

Acts 4:13-22 “Jesus Motivates Men” Boldness

Intro:

Last week we saw how Peter had just taken the Sadducees and Scribes to the woodshed and put the beat down on them.

Two Themes: 1) Been with Jesus (13-18) and Civil Disobedience (19-22)

I. Been with Jesus

In Mark 13:11, Jesus told them that they would be arrested, and they would be given the words to say. This is a fulfillment of that prophecy.

What was it that changed their disposition and attitude? What changed them from simply being ordinary men? Why were they now so bold? What happened.

There were actually two things. The text tells us about both of these things. Verse 13 says that the religious leaders were amazed at their boldness because they were “uneducated and ordinary men”. Now, if that doesn’t get you fired up, I wonder if you see the implication. Because 12 regular guys had been with Jesus, they are now about to change the world. It begs the question, “to what extent have we, likewise been transformed by the person and work of Christ?” “What are we doing to spend time with Jesus and to be likewise transformed? So, these guys were bold because of their association with Jesus.

Additionally, looking back to verse 8, what does it say about Peter before he spoke to them? He was filled with the Holy Spirit. So, these are the two things that happened. They walked with Jesus and were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, how do we do this today? I want to submit to you that there is something critical that we must do that they did not necessarily have to do in the same way. Since Jesus is not here in physical form, we must look back to what God has said, and trust that the Spirit of God uses the word of God.

Academic and passion, Head and heart.

Christianity is not only an academic endeavor but it not less than that. We are people of the Book. The way that we encounter God is by hearing and obeying His Word. You can’t love the God that you don’t know. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to communicate to our hearts and heads.

In reformed worship, we pray, sing, and preach the Word. We experience Jesus in the Lord’s Supper and normal, ordinary means of grace given to us. When that happens, we are changed. We are moved. We are transformed. We are conformed to the image of Christ.

There is both, an experiential nature, and an intellectual nature to this thing. Heart and head. Mind and passion. Word and deed. Word and sacrament. They go together.

In opposition to the anti-intellectualism of modern society, Christianity offers an encounter with the living Christ, through His word, and people. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that we are invited to plumb the depths of God and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. In Matthew 22:37 we are commanded to love God with all our hearts, and MINDS.

This is why I regularly point out pertinent Christian resources. This is why we've spent money on books that are available in the back. This is why you need to bring your personal copy of the Scriptures with you to church. This is why we should all be systematically reading through the Scriptures in addition to our deeper studies. This is why the Scottish Presbyterians changed the world and initiated modern society through education and learning. This is why we must cast off the shallow, superficial, facade of the current clown and trash world. This is how the world will be once again, transformed into the image of Christ. It is through the power of God displayed through the gospel believing people, who know the depths and riches of Christ and are being filled with the Spirit of God as they encounter God in the word of God.

These men were bold because they had been with Jesus. These men were confident because they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. If you want to be bold and confident in the Lord, you better meet with the Lord through His word and work. If you want the boldness of a lion, then you better get to know the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. If you want to be able to stand against the winds of the world and testify faithfully, you better take up the full armor of God like Paul talks about in Ephesians 6, where he says to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (Eph 6:1). You better build your life on the rock as Jesus says in Matthew 7.

These men were bold and courageous because they had been with Jesus. Let me plainly ask you now... have you been with Jesus. Are you daily communing with Him through prayer and study? Are you actively participating in the divine worship here today? Are you obeying the clear commands of Scripture so as to not throw water on the work of God and quench the Spirit's work. Are obeying the call to worship that commands you to sing loudly or are you just going through the motions? Are you making excuses or making headway? Are you floundering or fulfilling God's call to walk with Him? Is your family moving forward for the Kingdom or just getting by? What is your intentional plan to read and study God's word? What is your families' tradition of being educated in and observing God's word? Husbands, how are you leading your wives in this endeavor and praying for her? Wives, how are you helping your husbands to lead? Dads, how are you fostering a love of the God of the Scriptures in your kids? Moms, how are you helping your husband shepherd the family that God has given you to feast on the word of God? These men had been with Jesus. What about you?

Read the transition text verses 14-18.

Question 3: Peter's response v19-20; cf. 5:29 (disobey) & 3:15 (bear witness).

II. Protestant Resistance Theory

-A lesson on hermeneutics (Bible interpretation).

1. Interpret Scripture BY scripture
2. Interpret the obscure by the clear
3. Interpret the testaments in light of one another.
4. Interpret according to the genre giving appropriate weight to each. Didactic teaching in general has more weight than narrative, wisdom literature, or prophecy.

This being said, Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14 tell us to do what the government says because God is sovereign and He has appointed them to punish evil, so we should obey them. Now, the question becomes, is this a hard and fast rule? Are there exceptions? Is this an absolute, unchanging, homogenous law that must be obeyed under any and all circumstances?

This is why we need one more list to our hermeneutical paradigm. We need to account for the history of interpretation. Church history is replete with commentary on all the Bible and we would do well to not just get our Bible's and get alone and think we've got it all figured out. For instance, we hold to the Westminster standards because we believe it is a faithful summary of what the Bible teaches, and it gives us direction on some particularities about faith and practice.

That said, history and the rest of the Bible need to be examined before we just blindly follow whatever the government says because Romans 13 and 1 Peter tell us to. Are there exceptions, both Biblically and historically to this general rule? YES.

The Bible is replete with examples of civil disobedience:

Question 6: Civil disobedience in the Bible (at least 13 examples):

Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1 and Moses' parents Exodus 2

Rahab in Joshua 2

Elijah challenged king Ahab in 1Kings 18

2 Kings 2

Mordecai in Esther 3 and Esther herself in Esther 4

The prophet Jeremiah in the book of Jeremiah 38:1-6

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendigo in Daniel 3 and 6

The wise men at the birth of Christ in Matthew 2:1-12

Jesus and the disciples Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5

This passage

The next chapter

Paul and Silas Acts 16:16-40

Rev 13:15

The reason that Paul and Peter need to tell the people to submit to the government is not because that was the dominant view, in fact it was the opposite. As demonstrated above, the Bible's general stance is to resist ungodly leadership. Paul and Peter have to command that the people do not rebel over small things that make no real difference as to the work of Christ in the world because the totality of the Bible shows that people have always resisted tyrannical leaders in favor of obeying God.

Since the COVID craziness and associated governmental power grab that was ramped up a few years ago, there has been a resurgence of interest and work on this issue. Conservative, manly men of God with intestinal fortitude, have been publishing books, articles, and speaking on **Protestant Resistance Theology. That is the philosophical title of this phenomenon and the answer to Question 4.** Ironically, our country had a very rich history of embracing this mentality based on Biblical truth.

One could very easily make the case that the very founding of our nation, was based on this principle that "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God." - Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson use this phrase. They most likely got it from the Scottish reformer, John Knox, who got it from John Calvin, who got it from Augustine, who got it from God's word. To say it another way, if disobedience to tyrants is obedience to God, submission to tyranny is disobedience to God.

Draconian governmental mandates pushed by unelected bureaucrats at the CDC and WHO is by definition, tyranny. Our system was set up so that the people could petition their government for a redress of grievances. You cannot do that with the unelected alphabet agencies of the federal government, who have established themselves in the place of congress and the judiciary. The existing authority for Americans is the Constitution, not the bureaucrats or even the elected officials who defy the founding document of the land. So, it is not we who

are disobeying Romans 13, it is them, who are in disobedience. That is the thing that many evanjellyfish, soft Christians misunderstand. Those of us refusing who refused to be locked in our homes and wear masks and take the jab were not disobeying God and the constitution, they were.

Then you had other governmental types saying, "I'm just doing my job." Yeah, like the guards at Auschwitz and KGB agents did? And even now, possibly even IRS, DHS, FBI, ATF, EPA, and others. In our constitutional understanding, their existence is a crime prohibited in the constitution.

Unfortunately, there are effeminate so called Christian leaders and pastors out there touting a limp wristed, anemic, sissified, crybaby Christianity. They mask their cowardice as piety towards the woke industrial system of clown and trash world. People like Russell Moore formerly of the Ethics and Religious Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and now the editor in chief at the magazine Christianity Today, other sell outs include Eric Mason, Beth Moore, most of the writers for the Gospel Coalition, many pastors in our own town who shut down church and stayed shut down during the Vid. Those who mandated masks and the jab and ran headlong into the governmental compliance slippery slope of more control and less freedom.

This is contra Anabaptist and Baptist traditions and the well-known John Piper and his passivist approach. The Presbyterian ethic is much more sober when it comes to practical matters of dealing with the state and, at the same time more thoughtful and wholistic on a philosophical level. In the coming weeks, I'll have more of these books available but want to go on the record now in recommending the following.

"Slaying Leviathan: Limited Government and Resistance in the Christian Tradition" by Glen Sunshine

"The Bonafice Option" book by Andrew Isker and presentation by C.R. Wiley

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qE7PyDyZiMc&t=885s>

"Christian Nationalism"

<https://americanreformer.org/2021/08/resistance-to-tyrants-is-obedience-to-god-the-importance-of-lesser-magistrates/>

"Samuel Rutherford's seventeenth-century political tract, *Lex Rex*, contested the idea that Christians have to swear absolute fealty to oppressive governments. Rutherford gave a theo-political reading of Romans 13:1-7 that showed that resistance, even violent resistance, to tyrannical rule could be warranted. So there are occasions when opposition to government is not only required but even demanded by discipleship." -Bill Muehlenberg

<https://billmuehlenberg.com/2021/03/24/12-biblical-cases-of-civil-disobedience/>

Resisting state encroachments over things that are not explicit attacks on the gospel are but veiled attacks. Issues like education, corporal punishment of children, human sexuality and gender, and male leadership are but a few examples.

If you wonder why I'm ripping on all of this today, it's because our people have become dull of hearing and don't know who to trust. I'm simply giving a historical perspective to the text at hand. We will revisit this again in chapter five.

Peter and John preached the gospel in spite of being told not to. They defied the authorities because of a higher Authority. They disobeyed their leaders, to follow the commands of King Jesus. They were filled with the Spirit to testify before everyone. We should likewise do the same.

Oh, great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would you fill us with all boldness and truth to proclaim the glories of your excellency to the whole world. Would you be pleased to move in our day and time as to draw men to yourself. Would you use us to glorify the blessed name of Jesus in whom this man was healed and all of us have been healed by his stripes. Even today, Lord, would you open the hearts and minds of those here who don't know you to see the wretchedness of their sin and the mercy and grace offered in the death, burial and resurrection of your Son. In His name we pray, Amen.

Application Questions:

1. According to the text, what was notable about the disciples? What was surprising?
2. What transformation had happened in them (hint see Acts 2)?
3. What were the disciple's response to the command not to teach in the name of Jesus (v19-20)?
4. What is the philosophical name for this?

5. What are the two other primary passages that we need to reconcile with?

6. What other passages inform our view of this phenomenon?

7. What is necessary to understanding and framing this topic?

8. What are some external resources to better understand this topic?

9. How has the Spirit moved you to respond to today's message?

Answers: 1. That they had "been with Jesus" (v13); 2. They were filled with the Spirit; 3. Defiance; 4. Civil Disobedience and Protestant Resistance Theory; 5. Romans 13:1-7 and 1Peter 2:13-14; 6. Ex 1&2; Joshua 2; 1Kings 18; 2Kings 2; Esther 3&4; Jeremiah 38:1-6; Daniel 3&6; Matt 2:1-12; Matt 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5; Acts 5; Acts 16:16-40; Rev 13:15; 7. What God says, 10 Commandments and a comprehensive understanding of the Biblical worldview. 8. Lex Rex by Rutherford, Bonafice Option by Isker, Christian Nationalism by Torba and Isker, The Case for Christian Nationalism by Wolfe, Calvin's Institutes, Slaying Leviathan by Sunshine 9. Spend consistent time with God, through His word, for the purpose of better understanding and living out the comprehensive Biblical worldview.