

# **The Church: A Godly Perspective**

**Acts 4:23-31**

- **Last week we read about Peter and John standing before the Sanhedrin after healing a lame man and then preaching the gospel.**
- **They were told to never preach in the name of Jesus again, to which Peter and John made clear that they could not do as they commanded.**

## **Acts 4:18-20**

**18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”**

# 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, who 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,

# **Acts 4:23-31**

**“ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the peoples plot in vain?’**

**<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers were gathered together,  
against the Lord and against his Anointed’—**

# Acts 4:23-31

**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,

# Acts 4:23-31

**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.**

# **I. Choose fellowship over isolation.**

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

- It is a noteworthy thing that Peter and John, after being released, went straight to their friends to report all that had happened.**
- Often, we are tempted to suffer in silence, to isolate as to not be a burden to others.**

# **I. Choose fellowship over isolation.**

- **Persecution has a way of developing solidarity among believers.**
- **We see this in Acts 4:32-35 where those who make up the church are unified in meeting each other's needs.**
- **Sadly, we see much disunity in churches today which may be the result of a lack of persecution.**

# **I. Choose fellowship over isolation.**

- The lack of persecution is more than likely a result of the church not being willing to confront the world of sin. If we were more aggressive in confronting the world system, we would surely see more opposition which would result in driving us closer together in unity.**
- We as believers must turn to one another for support and comfort, but also for the purpose of unifying the church for the cause of Christ.**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

**<sup>24</sup> And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, <sup>25</sup> 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?**

**<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’—**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

**<sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

- A sign of mature faith is when a believer is fully devoted to the cause of Christ to the point that they are thankful even when facing difficulty, persecution, and suffering.**
- Another noteworthy part of this story is the state of Peter and John after this experience. They are not in a state of fear but of exhilaration.**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

- It is important to note that they used the word “Despotēs” (Lord) when they addressed God. This word is used only six times in scripture, and it is where we get the word despot.**
- This conveys the idea of one who is absolute master.**
- By using this word, they are recognizing God’s sovereignty which also comforts them in the face of threats of persecution.**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

- The church also recognized that the opposition they faced was foreseen in the Old Testament.**

**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’—**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

- They literally were witnessing the fulfillment of prophecy, and this was seen as an honor.**
- Likewise, as you and I see things prophesied in scripture coming true it is a reminder that Jesus' return is closer than ever.**

## **II. Choose thankfulness over resentment.**

- The church understood that all those in opposition to Christ and His church had only succeeded to accomplish what God had predestined to take place in order for His will to be done.**
- The same is still true today. May we rejoice as we see things taking place that point to His return. May we count it as a privilege to witness and an honor to endure.**

### **III. Choose to desire boldness not cowardice.**

**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.**

### **III. Choose to desire boldness not cowardice.**

- Every believer is expected to live a life of sacrifice which includes doing hard things, being inconvenienced for the kingdom, and suffering for the sake of Christ.**
- Our natural instinct is to run from danger. We see a threat; we head the other way.**

### **III. Choose to desire boldness not cowardice.**

- Like the soldier, the police officer, the firefighter, and the EMT we are to be willing to be in places of danger for a purpose that is greater than we are.**
- The prayer of the church in this passage informs us what our mindset as believers is to be in like circumstances.**

### **III. Choose to desire boldness not cowardice.**

- **First, they ask God to take note of the threats.**
  - **They talked to God about their troubles.**
- **Second, they ask for God's enabling for the believers to continue preaching.**
  - **It was their desire to continue sharing the gospel in confidence.**

### **III. Choose to desire boldness not cowardice.**

- **Third, they asked God for the gift of boldness.**
  - **Notice they did not ask for protection or for escape.**
  - **They wanted courage and boldness over safety and comfort.**
- **Forth, they asked God to continue to work miracles that would confirm their gospel message.**
  - **They wanted there to be no doubt that God was using His church and that His kingdom had come.**

### **III. Choose to desire boldness not cowardice.**

- God answered their prayer by filling them with the Holy Spirit who provides the enabling grace necessary to fulfill what God has called believers to do.**
- This is a gift given to every believer. When you and I face threats and persecution the same Holy Spirit is providing the grace needed to stand firm. It also fills us with supernatural peace, allowing us to rejoice in having the opportunity to suffer for our Savior's sake.**
- Like the church in Acts we must have an attitude of “get to” not “have to.”**