

Acts 5:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Analysis

We ought to obey God rather than men—Peter states the principle of civil disobedience when human authority contradicts divine command. The Greek 'peitharchein' (obey) denotes submission to authority; 'dei' (ought) indicates moral necessity, not mere preference. This doesn't advocate anarchism but establishes God's ultimate sovereignty over all earthly powers. The apostles' defiance was specific and limited: they continued preaching Christ despite orders to stop, but didn't resist arrest or sentence. This principle later guided Christian martyrs refusing emperor worship while otherwise submitting to Roman law. Daniel 3 and 6 provide Old Testament parallels.

Historical Context

Peter's response to the Sanhedrin's second prohibition against preaching (v.28). The high priest's accusation—'you intend to bring this man's blood upon us' (v.28)—shows the leaders' fear of being held accountable for Jesus' death. The apostles had been imprisoned, miraculously freed by an angel (v.19), and resumed teaching in the temple despite orders.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Where is the line between submitting to governing authorities and obeying God's higher law?
2. What contemporary issues might require Christians to say 'we ought to obey God rather than men'?

Interlinear Text

ἀποκριθεὶς	δὲ	ὁ	Πέτρος	καὶ	οἱ	ἀπόστολοι	εἶπον,
answered	Then	G3588	Peter	and	G3588	the other apostles	and said
G611	G1161		G4074	G2532		G652	G2036
Πειθαρχεῖν	δεῖ	θεῶ	μᾶλλον	ἢ	ἀνθρώποις		
to obey	We ought	God	rather	than	men		
G3980	G1163	G2316	G3123	G2228	G444		

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 15:24 (Parallel theme): And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

Acts 4:19 (References God): But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

Genesis 3:17 (Parallel theme): And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;