

Are We Boldly Praying for Boldness?
Acts 4:23-31

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And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness - Acts 4:29, ESV

How do we respond to challenge and opposition to the Gospel in our culture or from cultural leaders? Do we look for ways to compromise, to back off and water down, perhaps to save face or make peace? Or do we respond with anger, self-protection, and mean-spirited counter-attacks? In our last reading, we saw the boldness and clarity with which Peter and John faced their opponents and proclaimed the Gospel to them. Now, in today's reading, we see the church's response to their leaders' arrest and release.

When Peter and John were released, they went back to the church and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them. The church's immediate response was to pray. Their prayer reflects the same kind of Scriptural, Christ-centered heart that characterized Peter's preaching.

The church was not shocked or surprised by the opposition of the world. They looked to Psalm 2 and prayed its words back to God as an explanation of the opposition they faced:

*'Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed'*

The focus of their concern was not for their own safety or comfort. They did not ask for relief but for boldness: ". . . grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

God's response to their prayer was immediate and dramatic: "*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.*" God filled the disciples with His Spirit and granted their request, as they spoke with boldness.

What a model for us, especially as we face a culture that is increasingly intolerant of Christian truth. In such times, we cannot trust in ourselves to have the wisdom to answer as we should. We must seek the Lord in prayer. As we pray, we must seek our identity and calling in Scripture. And we must pray for boldness. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we preach as we should, pray as we should, and respond to a hostile culture as we should.

Heavenly Father, we are Your servants, Your children and Your ambassadors. The world needs a faithful, clear and bold witness of Your truth. Fill us with Your Spirit. Grant us boldness to speak Your word and proclaim Your Son with clarity, faithfulness and power. We ask this for Your glory and in Jesus' name, Amen.