

SEPTEMBER 24, 1995

BOLDNESS TO OBEY

The idea of Political Correctness has become a part of the society in which we live. It has affected our language in that certain terms are acceptable and others are not. As with any change of this type, some changes are good and some are all things but good. Every advocacy group has its own menu of concerns. We find Political Correctness concerns in race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and physical impairment. The concern over gender terminology has even affected the way some politically correct preachers refer to God. Instead of God being our Heavenly Father (a term used by Jesus), He is referred to as our Heavenly Parent or even as our Heavenly Father/Mother. I haven't heard this, but in like manner, instead of Jesus being our Elder Brother, He would be our Elder Sibling. To be politically correct, people who favor abortion call themselves "pro choice." People who used to be handicapped are now "people with disability." In terms of religion, we find that any group can advocate their cause in almost any forum except those who proclaim the name of Jesus.

Some significant movements happening today in the Kingdom of God are seen as threats by those with other agendas. The fact that Christians can influence what happens in our society by voting has some people concerned. To blunt the influence of the so-called "religious right," many try to discredit the influence of the church in all areas of life. Such concern by those who think they are in control has been around since the very beginning of the Church.

After Peter and John healed the lame man at the Temple gate, the Jewish leader became convinced they needed to do something "to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people." They concluded, "we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name. Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus." (Acts 4:17-18) In other words, mentioning the name of Jesus was not politically correct.

The early church noted the threats of the religious leaders to silence references to Jesus but these threats did not change what they did. The church continued to grow and they met in the Temple area called Solomon's Porch. The Spirit of God was at work and miracles were not unusual. People would bring others who were sick into the street on the chance that the shadow of Peter might touch them and they would be healed. Evil spirits were being cast out of people and many were healed.

ACTS 5:17-18 As the church grew stronger, the Jewish religious leaders took action to silence the leaders of the church. The Sadducees were most concerned about what was happening. They were the liberal wing of the Jewish religion and did not believe in angels, miracles, or anything supernatural. Those things happening in the church were in direct contradiction to what they believed. Miracles and healings and evil spirits being cast out were blatant refutations of their doctrine. It is not surprising they were indignant and filled with jealousy. They used their influence to have the apostles arrested and put into prison.

ACTS 5:19-23 God had a different idea. He sent an angel and simply reversed what the Sadducees had done. The angel instructed them to go back to the temple and resume what they had been doing. The next morning they were back in the Temple teaching the full message regarding a new life in Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, the high priest called the Sanhedrin into session and then sent guards to bring the apostle to the chamber. They were not aware of what God had done. This is the basic problem with those who oppose the Kingdom of God today. They are not aware of what God is doing. Since they are spiritually dead, they cannot discern spiritual things.

It was only after the guards got to the prison did any of them realize something unusual had happened. The unusual thing was that in spite of the fact the doors were still locked and the prison guards were at their posts, the apostles were not in the prison.

ACTS 5:24-26 It is not surprising that these people who did not believe in the supernatural were confused by what was reported. They realized that when a message is proclaimed and mighty acts and miracles confirm the truth of that message, then many people will believe. Just how extensive such a movement might become was of great concern to these leaders.

The council was determined to have a hearing and to call the apostles to account for disobeying the instruction to not teach in the name of Jesus. They sent the guards to the Temple area to escort the apostles to the council chamber. They were cautious and did not use force because the common people would have come to the defense of the apostles.

ACTS 5:27-32 It became evident from the statement of the high priest that their main concerns were for their own position and security. They stood condemned before God for having sentenced Jesus to death on the cross and yet they were seemingly unconcerned about that. What did concern them was what people thought about them. They did not want the people of Jerusalem to know the truth that they had sentenced an

innocent person to death. If most of the people became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and realized that their leaders had been responsible for His death, then the people might attack and kill them.

Peter and the others were not concerned about the concerns of the Sanhedrin. The apostles' responsibility was to God and not to man. The truth of the matter was that the Jewish leaders did have Jesus crucified and God had overruled them by raising Jesus from death. It did not end there. After Jesus was resurrected, He was then raised up to God's right hand and recognized as Lord and Savior.

The apostles had seen the crucifixion, watched Jesus die and then experienced the resurrected Lord. They had been there when Jesus ascended into the heavens and they were there on the Day of Pentecost and experienced the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. They could not deny the truth of what they knew and they would not be silenced. They did not fail to live up to the words of Jesus when He said, "You shall be My witnesses."

We see evidence of restrictions all around us regarding the expression of our faith. Public events used to be opened with prayer. Our children were exposed to a time of prayer at school. Teachers could read the Bible during their "break time." High school choral groups could sing the classics though many of these were songs of praise to God. But now, all these are not allowed. Despite such "rules," many do what they believe God would have them to do. Some students will meet at school for a time of prayer before classes begin. Some student athletes will observe a prayer time when the game is over. These have boldness to obey. We should also be bold in our neighborhoods, in our organizations and everywhere we go.