

## Acts, Sermon #9

Acts 4

In Acts 4, we have our first persecution of the church.

- The Jewish authorities stopped the preaching
- They arrested Peter and John
- They questioned them, then
- Threatened them and let them go

This is where we left off Sunday morning.

- How did the church respond to persecution/ disruption/ interruption? – The key is to be Spirit-filled.

Spirit filled people respond when pressured:

1. With boldness, vs. 13
2. Enlargement of themselves, vs. 13
3. Been with Christ / companion of Christ, vs. 13
4. We cannot but speak; vs.20 – we are not able, not to speak – compulsive witness.

But there is a 5<sup>th</sup> response given in this passage. We will look at that tonight.

I've entitled tonight's message: **"Encountering Stormy Seas"**

Acts 4:21

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Acts 4:21-31

Let us pray

You may be seated.

## Encountering Stormy Seas

The 5<sup>th</sup> response by spirit filled believers to persecution is in vs. 24 – they prayed.

These people are not praying out of fear.

They were praying out of conviction. The focus of their prayer was God.

Prayer should always center on God.

Here is a prayer of 3 parts:

1. Adoration, vs. 24-28
2. Petitions, vs. 29-30
3. Response of God, vs. 31

What did they pray about?

What does a spirit filled Christian pray about when he is persecuted,

When he is faced with pressures/threats?

What is the content of their prayer?

Look at the first word in vs. 24 – “Lord”.

Lord, you are God. You made everything and you predicted in the Psalms what would happen and it happened.

What are they saying about God? What attribute are they extolling (adoring) God for?

Not His mercy, grace, judgment.

What attribute?

God’s sovereignty; a sovereign is a King.

They are extolling God’s sovereignty. God confirms His sovereignty by the answer He gives in vs.31—by shaking the building.

God has not lost control. We can be joyful, take comfort that God is Sovereign.

God's sovereignty is extolled.

1. By the title they use for Him, vs. 24 – LORD – *Despot*, (a world leader who is a despot is a negative), refers to someone who has unrestricted authority and rights.
2. They speak of God in His works and in particular, His creation, His work of creation.

What has God created? "All that in them is." God has created all people.

FIRST. The things God has done and God has spoken, vs. 25

God's work and God's words—Sovereign!

God's work is not going to stop and His Words will not be destroyed – but rather they will be fulfilled.

The passage they chose was Psalm 2. They only quote two verses (vs. 25 & 26). They were witnesses to the fulfillment of Ps. 2 prophecy. They prayed God's scripture back to God.

TURN to Psalm 2

Ps. 2:1-2

Why? For what purpose are the nations snorting like impatient horses?

What's the whole purpose of their raging and imagining vain things, and the King standing in defiance of God and Christ.

For what purpose do the nations do this, raise their fist in the face of God?

Ps. 2:3 – God laughs, to show the utter futility of human rebellion! All the plottings of man are vain, emptiness, Ps. 2:4.

Acts 13:25

The very **first** persecution that the church ever faced was religious persecution.

Acts 4

Vs.27-28 – they accomplished God’s purpose. God compels even the wrath and evil of man to serve His own divine purpose.

Vs. 29 – look at their request

They did not pray and ask for the persecution to stop. We would have prayed for Jesus not to be crucified, but it was best that He was crucified.

I might pray, God, don’t let me lose my job – it may be the best thing that ever happened.

The best thing to pray is, Master, I’m your slave.

Behold their threatening. Leave it with the Sovereign.

I assure you, God knows what to do.

Notice what they prayed for in vs. 29, Boldness

Give us the one thing that got us in trouble in the first place, more boldness, more outspokenness.

They were willing to forsake their commission. Their prayer is in accordance with Acts 1:8.

They were not intimidated or fearful but they prayed, God, magnify the name of your son, Jesus. How? By doing the miraculous, vs. 30.

What was the response to this prayer, vs. 31a?

Do you have any trouble accepting that? Shaking! Rattling it a little bit. God answered their request. He showed His power.

The God who can shake the world, can protect the Saint!

Vs. 31b – constant state of fullness – We are right back where we started.

Persecution, though it may interrupt, should not obstruct or stop the work of God. They knew the command of Christ. They would not allow anything to force them from the path that God had called them to.

Persecution, it interrupts but that is all it does.

Let us walk that same path and what is it? 5 things

A spirit filled response to persecution. Pray to the sovereign Lord.

What is our response to the pressures brought upon us today? Are we magnifying the Lord in our response or are we magnifying the enemy?

Let us surrender to God; get on our knees. We are slaves. But if we listen to their threats, we are filled with fears and magnify men just like the 10 spies of old.

Encounter stormy seas

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Every eye closed

Dear Tabernacle, be encouraged. Do not allow anything to frustrate the churches purpose

Total subordination of God's people

Are we personally responding to persecution with great confidence in God?

Are we compromising so to avoid persecution?

Are we hiding?

Fear not. Only fear the Lord God. We are in the hands of God.

Gospel

Eph. 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God not of works."