

April 30th 2006: National Prayer Sunday: Acts 4:1-31

In my sermon last Sun....story of Christian Reger

To help him thro this terrible ordeal.....God gave him the same scripture twice

That partic script....Acts 4:26—29...part of todays reading ...and is in fact a prayer
A prayer prayed by the disciples....time of persecution.....A prayer that met Christian's

• **Because today is our National Day of prayer**

It seemed good.....to have a closer look at it.....and at the lessons it teaches

The bible reading gave....story behind.

Not long after Pentecost.....Peter and John were used by God....to heal crippled...
Because of the impact.....they were thrown into prison and then brought the next day b4

The Sanhedrin got a lot more than they bargained for.....Instead of men cowering
Peter gave them a Gospel sermon ...**And** they were amazed at ...courage ...articulation
And in the end they had to let them go.....with threats but w/out further punishment

Peter...John and.....Went straight back to the believers.....reported.....
And then together they prayed this prayer
A prayer that includes references from Neh 9, Isaiah 37 and Psalm 2.....

.....*Listen again as I read it to you:-*
V24—30.....

• **The first thing that I note isThe Absolute Respect they have for God**
He is Sovereign.....in what He has done...planned.....will do

Throughout the prayer there is not even a hint.....or suggestion
That God is not in control.....or that they are asking Him to do something....
that He has not planned.....or thought about beforehand

The term they use to address Him....is just one word.....despota =>DESPOT
It referred to the absolute Master of a slave.....who has complete power

Able to do good or evil.....Only used 6 times in the NT....

So from the very first word.....they emphasise that they dare to approach God
Only as a slave to a Master.....(*In v29look upon your servants.....Slave*)

Indeed to One who is Master of all things...Nations..Rulers and powers

God ...in His awesome Grace and Mercy.....has revealed Himself to them in love
But it is still with great respect for who He is.....And for the Absolute control He has
..that they come into His presence.....even at such a time of crisis

- **We live in an age**....where respect for those in authority.....eroded constantly
And sad to say sometimes.....we all can be guilty....of not giving God the respect
The place of authority that is His...in our prayers...in our worship

This prayer reminds us of who our God is.

- **The second thing I note....is The Absolute Trust They have in God**

It is more than a recognition of His Sovereignty

It is also a belief that He will do what is right.....

He will carry through His plan.....already set in motion.....by His holy servant Jesus
...and nothing will stop it.

Look again at the prayer

They say to God.....

Lord---back in David's time you predicted an occasion when Nations..Kings..rulers
Would rise up against your Anointed One...

And sure enough we saw it happened....right here in this city of Jerusalem

Even Herod and Pilate.....got together.....to do a terrible injustice against.....
But even that was all planned by You ages before

And what they did in anger.....Was what you had decided to take place

You O God....have always brought to pass whatever You had planned
And this...that we are going through at the moment.....
Must therefore be under your control too.....It hasn't taken you by surprise
Because You are Sovereign God

- **Do you and I show that Absolute Trust in God when we pray.....**
Or do we hold back some of our trust.....and wait for things to improve
Wait for God to somehow prove Himself.....B4 we completely trust Him

It is this same absolute trust.....see in Job when he says in 13:15
Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him.

In one of the commentaries I was looking at ...this story.....p177Application Commentary on Acts

- **The Third thing I note is what they asked for:**

...v29.....

The threats they refer to.....were real and very nasty
The Sandhedrin had the power.....make things very diff.....even to take lives

John the Baptist....beheaded.....**Jesus**...crucified.....Beatings were normal
Indeed not long afterwards.....James would be beheaded.....Stephen...stoned

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They mentioned the threats....of course....They were a worry
But that was not their main concern

*I tend to think it would have been mine.....*Lord help me...Make my life easy...
Even if you have to change your plans to do so.....Protect little me

(Prayer of John Wesley....p38A Box of Delights)

Their Main Request.....Was for more miracles.....:caused all the trouble 1st place
and boldness to speak the word.....

Boldness to be part of God's great plan

Even if that plan meant suffering...being persecuted....
As it did for Jesus

They looked at what God was doing in the world.....and they wanted to be part of it
Whatever the cost

- **They too were human like us**

They knew fear.....They understood what the authorities were capable of
They had families.....They needed food and money and freedom to survive

They were not unmoved by the threats they had received

Yet they wanted to be part of what God was doing.....
They wanted to spread His message of love.....of salvation

SO THEY ASKED FOR BOLDNESS

What prevents us from being as effective for God as we could be ?

Possibly a lot of things

But you know....and I know.....that at the top of the list.....A lack of boldness

As I was preparing this.....Lord brought to mind....something He wanted me to do
But I had been putting off.....And I realised that I was fearful

So after thinking about this.....What else could I do
I prayed for boldness.....and straight away did it

- **What do you need to ask God to give you boldness for right now??**

Something you are fearful about in your life....ministry
Something you know God wants you to do.....putting it off

This morning approach God with the respect He deserves
Acknowledge that His plans never fail trust Him completely
And ask not for comfort....or for a change of assignment

But for Boldness to speak His word and to do His will

