

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon July 24, 2022

“Understanding and Responding to Persecution, Part 2 – Together With One Accord”

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

I. Introduction

a. Why does persecution occur?

- i. When God's people love Him and by His Spirit and Word, obey Him in real life. Not just hearers, but doers of His Word.
- ii. They follow God with one accord, not distracted or poisoned by the allurements of the flesh and of the world. They have become a real threat to the current world order. They are the conduits by which the Kingdom of heaven is coming to earth. So, the rebels hate this real-world demonstration of Christ and His Kingdom.
- iii. We should expect to be persecuted because the rebels hate Jesus and those that look like Him.

b. Understanding persecution

- i. Remember God is the Almighty Creator.
- ii. Remember Christ is the King over all the nations, peoples, and lands.
- iii. Remember all rebellion against Him is ridiculous and will fail.
- iv. Remember His sure victory is underway.
- v. We don't focus upon the threats or those who bring them.
- vi. Persecution should be expected in a society that hates God.
- vii. Persecution should be an encouraging sign that we are obeying God in some demonstrable fashion. Persecution is a blessing. We should rejoice when we're persecuted, Jesus tells. Persecution is a result of loving God and loving others.
- viii. Persecution is a sign that enough Christian unity and corporate faithfulness exists to represent a threat to the diabolical rebels who are in places of power. Persecution not usually against isolated individuals. When Christianity becomes a movement, the rebels implement persecution.
- ix. We should not be so foolish as to think persecution cannot occur in our nation.
- x. Persecution cannot overcome God's Spirit in us. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Tim 1:7)
- xi. Persecution is foreordained and is a part of how Christ shows His glory by using the very persecution meant to harm Him and His Kingdom to sanctify His people, advance His Kingdom and frustrate His enemies.

c. Responding to persecution

- i. Let's be persecuted together.
- ii. Let's be of one accord, agreeing together on the Gospel of the Kingdom and the mission Christ has given to us.
- iii. Define the threats aloud together.
- iv. Pray to God together corporately
 1. Remember God our Almighty Creator
 2. Remember Christ as our King
 3. Remembering the futility of the rebels and their threats

4. Acknowledge our weakness and cowardice without His help
 5. Ask God for boldness
 6. Ask God to do miracles of healing and other signs and wonders
 7. Ask God to conquer His enemies
 8. Pray with expectation
- d. Today: “Understanding and Responding to Persecution, Part 2 – Together With One Accord”
- i. They (Peter and John) went to their own v23
 - ii. They (Peter and John) reported all v23
 - iii. They all listened to Peter and John v24
 - iv. With one accord v24
 - v. Questions to know, love and obey God
- II. They (Peter and John) went to their own v23
- a. “And being let go, they went to their own companions”
 - i. So, Peter and John have been commanded by the Sanhedrin to stop spreading the Gospel, or face severe punishments. Their first response is to go back to their own people, the true Church, the believers at that time, in Jerusalem. Peter and John do not lay aside their calling and go home to Galilee. They go to their own. They do not go off alone to private prayer. They go to their own. They did not have prideful self-exaltation because of their bold and eloquent stance before the Sanhedrin. They go to their own.
 - ii. “To their own” – the word *companion* is not in the Greek text. It’s an added word for clarification. But, perhaps the addition of the word “companion” actually subtracts from the meaning? “To their own”, left as it is, points beyond companionship and into eternity. This mutuality arises from being One Body in Christ. We belong to one another because we each belong to Christ. We are members of our Heavenly Father’s eternal family. They went to Christ by going to His Body. They went to their Father by drawing near to His Family. Divine friendship drew them to their own.
 1. “After their release, Peter and John go “to their friends” (πρὸς τοὺς ἰδίους; lit., “to their own”), a phrase which is usually interpreted in terms of the community of believers in Jerusalem. ... The nominalized adjective (οἱ ἴδιοι) denotes persons associated with a larger entity and documents the familial relationship of the believers.”¹

¹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 4:23.

2. “The expression [“to their own”] is not accidental, as it presses the point of how the early church saw itself as a community of mutually supportive friends.”²
 - iii. They did not give way to pride and separate themselves from their own.
 1. “Though God had highly honoured them, in calling them out to be his witnesses, and enabling them to acquit themselves so well, yet they were not puffed up with the honour done them, nor thought themselves thereby exalted above their brethren, but *went to their own company*. No advancement in gifts or usefulness should make us think ourselves above either the duties or the privileges of the communion of saints.”³
 - iv. They do not first go off alone to private prayer
 1. “Though their enemies had severely threatened them, and endeavored to break their knot, and frighten them from the work they were jointly engaged in, yet they *went to their own company*, and feared not the wrath of their rulers. They might have had comfort, if, being let go, they had retired to their closets, and spent some time in devotion there. But they were men in a public station, and must seek not so much their own personal satisfaction as the public good. Christ’s followers do best in company, provided it be in their own company.”⁴
 - b. Where does your heart cry when you are afraid?
 - c. Where do your feet run when you are fearful?
 - d. Does your love and trust toward God your Father take you to His beloved children? Does your love and trust toward Christ take you to His Body, His Church?
 - e. Could someone watch your life and describe your relationship with God’s Church as “to their own”?
 - f. Calvin “thus must the children of God do, one must prick forward another, and they must join hand in hand, that they may vanquish the common adversary fighting under Christ’s banner”⁵
- III. They (Peter and John) reported all v23
- a. “and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.”

² Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 203.

³ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2078.

⁴ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2078.

⁵ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, [Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 181.

- i. Peter and John tell their brothers and sisters every command and threat of the Sanhedrin. Peter and John do not withhold any of the terrible threats. They are all sharing these persecution threats together.
- b. "And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 "If we this day are judged for a good deed [done] to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed."
 - c. The Sanhedrin wanted to know by what authority Peter and John did the miracle. Who do you think you are, Peter and John, to do a miracle? How dare you, right here in our temple?
 - i. This is the same ruling body that had Jesus crucified.
 - d. Yet, the Sanhedrin was restrained because all the people knew a mighty miracle had been done.
 - e. The Sanhedrin "severely" threatens Peter and John, commanding them "from now on they speak to no man in this name" and "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus".
 - f. After Peter and John reply: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard", the Sanhedrin "further threatened them".

- i. Severe threatenings “the [word] here used implies a very sore and heavy threatening, as of the most grievous punishment upon the most heinous fact.” (Matthew Poole)
- g. What was the command of Christ to His disciples?
 - i. Lk 24:44-49 “Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 “and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 “And you are witnesses of these things. 49 “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”
 1. They were to preach Jesus as the crucified, resurrected Messiah.
 2. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins in Jesus Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
 3. They were to serve as witnesses of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.
 4. They were to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
 - h. So, the most powerful ruling body in Israel, the same court that had Jesus murdered by the Romans, was now commanding the disciples to disobey the command of Jesus. Under the most severe threats of punishment, the disciples of Christ were commanded to no longer speak or teach anyone at all, ever, in Jesus Name.
 - i. “They reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them, adding, no doubt, what they were enabled by the grace of God to reply to them, and how their trial issued. They related it to them, That they might know what to expect both from men and from God in the progress of their work. From men they might expect every thing that was terrifying, but from God every thing that was encouraging; men would do their utmost to run them down, but God would take effectual care to bear them up. Thus the brethren in the Lord would wax confident through their bonds, and their experiences, ...That they might now join with them in prayers and praises; and by such a concert as this God would be the more glorified, and the church the more edified. We should therefore communicate to our brethren the providences of God that relate to us, and our experience of his presence with us, that they may assist us in our acknowledgment of God therein.⁶

⁶ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2078.

- j. What worldly pressures squeeze you to be silent about Jesus? Do you share these with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- IV. They all listened to Peter and John v24
- a. 24 So when they heard that,
 - b. The report from Peter and John was eagerly received by all the Christians. They listened carefully and joined with Peter and John as one. The threats are not just for Peter and John. They don't put Peter and John out and separate themselves from Peter and John. No self-protection on display here. They listen and live as one Body with Peter and John included.
 - c. Do you listen to the burdens and pressures of your Christian brothers and sisters, especially as it pertains to pressures that threaten their Christian witness?
- V. With one accord v24
- a. they raised their voice to God with one accord and said:
 - b. The church at that moment is of one mind and one heart. They understand Who Christ Is. They know He was crucified, resurrected, and ascended. They know His commands to them. They are in perfect agreement over Who He Is, what He has accomplished and what they are to do to obey Him. They also know the Sanhedrin's power and threats. They know they have been commanded to disobey Jesus or face terrible consequences. And, they know Jesus will support and defend His people as they obey Him, against all threats of every kind.
 - i. "They raise (ἤραν, plural) their voices "unanimously" (ὁμοθυμαδόν, see on 1:14), and thus as one voice (φωνήν, singular). In view of Peter's speech before the Sanhedrin which Luke summarized in vv. 8–12, Peter could be the one who formulated the prayer in vv. 24–30, with the other believers expressing their assent with a responsory "Amen."⁷
 - c. Note the pre-prayer momentum of shared threats, shared understanding and shared faith and hope. World-conquering prayer is a necessary consequence of being together with one accord, obeying Christ in the face of all threats.
 - i. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, v. 24. Not that it can be supposed that they all said the same words at the same time (though it was possible they might, being all inspired by one and the same Spirit), but one in the name of the rest *lifted up his voice to God* and the rest joined with him, ...*with one mind* (so the word signifies); their hearts went along with him, and so, though but one spoke, they all prayed; one lifted up his voice, and, in concurrence with him, they all lifted up their hearts, which was, in effect, lifting up their voice to God; for thoughts are as words to God."⁸
- VI. Questions to know, love and obey God

⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 4:24.

⁸ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2078.