

## Acts 4:23-31: Is Your Relationship with God Alive or Nonexistent?

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA September 4, 2016

### I. Introduction

What's your relationship with God like? Is it something like this: you're struggling with some bully at school, so you ask God about it and your bully problem goes away? You don't know what to do about your boyfriend, so you ask God and He shows you that the guy you're dating is not really husband material. You don't know what university to go to, which career to pursue, which woman to date, what to do about your out-of-control teenager, how to get your boss to respect you, etc., etc., so you ask God about it and He gives you the answer every time. In other words, God is the one you turn to for advice, comfort, wisdom and guidance. He becomes your ultimate Father. And He not only helps you with every situation, He gives you the proper starting point to your life. That is, He reveals the name and purpose you were always meant to have, as He did with Abraham, Gideon and countless others. Is that your experience with God? If it's not, why not?

### II. Acts 4:23-31: Is God Active in Your Life: Do You Hear His Voice, Do You See His Guidance?

**4:23-28**, Peter and John healed a man lame from birth, got arrested and thrown in jail, and they're brought before the Supreme Court of Israel, the Sanhedrin. They're miraculously released under heavy threat. They're warned not to say anything to the people about Jesus Christ. When they get back to the rest of the apostles, Peter and John tell them what happened. Upon hearing all this, they raise their voices in praise of God and oddly enough they make a request that's going to bring them more trouble.

Why did they praise God after hearing that Peter and John were severely threatened by the highest court in the land? Because the entire religious and political machine of Israel could not stop two fishermen! Instead of the Sanhedrin having their way with two uneducated men, the unlearned stumped the experts! That's how powerful God is, in fact, the apostles' praise shows just how powerful God is.

Does God have the power to control your universe? In their praise the apostles go all the way back to Genesis and the doctrine of creation: it is God who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. Why mention this? What does this have to do with two fishermen escaping the clutches of the Sanhedrin? What does the doctrine of creation say? That God basically controls the entire universe. If that's true, can He control and affect the universe of two fishermen? And if He can help two fishermen, can He help you, can He affect your universe?

How closely can God control your universe? Next the apostles cite Psalm 2. Why Psalm 2? Because it's about the end times and the battle of Armageddon, when the armies of the world turn their wrath against God and His Anointed/Messiah. They think that they can finally break away from God's authority. Instead, God laughs at their attempt and warns them: "I have given My Son rulership over the nations of the world. Those who put their trust in Him will be blessed. Those who refuse to serve Him will perish." What does the doctrine of Messiah have to do with Peter and John being released by the Sanhedrin? The Sanhedrin, Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Jewish people set themselves against God and His Christ but all they did was fulfill God's prophecy about His Son's exaltation. And when the Sanhedrin tried to stop Peter and John from peaching about God's Christ, they again set themselves against God, which is why Peter and John were released. God in essence laughed at the Sanhedrin's attempt to stop His servants Peter and John.

**4:29-30**, after the apostles praise God, they ask for something rather strange.

*Do you ever ask God to take away the problem or for boldness to face the problem?* The apostles mention the incredible threat they're under: the Sanhedrin controls life in Israel. But instead of asking for deliverance from the powers that be, they ask God to give them boldness to continue preaching in Jesus' name and to give them the power to heal more and more people, which will further enrage the Sanhedrin. Would you make such a request or would you ask God to take away the problem? The question is, will you follow God in what **He** put in front of you or will you panic? Will you realize that "it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure" as He worked in those in Acts 4.....will you realize that He has the power to affect your universe?

**4:31**, God answered their prayer in a mighty way. The place where they were was shaken and they were all filled with God's Holy Spirit. Thus, they went out and "spoke the word of God with boldness."

*Have you seen God show up when you call on Him?* Did the apostles know that God was going to give them what they asked for? Yes! How do we know? Because before they ask, they point to His absolute control of their lives and everyone else's including the Sanhedrin. And if God put them in front of the Sanhedrin, then the Sanhedrin was no problem at all. Is God present in your life?

**A woman struggles with her health, she calls on the Lord and He shows up**, this woman's been struggling for years with Scleroderma, a disease that hardens the connective tissues in your body, like in your esophagus. It's been extremely difficult for her to swallow and it causes a choking sensation and difficulty breathing. She's gone to gastroenterologists who've done numerous tests and dilated her esophagus several times. The end result: there's no more they can do; the next step is a feeding tube. She, her daughter, her son-in-law, and several others began asking the Lord for help. Later she saw her Rheumatologist who suggested seeing someone at USC Medical Center since they have a department specializing in this. Thinking that perhaps it's a longshot, they went anyway. The gastroenterologist who saw her told her that he might be able to help, but he needed to see all her medical records related to this. Her daughter called and incredibly the next day the doctor received her records. He reviewed the records and wanted to try dilating her esophagus again. The daughter was concerned and had several questions. But she was able to speak with the doctor personally who answered all her questions. When she broke the news to her mom, she was shocked and not too excited about undergoing this procedure again. Why? Because it has to be done far from home, she has to be sedated, she'll have a sore throat and be unable to eat for a day or more, and then there's the possibility of a migraine afterwards.

But then a friend reminded her of what she (and several others) asked of the Lord as he walked her through the recent events: they prayed for her to be seen at a teaching hospital that might know more about her condition and a good specialist who might offer hope. Her insurance approved it and she was scheduled to see a specialist within weeks instead of months as they were originally told. Once he saw her, he needed her medical records which he got within 24hrs. He reviewed the records and scheduled her procedure within days.....but what if this proves to be yet another dead end? What then? What is God saying to her then? The question is will you follow God wherever He takes you or will your circumstances erase His presence?

### III. Conclusion

*So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.*