

Discussion Questions

April 28, 2024

Acts 4:23-31

How the Early Church Responds to Hardship

Read Acts 4:23-31 then discuss the following questions:

1. How did the believers' understanding of God's sovereignty influence their response to persecution and threats and why?
2. Instead of praying for deliverance from persecution, the believers prayed for greater boldness in preaching the word of God.

Why do you think they made this request?

How does this impact our modern tendency to pray primarily for relief and comfort during times of difficulty?

3. James shared a story of how God has used the greatest hardship in his own life to enable him to minister more effectively to others who have experienced great pain. If appropriate, share in what ways you have seen God redeem Hardship or pain in your own life?
4. How can we as Christians live and walk in the tension of praying for healing, help, provision, etc, while also acknowledging that God often uses hardships for His glory and often doesn't miraculously intervene?
5. James quoted someone as saying, "I have been waiting to engage more with God & serve Him until life settled down and the chaos cleared up. But after 2 years of waiting for things to settle, I realize the storm might not end any time soon. So I think I have to learn how to trust & step out and serve God in the midst of the storm, not just pray for the storm to end." What storms of life are you going through right now and are there any ways you feel God may be challenging you to "step out in the midst of the storm" rather than just waiting for it to end?
6. What do you need greater boldness from the Spirit to do in your life?
7. Re-read Acts 4:29-31, then take some time and pray for the Spirit to fill you with boldness as a group.



Acts 4:23–31 (NLT)

As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them - you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

'Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans?

*The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together
against the Lord and against his Messiah.'*

"In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

despótēs:

Ultimate or Supreme Authority, Master

Psalm 2:4 (NLT)

But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.

Psalm 2:5 (NLT)

Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury.