

THE LEADER'S “REST”

(3 RESOURCES THAT PRODUCE GREAT CONFIDENCE AND REST IN SERVANT LEADERS)

Acts 4:24-33



SECURITY IS FOUND IN...

- ◆ God's **Sovereignty** (His Authority)
- ◆ God's **Providence** (His Wisdom)
- ◆ God's **Compassion** (His Ability)

“And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God in one accord, and said...”
(v. 24)

Bill Kirk

THE LEADER'S REST

Text: Acts 4:1-31, 33

Subject: Experiencing Great Grace "When" (Facing the Unexpected)

Introduction:

I love Verse 33 which says, "And great grace was upon them all."

Question: Do you want God's "great grace" to be upon you?

Question: Do you want to **respond correctly** to disappointments in your life?

Question: Do you want **faith** when you come to God in **prayer**?

Question: Do you want to pray for the **right things** at the **right time**?

Grasp the setting of our text:

1. Luke tells us that two waves of persecution are initiated by the Sadducees. (In Acts 4:1, & 5:17)
2. The Sadducees were the ruling class of wealthy aristocrats.
3. They joined with the Romans publically, they were not looking for a Messiah, and they denied the resurrection of the dead.
4. They saw the apostles as **agitators** (disturbers of the peace) and **heretics** (enemies of the truth).

Question: What did the Sadducees do?

Answer: They went on the offensive.

- ◆ In Verse 1, the chief of the temple police takes action.
- ◆ In Verse 2, he is greatly disturbed over this preaching of Jesus rising from the dead.
- ◆ In Verse 3, the authorities seize Peter and John and put them in jail overnight (because it is too late to convene the council).
- ◆ In Verse 4, the Sadducees had arrested the apostles, but could not arrest the gospel, as many people were saved.

Question: What happens after a night in jail?

Answer: The court session meets to decide the fate of Peter and John.

The 71 member Sanhedrin Council which included:

- ◆ The elders (or clan members)
- ◆ The teachers of the law (or scribes who interpreted it).
- ◆ Annas the high priest (and Caiaphas his son-in-law).
- ◆ Plus other members of the high priest's family (who all sit in their semi-circle as Peter and John are brought in before them).

Question: What's the big question in Verse 7?

Answer: "By what power or what name did you heal this crippled man?"

And in Verses 8-12, Peter responds with a spirit led witness that's convincing!

Question: What happens after Peter's response?

Answer: The council in session is dumbfounded.

- ◆ In Verse 14, the healed beggar stands before them.
- ◆ In Verse 15, the court meets behind closed doors, to talk about these two preachers.
- ◆ In Verse 16, "What shall we do to these men? For we cannot deny this miracle."

Question: What's the conclusion of the council?

Answer: In Verse 17; **"Let's threaten the apostles so they will quit preaching this Jesus."**
(Intimidation)

- ◆ In Verse 18; "We command you to keep quiet." (Domination)
- ◆ In Verse 21; "They further threatened Peter and John" with fear of punishment.
(Manipulation)
- ◆ In Verse 21, they let the apostles go and gave them their release. (Conditionally)

The question now is:

- ◆ "What do you do when you are given an ultimatum?"
- ◆ "Where do you run when you've been arrested, threatened, interrogated, and falsely accused?"
- ◆ "How do you pray when people meet secretly (behind closed doors) to plan your failure?"
- ◆ "What do you do, where do you go, how do you pray so that **"great grace"** will rest upon you in times like these?"
- ◆ "How did the believers in Acts 4 position themselves in prayer (to the point) where they were all filled with the Holy Spirit?"

The Lord gives you the answer in Verses 24-31

- ◆ In Verse 23, Peter and John are released and rush to "their own company." (The fellow believers who had been praying for Peter and John).

Question: What did Peter and John do upon reaching their fellow believers?

Answer: Verse 23; "They shared all that the court in session had said to them; their questioning, their threats, their warnings, and their planned persecution if Jesus was going to be preached again."

Question: And how did their friends respond? What did the believers do? How did God respond to their response?

Verse 24; “And **when** they heard that” (the threats and abuse and intimidation) what did they do?

“They lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said...”

- ◆ And what they said is a pattern for you and me! (That’s why it is in your hands)
- ◆ And how they prayed is life changing to your spiritual man! (It changes us all)

I. **They Prayed With Faith In God’s “Authority” (V. 24)**

“Lord, thou art God, which has made heaven, earth, the sea and all that is in them.”

Question: How do you pray under trouble, tension and uncertainty?

Question: How do you react to things that can intimidate you?

Question: What do you remind yourself so that “**great grace**” can rest upon you?

Verse 24, “Lord, thou are God.”

- ◆ The word “Lord” is the Greek word DESPOTES.
- ◆ The word DESPOTES means three things:

1. Sovereign Ruler
2. Sovereign Master
3. Sovereign Lord

Question: What are the believers acknowledging in prayer?

Answer: That God not only created the heaven, the earth, the sea and all the inhabitants,

But the Lord is our DESPOTES; which means:

1. The Lord has sovereign rule and final authority.
2. The Lord possesses all power at all times.
3. The Lord is in charge of all things as creator and sustainer.
4. The Lord still rules and overrules the plans of man.

In Other Words

- ◆ The believers are in prayer, acknowledging that God is sovereign (or Master) over the situation with the Sanhedrin Council.

Question: What’s that mean to you today?

Answer: It means, that you can pray in faith and “rest well” because:

- ◆ You have the truth and conviction that God is absolutely sovereign!
- ◆ You know that nothing happens without God’s knowledge.
- ◆ You know that God’s purpose will be fulfilled in your life.
- ◆ You know that God will make the crooked places straight.
- ◆ You know that if God is your master, and you are His servant, God is committed to care for His own.

#1. The Believers Prayed with Faith In God’s Authority

II. They Prayed With Faith In God's "Providence" (Vs. 25-28)

"Who by the mouth of your servant David has said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?"

Verse 26

"Kings and rulers stood up against the Lord, and against his Christ."

Verse 27

"For against Jesus; both Herod, Pilate, Gentiles and Jews were gathered together."

Verse 28

"For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."

Question: What are the believers saying here in prayer?

Answer: They refer to David and Psalm 2.

- ◆ It's a reference to the revolt of the nations against the Lord and,
- ◆ It refers to the adversaries of Jesus (Verse 27) Herod, Pilate, the Romans and the Jews.
- ◆ Verse 27 states, "For against Jesus, enemies ganged up against Him and crucified Him."

Question: Why are the disciples saying this in prayer?

Answer: Because in Verse 28 they also pray;

"Lord, what they did which was evil, You turned it around to work for Your eternal good."

In Other Words

Verse 28; **"For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy Counsel determined before to be done."**

Which Means

1. "Lord, you didn't cause your enemies to crucify Your Son." But,
2. "You knew they would and allowed them to do so." And
3. "You turned their evil deeds inside out and used them against the enemy to save every lost sinner who repents."

Question: Why are the believers so confident in prayer?

Answer: Because they understand God's providence or His determined counsel, which means:

- ◆ If God could overrule the worst that man has ever done, in crucifying God's best, His Son,
- ◆ Then surely God can overrule now and use anything that happens to you for an ultimate good in your life.

In Plain Vanilla

- ◆ Acts 4:28 says that God will bring good out of evil for those who trust Him in prayer.

In Other Words

- ◆ There is a purpose behind your pain and
- ◆ Nothing is wasted in His providence.
- ◆ There is an ultimate strategy unfolding.
- ◆ God still brings good out of evil, pain, tears and loss.
- ◆ Today, in your life, He's working all things after the counsel of His own will.

In Other Words

- ◆ As the Sanhedrin tried in vain to stop the apostles, so your enemy will try in vain to stop your progress.
- ◆ As the enemy tried in vain to kill Jesus once and for all, so your enemy will try in vain to keep you from your destiny.
- ◆ As nations plotted in vain to thwart God's will in the past, so your enemy will try in vain to hold you down.

In Other Words

- ◆ Every attack of the enemy of your soul will prove futile and foolish as long as you stay connected to Jesus!

1. **They prayed with faith in God's "authority"!**
2. **They prayed with faith in God's "providence"!**

III. They Prayed With Faith In God's "Compassion"

Verse 29; "Lord, behold their threatenings, and give us boldness to speak Your Word."

Verse 30; "Lord stretch forth Your hand to heal, and let signs and wonders be done in the name of Jesus."

Question: What did the believers pray for?

Answer: Two things

1. Boldness to point people to Jesus through the Word of God and
2. Miracles to reveal God's glory, as signs and wonders to those all around.

Question: What can we pray for?

Answer: Signs and wonders to attend the preaching of the Word as visible proof that God is alive – and still at work today.

In Other Words

- ◆ It's okay to pray for the supernatural.
- ◆ It's okay to anticipate the working of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ It's okay to expect God to manifest His compassion towards people.

- ◆ It's okay to release your faith in the ability of a living Jesus!

Question: Why pray for courage and boldness?

Question: Why pray for signs and wonders?

Answer: So that God's purpose is fulfilled in saving lost people and changing what needs to be changed in saved people!

Conclusion

Question: What happened when this brief prayer was prayed?

Answer: Verse 31; "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness."

Question: What's the result of praying God's way?

Answer: #1. God shook the room to let the believers know He saw their faith and heard their petitions and,
#2. God filled the believers again with the Holy Spirit, to go out and speak the Word with boldness.

- ◆ The room shaking was God saying, "I'm alive and well and still answer prayer."
- ◆ The outpouring of the Spirit was God saying, "What happened in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost is still happening today. I'm still pouring out My Spirit upon every available believer."

From the courtroom, the apostles retired to the prayer room.

Question: Why did the believers retreat to a prayer meeting in the midst of tension, threat and uncertainty?

Answer: Because:

1. The strength to win our spiritual battles is won with the Lord in prayer!
2. If we learn to wrestle with God in secret, we will never have to lower ourselves to wrestle with men in public!
3. If we prostrate ourselves before the Lord, we will never be prostrated before the enemy!
4. In prayer we learn to fear the Lord, which overcomes the wiles of intimidation, manipulation, insecurity and control!

Illustration

On April 18, 1521, Martin Luther cried these words on his chamber floor:

"In every crises of strain and peril through which our lives must pass, at every moment of supreme difficulty, there is no place of help like the secret footstool of Almighty God, nor any weapon like the cry of faith."

This is what God gives you in Acts 4:

- ◆ Faith in God's **sovereignty**. He is in authority and over what touches you!
- ◆ Faith in God's **providence and determined counsel**. He brings good out of evil, pleasure out of pain, and goes before you in all things!
- ◆ Faith in God's **ability** to do signs and wonders and miracles of saving and healing power by the Holy Spirit today. All out of compassion because of His love and mercy!

Life Application

1. To be is more important than to do!

- ◆ Peter and John's preaching was already seeing great results (what they were doing).
- ◆ But now their character (who they were) was being refined by God through rejection, jail, intimidation and tension.

2. Happiness is not an outward place, but an inward state of mind. (Because of your security in the Lord)

- ◆ Peter and John were so secure in the Lord, that when they were told to "shut up" they prayed for more boldness to "speak up".
- ◆ Their joy and strength was knowing that man proposes, but God disposes and works providentially in the midst of all events, after the counsel of His own will.

3. What happens in you is more important than what happens to you!

- ◆ Peter and John were arrested, threatened, given an ultimatum and experienced unfulfilled expectations in the ministry.
- ◆ They were put "on hold" by God in jail, while the Sanhedrin held a closed door meeting to decide their future.
- ◆ Yet, these ministers never asked God to smite their adversaries. They were not threatened by those who questioned their authority. All they prayed was, "Lord, **you know** their threatenings." (Verse 29)

What gives you great rest today? "When" ...

You know that:

1. God is **sovereign**; He is over everything that touches your life. (Psalm 37:23)
2. God is **providential**; He takes whatever is evil or painful and uses it for your good (after the counsel of His own will) when you respond with humility and get grace. (Romans 8:28)
3. God is **compassionate**; He still stretches forth His hand to heal broken bodies, wounded spirits, agitated minds, angry hearts and anxious thinking. (Psalm 147:3)

AMEN
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