

Acts Chapter 28

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Date: 27 December 2013

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Sure appreciate you all being here. And a special greeting to our Graham Grapplers. The place is filled with falcons this morning. So thanks guys for being here. We appreciate it.

We've got a little tradition going here, don't we, for Thursday morning and Thanksgiving Day. And I wish you all a happy Thanksgiving. Anything that you'd like to bring us by way of an update with the wrestling team, prospects, future, etc.?

Okay.

Okay. Our token Troy Christian guy. Okay. Yeah. Okay, great. Well, I appreciate you all being here.

We're going to do things just a little bit different regarding the food. We'll do this like we did last year. Usually there's just maybe a couple dozen of us here and they wait until all the food's up and bring it out all at once.

[1 : 0 6] But because we've got a goodly number here this morning, they're just going to bring the food out as it's ready. So when you get your meal, just start eating. And we'll have already returned thanks and we'll kind of be eating in shifts because everyone won't be served at the same time.

But we want you to be served when your food is still hot. So when it comes, you keep eating and I'll keep talking and we'll do just fine. Okay. Thank you. Appreciate you coming and wish you all a happy Thanksgiving.

And let's have a word of prayer together. We're grateful, Father, for this season of the year and for the things to celebrate that those who are in Christ really have to celebrate that the world knows not of.

And we ask that as we engage the subject this morning, you will use it to stimulate and encourage each of us. And where conviction is needed, that might be there. Where encouragement is needed, that might be there.

Because you are the only sufficient one capable of ministering to each of our individual needs as you know them to exist. So thank you for the gathering this morning. Thank you for the meal that we'll be enjoying shortly.

[2 : 1 1] And thank you especially for the Thanksgiving meals that so many families will enjoy in a special time of togetherness today. We give it all to you with great Thanksgiving in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, I want you to all use your imagination just a little bit and try to create a scene in your mind's eye. And what we've got here that I want you to contemplate is several men in a locker room of a golf club.

And a cellular phone on the bench rings. And a man engages the hands-free speaker function and begins to talk.

Everyone else in the room stops to listen. Guys are going back and forth to the shower and everything. And they just kind of get their attention with this ringing phone.

So with it being on the speaker so everybody can hear, this guy picks up the phone. Hello? The woman's voice on the other end says, Hi, honey. It's me. Are you at the club?

[3 : 14] Yes. The woman says, I'm at the shops now and found this beautiful leather coat. It's only \$2,000. Is it okay if I buy it?

The man says, Sure. Go ahead if you like it that much. Then she says, I also stopped by the Lexus dealership and saw the new models. I saw one I really liked and in the perfect color.

How much? She says, \$90,000. I said, Okay, but for that price, I want it with all the options. She said, Great.

Oh, and just one more thing. I was just talking to Janie and found out that the house we wanted last year is back on the market. They're only asking \$980,000 for it.

She said, Well, then, go ahead and make an offer of \$900,000. They'll probably take it. But if not, we can go the extra \$80,000 if it's what you really want.

[4 : 20] She says, Okay, I'll see you later. I love you so much. Oh, bye. I love you too. The man hangs up. The other men in the locker room are staring at him in astonishment, mouths wide open.

He turns and asks, Anyone know whose phone this is? Boy, that's in hock big time, huh?

I've got a few copies of this volume number six remaining, and we give these out at Christmas time, distributed by the thousands.

And each of the guys over here probably don't have one before. I've got a couple. One of them is for you, and one of them is for give to anybody that you want. But we can safely say that the contents of this CD really is the reason for the season, and it's what it is all about.

It deals with every aspect that we could think of regarding the person of Christ even before he was born in Bethlehem. He had a preexistence, and we deal a little bit with that.

[5 : 33] And it goes all the way through his earthly ministry, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and his coming again. They're all on these discs, and there are 22 segments on here.

Each one is just three and a half minutes long, but you're welcome to them. And we do have a few extras, and if anybody wants them, feel free to stop on your way out and pick up one. I've got a passage here in Matthew that I want to talk to you about a little bit, because it bears one of the world's best kept secrets.

It's something that the world really doesn't appreciate, doesn't understand. And unfortunately, a lot of Christians don't understand it either. And the principle is poured out of the pages right here in Matthew chapter 20, when an interesting scene takes place on behalf of two apostles, James and John.

These are sons of Zebedee. Both of these guys are fishermen by trade. They had a family business. Their father Zebedee headed up the business, and these boys were in it. And they were two of the first apostles that Christ called when he came on the scene and started his earthly ministry.

And it has been taking place now for approximately three years. He's coming near the end of his ministry when it won't be long, and Christ will be arrested, tried, and crucified.

[6 : 58] But before that, one of the most interesting things takes place that sets forth a principle that I want to talk to you about. And as I mentioned, this is something the world really doesn't understand, doesn't know anything about.

But here's the scene. The mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons. Now, you've got to remember, these are men. Her sons are in their men probably somewhere in their mid-twenties to early thirties.

So they are not little boys that this woman is bringing to Jesus. And we are told that she bows down to him and makes a request of him.

You've got to remember that this is against the backdrop of a dramatic ministry that Christ has already had for the past three years. He's delivered some incredible teachings. He's performed a number of miracles.

He's established a tremendous reputation. Everybody's familiar with him. And this mother, who had obviously been a supporter of Jesus in her ministry, brings her two adult sons.

[8 : 04] And this is a mother-child thing that is different from our relationship because today a couple of guys in their twenties or thirties would probably be embarrassed to be accompanying their mother for something like this.

But this was a different culture. And anyway, she said she wanted to make a request of Jesus. And he said, what do you wish? What is it you want? He asked her, what is it you want?

And she said to him, command that in your kingdom, when these two sons of mine may sit one on your right hand and one on your left.

Now we've got to understand this setting just a little bit because it's not all that clear on the surface. Jesus had been preaching and teaching about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God coming to earth.

And he was going to be the one to establish it. They thought that this was going to be an earthly kingdom and that Christ was about to take charge of everything.

[9 : 04] That, of course, meant chasing the Romans out of the country, setting up the throne of David, and reigning there as a king supreme. This is the kingdom they were anticipating. And one day, it is going to come.

But they didn't understand that this was not the time. And they thought it was. When Jesus later will ride into Jerusalem on that donkey on Palm Sunday, and they'll be waving palm branches and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David.

They thought that's what he was going to do there. And then, that he was going to establish that kingdom. He was going to go right into the temple, set up the throne of David, chase out the Romans. Everything was going to be wonderful.

That was their anticipation. And this woman is saying, we understand that that's going to happen. And it's going to be very soon. And I just want to put in dibs for my two boys here.

What she's asking for is something like a cabinet position. That these two sons of hers will enjoy an elevated position in the kingdom. One will be on the right hand of Jesus.

[10 : 07] The other will be on the left. And of course, those would be positions of great influence and great power. So, she is thinking, these two boys of mine have been very faithful and very diligent in following Jesus, in obeying his commands, etc.

I want to make sure that when you establish that kingdom, these two sons of mine are amply rewarded. Can you do that? And Jesus answered and said unto her, You do not know what you are asking for.

Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? I am sure he looked at these boys, these men, when he said that. And he told the mother, You really do not understand what you are asking.

And then he looked at James and John and said, Are you fellows able? Do you think you are able to drink of the cup that I am going to drink of?

And without hesitation they said, Yeah! Yeah, right! Yeah, sure! They didn't understand at all that the cup he was talking of is a cup of sorrow and a cup of death.

[11 : 21] And it involved what was soon going to take place by way of his arrest and trial and crucifixion. They didn't understand that.

And they said, We are able, not realizing what they were saying. And Jesus said, My cup you shall drink. What did he mean by that?

That was a statement to the effect that these two are going to suffer. They are going to be martyred. At least John will be martyred by way of exile to Patmos.

And we know that James will die by the sword. So he is going to die. And Jesus admitted that. And he said, My cup you shall drink. But to sit on the right hand and on my left hand, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.

In other words, someone else is going to make that choice. And hearing this, the ten, that is the other apostles. Remember there were twelve.

[12 : 27] They are talking about the two. And the ten are there also. And they are listening to this conversation. And they know that the mother of James and John has put in a bid for these two sons of hers to sit, one on the right hand and one on the left.

And when the ten heard this whole thing, they were ticked. I mean, hey, hey, what is going on? What are we, chopped liver? I mean, what is this all about anyway?

And they were offended at that. The text says, The ten became indignant, ticked off at the two brothers.

But Jesus called them to himself and said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles... Now, Gentiles are people who are not Jewish.

And immediately, you would think of the Gentiles who comprised the Roman army that was there occupying Israel, occupying Jerusalem at the time.

[13 : 29] They constituted the largest number of Gentiles in the whole area because the virtual population of Israel was all Jewish. But they had been invaded and conquered.

And there are Roman soldiers there, probably by the thousands, occupying that place. They, of course, are Gentiles. They are non-Jews. And Jesus said, You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them.

And their great men exercise authority over them. You understand that's the way it works? That's the way the world operates? It starts, in this case, with the Caesar of Rome.

He is the one who is the head of the entire Roman Empire. And many people even deified him and thought he was God. He would issue orders and all of his underlings would scurry about to fulfill those orders.

Carry out those orders. And they had a chain of command. It started with Caesar. Then it would go to the senators in Rome. Then it would go to the military commanders that were stationed all throughout the world.

[14 : 31] The generals and then the colonels and then the captains and then the sergeants and so on down to the private. You know how it is. They issue an order from the top and everybody below them carries it out. And that they regard as real power.

That's real authority. That's the way it works in the world. You understand that, Jesus is saying? And I'm sure their answer was yes. The Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them.

But it is not so among you. Now here is an enormous contrast. Because what the mother was requesting was that her sons be installed in an office or a position that would reflect power and authority.

And Christ is due that and he's going to exercise that, no question about it. But he says that's the way the world operates. But it is not to be that way among you.

And we bring this over to where we are today and it is not to be that way among you. Because what we have set forth here is an incredible, complete opposite of the way the world functions.

[15 : 45] The way the world functions is you put yourself in a position where you can have as much power and as much influence as possible.

That will be regarded as success. I mean, we are impressed when someone in the Oval Office, in the White House, can pick up the phone and within five minutes have a helicopter waiting for him on the White House lawn.

That's power. That's influence. We are impressed by that. The world is impressed by that. But what Jesus does is he puts a 180 degree twist on that.

And he says, that's not real power at all. Real power at all is not determined by how many people you can have serving you.

But it is in how many you can serve. This is all about developing a servant's heart.

[16 : 57] Because God's way up is down. This is something the world will never understand.

And unfortunately, many Christians don't understand it. But I'm really glad for so many young people here this morning because this is a principle. If you are able to pick up on it and build it into your life, it will give you true significance and real power in a way that the world can't understand.

Developing a servant's heart is completely contrary to our human nature. Because we all want to be served. We want our own way.

Tell us, we are natural born rebels. We tend to be self-seeking, self-serving, and self-satisfying. It's what I want that matters more than anything else.

This is the plight of the fallen world. This is the way they function. This is the way they operate. But for the believer, it's supposed to be the complete opposite.

[18 : 04] And it starts with understanding this powerful thing that God has given you called your volition. Your will. We are all endowed as a free moral agent.

We all have the power and the ability and the responsibility for making choices. Every day. Without even thinking about it.

You make all kinds of choices. Some of them are just small choices. I mean today. Is it going to be white meat or dark meat? You know? Small choices. But then there are really large choices that you make that will impact you and others for the rest of your life.

And the main choice that we can make is the capturing, the corralling, the submission of our own will to an authority that is above us.

And this starts in at a very, very early age. Way down like in the tender twos. And you know, somebody, especially if you're a young person, you might feel this way.

[19 : 14] Somebody is always telling you what to do. And very often, it isn't what you want to do. It's what they want you to do. But you've got a mind of your own.

You've got a will of your own. And you've got an agenda of your own. And you've got desires of your own that you want to fulfill. And that's what matters to you more than anything else in the world.

Let me tell you something. That's completely natural. That's completely natural. But God does not call us to a natural life. He calls us to a supernatural life.

And it begins when we submit voluntarily. You know that word volition? Comes from the same word as volunteer comes.

And it means when we determine by our own will, our own free will, our own volition, we determine to submit ourselves to the authority above us.

[20 : 18] And this begins with our parents at a very early age. We all know what parental authority means. And we all know how we tend to violate it.

We want to go against it. Because we want to do our own thing. When we see that full pound size of Hershey's chocolate bar, we want to eat the whole thing.

But mom and dad don't want you to do that. They won't let you do that. Now, a two-year-old is going to do that if you let them have their own way. Why? Because that's what they want. So the parent has to step in and say, no, no.

I know what's best for you. That'll just make you sick. I'm not going to let you have that. And what does a two-year-old start doing? He starts crying with, you don't love me. This kind of thing, you know. Because we resent authority coming down on us that contradicts what we want to do.

And let me tell you something. You will never outgrow that. It's always going to be that way. We are always going to chafe under authority. We are always going to murmur.

[21 : 22] We are always going to complain and gripe and bitch about this and that. Because somebody's coming down on us. And he's always trying to... I remember this. Hearing about this kid. He was 17 years old.

And he was talking to his counselor. And he said, I'm just getting sick and tired of everybody telling me what to do. And his counselor said, well, explain yourself.

What do you mean? He says, well, he said, I've got these teachers. They're always telling me, do this, do this. Don't do that. Don't do that. And I've got this coach. And he's always on my case. Do this and do that. And the workouts and all the rest. All these orders coming down.

And somebody's always telling me what to do. And somebody sent me to the principal's office because I had a bad attitude. And the principal was telling me what to do. I'm sick and tired of it. I'm fed up. And the guy says, so, what are you going to do?

And he said, I'm getting out of all of it. I'm going to join the Marines. You know, that's kind of the way we think. But, fellas, you need to know that to want your own way and to do your own thing is perfectly natural.

[22 : 27] And we're all constructed that way. But, if you want to do it God's way, if you want to do it the way he intended, we begin by submitting ourselves to his authority.

Because there is just really one God who is actually in charge. And it's not you. It's not me. And once we recognize that authority and then realize that God has set a chain of command under us, and there are those over us who are our authorities, and if we can learn to swallow the bitter pill of submitting to authority and do it with the right spirit, the time will come, trust me, when you will be in authority.

And you will be trusted with authority because you learned to develop a submissive spirit to those over you.

This is one of the most difficult things a human being has to contend with. And let me tell you something. For the non-Christian, they can't even do it. It's just not available to them.

But for the believer who has the Spirit of God dwelling within him, there is that potential and that opportunity. And we, with loving obedience, can submit to that which we recognize as an authority.

[23 : 56] And in doing so, you will be building and developing a servant's heart. And, fellas, there is no greater contribution that you can make.

To the world or to the cause of Christ than by developing a servant's heart. That's where the true authority is. And let me tell you something. That's where real satisfaction and fulfillment comes in.