Christ.

But in our last session we dealt with one particular miracle from the Old Testament. You'll recall that the reason I did that was because I'd forgotten the recorder and we couldn't get it recorded.

So we delved into 2 Kings chapter 5. We're not going there now, but I just want to remind you that it was in connection with an Old Testament miracle involving Elisha and Naaman and the seven ducks in the muddy river and how he was healed of his leprosy and it was quite a remarkable story for anybody who didn't get it or is not aware of it.

We would recommend that you consider 2 Kings chapter 5 and you'll find the account there. It is one of the more remarkable stories of healing in the Old Testament.

In connection with that, we noted that the reason that he was directed to Elijah or Elisha for the healing was because of a little Jewish maiden who had actually been kidnapped by the opposing army of the Syrians, taken into Syria, swept away from her homeland and her family in Israel, made a prisoner and a servant of Naaman's, who was the commanding general of Naaman's wife in his household.

[1 : 40] And they were lamenting the fact that Naaman, who was the commanding general of all of the forces of Syria, had contracted leprosy.

It was a dread disease and always terminal, always fatal. And that little Jewish girl, who was serving in their household in the capacity of a slave or a servant, remarked to her mistress that there was a man in Israel that could cure Naaman of his leprosy.

And when his wife told him about that, he as much as figured, well, it probably won't work, but it wouldn't do any harm, and there's no harm in trying, so I'm going to go there.

There's nothing else that I have going that could possibly cure this leprosy. So long story short, he was cured of the leprosy. But the question that plagued us all, and that I want to address now, is why in the world would a little girl, we're not given her age, she was probably a young teenager, kidnapped from her family and her country to serve as a virtual slave in the household of foreigners, why in the world would she volunteer information like that that could aid those who kidnapped her?

You would think that the spirit of resentment would be so powerful that she wouldn't breathe a word of it because she wouldn't want him to be healed.

[3 : 19] But she had a completely opposite attitude. And the question that I want to pose to you is, why should she have felt and thought that way when she had a perfect opportunity to keep quiet and let this guy go ahead and die of his leprosy?

It would serve him right. But she didn't. And you can fast forward, or in this case, we'll go back a couple thousand years to the time of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt.

And when he was there, having done some right things, he was put in prison as if he had done wrong things. And yet, he was not bitter, and he did not recriminate against his captives.

But he offered advice that would rescue the entire nation of Egypt by revealing to them the dream that Pharaoh had that he could not interpret.

And it involved seven years of plenty that would be followed with seven years of famine. And the Pharaoh took his advice, and as a result, the whole nation of Egypt was saved, while all the rest of the area was subjected to a famine.

[4 : 39] And eventually, all of Joseph's family, numbering seven all together, came down to Egypt. They were there in the land of Goshen for some 400 years before Moses led them out through a series of miracles.

So we've got another instance where Joseph, who had been sold into Egyptian slavery, volunteered helpful information that resulted in sparing the nation of which he was a prisoner.

And we look for a reason for rationale for that, and we just, in our humanness, we just cannot seem to find any. And when you come into the New Testament, actually you could stay in the Old because we find instances of this.

And perhaps one that is more better known as Daniel and the three Hebrew children, they were captives also, made prisoners of the Babylonians, carried away from the land of Israel, and placed in servitude there in Babylon.

And lo and behold, these three young men who refused to worship the idol that had been set up, were cast into the fiery furnace, and they were told in advance that you either bow down and you serve this idol, or you'll go into the fiery furnace.

[6 : 03] And these three young men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, rather than submit to that, said, we cannot do what you ask because of our loyalty and devotion to our God.

We cannot bow down and worship. Well, then you'll be thrown into the fiery furnace. And their response was, well, we're certainly not looking forward to that, but you'll just have to do what you have to do, and our God is able to deliver us from that fiery furnace.

But if he doesn't, if he doesn't, we still cannot serve you. And you know the story of the fiery furnace, and they were spared. Daniel, one of their colleagues, would suffer the same kind of fate in principle because he was insistent on praying to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he was doing so, and that was strictly forbidden, and he was discovered and turned into the authorities, and they had already established the penalty that anyone that would not bow down to that idol would be placed into the den of lions.

And they told Daniel that that's going to be his fate. Daniel said, well, you'll just have to do what you have to do, but I can't. You see, I am marching to the drumbeat of a different commander, and I cannot violate my loyalty to him.

So I guess you'll just have to put me in with the den of lions. And they did. And the next morning, as they went there to examine what probably would have been the remains of Daniel, we're told that he was there in the midst of the lions and just enjoying a good time of fellowship with the felines.

[7 : 52] So what can you attribute that to? As you come in then to the New Testament, we find an occasion where our Lord is confronted with hostile troops from the temple who have come to arrest him, and Peter was convinced that that was not going to be, and we can take these guys.

And Peter pulled out his knife and sliced off the ear, his sword and sliced off the ear of Malchus' servant, and Jesus told him, put away your sword, Peter.

We are not going to oppose these people. We are going to submit to their demands. They arrested Jesus, took him off to Caiaphas, the high priest, and eventually before Pontius Pilate, and you know the rest of the story, the cross and all of it.

And yet, when our Lord was accosted, he reviled not. When he was crucified, he did not curse. He did not utter any epithet saying, we'll get even with you or anything like that.

He submitted himself to those who contributed to and were responsible for his death. And we give you all of this background to ask the question, what was it about these people?

[9 : 09] What was it about these people that allowed them to have that kind of an attitude? Why didn't they fight? Why didn't they resist? We've got examples in modern history with Mahatma Gandhi.

Remember that? Some of you do, years ago. India. And even more recently with Dr. Martin Luther King, whose peaceful resistance, compliance but still resistance, peaceful resistance, in the face of tremendous opposition, remember reading and hearing and seeing the videos about Bull Connor sicking the police dogs on the blacks that were protesting in Selma, Alabama, and the crossing of the bridge, and all the rest.

Martin Luther King thrown in jail and all the rest of it. And yet, that lack of resistance, that unwillingness to fight in order to preserve what you thought were your rights and your privileges and so on, they submitted to them.

There is a principle there. What would you attribute it to? What could be the ulterior motive or the motivating factor that led them to do that, that caused them not to resist?

What would you suggest? Anyone? He understood God's love that God knows everyone. Okay. God's love certainly entered into it, but there's another item, God's love, and it too involves God and His attributes, and the one I'm looking for is God's sovereignty, God's confidence, their confidence in God and His wisdom and ability to either deliver them from death or deliver them through death.

[11 : 06] But either way, it would be a deliverance and their loyalty would not be turned aside. That is putting your faith where your mouth says it is.

That's when push comes to shove that people find out what they're really made of. And we find a more recent example of that as you turn to Acts chapter 5, and that's where we'll be for this morning, at least for a while.

And in it, we find that same kind of attitude prevailing. It is a peaceful resistance, a non-compliance, but the refusal to retaliate physically.

Remember when Jesus was confronted by some who wanted to trip Him up and they thought, we'll give Him a question, and no matter how He answers this question, we got Him.

And they showed Him a coin, or they had a coin, and they said, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not? Now, this question was asked in the midst of a lot of people there.

[12 : 25] And most of them, of course, were Jews, were fellow Jews. And they knew that if Jesus says, well, you're supposed to pay your tribute to Caesar, that was not going to sit well with the crowd because everyone in that crowd resented Caesar, their occupation of Israel, and their demand that they pay tribute money into the coffers of Rome.

And they hated Rome with a passion. So if Jesus says, no, you pay the tribute, He's going to look bad in the face of all of His fellow Jews. On the other hand, if He says, no, you don't pay the tribute, then He can be accused of insurrection and rebellion against the authority of Rome, and He could bring the Roman authorities down on Him, and instead He said, show me a coin.

And they showed Him a coin, and He says, whose image or superscription is on this coin? And they said, well, Caesar.

And Jesus said, all right, then you give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and give to God what is God's. And they scratched their head and said, what are we going to do with that?

And so there was an opportunity for Jesus to have actually incited some kind of opposition by saying, no, you don't give them a cent of God's money.

[13 : 54] You don't pay money to Caesar. You don't give in to them, and so on. And that would have been, could that have been justified? Well, humanly speaking, absolutely.

They were people who were under oppression, and they were trying to break free. And you know, Israel had occasions for doing that. Every now and then, they would get riled up, particularly in connection with some of the holy days, and they would start an insurrection, and they had a group of people.

In fact, one of them was one of Jesus' disciples. Remember hearing about Simon Zelotes? Simon Zelotes, Simon Z.

He was a zealot. He belonged to an opposition, clandestine, political party, that was known to have dreams and visions of fighting against Rome and overthrowing Roman authority and taking back the government of their country.

And these people were called zealots. Simon was one of the disciples, one of the apostles of our Lord, and he belonged to that group. During World War II, there was the French underground that fought against the Nazis, and so on, and all of that was in opposition.

[15 : 10] And when Jesus was placed on that cross, we are told in Peter's epistle that he did not revile in return, that he did not condemn. He submitted himself to him who judges righteously.

And there again is another example. Jesus on the cross wasn't cursing, wasn't saying, I'll get even with you, and so on. He submitted himself. All because of one particular mindset.

They had an unflagging, unfailing confidence in the wisdom and sovereignty of God so they were not able to oppose on their own.

And they didn't. And there is a valuable lesson. We see this even today, and here in Acts chapter 4, we've got another illustration of it. If you will look at it, please. This is in connection with their being arrested.

And we are told that in verse 1 of chapter 4, as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees, now keep in mind the significant thing about this, these are all Jews.

[16 : 22] There are no Romans involved here. These are all Jews. And they are of the temple. And they came upon them, that is, Peter and John and the other apostles, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And by the way, this is now at least six weeks, this is about, probably about two months after the ascension of Christ back to, I'm sorry, about two weeks after the ascension of Christ back to heaven.

And what they were preaching was contrary to the party line because what, what was the official Jewish answer to the resurrection of Christ?

Well, he wasn't resurrected at all. There wasn't any resurrection of the body. While the guards slept, his disciples came in at night and stole away the body and proclaimed that he was raised from the dead.

And the text tells us that that is the official line and story that is given among the Jewish people to this day as regards the resurrection of Christ.

[17 : 37] That's their explanation of what happened. He wasn't resurrected at all. His body was stolen away and we don't know what happened to it but there was no resurrection. And now, Peter and John and the other apostles are preaching the bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead and the more they preach it the more people are believing it and its thing is beginning to get out of hand.

It is not hewing the party line. They already had fake news out there but this was real news that they were giving and it was confrontational and they were greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead and they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day for it was already evening.

But many of those who had heard the message believed and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

This is an additional three thousand added to the two thousand I'm sorry two thousand added to the three thousand that believed on the day of Pentecost just a couple of days earlier than this.

Now that three thousand has grown to five thousand and the official authorities are beginning to get worried because this thing is getting out of hand.

[19 : 07] So they decide that they're going to have to silence them and Annas in verse 6 the high priest was there Caiaphas John and Alexander all who were of highly priestly descent.

These are the shakers and movers of Israel. These are the religious authorities. These are guys who were also in cooperation and in bed if you will with the Romans because they did their bidding and they were responsible to keep a lid on the Jewish people so that there wouldn't be any insurrections or riots or anything like that and that's exactly what they're trying to do.

We are told that in verse 7 they said placed them in their center they began to inquire by what power or in what name have you done this? And Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them rulers and elders of the people if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man as to how this man and I'm sure he was standing right there with them as to how this man has been made well let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead by this name this man stands here before you in good health and then a verse is quoted from the Old Testament he Jesus is the stone which was rejected by you the builders but which became the very cornerstone and there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved and these guys these official guys are standing there listening to

Peter say this and they're going over in their minds what are we going to do with these guys this thing is really good and they observed the confidence they observed the confidence some translations render it the boldness of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men they were marveling and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus what a compliment what a compliment they are speaking with boldness and as I've related to you before nothing gives a speaker more boldness than knowing that he knows what he's talking about what he has witnessed what he has seen what he has heard what he is sure of he has confidence in the message and these guys knew whereof they were speaking they spent six weeks with Jesus after the resurrection and they ate broiled fish with him they knew that he was alive and they were not going to be denied we can't deny that hey we know what we know and they threatened them in verse 17 in order that it may not spread any further among the people let us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name and when they had summoned them they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of

Jesus this is first century being cancelled a lot of this cancellation stuff is going on today there's nothing new about it they were trying to cancel these guys back here 2,000 years ago shut them up when you cannot answer or defeat a man's arguments shut him up don't let him speak shout him down don't give him the floor because what he has to say is dangerous and people know that if someone is able to speak freely there's going to be a certain number of people that's going to believe what they say and this thing is going to grow so the name of the game is shut them up don't let them speak they won't make any converts that way they can't be heard silence them that was the name of the game and by the way as you know as well as I do that's going on today in a lot of venues a lot of circles and for the same reasons when people are invited into some of the liberal college campuses to speak and address issues that are going on in our world today very often there is a faction that is gathered there that demands that they not speak that they shout them down they disrupt the meeting and they cannot afford to let that person speak because there will be some who will believe the message and the numbers may grow and that will provide more opposition to our cause so the name of the game is silence them don't let them speak actually it is a testimony it is a testimony to their fear and their vulnerability if you refuse to let someone speak it's only because you know that they've got a message that may be believed and the honorable thing to do the honorable thing to do is to let both sides of the party speak let them make their case and then let the people decide where the truth lies and which way they want to go but when you only hear one side boring and by the way this is exactly what's going on in the media today so much is selectively ignored and others are selectively covered and the

[25 : 23] American people are beginning to see through it but there are too many who do not so what we've got here is an age old problem it goes all the way back thousands of years goes all the way back even to Egypt if you will what shall we do verse 16 what shall we do with these men look at this verse 15 says they had ordered them to go aside out of the council and they began to confer with one another you guys get over there we'll tend to you later so they call their little group together and they got a huddle and they say guys what are we going to do how are is mentioned for the fact they even call it that fact for the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place what are they talking about they're talking about this man in chapter three who was lame from his mother's womb he was in his forties and had never stood on two feet in his life and he's healed and dancing around and everybody knows this guy and they know he's healed they know he's well and the authorities say the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in

Jerusalem and we cannot deny it isn't that something to even make that admission and the impression is if we could deny it we would in a heartbeat but we can't because too many people know it's true what are we going to do and they come to the conclusion they call them back into their presence and they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus got that you be quiet we don't want to hear another word out of you about Jesus or there's going to be big trouble got that and Peter and John answered and said whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God you be the judge all we know is this we cannot

I love that word we cannot we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard we just can't dummy up we've got to tell people after all they were commanded to give this word and that's what they're doing and when they had threatened them further they let them go finding no basis on which they might punish them they tried to manufacture some kind of grounds but they couldn't and look on account of the people it would really make them look bad if they came against them in a more direct way all of these people are going to be witnesses they're going to see what's going on and what that's not going to play well in Peoria so what are we going to do when they the man was about 40 years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed and when they had been released that is

Peter and John they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them and they put them they told them they put us under a warning they gave us an ultimatum that we had to stop speaking and they prayed and said oh Lord it is thou that make the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them who by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father David thy servant did say why did the Gentiles rage and the people devise futile things the kings of the earth for truly in this city Jerusalem there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus whom thou didst anoint both Herod and Pontius Pilate along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever thy hand and thy purpose predestined to occur and now

Lord look I love this verse and now Lord take note of their threats and grant that thy bond servants grant that we may speak thy word with all confidence and boldness while you do extend your hand to heal and signs and wonders take place through the name of the holy servant Jesus and when they had prayed the place where they had gathered together was shaken it's almost as if God is giving a kind of physical response to their prayer and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness now fellas when you flip the page and come over to chapter 5 let's come down if we may you know they put them in prison and the angel of the Lord miraculously led them out of prison and we we we we are told that that they are free and verse 26 says when the captain went along with the officers proceeded to bring them back that is bring them back out of the prison without violence for they were afraid of the people lest they should be stoned that is the people would stone them because of what they were doing and when they had brought them they stood them before the council and the high priest questioned them saying we gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name behold you have filled

[31 : 45] Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us that is of course the blood of Christ and Peter and the apostles answered and said we must obey God rather than men the God of our fathers raised up Jesus I can just see the scowl coming across the faces of these people that Peter is talking to the God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you had put to death by hanging him on a cross he is the one whom God exalted to his right hand as a prince and a savior to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins and we are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him and when they heard this they were cut to the quick and intended this really penetrate really got to them these guys are just boiling over with anger you can see it on their faces they are filled with anger and hatred toward this message and when they heard this they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them and then

Gamaliel speaks up on their behalf and says listen we've had similar situations in the past where different ones claimed things and they were raised up supposedly by God and they came to not and their cause fizzled out and nothing came of it because God wasn't in it but let me tell you fellas if God happens to be in this thing and you oppose it that's the same thing as opposing God himself and you're not going to win so my advice is just leave them alone don't do anything but then they wouldn't do that so the text goes on to say they went their way verse 40 and they took his advice well they only partly took his advice they took his advice and after calling the apostles in they flogged them that is a severe beating that is a lashing they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of

Jesus and then release now before all we did was give you verbal warnings but now we're going to give you something you can feel and you'll remember this and they beat them but they still could not beat them into silence and they went on their way from the presence of the council and would you look at this rejoicing rejoicing after being flogged rejoicing what are you going to do with people like this rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name and were they silent nope every day in the temple and from house to house this is door to door evangelism they kept right on teaching and preaching

Jesus as the Messiah I tell you there are some truths that just will not be silenced because people who hold them know what they know and they cannot remain quiet but you do not get any impression at all that Peter and the twelve were saying anything like what we need to do is get a group together and attack these people and overthrow them overthrow the chief priests and the Sadducees and the Pharisees and all that and take back our country and seize them no indication that they were physically involved or even thinking about it but they submitted themselves to this ungodly authority knowing that they were doing so under the approval and the attitude of their God is there a lesson there for us as believers today

I believe there is I believe there is we are to submit Romans chapter 13 makes it clear that the powers that be are ordained of God and we are to submit to the authorities that are placed over us and the principle is this that we are to do what Caesar requires by law that means as responsible Christians we have an obligation to submit to authority to pay our taxes to obey the traffic rules to not commit crime and if we are confronted because sometimes sometimes you can be punished by authorities for doing the right thing we expect to be punished for doing the wrong thing but we don't expect to suffer ill for doing the right thing but if it's the authorities who are in the wrong it's a little thing called injustice and there's a lot of injustice that takes place in this country because the law is limited to the wisdom and the integrity of the people who enforce it and if they are in question or if they are corrupt you need to look for justice from them you only look for more injustice and that's what takes place that's what evil does and it's good to the comes to put the ■■ might be good up things good the