

Series: The Acts of the Apostles: From Jerusalem

Text: Acts 4:23-31

HI: His enemy's plot fuels the Sovereign Lord's plan.

Title: *The Powers That Be*

Hook: "You can't fight city hall"

Date: 10.16.22

Purpose: To call God's people to pray faithfully and witness boldly.

FCF: The early church faced a major threat to their lives, but the grace of God met them there as he empowered them for witness.

COR: We live in a corrupt world, and very few would argue this. The powers that be wield their power corruptly. In this scene, we see a faithful and persecuted minority who turns to God in prayer and is empowered by his Spirit. The rest is history.

Witness of Christ [WC*]: The wicked authorities united against Jesus, but their schemes did nothing but fuel his mission. Resistance is futile.

Apologetic: The answer to corrupt power isn't corrupt power; it's the kingdom of Jesus.

Form: Hourglass (between MVM's)

Outline:

I. God's enemies engage in futile resistance. (24-31)

A. The Lord has all authority is fully trustworthy. (24b)

B. His enemies bow to his sovereignty. (27-28)

C. The Lord empowers his people. (31)

II. God's people endure with faithful resilience. (23-31)

A. They turn to God in unity. (23-24a)

B. They pray for boldness. (29-30)

C. They walk in obedience. (31)

Main Idea:

Subject: Where does persecution lead the Lord's people?

Complement: To the Sovereign Lord, who empowers them to speak his word with boldness.

Exegetical Idea: Persecution leads the Lord's people to call out to him, resulting in their empowerment to speak his word with boldness.

Theological Idea: Persecution results in the Sovereign Lord's empowerment of his people.

Homiletical Idea: His enemy's plot fuels the Sovereign Lord's plan.

Introduction:

Tammany Hall: PIC

Boss Tweed: PIC

Boss Tweed Cartoon: PIC

READ Acts 4:23-31

²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, "ho made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'--

²⁷ 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,

²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Sovereign Lord = "the omnipotent ruler whose authority extends over all human beings"

Psalm 146:1-4 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! ² I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. ³ Put not

your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ⁴ When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.

READ Psalm 146:5-10 ⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

RE-READ 4:25-28

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²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

I. God's enemies engage in futile resistance.

Predestined: To predetermine, decide upon beforehand

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RE-READ 4:23-24b, 29-30

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²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said,

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

II. God's people endure with faithful resilience. (23-31)

"their friends" = "their own"

"Pentecost was not only a past event but a continuing reality." Patrick Schreiner

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