



“God’s Empowering Presence”

Acts 4:23-31

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Introduction: Today we are going to take a look at one of the early church’s responses to persecution.

Acts 4:23-31 – “When they had been released, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, ‘O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise futile things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’ For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *begun* to speak the word of God with boldness.”

I. The Threatening Report

Acts 4:23 – “When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.”

What a special thing to be a part of a community that supports each other and seeks the face of God together. Wherever God’s people gather has become the new center of prayer.

II. The “One-Accord” Prayer

1. The Lord’s Absolute Sovereignty

Acts 4:24 – “And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, ‘O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them.’”

This was a prayer meeting marked by urgency and unity.

“O Lord” – *despotes* in the Greek – the term for lordship that expresses God’s sovereign position.

2. Psalm 2 Rerun

“The Gentiles and the Peoples”

Acts 4:25 – “who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise futile things?’”

Psalm 2 describes this rebellion of some of the most powerful nations and rulers in the world.

The prayer initially points out that both the Gentiles and Jews are grouped against God. An opposition effort that ultimately is fruitless.

“The Kings and the Rulers”

Acts 4:26 – “The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.”

To identify the enemies of God one only needs to identify those who oppose His Messiah.

3. **God's Hand. God's Purpose.**

Acts 4:27-28 – “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

The church had already seen a display of God's power against the rule of the authorities. Jesus was delivered into their hands for execution, but the Lord determined that from all eternity that the Son would suffer at the hands of wicked men for our sake.

4. **Two Requests**

1. An appeal for justice.

Acts 4:29a – “And now, Lord, take note of their threats...”

2. A prayer for boldness.

Acts 4:29b-30 – “...and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

Notice that they did not ask for judgement to come on those who were persecuting them, nor did they ask to be freed from dealing with persecution in general. Instead, they prayed for power that would enable them to do the work the Lord called them to do.

III. **The God-Sized Response**

Acts 4:31 – “And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

3 Signs of a Divine Response:

1. The place shakes
2. They were filled with the Holy Spirit
3. They spoke with boldness

There are a number of OT responses like this as God's people experience a fresh filling of His presence (cf. Exodus 19:18; Isaiah 2:19, 21; 6:4; Amos 5:8-9; Ezra 6:15, 29).

Concluding Challenge:

Seems that what the church needs more than ever today is resurrection courage!

“Pray for great things, expect great things, work for great things, but above all – pray.” – Dr. R. A. Torrey

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. Think of someone you love but haven't heard from in a while. Reach out to them and ask them to share a praise report with you.
2. In what ways can we as a church better come together on “one accord” in prayer?
3. Read Romans 8:28. Give an example of how this verse has played out in your life.
4. How do you instinctively respond to opposition to your Christian faith?
5. Describe what your life would look like if you had resurrection courage. Then pray for that courage.