

## **Acts 4:23-31 (WCF 3:3-8) “A Predestination Prayer”**

**For the Children:** Imagine a child who said, “I know my parents really want me to have a tidy room. And I love them so much, and want to please them so much, I’ll just sit back and let them clean my room. After all, if they want it clean so badly, I’m sure they’ll get the job done one way or another!” No, the child should say, “If they want my room clean, I’d better do it. That’s the way they want it to get clean!” Now it’s true that God has already chosen who is going to heaven. But He’s also chosen the way that normally happens – by believers telling others about the Gospel, people studying His Word, praying, going to church and seeking to obey Him. If we know that’s what He wants, we should be eager to pursue those things. **Questions:** Why do some people oppose the Lord Jesus? Does the Lord have a right to choose who goes to heaven? What did the apostles ask of the Lord in Acts 4:23-32?

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### **Introduction:**

#### **First Point: God’s Purpose of Election**

- 1) Acceptance & Hostility: When Peter and John healed a lame man in the Temple, many were converted (v. 4), but the Jewish leaders became even more hostile. They arrested the two, ordered them not to speak in Jesus’ Name, threatened them and released them. Public evangelism was now illegal there
- 2) Acceptance Predestined: The conversion of the many was due, ultimately, to God’s decree of election (Acts 2:7, 11:21, 13:48). Before time, God chose the precise number and which individuals were to be saved, an unchangeable decree, by free grace, due to His mere good pleasure – not by foreseeing some other cause or condition in men that moved Him to elect them. See WCF 3. Basing election on bare foresight makes the appointment due to Fate, with the Lord merely fitting His plans around that
- 3) Hostility Predestined: WCF 3:3,7 also teach that God chooses to pass some by with respect to His mercy, ordaining them instead to eternal death – to the praise of His justice. In v. 28 the apostles acknowledge that the hostility of the Romans and Jews was according to whatever God’s hand and purpose predestined. “Predestined” means that their path was marked out by God beforehand. This could not be used to describe God merely seeing into the future. See also Acts 2:23, Lk. 22:22
- 4) A Matter of God’s Sovereignty: This comes in the context of a strong acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty over all creation. V. 24, quoting Ps. 146:6, calls Him “Lord” meaning a Master in total control. It is because of this same sovereignty that He could foretell in Ps. 2 re this very hostility by Pilate, Herod, the Romans and Sanhedrin. For He has the right and ability to make all outcomes exactly what His hand and purpose have predestined

#### **Second Point: The Means for Carrying Out This Purpose**

- 1) Predestined Means: WCF 3:8 warns that we must handle the mystery of predestination with care, lest man’s responsibility be undermined. The way to prevent this from happening is to see that God has also predestined the *means* for carrying forward His plans of salvation – His work of redeeming us by His Son and applying redemption through His Spirit; and our response of obedience to His Word, study of His Word, evangelism, prayer, worship and so on
- 2) The Means of the Word: Understanding that God had ordained the means of proclamation of the Word to call the elect to Himself, the apostles respond to the Sanhedrin’s threats by asking for greater courage to proclaim Christ boldly now that that had been made illegal. They ask for nothing for themselves, they are only concerned about the Master’s glory
- 3) The Work of the Spirit: That request for boldness is indirectly a prayer for God to work by means of His Spirit. So immediately the Lord answers by sending His Spirit, as the room shakes, to give greater boldness in proclamation. The apostles also ask the Lord to do signs and wonders, according to His will – like the healing of the lame man – a request appropriate for that time, but not for today
- 4) The Means of Prayer: The means of prayer as a vital part of God carrying out His purposes was the first thing to which the apostles resorted in this difficult situation

**Conclusion:**