

The God Nobody Is Mad At

by Rolfe Barnard

The speaker wants to preach a Christ that's very offensive, not just a likable sort of a fella, in order to truly witness to God's power and bring people to repentance.

Duration: 45:10

Scripture: Acts 1:1-2, Acts 2:13-15, Acts 5:17, Acts 5:20, Acts 5:24-25, Acts 5:28-32

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of believing in God despite our doubts. He describes Jesus as the ultimate mediator between God and man, highlighting the significance of his sacrifice on the cross. The preacher refers to the Book of Acts, explaining that it is a record of preachers interpreting the acts of God. He specifically mentions the Apostle Peter's interpretation of the events on the day of Pentecost, where he explained that it was God working and not drunkenness. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the transformative power of witnessing and experiencing God's work.

Transcript

I want to speak tonight on the God nobody's mad at. My impressions during the solemn time of the funeral of our departed president, my impression was that the God of this day is a mighty likable sort of a fella, that even an atheist wouldn't be mad at him. And my impression this last week in the Bible conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, was that the Christ who is preached today, nobody would be offended by him, and so I'm down in the dumps.

I want God to work. I never can preach except when I'm in agony. I don't believe you can witness any other way.

My soul, I beg you to pray for the ministry of this church, and if you don't think that's worthwhile, pray for me. Under God, I'd love to preach a Christ that's very offensive, instead of the nice Jesus everybody loves today. And the temptation is great, on my part, to take away those two things about the Lord Jesus Christ, which if a man would face, he'd scream away with him, or he'd fall down to worship him.

Anything except the nice, convenient patronizing of the sovereign Christ, that's the order of the day. My covet for you, young pastor, all the other boys and myself, a broken heart and open doors. I wish 13th Street Baptist Church would pray doors open.

In the fifth chapter of the book of Acts, the 17th verse, let me read the scripture and then notice context. The context of the scripture led to my opening remarks. I just give you this statement about the whole book of Acts.

The whole book of Acts is the record of some preacher, or some group of preachers or witnesses, standing up to interpret something God has done. On the day of Pentecost, things took place, and the reasonable men said, you're drunk. That gave the apostle Peter an opportunity to get up and interpret what was taking place at the hands of a living God.

He said, we're not drunk, but this is God doing things. Yet in the fifth chapter of the book of Acts, as always in the book of Acts, it starts in the first chapter. Remember, Luke said he's going to keep on talking about what he'd been talking about in his gospel of all the things the Lord began to do and then to teach.

The thing that I'm praying about, the thing that I have to stay in an agony of prayer most of the time, even while I'm telling jokes with you, is that today the doing is sort of absent. We have the responsibility of preaching and trying to explain, try teaching that we all accept in our heads, instead of interpreting the great, mighty acts of God. And if you were a public preacher, you'd know what I'm talking about.

And more than you ever did before, you'd lift up the hand of anybody who's trying to struggle through the religious atmosphere of this day and preach Christ as He really is. Here again in the book of Acts, something's taken place. God's killed a couple of people by the name of Ananias and Sapphira.

God did it through His preacher, and it caused no small commotion. The first effect of it was that great fear came on the people and that folks were scared out of their wits. And verse 13 says, "...of the rest there's no man.

Join Him, saith to them." They were afraid of that crowd of people, of that congregation where two people lied to the Holy Ghost, and God acted about it. He came on the scene. He reached out His mighty arm and struck them dead.

And it scared people and said, we're not going to go around that place. But in that atmosphere, the people magnified. These disciples and believers were the more added to the Lord.

Multitudes, both of men and women. And things, no small stir took place. Another thing that resulted from the action of Almighty God in striking these two people dead is recorded in verse 17.

The thing was spreading so they were bringing people, verse 16, from all the cities round about Jerusalem and the disciples into authority, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ were taking care of their needs. And so the religious hierarchy, the people who preached a God that nobody would possibly be mad at, we won't talk about tonight, then the high priest rose up. And all that were with them, which is a sect of the Sadducees, and were filled with indignation.

And they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord, God came on the scene again. The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them forth and said, go and stand and speak in the temple to the people, A-double-L-O, the words of this life.

And they heard that and they went and began to do what the angel of the Lord had commanded. And in verse 21, the second sentence, the high priest came and they that were with him and called the council together and all the senate of the children of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when

they got there, you remember, the prison was, nobody was in it.

And verse 24, when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow, where this Jesus business would get out of hand. And somebody came and said, the men who were in prison, they're standing out there and brought open daylight in the temple and they're teaching the people. So the captain went with the officers and brought them, these preachers, without violence, for they feared the people lest they should have been stolen.

And when they brought them, they set them before the council and the high priest asked them, see, notice now the next few verses I want to talk to you briefly about. The high priest said, now didn't we treat you folks fairly? Hadn't we given you enough courtesy? Didn't we straightly command you that you should not teach in his name, have your religious ceremony, go through your motions, believe in the God of your choice, anything, but haven't we told you enough? We've commanded you. We speak with authority.

Did we not straightly command that you should not teach in this name as the rock of offense? And instead of paying attention to the voice of authority, ye fill Jerusalem with your teaching and it looks to us like you intend to bring this man's blood, this rock of offense, this Jesus who we took care of after careful examination and investigation. We decided he was a blasphemer and he would never do. And in the name of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, we nailed him to a tree.

And by so doing, we're serving God as we thought. It looks like you intend to bring this man's blood upon us. And then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we're so far out.

We had not meant to be offensive. We must have sort of been carried away. If you'll forgive us, we'll go away and speak no more about this man, Jesus.

No, he didn't answer that way. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, what's before, a little girl had pointed a finger at this self-same Peter and said, you're one of his, aren't you? And he said, oh, no. Excuse me, a case of mistaken identity.

No, sir. No, sir. No, sir.

And this same man stands now with the Sanhedrin gathered about him. Annas, the high priest, the chief officers of the Sanhedrin, the greatest scholar of the day, Gamaliel. What an oppressive array of religion.

Reminds me of the time the president of France, the vice premier of Russia, the personage of the world. The princes of England gathered to pay homage at the funeral of our president and attended a funeral. What an oppressive array of constituted religious authority commands the apostle Peter not to teach in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there he stands as a former coward and it's not that he's going to take advantage of a second chance to be brave. It's not that he's, uh, something terrible or tremendous has happened to him. But it is that he has witnessed something that's made a different person out of it.

You know, not much difference in people. And I think the one difference, not so much brain power or heart power, I think about the only difference in two preachers or two people is the day they live in and the experiences they've witnessed. And the apostle Peter stands now.

You can't brag on him so much, oh, well, something happened to him now and he's an entirely different man. No, he wasn't changed much. And I wouldn't want it to get out on us, but if you got changed considerably, it wouldn't amount to too much.

But I tell you what had changed. The apostle Peter had been witness to the action of Almighty God in raising Jesus Christ from a grave and enthroning Him at His right hand and giving Him the job of giving repentance and forgiveness of sins to eternally bound sinners. And Peter was a witness of that.

He wasn't just a dry, matter-of-fact recounter of the truth of it, but he was a witness in the sense that he'd experienced the power of Him who's been exalted to break the shackles that bound Him and set Him free. And in that atmosphere, that situation, this man, just a man, when they told him, reminded him, not to preach and teach in the name of Christ. He says, we ought, he said, there's just no use talking to me.

A man that's experienced what I've experienced and witnessed what I've experienced, there's no use talking about this. We ought. Nothing else we can do.

Man's got sense not coming out of the grave. No question here. We ought to obey God rather than men.

Why ought you? Why is this thing settled? He says, the God of our fathers raised up Jesus and He taught me by keeping my mouth shut about Him. I've seen God work. I'm living in a time when the same one you took in all the wisdom of your religious traditions, with all the zeal that religious people could have to preserve the status quo.

God took this one whom you hung on a tree and raised Him and exalted Him at His right hand for the express purpose as a prince, a sovereign, a postatee, one having authority and a savior for to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins and said, we're His witnesses of these things come hell or high water. We got to talk about it. We got to tell men about this action of God almighty.

We live, said Peter, in a day when God has laid bare His reveal. He's manifested His power and He's given His answer to the actions of sinful men and His action and His power is in the exalted position of Jesus Christ and the job the Father's turned over Him to do. No wonder Peter, not in his own strength, not because he's had some experience that so radically changed him, but because he's witnessed the action of almighty God.

He says it's not a debatable question. You men tell us we mustn't teach in the name of Christ. You can kill us.

Our Lord warned us to fear not Him who can kill the body. Men can do that. But to fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Peter said, we know what you can do. You kill James, don't kill Him. But that's all you can do.

It's not a debatable question to anybody on God's earth who more than receiving a doctrine has experienced the power. It's not a debatable question whatever the cost. We are witnesses.

We've got to tell people about it. We are witnesses of these sayings and here's something I can't incorporate. I'll just read it and pass over.

It was awful wonderful and so is also the Holy Ghost. So is also the Holy Ghost. He's talking about one person.

He's witnessing to one person and the two sayings about that one person. This world's mad at His death on a cross and His enthronement at the right hand of God. He says we are witnesses and so is the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him.

And strange to see, speak on this next verse tonight, when they heard that they were cut to the heart and took counsel to slay them. Let me just say two or three things. Somewhere in my reading I read words something like this from somebody's pen.

I do not remember. It is painful to hear a man who does not believe Peter's gospel seek to preach it as if in some sense he believed it. But it is thrice more painful to hear a man who believes Peter's gospel preach it as though he did not believe it.

Preaching, praying, living, witnessing without passion, without urgency, reciting facts, quoting creeds, repeating religious formulas, preaching without heart, passion, and without divine urgency. My friends, for thirty-odd years and I have wrestled with my greatest, facing that sand, stay there in that atmosphere, in the atmosphere of the raising of Jesus Christ from a grave and the exalting of Him on a throne. I wish I could stand there until I believed it, until I believed it from the top of my head to the bottom of my feet.

You know if I could believe that, I'm telling you the God's truth, there isn't anything in time or eternity that amount to a hill of beans. Is it true? I do not preach down to you. In my head I've accepted this glorious truth all these years.

In my heart, I wish I could get to the place I didn't have to pray, Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief. No man could take a pen and do justice to this truth.

No man with words from his lips can do anything else I guess except stand and take off his shoes and cry out in his heart as you stand face to face with the greatest single truth and fact and experience and action of God this world's ever known in the same about. Actually, the man with the print of the nails in his hands, the man who was God manifested in the flesh, the man who was born to die, the man, God's darling who was given to the dogs, the man who wound up in disgrace on a criminal's tree, the man, the man! There is one medium far between God and man. It's this man.

How I need him. How I need him! A man, all man, whole man, yet God, to stand between me and the scroll of God's judgment against sin. Actually, the old book, I think my mother believes it and been trying to, the old book tells us if we could just believe it that the one who must mediate between me and the holy God is now, forevermore for the purpose of working repentance in my heart and granting me the consciousness and the experience that my sins are forgiven by holy God.

Boy, I wish I could believe that. The more I look into that, the more I wish before, I could enter in to the preacher of what it means to wither hard, wither hard, with every seed there is. It's so hard to believe that God has raised that man from the dead.

When I'm dead certain that lit service, repeating of the sinner's prayer, and going through the motions, won't get the job done, there must be hard faith. Something that you can't get out of books. Something that only a power greater than I am can bring to pass in my life.

And that's the reason I thank God for the struggle some of us little peanuts have had, resting, going against the grain of present day, preaching of what's called the gospel. I know, I know that acceptance of a creed won't get the job done. I know, Brother Henry, sometimes I got to stand with Peter and say, now I've

witnessed this, this is a part I know about this.

I've witnessed it, I've experienced it. A witness is not somebody who can just say two and two, four. A witness is somebody who can interpret what happens.

The Apostle Peter, by his own experience, he said, you needn't talk to me about obeying you people, how to obey God. I can't do anything else. I'm a witness.

I'm a witness. Peter stood in the day of God's power when he raised the one Mediator from the dead and put him on the throne. I'm vitally interested in that Mediator, what came of him.

I surely am. And to find out that he's sitting there on that throne, climaxing, carrying forth, pursuing, working at the job of God's purposes of salvation. He's exalted him, made him a prince and a savior due to him.

Anybody need forgiveness of sin? He's the one that gives it. Imagine, he loved the Lord. You do, I just pass it.

Those disciples, I don't know when they got saved, brother man, you can straight, they were broken hearts. And Peter wasn't the only one. Some disciples are going down the road to a mess.

They're just broken hearts. They didn't understand the death of Christ. But now Peter stands and by experience, he understands what the Lord said.

I must need self-remitting. Then enter in the blood of a man that does not believe in the end. The man or woman who's experienced the power of that exalted Christ to break your heart, to lay hold on Christ, cannot help but preach it and say, I'm standing in the day of which the Psalmist in 118 spoke, the right hand of the Lord is exalted.

The Lord doeth valiantly. The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing.

The builders refused Him. He's the head now. This is the day which God has brought to pass.

We will do what? We will rejoice and be glad in it. Hallelujah. He's exalted Him.

Hallelujah. Let's be glad about it. I have to cry to God so much before what I'm talking about now gets sweet to me.

Let's be glad about it. This is a great day, a day of great joy. You and I are living in the time when Jesus Christ from a throne was repented.

He breaks the chains that bind them and set them free. He held the earliest trope. Then, very seldom a week goes by that I do not repent.

This experience, it helps me out of the church. Her husband was a big shot. And he was there in the oil city dealing in within the law and yet criminal business, making a lot of money.

He had been secretary to Andrew Carnegie. He had been everywhere, highly educated, the soul of culture and courtesy. And he finally got to come in to hear me preach.

And he sat and listened to me. Tell me he enjoyed listening to me preach. Greatly concerned about him.

And I got a little concerned. And one day his wife hatched a plot. She said, Sunday, you're going to have Sunday dinner with us.

And after the meal, I'm going to have an errand I've got to run. And said, I want you to really talk to my husband. Said, for the first time in our life together, I actually believe.

Lovely dinner, and then she made some excuse, cover to cover, being wise and sidewise. He used it to argue about. He is smart.

Out of his house, it is schisms, testimony that has to come from heart. Prepare a high-powered sermon for that night, that afternoon, out in West Texas. It started to rain.

Just came a cloudburst. When the evening service time was there, just, oh, it's raining terribly. It doesn't rain much in West Texas.

And the crowd decided that they'd leave it with me. Instead of having a big crowd, we used to have a big Sunday night crowd, way back yonder. I just had a little handful of folks that braved the awful cloudbursts.

And I was a little younger than I am now, and I just couldn't afford Brother Mayhem to request that big sermon, you know, on that little handful of people. And I was desperate. And I went back and was studying.

I was sort of mad too, because the people hadn't come out to hear a big preacher like me, let a little rain keep them from it, you know. And I had a pretty hard time. And I was suffering too, because that intellectual giant had cut me to pieces, so at his dinner table.

And I was wounded and discouraged and blue. And I got up that night and preached a little half-hearted sermon. Oh, well, I believed in God with a nod, and I decided when it was over it wouldn't do any harm.

And I said, we're going to stand and sing. And somebody, I may want to publicly confess Jesus Christ, because I knew nobody did, but I thought I ought to be religious. And before the psalm leader could get the tune, I asked it, here came that man, running down the aisle, sobbing like his heart would break.

To the dead. Never forget what he said. Him no longer.

Oh, if it's somebody sitting on a throne with the authority and the delegated task of giving repentance to men. He just said, I don't understand how the Lord a religious sinner could be brought in a way that I certainly could get no glory to a place where He'll say publicly I can rebel against Him no longer. I surrender.

And I remember that the next Lord's Day I baptized Him. And the next Lord's Day I called on Him to lead in public prayer for it will be a thousand years. I'll never forget His prayer.

It is a matter of fact. He said, Oh, Lord, this first time I ever did anything like this, if You'll help us today, I'll be much obliged. That was His prayer.

In the course of time, we set Him apart to the work of a deacon. Two weeks after I baptized Him, He called me by phone and said, Brother Pastor, I just must see you. And I went down and He had gotten out of His,

within the law crooked business and was cleaning up everything, paying things off.

He sat me down, faced me to the desk between us, and He gave me the greatest compliment then. It don't hurt to compliment a young fellow who survives in the battle. He said, that was His name for me.

He said, I've heard all the preachers that amount to anything. The big preachers, 150, 200 miles, just listen to a big preacher to criticize Him. He said, I had to come way out here to this Texas oil town and listen to a boy hardly old enough to shave before the claims of Christ upon me to wear a hat.

Then He got up, came around, put His arms around me and kissed me full on the lips, thick thin. He wanted me to be there at His bedside and I didn't know about it. When you want to quit, when it looks like you're not getting anywhere, He hit me between the eyes.

Especially in these last days, the Christ seems to be first. Spit out a bit of juice in the desert. There's somebody that can't believe the rebellion in a man's heart.

There's somebody who hung on a tree and sits on the throne. One more time. This was boldness.

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