

God Is Greater Than Man

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0 : 00] Little church, you can be dismissed at this time. And for those of you who are not going to be departing for Little Church, please take your Bible and open up to Acts chapter 4.

Acts 4. God bless you all. Have a wonderful morning. None of them heard me.

Thank you, Dennis. So we're going to look at today, Acts 4, verses 5 through 22. God is greater than man.

You recall, it's not about me. It's all about Jesus. And people hate that. Those were the three phrases that made up the outline for last week's sermon.

And I think it makes for a pretty good summary for the life of the believer. It's not about me. It's all about Jesus. And people hate that.

[1 : 11] I'd like to share with you a testimony that I read leading up to this from Voice of the Martyrs. It comes from Nigeria.

On the evening before Easter Sunday 2012, Comfort Jessie, that's the young lady's name, sat in the enclosed courtyard of her home in Nigeria, chatting with her parents, older siblings, and some neighbors.

Around 11 p.m., they heard bombing in the distance. And less than 60 minutes later, Boko Haram militants were burning the church next door and pounding on the gate in front of their home.

Comfort's mother, Juliana, helped her husband hide in one of the back bedrooms, covering him with clothes. God, we are in your hands, she prayed.

Several militants entered to search the house while others dragged Juliana into the courtyard, striking her with their guns and taunting her about her faith. You Christians say God has a son, they said.

[2 : 18] Call on that son. Today is your last day. Your own life is over. They then forced Juliana to kneel. They said that if they don't get their man, they will kill her.

Comfort said, my mother said, even though I see your gun, I will not fear you. One of the men gave a shout from inside the house. He had found Comfort's father.

They dragged him out to the courtyard and instructed him to renounce Christ. He remained silent while Juliana's mother shouted, Jesus, Jesus.

The militants ordered Comfort's father to lie down and then they shot him four times. Before leaving, they ransacked and burned their home. Juliana pulled her dying husband into her lap and prayed.

And he uttered a final amen at the end of her prayer before dying. Comfort, who was 13 at the time, sat by her father's body with her eight siblings crying in the early morning darkness.

[3 : 23] Comfort carried scars from the trauma and losses that she had suffered. And so much so that if a family member had shouted at her, she would spend the entire day in her room and refuse to eat.

In 2018, so six years later, Comfort and three of her siblings attended a youth camp that Voice of the Martyrs hosted for teenagers who had suffered similarly traumatic experiences.

In the years since attending the youth camp, Comfort has been able to let go of her anger and even to pray for Boko Haram. She says, I beg God to forgive them because they did not know what they were doing.

Every morning, Comfort and her family gather for devotions and to thank God for the help that they have received. Comfort said she loved God before but has grown in faith through her trials.

I didn't really hold on to God as I am right now, she said. I love God now more than in the past.

There are many stories like this that happen in many countries around the world.

[4 : 33] The circumstances may be different, but the story is still the same. It's not about me. It's all about Jesus. And people hate that.

Here in Acts 4, we pick up where we left off. Peter and John have been arrested for preaching in the name of Jesus. Now we will see how their experience reveals a simple but important reminder. That God is greater than man. As we get into, we're going to read verses 5 through 12. We're going to see first that God's work is greater than man's work.

Acts 4 verse 5. And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, By what power or by what name did you do this?

And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

[6 : 22] This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

In these verses, we see man's work and God's work. Each of the points that I'm going to give you this morning, I'm going to break it down in the section that it's in to look at how man has worked in this way and how God has worked in this way in this passage.

And so first we see men's work. What did they do? Well, first they had Peter and John arrested for preaching the gospel. Remember, it's not about me.

It's all about Jesus and people hate that. And we see here that the leaders, the Jewish leadership, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, the rulers, the high priestly family had Peter and John arrested for preaching the gospel, for talking about Jesus.

Then they call into question their qualifications. By what power or by what name do you do this? By what name or by what power did you make this man healed in your preaching about this Jesus?

[7 : 49] They're calling into question the credentials of Peter and John. And we're going to get more to that here in verse 13 as we continue. But they weren't impressed with them.

So they're like, who are you to be here talking about this? Remember, they're in the temple court. They were in the Solomon's porticos where they were meeting regularly.

Remember, they're on their way up to the temple for prayer. So all this is happening among the rabbis and the Jewish leadership and the teachers of the day. And they're the ones with the credentials.

They have the PhDs. They've put in the time they've learned. Who are you, John and Peter? By what name and by what authority? And then we find in Peter's response, talk about man's work. You can't ignore the fact that he says in verse 10, let it be known that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified.

[8 : 55] Remember, they didn't like Jesus, so they tried to shut him up and get him to go away. And so they crucified him. People hate Jesus.

People hate the good news, the hope that he brings. But what do we see as far as God's work is concerned?

Well, first we see that he filled Peter with the Holy Spirit to speak boldly. I'd like you to take a moment to turn back to Matthew chapter 10.

Don't lose Acts 4, so we're going to be there. But to turn back to Matthew 10, and maybe even make a note of this in your bulletin to look at later more in depth if you so desire. Matthew chapter 10, verses 16 through 20 is an early revelation for us of what takes place with Peter in the Jewish leadership here.

And we see God's work in his life. Matthew chapter 10, verse 16. Jesus speaking, it says, Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

[10 : 08] So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues.

And you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. We'll pause for a second.

Jesus is telling them exactly what's going to happen in the future. And what we see in the book of Acts is this prophetic word from Jesus taking place.

He said that men are going to deliver you to the courts. They're going to flog you. You're going to be dragged before governors and kings. And that is the book of Acts.

The entirety of the book of Acts, you see that taking place and happening. Verse 19. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say.

[11 : 09] For what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. Verse 20. For it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father speaking through you.

Jesus makes it known. He says, look, you guys are going for my sake, because of my name, because of the message I'm going to give to you, you're going to be pulled before the courts. You're going to be flogged.

You're going to be persecuted. And I'm telling you, do not be anxious. Do not be fearful of what you should say in that time, because it will be given to you by the father through the spirit.

And we see that in Acts 4, verse 8. Then Peter. So he's put on trial. By what name? By what power? And Peter, it says, filled with the Holy Spirit said to them.

And the words that come out of Peter's mouth come from God through the spirit. It is the truth of scripture and of what happened.

[12 : 18] God works through his people. God gives his people the words to say at the right time to say them. What is another work of God?

Well, in working contrarily to man's work, man, they crucified Jesus. Well, God, he raised him from the dead. Man thought they had a victory over God.

They thought they had a victory over his message of truth and hope and redemption. But God said, uh-uh. Three days later, rose him from the dead.

And what's even more amazing is when you dig into that, and you're looking more deeply into scripture, you see that Jesus talks about himself. He says, I lay my life down and I take it up again. So we talk about the divinity of Christ, the divine nature of Christ as being God. He laid his life down and he took it up again. Raised on the third day.

[13 : 25] And then Peter says that this man is standing before you well because of Jesus. That's God's work.

He made the lame man whole in the name of Jesus. No matter how hard men and women work against God, they can never thwart his plans.

No matter what men and women do, no matter the instrument that Satan uses to try to upend and thwart God's plan, it will always come to pass.

Because God, God's work is greater than man's. And we cannot forget Matthew 16, verse 18.

And so much of it, as we were talking about this morning in Sunday school, which is an excellent, you know, what is preventing the church from growing? And we're getting these thoughts from society that's out there, or the observations and such.

[14 : 32] And I just come back to Matthew 16, 18, because what man is attempting to do to thwart and stop and to discredit and discount God and his word, we see in Matthew 16, 18, Jesus says, I tell you, you are Peter, who just made a profession of who Jesus was, that he's the Christ.

He says, on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Jesus is the one building the church.

And there is nothing man can do about that. There is nothing Satan can do about that. Because it's God's work, it will be done. God's work is greater than man's.

Next, in verses 13 through 17, we see God's wisdom is greater than man's. Let's read it, verse 13 through 17. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.

And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

[15 : 52] But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, what shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name. We'll stop there.

We see man's wisdom at play here. What? First of all, they look at Peter and John, they're uneducated, common men. Who are these people? Who is this joker coming in here and saying these things?

I think the fact that they were astonished, you know, it wasn't so much that, oh, who are these uneducated common men who all of a sudden have such great wisdom and such great teaching? I

think they were astonished because these uneducated common men were standing in the face of the PhD professors in the Jewish religion and saying, you're wrong, here's why, and pointing to it. And then the PhDs are like, we've got nothing to say. I think they're astonished that such uneducated people were so bold to proclaim what they had to proclaim.

[17:13] But by their wisdom, these guys are dumb. They're idiots. And they noticed, well, they had been with Jesus. And we're going to see that this both falls under man's wisdom and God's wisdom.

All right? And I'll get to that in a second. But they'd been with Jesus. They recognized their faces. They'd seen him around, these hooligans. And then they tell him, they're at a loss.

The best they can come up with, well, don't speak to anyone in the name of Jesus anymore. We don't like you. You're dumb.

You're not educated. You'd been with Jesus who was killed. And don't talk about this guy anymore. He's gone. It's the best they can do.

That's man's wisdom. Like what John Calvin says, the wisdom of the flesh is always exclaiming against the mysteries of God.

[18:17] The world can't understand what God is doing and how God has worked and the truth that God proclaims in the name of Jesus. God's wisdom we see, turn to 1 Corinthians 1.

1 Corinthians 1, verses 26 through 31. We see that God's wisdom confounds man's wisdom. Paul writing to the church at Corinth says, for consider your calling, brothers.

Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth.

What's he saying in verse 26? You were nothing. Very few of you were anything according to this world. Verse 27. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world.

[19:32] Even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are. This is how God's wisdom works.

The things that the world considers great and awesome, God is like, nope, that is mine, that's mine, and that's mine. All of you in your wisdom is foolish. Verse, where was I?

29. So, verse 28. Even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are. Verse 29. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

It's not because of who we are or what position we hold or how important we are in the world that God has chosen us. Verse 30. And because of him, you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, so that as it is written, let no one who boasts, boast, or let the one who boasts, excuse me, boast in the Lord.

So, because of God, we are in Christ Jesus, and being in Christ Jesus, he, God, the Lord Jesus Christ, became wisdom to us from God.

[20:55] He's also our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. Any kind of boasting that a Christian has is only in the Lord.

And that's what Peter is getting at. He never says, the healing that I did, or the miracle that I performed, or this or that, about himself.

He says, no, it's about Jesus. It's not about me. It's all about him. That's what Peter's saying. And based on what we see in 1 Corinthians 1, and what we have from God's wisdom, it confounds man's wisdom.

It makes foolish man's wisdom. When we boast, it's only in Christ. It can never be in ourselves. Not only does God's wisdom confound man's wisdom, I mentioned we're going to come back to this aspect about, you know, by man's wisdom, they saw Peter and John had been with Jesus.

Well, guess what? Under God's wisdom, it's obvious to others when you have been with Jesus. And it should be. In Romans 8, verses 28 and 29, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good.

[22:16] For those who are called according to his purpose. For those who before knew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

It is God's intention for those who come to faith in Christ to be made to look like Christ, to be conformed into the image of Christ. So if you have been with Jesus, it's God's intention that the

world can recognize that, that you're going to change.

You're going to be different. You're going to act different. You're going to think different. Your motivations are going to be different. John 3 says that we are born again.

Because the old man needs to die. And the new man needs to come in. Romans 12 too. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Our fellowship with Jesus, our time in his word, is going to bring about a transformed mind. It's not going to think the way the world thinks.

[23 : 25] it's not going to desire the things the world desires, but it's going to ultimately be desirous to fulfill the will of God and to know him more.

We have a transformed mind. We're being conformed to the image of Christ. John 13 verses 34 through 35, a new commandment I give to you, Jesus says, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

And here it is, ready? By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. I think there is a whole lot to unpack in those two verses.

I'll tell you what my immediate thought and observation was. that it is by our love for one another that the world knows that we are Christ's disciples.

And the question that I asked is, why? Why does that alert the world that we are Jesus's? And I can only come up with one answer, one conclusion, because the world doesn't love one another.

[24 : 50] Let's sink in for a second. The world doesn't love one another. The world and those in it love themselves more than anything else.

Jesus showed us how to love others more than ourselves. And so when we love one another, the world will know we are Christ's disciples because we are acting and living in a way that is not the way they are used to and the way that they deem normal.

Ever since the time of the apostles, people have been looking down their noses their noses at Christ's followers. Anyone who names the name of Jesus and seeks to be known as his will not be well received.

And so in our discussion and Sunday school and the observations and the article the report and all that stuff if you're wondering man what is he talking about come on Sunday school 930 it is a fruitful conversation and guess what there's tension in that conversation but as I told somebody earlier you know when you think about a tightrope walker a tightrope walker gets from point A to point B because there's tension in the rope conversation can't be fruitful and edifying unless there's some tension there come add to it Sunday morning at 930 edifying tension by the way I just want to put that out there in case anyone was wondering to upset the apple cart but anyone who names the name of Jesus and seeks to be known as his will not be well received John 16 verse 33 Jesus says I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace in the world you will have tribulation but take heart

I have overcome the world so God's work is greater than man's work God's wisdom is greater than man's wisdom and then finally verses 18 through 22 God's glory is greater than man's glory verse 18 so they so verse 17 they say hey in order that it may spread no further let's warn them let's speak any more in this name so they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus but Peter and John answered them whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God you must judge for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard and when they had further threatened them they let them go finding no way to punish them because of the people for all were praising

[28 : 00] God for what had happened for the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old wow so what do you see here man's glory on display they tell him do not speak or teach in the name of Jesus at all they can't share glory with anyone else when you're preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus it takes away the glory of man and puts it on God and so in the opposition in the resistance to the gospel in the resistance of Jesus in the desire to to quench that name out of conversation they say no more you can you can preach in the name of Annas and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and whatever the other names are in that group no you learn from us and then you go and teach and you proclaim what we have said that is what mattered to them and that is what was important to them and you kind of see it too in our conversations and

I can get this way sometimes we can say I had a class with so and so I had a class with John Polking horn that doesn't mean anything to probably most of you but a very well known scientist and

professor in England I sat under Stephen Hawking or you want to name drop who you learned from and that's what they did they name dropped you look at who Paul was who sat under his name is escaping me now anyway he'll come up in Acts he's part of I think in Acts 5 I'm sorry all right we'll get to it though but it's almost like a name drop of a very important individual that he was trained under and that's what they did they lifted each other up and they said no more Jesus because they threatened those who failed to comply right don't talk about

Jesus anymore talk about me talk about anyone else but don't talk about Jesus and if you do we're going to hurt you we're going to do something bad to you you're going to lose your house your home you're going to lose your job you're going to lose your livelihood and that's what's taking place in places like Nigeria India and North Korea those who name the name of Jesus they are losing their livelihood and that's man's wisdom if you can't stop it you can't make somebody stop doing something we'll take everything from you but God's glory that's man's glory but what about God's glory those what John and Peter say is that whether it's right in the sight of God to listen to you or rather than to God you must judge we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard we must speak of what we've seen and heard we can't hold it in we're going to explode if we do turn to 1st John 1 let's 1st verse 1 1 how about this epistle from the apostle John he says verses 1 1-3 that which was from the beginning which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life the life was made manifest and we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ He says that we must now this is what we've seen we've heard, we've touched, we know about it we've first hand experienced it and we're proclaiming it to you and I love verse 4 and we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete and there may be a little footnote in there that next to the word our some manuscripts say your

I'd grant it to them there's only one letter difference in the Greek between your and our but the point is this is that there is joy present when Jesus is proclaimed it is the joy of the proclaimer who has seen and heard and knows the truth of scripture to proclaim Jesus Christ and it is the joy to the receiver to hear the proclamation of Christ and to hear about life in His name 1 Corinthians 9.16 for if I preach the gospel that gives me no grounds for boasting for necessity is laid upon me woe to me if I do not preach the gospel Paul couldn't do anything but preach the gospel he had to do it he was sad if he didn't need to proclaim him and also the glory of God all people praise God because of what He does that's back in Acts 4 verse 21 that they found no way to punish them because of the people for all were praising God for what had happened and then you see for the man on whom the sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old the sign of healing that was to substantiate the message that from Peter as coming from God and the message from Peter was all about Jesus it was not about Peter or John or the great power they had or the mighty miracles they could do it was all about Jesus ultimately it is to point people to God and not man they were praising God for what had happened they weren't praising Peter and John it was all glory to God and that is what matters and that is the focus it is not about me it's all about Jesus and people are going to hate that

[34 : 56] A.W. Tozer says God's glory is and must forever remain the Christian's true point of departure anything that begins anywhere else whatever it is is certainly not New Testament Christianity and he is right on everything that we see in the New Testament everything we see happening in the book of Acts everything that Paul writes about that Peter writes about that John writes about that Luke writes about that Mark writes about that Matthew writes about is to point to the glory of God most if not all of us will never have an experience like the young lady I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon probably I would almost say not any of us will ever experience that yet we are assured that in 2 Timothy 3 verse 12 all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted so long as we're living a committed life for Jesus' sake we can expect to face opposition and to be persecuted for it and even still we can take encouragement from the fact that God is greater than man and he is the one to whom our allegiance is committed let's pray gracious father thank you for your word thank you for your servants Peter and John and the example that they give for us to follow

Lord we thank you that your work is greater than man's your wisdom is greater than man's and your glory is greater than man's and you call us to a life of commitment and sacrifice for your sake and

you promise we're going to be persecuted we're going to experience troubles and Lord just help us to rest knowing that you are greater than all of it these temporary light afflictions are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits us Amen