

A Prince and Saviour

by Carl Armerding

Carl Armerding's sermon emphasizes the importance of obeying God over human authority, highlighting Peter's courage and the significance of Jesus as both prince and savior.

Duration: 39:17

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 5:29-30, Acts 5:32

Topics: "Saviour"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes three main points. Firstly, he highlights that the men preaching the word of God were subject to divine authority. Secondly, he emphasizes that their purpose was to present Jesus Christ as the central figure. Lastly, he discusses the importance of the word of God and how it remains true despite any attacks against it. The speaker also mentions his personal faith and how it has grown stronger over the years. The sermonette mentioned is a short but powerful message delivered by Peter in response to accusations against him for preaching about Jesus. The speaker also mentions the courage of Peter and other characters in the book of Acts who faced imprisonment for their preaching. The sermonette itself is less than sixty words and emphasizes the importance of obeying God rather than men. The speaker concludes by urging the audience to turn to chapter 5 of the book of Acts to further explore this inspiring church history.

Transcript

We're here to have friends with us this morning who were not with us previously this week. We just say that during the last week we were studying some in the Book of the Acts, and I had thought perhaps that I would do something else this week, but it just seems impossible to pull myself away from this wonderful Book of the Acts. So I'm going to ask you to turn, please, to chapter 5 of the Book of the Acts.

You know, of course, that this is the inspired Church history. Every man who attempts to write the history of the Church must, of necessity, consult this first Church history book which we have included in the New Testament in this Book of the Acts, beginning at chapter 5, verse 29. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

One cannot read this Book of the Acts without being impressed with the courage of these older Christians. There seems to have not been one coward among them. Perhaps the nearest we would come to that would be a man or boy called John Mark, who in the later chapters of this book returned from the work and went back to Jerusalem.

There has been a good deal of conjecture as to why John Mark left the work. Some thought maybe he left it because the going was pretty hard. He was with a veteran like Paul, who apparently took all kinds of hardship and thrived under it.

Others again have suggested that maybe John had a sweetheart back in Jerusalem and he just could not stay away too long, and so he decided he would go back again. But we are glad to note in the later writings of Paul that once again he looked upon John Mark as a faithful and profitable servant of the Lord. He said, Bring Mark with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Probably with this one exception, we could say all of the characters that are brought before us in the book of Acts are courageous men. In the first part of this book, Peter is prominent. In the second part of the book, Paul is prominent.

But this morning we want to talk about Peter and those who were immediately associated with him. They had been in prison before this for their preaching, and once again they are thrown into prison, and now they are called upon to give answer to those who had thrown them into prison. And if there was any such thing as a Shakespeare in the days of Peter, for I believe it was Shakespeare who gave us that wonderful aphorism that brevity is the soul of wit.

And here is a man who in less than sixty words gives to us what I think is one of the choice sermons or sermonettes. I do not like the word sermonette altogether. My friend Herbert Lockyer in England has kind of spoiled it for me.

He said these sermonettes are preached by preacherettes to Christianettes, and he did not like that. But we do have here a wonderful little sermonette of less than sixty words in the original language preached by this man Peter, given in response to the accusations which were leveled against him because he preached Jesus Christ and him crucified. You will notice in the opening verse of our lesson this morning, the first thing that Peter expresses here is the fact that he just simply cannot do otherwise, because he says we ought or we must, as another translation puts it, we must obey God rather than men.

Here is a man who had the courage of his convictions. It did not make any difference how high the office was which these men occupied, how glorious their titles might be, how wonderful their financial remuneration might be. Peter has none of this in mind, quite different from his present-day successor so-called.

But he is here to tell us that he is to obey God. And I rather like the word ought as we have it in our King James Version, for I understand that our word ought is a contraction of two words. We owe it.

We owe it to obey God rather than men. And here is a great word for any one of us who would witness for the Lord Jesus. It is not a question only of a man who stands up in the public platform as a recognized minister of the word of God, but this is something which we believe applies to every true believer in the Lord Jesus.

He needs to remember that he is subject to one authority only, and this is a tremendous thing. It takes one sometimes to places where he did not think of going otherwise, but he goes because he is under authority. And this is the thing that needs to be stressed in a day like this.

You know, people are rebelling against authority, and they are choosing whatever laws they think they would like to obey, and they wind up by obeying none of them. But this is the idea today. And not only that, but we seem to have a repetition of the early days of the Church in the opposition which there is to Christians in particular.

You find as you look into some of these things that are going on in the world today, men and women are being put to death not simply because they are Americans. It is true that the American is hated in many places in the world today, and I have been made painfully conscious of that myself in my travels around the world. And some of this hatred, I think, is perhaps well-earned, well-deserved, because we have been, shall I say, rather obnoxious in some places, so much so that sometimes one was almost ashamed to recognize fellow Americans by the way they behaved in foreign countries, the spectacle that they made of themselves.

But today I find that the opposition is not so much against a particular nationality as it is against a person who believes in the Lord Jesus. And you know it is not so many days ago since the report came to us over the radio about six missionaries being put to death in Vietnam, missionaries connected with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and how many others may have been done to death of the believers in Vietnam, this is a question which probably will only be answered at the judgment seat of Christ. And as I have reminded you in a previous talk last week, a report that came out of West China years ago, issued by the United States Press Agency, which of course is not a religious agency at all, telling us of 175,000 Chinese put to death for no other reason except that they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as one who is connected with the old China Inland Mission, now known as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, we have reason to believe from sources that we cannot name in particular this morning, we have reason to believe that there are somewhere between two and three millions of Chinese that have been put to death for no other reason except that they believe in the Lord Jesus. So that we are beginning to see a repetition of these early days of the Church. And the statement which we made last week I think is well supported, that there have been more martyrs to the Christian faith in this twentieth century than in all the previous nineteen centuries.

And the thing isn't going to get any better. And the question is, how shall we behave under such circumstances? I believe the scripture which we have just read this morning is the answer to that question. You know, to me it's remarkable how relevant and how meaningful the scripture becomes when you look at it in the light, shall we say, even of present day events.

And here is a man who begins by telling his captors, his enemies, we ought to obey God rather than men. That's where he starts. Well then the second thing he brings forth is that this God is none other than the God of their fathers.

It wasn't as if he was bringing some strange God to them. But you notice he says in verse thirty, the God of our fathers. Because his audience was probably largely made up of Jews.

As a matter of fact, those who had put him and his fellow apostles in prison were Jews. The Sadducees, to be sure, but they were Jews nevertheless. High priests.

And so he could speak to them about the God of our fathers, which of course would be what he called them in the third chapter of this book. The God of our father Abraham with Isaac and Jacob. Yes, the God of our fathers.

Here is something that this one has done. And what has he done? He has raised up Jesus. Now this does not refer to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus here.

This refers to his being brought into prominence. We have this same expression used right in the same book of the Acts in connection with David, whom God raised up. He put him into a place of prominence.

And in the ninth chapter of Romans we have the same word used of Pharaoh, where God says to Pharaoh, For this cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee. And so God raises up a man called Jesus, whom we've been looking at in his varied characters in the early chapters of this book. In the first chapter we saw him as the man who was taken up.

The man who is seated at the right hand of the majesty of the heavens today, ever living to make intercession for us. Then in chapter 2 we saw him as the man approved or accredited of God with miracles and wonders and signs. In chapter 3 we saw him there as the prince of life, whom they had put to death and so on.

Chapter 4, we saw him as the stone which had been disallowed by the builders become the head of the corner. Oh, the varied ways in which the Spirit of God brings our Lord Jesus Christ before us. But here he is, the man Jesus, whom God has raised up with his right hand.

God has exalted him with his right hand to be a prince and a savior. And what did they do with him? Oh, Peter doesn't pull his punches here for a minute. He says, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Whom ye slew. You notice he doesn't try to shift this blame off onto the Romans, as so many people are trying to do today, to be sort of conciliatory toward a certain racial group. But Peter doesn't do anything of the kind, even though he has a relationship with them.

He says, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. You know, it's interesting that Peter uses the word tree here instead of cross. Paul uses the word cross usually.

There's only one place where Paul uses the word tree, and that's in the epistles of the Galatians, where of course he refers back to a passage in the book of Deuteronomy where he says, Whosoever hangs on a tree is cursed. But Peter was using the word which was common among them for this mode of execution, a tree. But we have two words for tree in the original language of the New Testament.

We have a word dendron, which some of you will recognize a part of the word rhododendron, that beautiful shrub that grows in so much in the eastern part of our country here, and which we enjoy so much. Well, dendron is the Greek word for a living tree, a tree that's growing. But we have another word, zilon, which means a tree that's been cut down.

And yet remarkably, this is the word which is used in the book of Revelation for the tree of life. In both the second chapter of Revelation and in the 22nd chapter of Revelation, this is the word which is used for the tree of life, a tree which has been cut down. How suggestive this is, isn't it, of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was cut down, but who has now become the tree of life to you and to me, of whom that tree of life way back in the Garden of Eden was a picture.

And the Lord Jesus speaks of himself again and again in the New Testament as the life. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. I am the way, the truth, and the life, says he.

Yes, he is the life. He's the living one. And yet they slew him and hanged him on a tree.

Suggestive, I say, that they should hang him on that which is going to speak so eloquently of him as the one who died and rose again. I think there's something really designed about these choice of words. I'm such a firm believer in the verbal inspiration of Scripture that the selection of every word here has meaning for me.

The fact that there were two words from which he might have chosen, and he might have chosen the word dendron instead of the word zilon, but he didn't. He chose the word which the Holy Spirit wanted to put here. And this does not minimize for one moment, dear friends, the fact that this is known elsewhere as the cross.

This is what Peter is preaching, Christ and him crucified. To the Jews, a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, foolishness. But unto us who are saved, it's the power of God.

I know people sometimes say, oh, you mustn't talk about that horrible thing. It doesn't fit in our present philosophy of life. But, dear friends, it fits in the word of God.

And this is fundamental to our Christian faith. And so, as I said a few minutes ago, Peter here, in this very brief sermon, bringing out this wonderful fact of Christ crucified, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. But says somebody, yes, but you know, this is 1968, and that occurred way back there nearly 20 centuries ago, and now you want me to admit that I had a part in that? Well, I have an illustration which I think will make that clear.

You know, I wasn't living in this country in 1776, when 13 colonies were built against His Majesty King George III. I wasn't around then. But I was born in these United States many years after that revolt against King George III.

And as I grew up and read the story of that revolution, I had opportunity to take sides with the other party. In fact, I have lived eight consecutive years under the British flag, long enough to have qualified as a citizen. I've not only lived in Canada, I have lived in New Zealand.

I've spent some time in England itself. I've lived there long enough to have requested citizenship in these countries. Three years in New Zealand, welcomed by them in New Zealand.

They never held it against me. I had an American passport. And you know, if they'd known history, they could have said, so you're one of those that rebelled against His Majesty King George III in 1776.

And you'd say, well, I wasn't there, but I'm siding with it just the same. See? My dear friend, you didn't have to be present 1900 years ago to be guilty of this. The question is, where do you stand this morning? Are you taking sides with those who declared themselves and said, away with him, away with him, crucify him? You might just as well have been there.

It's just as serious as that. These things have not changed, dear friend. The line is clearly drawn in the word of God, we're either for or against.

And so this morning, let me press this upon you, dear friend. If you're not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you're on the side of those who said 1900 years ago, away with him, crucify him. In other words, you would have stood charge as if Saint Peter himself were standing here this morning and saying, and ye slew him and hanged him on a tree.

Just as direct as that. But now, what does God do about it? They thought they had him secure. Yes, they thought they had him dead, he's gone, he's buried.

They even went so far to put a seal on his tombstone there, the great big round stone that rolled in front of the door. As some of us have seen, there's a groove in front of the tomb which we claim was the tomb where our Lord lay. And in this groove where they rolled a great big stone which had one flat side on it, and once rolled into position, it was very difficult to move it out again.

That's why the women said, who shall roll us away the stone? But in addition to the weight of the stone, there was the seal, and there was the watch of soldiers. The stone, the seal, the soldiers, they keep him there till that resurrection morning. When he said he was going to rise again, they'd break the seal, roll the stone back and say, there he is! But he wasn't.

Friends, I admit to you that the empty tomb is what people call negative evidence. But there was plenty of positive evidence in the tomb as well. Everything was in perfect order.

The grave clothes was there, the napkin that was about his head lying in a place by itself, all folded up. And you know that's significant too, because the word for napkin is the word for a sweat cloth. As much as to say the Lord had finished his work, he'd mopped his brow, he wrapped up the cloth and laid it aside.

It is finished. Oh, this is a tremendous word, friends. It is finished! I tried one time to impress this on a man with whom I was working.

I was in charge of the engineering department in this particular firm, and I came into contact with the machinists out on the floor who were making the things which I had designed on the drafting board. I talked to one of these men so frequently about the finished work of the Lord Jesus, there was nothing left to do. This man would admit, oh yes, Jesus did a wonderful thing when he died on the cross, but you know I've got to do my part.

So one day he told me, he came in the office, he said, Mr. Armerding, I've got a piece of work ready for you to inspect. I said, I'll be right out, John. Got out there and had the blueprint, looked over this piece of work, it was beautiful.

From a mechanic's standpoint, it was admirable. I stood there and looked at this piece of work, I took all the measuring instruments, the calipers and whatnot, and measured it all, and it was just right up to scratch. We used to measure things within the one thousandth part of an inch, and he had carefully made his piece of machinery just exactly right.

He was waiting for me to put my initial CA on the little paper inspected. I said, John, get me a two-pound hammer. He got a hammer out, a ball-peen hammer, two pounds.

Let me have a cold chisel, John. He got a cold chisel. I held the cold chisel over this piece of work and the two-pound hammer.

He said, hey, what are you going to do? I said, I'm going to finish it. He says, it is finished. I said, John, you've refused to believe that about the work that is finished.

I said, but John, what would happen now if I was to do this? He said, you would finish it then. Yes, I say, and if you were to do anything to the work of Christ, that's exactly what would happen. You'd spoil it.

Oh, friends, God has put his seal on the work of the Lord Jesus. It's right here in this text. Look at it, please.

In verse 31, him hath God exalted. Oh, I love that word. He not only raised him from the dead, but he exalted him.

And Peter's careful to tell us about this. Peter doesn't very often go beyond the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in his presentation of Christ, but he does on this occasion. He says he's exalted him to be a prince and a savior.

You know, this is bringing two wonderful things together. As the prince, we think of him as the originator of life. This word is only used four times in the New Testament, and every time it's used, it's used of the Lord Jesus.

Twice in the book of the Acts, and twice in the epistle to the Hebrews. And it not only means a prince in the sense of a place of dignity in the line, but it means that he's the originator of life, the originator of life. He's the one who brought everything into being, the originator of the old creation as well as of the new.

All of that is included in the original word he translated, prince. But when you talk about a savior, you talk about one who came down from this high position and went down low, so low, that as we were reading, hearing read this morning in an earlier meeting, I'm a worm and no man. The reproach of men and despised of the people to be a savior.

Oh, friends, this word savior has taken on dignity, I know, with you and me as Christians, but oh, what it cost the Lord Jesus to take this name, a savior. This is the first time he's introduced in exactly this way, in this combination, in this book of the Acts, a savior. Yes, this is the name which was given to him when he was born.

You remember? Unto you was born this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord. This is he. Don't use that term lightly, dear friends.

It cost him too much. A savior, a prince and a savior. Now, this prince and savior is giving three gifts, and I want to talk about these three gifts in the minutes that remain of my time.

The first gift is repentance. You notice that? He says to give repentance to Israel. What is repentance? I heard a definition some years ago which has stuck with me.

I know we get the usual definition that repentance is a change of mind, and literally that is so. But I think I have a better definition this morning. In fact, it's more of an exposition than it is a definition.

It's this, that repentance is taking sides with God against yourself. Think about it. Repentance is taking sides with God against yourself.

The prodigal son furnishes us with a pretty good illustration. First of what is not repentance, and then what is. You know, as long as the prodigal could say, Father, I've sinned against heaven, and in thy sight I'm no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.

He hasn't reached bottom yet. A lot of people think he's reached the turning point. No, he hasn't.

As long as you talk about being made a hired servant, you can still work for what you're going to get. No, he hasn't reached the bottom. But when he was in his father's arms and his father's kisses were rained upon his neck, then what did he say? Father, I've sinned against heaven, and in thy sight I'm no more worthy to be called thy son, period.

There it is. No talk now about hired servants. Repentance, taking sides with God against yourself.

If God says I'm a sinful, undone sinner, a man who can not save himself, I take sides with him. And I say everything that he would pour out in his wrath upon a sinner, I would deserve it. I take sides with him.

But this brings me to the second gift here. You notice this second gift, and forgiveness of sins. That's a great gift.

And it's a gift. It isn't something you work for. It isn't a reward.

It isn't wages. If you want wages, we've got a verse for that. The wages of sin is death.

I remember standing in an open-air meeting in St. Louis many years ago. A dear friend of mine, who is now in glory, was conducting the meeting. And he was very faithful in his presentation of the gospel and also the need of men, that they were sinners who needed to be saved.

And he had a heckler in the crowd who said, well, he said, if the wages of sin is death, what's hell for? I thought to myself, that'll take some doing to answer that one. But my friend was equal to it. He said, the wages of sin is death, and hell's a place to spend your wages.

I've never forgotten that. Think about it. But now in praise of this, God gives me, not as wages, not as something I've earned, but as a gift.

And you know, once again, this word forgiveness is a big word. We use it so easily. We think we've forgiven somebody when we say, oh, let's forget it, but we talk about it nevertheless.

That's not forgiveness. That's not forgiveness. When God forgives, He also forgets, dear friends.

He says, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. That's the way God forgives. But what does the word forgive really mean? Well, in both the language of the Old Testament as well as the New, it really means to take away, put somewhere else.

And when God forgives your sin and mine, He takes those sins of mine, He took them and He laid them on His beloved Son. That's what forgiveness implies. That's what it includes.

God taking my sins that I deserve to answer for and to die for, He takes them and puts them on His beloved Son. And He bore them as if they were His own. Oh, some of the language of the Psalms can't be understood in any other way.

For example, when our Lord talks about His iniquities in Psalm 40, what's He doing there? He's certainly not talking about His own sins, for He had none. He's talking about yours and mine that He took to Himself. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

And we've pointed out repeatedly that when they put an accusation over His head, they didn't accuse Him of breaking any one of the Ten Commandments. They didn't accuse Him of going back on something He said in the Sermon on the Mount. The only thing they could put over His head was, This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Not one sin could they lay to His charge. Which of you says He convinced me of sin? In Him is no sin, He did no sin, He knew no sin. But He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

And God, in forgiving them, takes them from Me and puts them on Him. And He bore them for Me. All of this is involved in this word forgiveness.

Friend, I ask you solemnly in the presence of God this morning, I'd just like to assume that everybody in this chapel this morning is a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus. But you know, sometimes happens we have one guest present or more, who have never known what this means to trust Christ as a personal Savior. You know, we just long for you to have this same blessing.

We're not here, dear friend, to try to uncover something of your past and make you feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. We're here to point to you, point you to one who can take everything that you'd be ashamed of in a coming day and take it away and take it away forever, washed away in His precious blood. That's it.

That's how God can forgive, because His righteousness and holiness have been perfectly satisfied in the sacrifice of Christ. There was no simply passing over things at the cross. Everything was dealt with in a righteous way.

And so God now gives Him the privilege from the throne to give repentance and forgiveness of sins. This is a gift. But there's a third gift here.

You notice as we come down in this thirty-second verse, we are His witnesses of these things, and so also of the Holy Ghost whom God has given to them that obey Him. You know, this is remarkable too, isn't it? That those whom God has forgiven in His marvelous grace on the basis of what Christ did at the cross of Calvary, now God gives them a gift. And this is not something special to a certain particular group of people who've gone through some remarkable experience.

This is the birthright of every true child of God. For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of His. If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus this morning, you have the Holy Spirit.

You have Him. He's God's gift to you. He's come to take up His residence in your body.

Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Oh, friends, if we realize this more, we'd have no difficulty with rules and regulations as to what we could do and couldn't do. Do you think, dear friends, if I was fully conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit within that I would go to some place over which even I would have a question mark? Or do something over which I would put a question mark? Oh, no.

Not if I believe in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that what? That we're the children of God. And how remarkable this is as we travel around the world to find those who, like

ourselves, born of the Spirit.

We find a kinship that is superior to any national kinship. Anything that you can mention today is the kinship of those who've trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as a Savior. In 1938, after a month's visit in Palestine and Egypt, we came to England.

I came to England, and I went over to the continent to visit in Germany with some of my relatives whom I had never met. They lived in the north part of Germany in the city of Rostock and Mecklenburg-Schwerin. And in the course of our conversation, they said to me, Well, Carl, where have you been? Where have you been traveling? Well, I said, We lived in New Zealand for three years.

We came by Australia. We ministered there. We stopped in Ceylon.

And we came to Arabia, Aden. And then we came up to Egypt at Port Said. And we got off the steamer there, and we spent a delightful time in Egypt looking around.

And then I said, From Egypt, we took the train through Qantar, and we came up to Lydda, and changed trains, and came up to Jerusalem. And who did you stay with in Jerusalem? Well, I said, We stayed with some of the brethren. And this, in German, sounded as though they were my flesh-and-blood brothers, you know.

It's a breeder. I said, They didn't know that you had brothers in Jerusalem. And mentioning my father, they said, Well, Uncle Ernst must have been a wonderful man to have such a big family, to have children in Jerusalem.

I said, No. I said, They were not my earthly father's children. They were my heavenly father's children.

And they had never heard of such a wonderful relationship. Friends, this is wonderful. It is wonderful to think that we are the family of God today, born again.

Every true believer in the Lord Jesus, no matter what the color of his skin, no matter what the language he speaks, no matter what his racial origin, if he's born again, we're one with him in the body of Christ, the family of God. This, dear friends, some of the things linked with these three gifts, oh, if you don't get anything else out of this fifth chapter today, I hope you'll get this. First of all, that these men were subject to an authority that was divine.

Secondly, that they came to present a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And thirdly, to show what he's done for us in giving us repentance, forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit. Friends, all of these things are based on the word of God.

And no matter what the attacks on this old book this morning, we thank God that these truths remain. There they are. I've believed them now for more than three score years.

I'm getting pretty close to the four score mark now. And friends, the more I see of it, the more precious it becomes. Instead of losing my faith, it's getting stronger and stronger.

This old book, which our brother Willie held up for you a little earlier this morning, this old book, the word of God, more precious to me today even than the night when I first came to know the Lord Jesus as my Savior. In keeping with this, I'm going to have you sing a grand old hymn of the faith, written by a man who knew what it meant to suffer for Christ's sake. Hymn number 254.

254. And those of you of Teutonic origin will remember, I'm festivor his undergut. A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing, our helper he amid the floods of mortal ills prevailing.

For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe. His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate. On earth is not his equal, but as the hymn goes on, we'll see.

Number 254. You can't sing this sitting down. You have to stand up.

254.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8015.mp3>

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