

With all boldness: Acts 4:23-31

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Date: 28 November 2021

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[0 : 00] According to an Open Doors Ministry article this year in 2021, the average number of Christians that are killed each day for following and proclaiming Christ is 13.

By the time all of us put our heads on our pillow tonight and go to bed, 13 of our brothers and sisters around the world will be killed for following and proclaiming Christ.

400 Christians will die this month. The number is thought to be much higher, but it is difficult where killing Christians is done in secret like North Korea or in closed countries like Afghanistan or in areas of conflict of Somalia and Libya. The number is thought to be much higher, but what we know is a minimum of 13.

Each year, over the last 15 years, the number has been increasing of the number of Christians who are killed each year and martyred for the cause of Christ.

Last week we looked at a text where Peter and John had suffered. The Sanhedrin had put them in prison. Upon release and being threatened, they went and they gathered and were going to read what they did today.

[1 : 32] It's going to be our text for today. But what was their response? Where did Peter and John do? Where did they go? What did they do? And what principles could we apply to our lives today as we look at this text?

So let's read. If you have a copy of God's Word with you, if you would turn to Acts chapter 4, we're going to begin reading in verse 23. And before, yeah, let's read this text together.

Chapter 4 verse 23. When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them. And when they had heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, Sovereign Lord, who has made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through your mouth of our Father David, your servant said by the Holy Spirit, Why did the Gentiles rage and why do the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed. For truly in this city there were gathered together against your Holy Servant Jesus whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontus Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.

To do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, O Lord, look upon their threats. Grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

[3 : 08] While you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are to be performed through the name of the Holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. Lord Jesus, I pray that whatever you have for each of us today in your word in this text, may our answer and response to you be yes Lord.

We love you and it's in your name. Amen. I want us to look back at before we look at this prayer. They gathered together and they prayed.

But before we get to the prayer, I want to look at where they went. Look with me in verse 23. When they were released, that is the Sanhedrin released them after threatening them, they went to their friends.

You could literally say they went back to their own. Now, who were these friends? Remember in Acts chapter 2, 3,000 people came to faith in Christ. In Acts chapter 4, 5,000, in our previous text, we learned that 5,000 people came to Christ.

[4 : 20] So now we have at least 8,120 with those who were asked to wait for the Holy Spirit of promise to come. So who was it that they went back to their own? Is it 8,120?

Plus we know that each day the Lord was adding to their number. This number could have been 10,000 people and Jerusalem had come to faith in Christ by this time. But it's doubtful that they would go back to all of that number of people. What house would hold that many? So we don't know specifically who their friends were, but here's the point I do want us to make.

This expression they went back to their friends is not accidental, and it presses the point how the early church saw itself as a community of mutually supported friends.

So where would you go if something happened in your family, in your life, and you said, I need to have these individuals who are in Christ, who are these mutually supported friends, that's who I'm going to seek out.

[5 : 21] So likely it is some of the apostles, if not all of them, and some others. Who knows who this is specifically?

It is one of our aims of our discipleship group at 9 o'clock, is to gather together at 9 o'clock, and to be in a smaller setting. You'll notice that this is not really a good venue to make friends.

Everyone is facing this direction, and there's only one guy monologuing. And so this isn't really set to be a dialogue setting where we can make friends and converse.

But 9 o'clock is different. We sit around tables and we discuss God's word together, and we're able to share, you're able to pray with one another, and we are able to discuss the meaning of God's word and be taught the word faithfully, and to hopefully build relationships and friendships, for which when that day occurs for you, when you need someone to go to your own who are friends, you would know some people in the church.

It is one of the aims that we have of putting everyone in discipleship groups. And if you haven't found one yet, I would love to help you find one next Sunday at 9 o'clock, or you can also see the welcome center, and they would love to help you find a group.

[6 : 45] Hmm. And so how do we become better mutually supportive friends? How do we be mindful of one another?

When someone asks for prayer and to pray, I sat in a group this morning and I wrote down all the ways to pray, and I hope this week to pray for them and text them when I prayed for them to say, I want you to know I prayed, I heard you, and I prayed.

Let us be a people who practice good listening and who practice being empathetic to those around us. The next thing we know, they found their group of friends, but notice what they did.

And they reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them, which was found back in verse 18, do not speak or teach in the name of Jesus. Do not speak or teach in the name of Jesus. So they reported to their friends, this is what the Sanhedrin had told us, and when they heard it, they lifted their voices together and said. So what they instantly did, they heard the report, what are we going to do?

[7 : 54] Let's pray. We hear this distressing news, what are we going to do? Let's pray. We hear this news, what do we do? We pray. That's what the church does. It's a place where people pray.

They move to lift their voices together, that is in one accord or as one voice. That is, the entire group was sharing in spirit and the nature of the request.

So one of the things I want us to grow in as a church and I want to foster as an individual is this. Is that prayer is a participatory sport. It's not that just one person is praying and everyone else is just listening or being distracted by your cell phone or something.

It's that when we pray, we are praying in one spirit. So what does that look like? While one person may be indeed praying, everyone else should be listening and saying, and praying along with the person who is praying and saying, Yes, Lord, amen, so be it Lord, please do that Lord.

And so prayer should be a really allowed event. One person is praying and there should be other people chattering saying, Yes, Lord, amen, and you hear people do that.

[9 : 09] And it is in that sense that everyone was praying in that way. That they shared the same spirit and the same nature of the request and agreeing with that.

Even though one person was praying. So it's like a participatory sport. When we were having prayer, nobody is on the bench. Everyone is in the court.

They're all praying. There's not five members of the prayer team on the court and everyone else is on the bench and crowd is just watching. The concept is everyone is in the court.

And when in the manner of the spirit and the nature of the request, if your spirit agrees with that, say, Yes, Lord, amen, I agree with that. And be attentive in your mind, praying to the Lord as the other is praying.

Prayer is active. And they were praying as one voice lifting this request to the Lord. And that's a beautiful sight. So then we get to this prayer.

[10:15] So now we're going to get to the prayer. The bulk of the section of the scripture that we've chosen for today is really a prayer. So I want to look at the facets of this prayer to help educate us as to how we ought to pray.

This is their prayer, but this may inform us into facets of this prayer. So let us look then at the first facet. This first facet is that prayer recognizes who God is.

Look with me in verse 24. They use this word of God saying, Sovereign Lord. Josh, could you help me for one moment?

They use this request saying, Prayer is Sovereign Lord. The Sanhedrin does a power play. They demonstrate their authority by throwing Peter and John in prison.

And if they don't comply with no teaching and no preaching, this edict is in place. There are more repercussions to follow if this is broken. And so they do this power play and it is plain and simple.

[11:22] And so this church, they gather together these believers, whoever they are, and they say in this context, they say this unique word for the Lord that means master.

Here it's translated in my translation, the ESV as Sovereign Lord. I don't know what your translation may say, but it's the Greek word despata, which means master.

We get the English word despot. But in the English translation of the word despot, we also often have a negative connotation. In the Greek first century, that is not so.

That is not so. There is no negative connotation. It is master. So imagine the picture. You have the Sanhedrin's who think, the members of the Sanhedrin who think they are the authority for the Israel's religious account.

And this church is saying Lord, master, sovereign Lord, despata, we appeal to you.

[12:24] It's actually a unique word. It's only found 10 times in the New Testament. This word for sovereign Lord or master.

It can phrase the idea of absolute authority and unquestioned master. To those who are in the prayer meeting, the Sanhedrin think they are powerful and they are superior in every way, but no, they are lifting their voices to despata, to sovereign Lord, to the unquestioned master.

There's beauty in God's names. We find there's a distinct difference. There's no comparison between the Sanhedrin and the Lord.

Imagine with me, how long have the Sanhedrin been in effect? We know that the closed of the Old Testament, the book of Malachi and the New Testament, there's about 400 years. We find them popping up in the New Testament, but actually, until those years between the Old Testament and the New Testament, those 400 years are often called silent years, but the years of silence.

But however, things were happening. Life was happening. Israel's religion was forming and one of the institutions that we find in those silent years was the institution of the Sanhedrin.

[13:45] We know by the year 70 AD, that thing was put down in the destruction of Jerusalem. We have maybe 300 years of the Sanhedrin's existence.

Who has existed for all eternity? Who is the unquestioned master? These people who will have an existence for a period of 300 or so years, or the eternal God?

From time to time, it's good to remind ourselves of the various names of God that we find in the Old Testament or in the Bible itself. Because you have either the Lord revealing Himself such as I am, you have the Lord revealing Himself in such a way, or you have godly people who want to address an attribute of God and say, Lord, and they address Him in that way.

So some examples of that is this. You find in Isaiah in Genesis 17, Genesis 1, 1, we find Elohim, the strong one.

We find El Shaddai in Genesis 17. This is the God Almighty. And someone in here needs to know the Lord is Almighty.

[15:07] He is the strong one. I'll name some other things. Names of God. The Most High God, the Everlasting God, the Lord who will provide, the Lord is my banner, the Lord of peace, the Lord of hosts, the Lord who sanctifies, the Lord is my shepherd, the Lord of righteousness, the Lord is there.

He's Adonai, the master and owner of everything. And then we have the name Jesus Christ, who one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to that name.

That Jesus Christ is Lord. But they have this name, these first century, this early church, after being persecuted, they say, master, sovereign Lord.

The Sanhedrin was limited in power, limited in authority, and limited in their geographic extent. The Sanhedrin had no authority, what was happening in Italy, let's assume, modern day Italy.

They had no authority there. They had this limited extent. But God, He is limitless in His power, limitless in His extent, His limitless in His geography, for He created all things.

[16:35] And then after calling upon this name of the Lord, prayer recognizes who God is, He is the unquestioned master. The next thing is that prayer is rooted in God's attributes.

So notice sovereign Lord, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them. He made the heavens, the planets, the asteroids, the stars, the sun, the moon, quasars, black holes, galaxies, and the various solar systems and the trillions upon trillions of stars, and the black vacuum of thing that we call space in between those mass, vast distances.

He made all of that. So He made the earth, the mountains, the valley, the deserts, the ocean, the streams, the forest, the grasslands, the tundra, all of it, the terrestrial stuff, the celestial stuff, the terrestrial stuff.

And then the aquatic stuff. This is really stuff as a vast word. Everything in the ocean. He made the oceans and everything in them.

So this group comes together and they say, the only way we can combat what the Sanhedrin's have done is to pray. Let us pray in recognizing who He is, unquestioned master.

[17:57] Second, let's address Him with His attributes. Who is this unquestioned master? He has made everything, everything, the maker of heavens and earth.

I hope you see the difference between the power and the extent and the geographical and the duration of office between the Sanhedrin and the God of the word.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thirdly, we see in this prayer that His prayer is rooted in scriptures. Look what they say next in this prayer.

Who, through your mouth, verse 25, who through the mouth of our Father, your servant, said by your Holy Spirit, let me just summarize that first part of 25 by saying this.

This group is praying saying, God spoke through the Spirit by David His servant through His word. And then He's going to quote this portion of Psalm 2 that He attributes to David having written.

[19:07] And so then He attributes this Psalm. So then the Psalm reads in Psalm 2, they're quoting scripture here. Why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His anointed.

I'm going to put up Psalm 2 for us, verses 1 and 2, then 10 and 11. 10 and 11 are not found here, but I want to show you what Psalm 2 looks like.

Let's read Psalm 2 verses 1 and 2 and see if this sounds familiar. Why do the nations rage and the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed.

That's what they're quoting here in this prayer. And verse 10 and 11, before we get there, it says, and the nations rage.

Notice the word, it says the nations rage. The nations are insolent, they're uncivil. They are arrogant, they lack respect. In the common vernacular, when this word rage was used, it was a spirited animal, that of like a snorting horse before a race.

[20:24] And so that's what the nations were like. They're uncivil, they're arrogant, they lack respect. And what do they do in this state?

They plot in vain, it says. Imagine people imagining useless things. They're plotting useless things. They're imagining and they're plotting mindless things and empty things, things that will come to nothing.

And so later in the Psalm, now reading in 10 and 12 that's on the screen, now therefore kings be wise, be warned, rulers of the earth serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

So the Psalmist concludes with, listen, listen all of you kings of the earth who do these things, who set counsel against the Lord and has anointed the end of this, you should be wise and you should be warned.

The rulers of the earth take note. And what is your should be your response, you kings of the earth is serve the Lord fear and rejoice with trembling.

[21 : 34] So that Psalm is here in this text because you're going to find players who were taking, who did not accept God's messenger.

Who is his messenger? What did they do? They plotted in vain against the Lord and his anointed, we're told from the prayer, the Lord and his anointed. So then he's going to name and Psalm two, let me stop here for a second and say, Psalm two is a criticism of the Gentile nations for not accepting God's messenger.

Well, there now these folks in the first century church, they're going to take that proverb and they're going to attribute it to Christ. And they're going to mention the players who were in play that didn't accept the Lord or his messenger.

So now they're named. Who was it that plotted in vain? The kings of the earth, verse 27 for truly in this city, they were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus.

What's the criticism or what is foretold in the Psalm, the Gentiles rage, they plot in vain. They set themselves the rules that gather together against the Lord and against his anointed.

[22 : 53] So then he says for truly in this city, they were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus. Whom you anointed. And then it mentions the players who were set against him and plotted in vain, both Herod and Pontus Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.

Herod here would be Herod Antipas. He was the one that Pilate saw Jesus, sent him off to Herod Antipas and he received him back. So Herod had a responsibility in the death of Christ, Pontus Pilate.

He had a responsibility in the death of Christ. The Gentiles, they had the Roman soldiers, the Roman citizenry that was in Jerusalem, they had responsibility.

But here's the new part that should be a little bit arresting, which would have been hard to swallow in the first century. But also the peoples of Israel.

You see, Psalm chapter two just dealt with the Gentile nations, not accepting the messenger of the Lord. And now Psalm two is being used and the audience is being broadened.

[24 : 07] And now it includes also Israel. Not just the Gentiles didn't accept the Lord's messenger, his anointed, but also Israel now is guilty of the same.

And the players of the death event of Christ are named. Why is this illogical opposition against Christ take place?

At one level it makes no sense. On another level it shows how out of touch many of God's ways are. Given the fact that God is working out his plan, the tone of the prayer is very calm.

The implications of the prayer is that many Jews and Gentiles need to see that God is doing what God is doing. And they need to change their approach of how they approach the Lord, change their approach to Jesus.

And so the next thing we come to is this prayer trusts in God's sovereignty. How do we see this? We see this in verse 28.

[25 : 19] These Herod, Pontus Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel found in verse 27. What is it they did to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place?

Do you hear how these people are praying? Lord, all Herod and Pontus Pilate did and the Gentiles and the people of Israel did is they did exactly what you wanted them to do.

To do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. This human rejection of Jesus experienced at the hands of Herod and Pontus Pilate Gentiles falls within God's plan and activity of God's hands.

Now we see more clearly why it is that they're plotting in such vain. They're plotting on their ends for their reasons to take control of this rebellion that is in Jerusalem and to remain in power.

That's their motive. But God says, but I want to offer my son for the salvation of all for sin to be forgiven and people to know me.

[26 : 32] So you're going to be players according to my plan that I predestined ahead of time for you to take part in.

So this prayer just trusts in God's sovereignty. Herod and Pontus Pilate, the Gentiles, Israel were made to look like fools.

They rage against God and his anointed. On a human level, they again, they want to remain in power. They don't believe Jesus is Messiah and some may and yet they reject the rejection falls in

God's activity and his plan.

But from God's perspective, he is the one who is behind Herod Pilate and the Gentiles and Jews. They are fulfilling God's plan to crucify Christ to accomplish the sacrificial atonement for sin. They are fulfilling God's plan and what God had planned from eternity past. Last Sunday, somebody asked me, what is my favorite attribute of God?

[27 : 46] We were at someone's home and they asked me this question and without hesitation, I said, God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty has a few components in it and let me share with you these few components of understanding.

First, that God is Creator and we are the created. Second, God is omnipotent. That is, he is able to do all that is within his holy will and he is infinitely powerful to accomplish all that he wills.

That's a component. Thirdly, God's exercise of that power over creation is referred to God's sovereignty. And why this is so beautiful to me, this doctrine of God's sovereignty is so beautiful to me, is it helps me make sense of the circumstances in the world around me.

If we were living within that 90-day period of time that we talked about last week, it would be very difficult to understand why Christ died.

Yes, he foretold it. Yes, all of Scripture led up to that event. Yes, yes, yes. At the same time, Judas completely missed it.

[29 : 07] Peter denied Christ. It was a difficult time to fully appreciate and understand what that death event meant. Yes, after Pentecost, all of things, many things became clear.

But that would have been hard to understand and today we all have circumstances that are hard to understand. And the doctrine of the sovereignty of God helps me. Why is there adversity?

Why do things occur that cause heartache? I recall a story Dr. Vreeland shared with me a while ago, and I shared this earlier where a mom lost a child.

And in that event, of course, there was deep questions and hard to understand. How do you rationalize that? And I appreciate Dr. Vreeland's words to that mom where he said, I don't know why fully, but I do know who.

I do know who. That when we see even that the Father would send His Son to die on the cross for sin, that the Lord would do that, and He does that for His glory and the benefit of others, and the Lord would do that.

[30 : 26] So I know all things that occur, even those that are hard to understand, are ultimately to the working of His glory and to the benefit and the good of others.

And that is hard to see in circumstances, but that's why I arrest in God's sovereignty. I don't know. You may be like Job.

Think for a moment about Job. We know more about Job's story than Job does. We know the dialogue in heaven that was occurring between God and Satan.

We know that dialogue that occurred. Job didn't. Job never, God never answered Job, why? Yes, Job was restored at the end of his life, but his restoration doesn't include an explanation.

Job died never knowing why all of that tragedy happened. I can tell you this, it was ultimately for God's glory, and it was for the benefit of others.

[31 : 34] Have you benefited from Job's story? Secondly, but you may know why God responded to Paul.

Why is this thorn in the flesh given to me? The Lord responded to Paul, you may know why, but you may die never knowing why. But I trust in God and I trust in His sovereignty.

I am no and I am convinced of the goodness and the nature of God, that He does all things for His glory and the benefit of others.

Why are we blessed? Why do you know the Lord and your neighbor not? Why am I born in America and others not? Why was I born into a family of loving parents and others not?

Why am I blessed financially and others not? Many of us could say many of the same things. Why? I don't know, but I do know this. Whatever is true of me is to be ultimately stewarded with this understanding that these things have happened to me for God's glory and the benefit of others.

[32 : 44] That's what I know. But it also helps me answer questions that have been difficult. Why is it that my wife and I have never been able to have children?

The years of hurtful comments, some by just very good intentioned people. And the years following of insecurity, of asking questions like, if we don't have children who will care for us when we are older, why do we not have children?

I don't know, but I do know this. That reality for us is because in that reality and in that state, I need to glorify God and I need to benefit others.

That's all I know. And I could rest in God's sovereignty, He knows. I do not know why, but I do know who, and I rest in His sovereignty and His character.

He is good. He is good. So today, if you are wrestling with a why, you may not understand why something is occurring.

[34 : 02] My plea with you is not to question His goodness and rest in His sovereignty, trusting Him with your present circumstance and glorify Him in it.

And some may have to offer even a sacrifice of praise. It's not easy to praise the Lord in the midst of difficulty. Last point I want to mention is their prayer is for mission above comfort.

So notice in verse 29 and 30, and now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant your servant to continue to speak the word with boldness.

We are going to place our mission to be proclaimers of your word. We have been told to be quiet about teaching and speaking of this name and teaching your word, but we will not, because we're going to place our mission above comfort.

Keep in mind the Sanhedrin warned them, and if you continue, more is to happen. More is to occur. That's the intent of their threat.

[35 : 19] And they know if they continue to teach and proclaim God's name, they will suffer discomfort, maybe even death, pain, suffering, jail time, beatings.

All of that is going to follow in the book of Acts. But they're going to choose the mission over comfort.

So look upon their threat. I find this very interesting. They have two requests. They have an appeal to God's justice.

They do say, Lord, look upon their threats. They ask God to take special note of the injustice and act on the community's behalf. This is referring to the threat of the Sanhedrin.

Demonstrate incredible maturity and restraint of the early church. They do not ask the Lord to crush their opponent. They do not ask to be spared even by their opponent.

[36 : 23] The apostles leave to God the moral judgment of the opponents for their actions. The prayer simply requests to God, give them grace to face the opposition as they suffer faithfully.

Note their threat. It is not easy. I think it would have been very easy to be distracted by things that may have been natural for you and I to think.

Think about how easy it would have been to say, okay, 70 members of the Sanhedrin were totaling now 8,120.

I know where we're going tomorrow. It would have been very easy to focus on retribution yourself. But they do not. They just say, Lord, look upon their threat.

We will leave the justice to you. Help us as we're faithful to our mission. Because we can get awfully distracted by a number of different things that get us off mission.

[37 : 27] And they refuse to do that. The second appeal is for God that he would grant him boldness in this community. So how are they choosing mission over comfort?

They're noticing God. The second is they want God to grant them boldness, to speak the word boldly.

This gospel, this life, death, resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sin, to share that in the word of God, to do it boldly. Notice what their prayer is not for.

It is not for wisdom. It is not for protection. It is not for safety. It is not favor with authorities. These would all favor comfort over the mission.

The mission of the church is to make disciples. We have to shake this attachment to comfort. It is powerful influence in our lives. This desire for a life of ease and comfort, of good reputation.

[38 : 29] When I served as a missions pastor in my previous ministry context, the number one question I was asked by parents when I would take their son or daughter overseas on mission they would ask, is it safe?

Suffering is unavoidable to the Christian. Why? In every generation, the gospel always cuts against cultural convictions and norms in some way.

It always does. Paul says it this way to Timothy. All who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Thinking in light of the freedoms we enjoy in the United States, I wonder how our prayers might differ from those offered by the early church in the view of the American dream

ideology that permeates our culture.

We want our children to be professionals and successful, good athletes, astute academics, young people who are socially acceptable on a career path. Someone who you could say to, someone you meet on the street, my son or daughter, and be able to brag about that, because that is socially acceptable.

I am not advocating every child should enter ministry by no means. However, I know too many parents who have talked their children out of serving the Lord in vocational ministry.

[39 : 53] Could it be that our prayers are more about comfort and being maintained and enhanced than we are asking for God's greater glory to be displayed?

Church, we pray for fellow believers facing opposition, for instance, and it is not usually sufficient to pray Father, alleviate this. Remember, we might add, but Lord, if you choose not to, may the gospel be advanced because of this hardship.

So in our school students, may we value the gospel more than our reputation at work? May we value the gospel more than we esteem the esteem of our colleagues in our neighborhoods? May we value the gospel more than we value the thought of our neighbors in our families? May we value the gospel more than appeasing mere friendships?

How does one possess this kind of courage? Two things, valuing the mission over comfort, and then secondly, may I add, seeing yourself as a slave of the unquestioned master?

[41 : 02] Look with me in verse 29. And now, oh Lord, look upon the threats and grant your servants to continue to speak the word in boldness.

Remember this unique word for the Lord, sovereign Lord, that is used back at the first part of their prayer. It's the first thing they say as they address God as master, unquestioned master.

Well, this word for servants could be translated slave, bondsman. So could it be that how do we possess this kind of courage?

Yes, we value mission over one's comfort, but we also see ourselves as a slave of the unquestioned master. You have rights over my life. You are sovereign.

I am here at the pleasure of you to do your bidding and your will. And then God confirms he has heard them with three miracles or three signs.

[42 : 05] They prayed in verse 31 and the place was shaken. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness. I want to conclude with a video today.

I found this when I was praying for, I wanted to find some information. I was praying for the persecuted nation of Egypt. Egypt ranks number 16 of the most persecuted nations of the world. And so I was praying for Egypt and I found this video is from a pastor, a church leader in Egypt. And now I want to conclude with this. And I want us to listen as we hear him, he's going to ask us to pray, but I want you to listen to what his prayer request is for the church in Egypt.

And it's almost as if he bred the book of Acts. Let's go ahead and listen. My dear brothers in the United States, thank you so much for praying for us Christians in Egypt.

We appreciate your prayers and support. And it's really so thrilling to know that there's a large number of Christians in America who are interested and committed to pray for us.

[43 : 20] So I would put two prayer points in front of you today. One, as you may know, the community of Christians in Egypt is large.

We have about 50 million Christians in Egypt. And this is the largest, this is about half the Christians of the entire Middle East. I would ask you to pray for Christians in Egypt.

So every Christian in every situation, whether he is a man or she's a woman, a boy or a girl, to be able to show the love of Christ with a humble heart to their neighbors, to their Muslim neighbors and friends, that they continue to shine for Jesus in a country that needs to see and know the real Christ and not distorted image or information about him.

So please pray that every Christian will be able to testify. Please pray for boldness and courage because the enemy always used a weapon of fear.

I think he uses the weapon of fear against Christians all over the world, but especially in countries when Christians are under persecution. Please pray for the chain of fear to be broken.

[44 : 39] And every Christian to brightly and boldly share the good news and share the love of Christ as God would lead us to do that. Thank you so much for being partners in the work of the Kingdom and continue your prayers and support for us. Amen.

I want to conclude in prayer. Did you hear him? Pray that the Lord would give us courage and boldness and not to give into the spirit of fear.
It's what they prayed for and it's what we will pray for today. Father, thank you so much for this time together to look at this beautiful prayer of a church after it tasted persecution.
Lord, I pray that you would bolster in us a courage to proclaim your name, a courage to speak and teach your word powerfully, to share the gospel easily.
And as these, this man in Egypt asked us to pray, or we pray for them in Egypt and all over the world, including Fourth Memorial Church, that the bonds of fear would be broken.
[46 : 04] And we would find such pleasure in you, clearly speaking of you to our friends, family, neighbors.
We love you, Lord. May we be a courageous church and would we grow in courage and boldness for your namesake. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
[50 : 16] Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.
[55 : 16] Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen.