

Recap of 5/16/21 message (Chris Sommerfield – Acts 4:23-31):

Believers Respond to Persecution with Praise and Petition

BELIEVERS RESPOND WITH PRAISE GROUNDED IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

There is unity within the body of believers which will be a continuing theme in the book of Acts. The believers recognize God as master over all, creator and sovereign ruler.

The word for lord in the New Testament is usually κύριος, *kyrios*, meaning one who is in charge by possession, or one who has authority. However, in verse 24 the word used is Δέσποτα, *Despota*, where we get our English word *despot*. In English there is a negative connotation of a ruler who exercises absolute authority often in cruel ways, but in Greek when Acts was written there was no negative connotation. It was simply used of one with great authority often reflecting a master/ servant relationship. The believers really highlight God's sovereignty as master and creator over all which is reflected in the servant language throughout the prayer.

BELIEVERS RESPOND WITH PRAISE GROUNDED IN GOD'S WORD

Verses 25-26 are a reference to Psalm 2 which is a Royal Psalm. They already notice the dual authorship of Holy Scripture being both from man and God by the Holy Spirit (vs. 25).

The believers link those against God's anointed in the Psalm with those who are against God's anointed Messiah, Jesus.

Nations (*ethnē*, Acts 4:25) compare with Gentiles (*ethnesin*, v. 27); peoples (*laoi*, v. 25) compare with people of Israel (*laos Israēl*, v. 27); kings (v. 26) compare with Herod (v. 27) who was Herod Antipas which was functioning in the role as a regional Jewish King during Christ's crucifixion; and rulers (v. 26) compare with Pontius Pilate (v. 27), the Roman ruler of the region.

BELIEVERS PETITION FOR CONFIDENCE AND BOLDNESS

They did not ask God for the destruction of those persecuting them, nor for the persecution to be lessened. They asked for the boldness to press on and continue in their ministry and proclamation.

They are able to do this because they know God is sovereign and they know His word, that the Messiah is victor.

We are able to stand up and endure rather than look for an easy way out when the reason for enduring is viewed as worthy. There is nothing more worthy in this world than Jesus Christ. When we are persecuted on account of Him, we must be a community that is ready to pray for confidence and boldness to continue in faithfulness even in the face of persecution. We cannot expect to escape persecution and remain faithful to God. Our God is the God of second chances. This same religious council that arrested Peter and John also arrested Jesus. In the night He was arrested, His disciples were told to pray that they would not fall into temptation. They did not pray, they slept, and moments later Jesus was taken from them and they were scattered. Peter denied Jesus 3 times. This time as they experience persecution from the same religious council, they do not sleep on the job, they do not give into the temptation to deny Christ, they remain resilient and pray together. God shook the place where they were as confirmation that He heard their prayer and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with Boldness. The very ground and building may have shook, but these early believers were not going to be shaken. The same power that shakes the ground also gives sure footing to the believer so they can stand firm.