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The Power of The Right Perspective **Acts 4:13-37**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: One event but two very different perspectives. This is what we find in this first step in the religious leaders in Jerusalem beginning to oppose the message of the early Church. One perspective is borne out of unbelief, that therefore ignores the evidence and seeks to squash the message of the gospel. The other perspective is that of early Church. They see all of what transpires through eyes of faith. They therefore respond and interpret the events properly and with much hope.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 4:13-33.
- B. Perspective is key to most things in life.
 - 1. Small children becoming upset because they can play with the electrical outlet.
 - 2. Holding a man a gunpoint while citizen asks for directions.
 - 3. The current trial involving Kyle Rittenhouse is one of perspective. And the emotions and opinions run strong on it.
 - 4. How you view a situation or concept affects how you will respond. As Maslow said, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as nail."
- C. That is what you have in our passage today. Two very different perspectives about the exact same situation.
 - 1. A man known by everyone was healed. There is no debate over that. Vs 14 makes it clear.
 - 2. So what is to be done about that fact? How should this be viewed? That is what is going on in this passage.
 - 3. Depending on their perspective the people involved in this situation will be making decisions and acting on those decisions. But the decisions are not the product of nothing. They flow out of how the situation of this man's healing is perceived.
- D. Quick backdrop:

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1. The man was healed in the “name” of Jesus Christ. His authority and His power.
2. The resulting reaction by the many at the Temple was amazement and in that situation Peter preached to them about Jesus. That He was the promised One from the Old Testament. That He was murdered by them but God raised Him from the dead.
3. He called upon them to repent and return to God through Jesus.
4. They were arrested and held over by the Sanhedrin.
5. Last message we saw how Peter responded and it was all about the name of Jesus.
 - a. No other name to proclaim. No other name for which to suffer. No other name to believe and no other name to find salvation.
 - b. In other words, he drew a line in the sand.
- E. And that is where we find ourselves today. Two very different perspectives over the same set of facts. A man is healed. A message is being preached and people are responding.
- F. But in this we have a great lesson for each person here. When you have the right perspective, and you know it, then you find great comfort and boldness.

II. It's All about Perspective.

- A. The consequences of a wrong perspective (14-22).
 1. Sadly, the leadership of those who shepherded and instructed the people of Israel was a terrible response that flowed from a wrong perspective.
 2. Now in this section we see some interesting parallels between the Apostles and Jesus Christ, who sent them.
 - a. The Sanhedrin began to look more carefully at Peter and John. Their first impressions were not good ones and now they are rethinking what is happening (13).
 - b. Jesus amazed the people and leaders with His teaching (cf. Matt. 7:28-29; Mark 1:22). It is worthwhile that we remember that Jesus had no formal training as well, which was part of the shock factor in his teachings.
 - c. Jesus did things that simply defied rejection (John 9; Mark 9-30).

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- d. Now look at the end of vs 13. They now see these men as having been with Jesus (past tense). But was that the reality though?
 - (1) Jesus was with these men and He was speaking through them by the power of the Spirit. Notice how the leaders are right back where they started with Jesus, they don't know what to do.
 - (2) They tried silencing Him by killing Him. But He rose from the dead and now has sent these men to speak with His authority and message.
3. The reactions of a wrong perspective:
 - a. First, they stay quiet (14).
 - (1) No rejoicing in the healing. No desire to learn and understand.
 - (2) They rejected Jesus. These men were now healing and speaking on behalf of Jesus. So they have no idea what to say.
 - b. Second, they begin damage control (15-16).
 - (1) They have no way to give an alternate explanation to the healing so they choose to say nothing and keep it as quiet as possible.
 - (2) What could have been their response? Believe.
 - (3) And there is a good chance that at least one was converted at some point since this is data that would not be accessible without a witness to tell Luke what was said by the leaders in private. Some think it might have been Gamaliel or Nicodemus.
 - (4) You also see how the love of power and reputation corrupts our thinking. They know there was a miracle but from their perspective this represents a threat to the status quo so they seek to prevent the people of Israel from knowing and hearing.
 - c. Third, they begin use threats (18, 21).

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- (1) Intimidation is the next step. Stop talking about Jesus. Stop proclaiming Jesus as the promised Messiah. Stop talking about us as murderers.
 - (2) They tell the apostles to not talk about it so that they can later use it against them if needed and that is exactly what we will see in 5:28.
 - (3) Again, note well that the key concern is that they were teaching in the name of Jesus—that must stop. Heal people? Fine. Heal people in the name of Jesus. No.
 - (4) To abuse them in any way risked making them martyrs.
 - (a) Realize that the common people would be talking up about this miracle and the name in which it was done. The name of Jesus was already the focus of thousands of conversations.
 - (b) So they talk tough and release them.
- B. The power of a right perspective (20-33).
1. The problem for the Sanhedrin is that they were dealing with two men who knew the truth.
 - a. Peter and John had walked with Jesus for 3 years. They saw the trial and the crucifixion. They saw Jesus risen from the dead. They were taught by Him. They watched Him ascend into heaven. They experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. They may not be educated by man's standards. But they were in no way ignorant.
 - c. Truth brings confidence. Truth frees you from mental games where you are trying to remember your last lie. Truth gives you a clear conscience no matter what comes. You know you are right and you know what is right.
 2. The reactions of a right perspective.
 - a. First, there is confidence (19-20).
 - (1) Note how they respond. Peter and John set the issue up carefully in such a way as to put the Sanhedrin in an untenable position.

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- (2) They frame their response in an either-or situation. And they put it before the leaders and they then invite these men, who are judges of Israel to judge. This must have frustrated the Sanhedrin no end since they viewed the men as uneducated.
 - (3) “You decide. Do we obey you or do we obey God? Who do we listen to?” That is the idea of listening or heeding in vs 19.
 - (4) Now why do they say they were obeying God? Because it was Jesus who commanded them in Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:18-19. And this also showed that they knew Jesus Christ was God.
 - (5) This confidence must have shocked the Sanhedrin. They are used to intimidating people and these two simple men are unimpressed. A right perspective brings great confidence.
- b. Second, the right perspective brings prayer (23-24a).
- (1) The first place they head to is to be with their fellow companions. Who this is exactly we don’t know, but it is not the entire church, which is now over 10,000. Likely it would be the core group of Apostles and those closest to them.
 - (2) They know they are right but this does not mean they know how best to proceed. So they pray. If they were wrong and they knew they were wrong they would not pray in this way.
 - (3) But also because they knew what they were saying and doing was right it caused them to go to the God in prayer. They were obeying Him.
 - (a) These were not their plans nor their ideas; rather they were obeying God. So it is to God they then go.
 - (b) Compare that to the Sanhedrin who sought their own counsel when confronted with the same situation. They did not go to God in prayer; rather, they conspired among themselves.
- c. Third, the right perspective pushes you onward (31).

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- (1) They finished the prayer and Holy Spirit fills them with power. What kind? The kind that causes them to speak the word of God.
- (2) This is simply confirmation for them that they understood rightly. They had prayed and committed themselves and their efforts to God. And the result was this great filling of the Spirit and a compulsion to speak.
- d. Fourth, the right perspective brought forth a heart of generosity (32).
 - (1) Keep in mind that the right perspective that they had was that Jesus was Lord and that everything He taught was true and to be obeyed.
 - (2) This immediately affected their pocketbooks. This world was not theirs and they were not hoping in this age but the one to come.
 - (3) They took to heart the substance of Christ's words that you cannot serve God and money together. One must be supreme. They grasped the idea of loving their brother and would not withhold any good thing if it was in their power.
- C. The content of this prayer is worth noting because it shows how they were thinking and interpreting these events involving them.
 1. First there is a strong affirmation of God's sovereignty by quoting from Nehemiah 9:6.
 - a. Term for "Lord" here is not the normal one. It is *despotas* and speaks to God as sovereign ruler over all.
 - b. This statement of God as creator is very common in the Old Testament. Paul picks this up in Acts 17 when he speaks to the Gentiles because it eliminates all other gods.
 - c. The believers reveal their perspective on how all things operate right from the start. God is Creator of all. Nothing stands outside of His will.
 2. There is certainty that there will be opposition and resistance against the Messiah (25-28).
 - a. They then quote Psalm 2. A psalm specifically about God's Messiah, the Christ. The unbelievers hate Him.

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- b. What is sad is that this is about the Gentiles, the unbelieving, pagan nations. They do not want to come under His rule and authority.
 - c. But now it is applied against the religious leaders of Israel. They have become like the nations. Instead of being witnesses to the nations, calling them to repent and come to the true God; they instead become like the unbelieving nations.
 - d. Grasp what they are saying in this scripture-infused prayer. They realize that these events are not against them in the ultimate sense, but against Jesus. Again they have a right perspective that then gives them the ability to interpret events properly.
 - e. These are not accidents. Note the incredibly strong wording of vss 27-28. These are enemies of God. These are the people who conspired against Jesus and had Him crucified.
 - (1) But why?
 - (2) “to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”
3. But this does not mean they then become fatalists and just sit by and do nothing. If God is supreme and if God is sovereign then if you have right perspective of God it moves you to go to Him in prayer. Note the content in vss 29-30.
- a. They don’t ask for deliverance.
 - (1) They recognize that this is part of God’s plan and they are asking for faithfulness and boldness on behalf of the apostles.
 - (2) When we pray it is not so much for a way out of our situation but rather a call for God’s strength to be manifest in the midst of it all.
 - b. The connection of endurance with miracles.
 - (1) The miracles never exist for their own purpose in Acts. They always accompany the preaching of the Gospel.
 - (2) But they also tend to bring persecution as a result. The church knew that this would occur so “while” God does those things, they ask that the one who suffer would endure and be faithful.

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III. Conclusion.

- A. Beloved, we each have multiple opportunities in our individual lives to make key decisions that set into motion major life events.
 - 1. Perhaps you watched with sadness a person make a decision regarding a relationship or a job that was the beginning of the unraveling of a life. Where you watch them years later filled with grief and sighs or bitter and angry because the wheels came off of everything they hoped for.
 - 2. Or a decision that set into motion a radical reorientation of multiple generations. A husband and wife coming to faith in Jesus Christ that then brought about the radically Christ-centered parenting and educating of their children. And that led to godly young men and women who married wisely and well to others who pursued God in faith and produced another generation of children brought up in a vibrant, Christian home.
- B. What drives these things?
 - 1. I have argued throughout this sermon that it is all about a perspective.
 - 2. We could change the wording a bit and say that it is all about what you believe, truly believe is good, right and true.
- C. Two groups of people saw the same thing. But because of their perspective they reacted in two very different ways to the events.
 - 1. One acted out of rebellion and unbelief. And as a result they sought to suppress and control.
 - a. They saw these events such as the healing of the man and the preaching in the Name of Jesus to be threats to their power and influence.
 - b. Their perspective guided them short term to achieve what they thought was good. They maintained their power. But in the end they found themselves under the fulness of God's holy wrath.
 - c. John 8:13-24 illustrates this.
 - 2. The other group, the Apostles and those who believed in Jesus, acted in boldness, joy and hope even in the midst of stress and persecution.
 - a. Instead of complaining, they rejoiced.
 - b. Instead of retreating, they kept pressing forward.

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- c. Instead of grasping, they gave generously, sharing with all who had need.
- D. Why?
 - 1. Because if Jesus is Lord and He is their hope for deliverance and forgiveness, then they cannot lose.
 - 2. To quote the missionary Jim Elliot, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”
- E. For some here you are hearing and rejecting Jesus.
 - 1. You are considering the cost and from your perspective it is not worth it. For you it will be some other thing or person. And when you stand before your Creator, that person or thing shall be your downfall.
 - 2. You are like the people in Psalm 2. You see God not as your Savior and life but as a fetter. Something that binds you and holds you back from what you believe shall bring you the joy or fulfillment you crave.
- F. For many of you, Christ is Lord.
 - 1. So for you I say, how does that perspective affect you? What decisions are being made right now in your life that reflects that perspective?
 - 2. This is why we gather both as a church and in smaller gatherings. We gather to remember and to encourage one another that Jesus is Lord. We have a different home. We have a different hope.

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. May you rest in the power of the Holy Spirit and may you rejoice in the love of the Father as it flows to you in every moment and in every way. Amen.