

Confrontation!

- (23) On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.
- How do you react to confrontation?
- Very dependent on your personality!!
 - there will be some of us who **back off during confrontation**, who don't like it, who will seek to avoid it, who can't think what to say - and its only afterwards that we express our anger or frustration!
 - there will be those of us who **rise to confrontation, who let rip**, who make sure folk know what we think - and perhaps sometimes have to come away afterwards sorry for what we have said...
- Confrontation can **get the adrenaline flowing**, set off within us the "fight or flight", the bodies' response to danger:
 - heart rate high, excited...
- But probably most of us will want to tell someone else about what has happened, to let off steam, to work through what happened
 - and so it was for the disciples, following their confrontation with the Sanhedrin;
 - *recap - healing, crowd, preached the resurrection, thrown in jail overnight, brought before the Sanhedrin (same court as had condemned Jesus), given a stern warning...*
 - on release, came back to fellow believers to tell them...
- Probably only a small group ("**their own people**"):
 - maybe the other disciples, maybe the equivalent of their house-group, those they were particularly close to, who they met with, prayed with, grew in faith with?
- Their reaction to the confrontation involved two basic things:
 - acknowledgement of something of who God was, how he was involved;
 - and their prayer for what they should do next.
- We'll look at each part of their reaction in turn.

Sovereign Lord

- (24) When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. (25) You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? (26) The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' (27) Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. (28) They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.
- What they did first was pray
 - but its worth peering under the surface here a bit!
 - v.24 says "**they raised their voices together...**", and then reports a verbatim transcript of their prayer....
 - it makes you wonder whether someone wrote it up on an OHP and they all prayed along, rather as we pray the Lord's Prayer together!?!
 - or did the Holy Spirit inspire every single one of them all at the same time to utter exactly the same words in time?!
- What seems much more likely is that as Peter and John reported back, this group of Christians were thinking and working through the implications of what they were hearing:
 - and they prayer we have recorded is their considered response;
 - it reflects what they thought was really important in responding to the challenge the Sanhedrin had flung in their face!
 - quite possibly the actual words of the prayer were spoken by one of the leaders,

maybe even Peter or John themselves - and the others echoed them (compare us "adding our Amen" to someone's prayer)

- The core of their prayer is an acknowledgement, an entrusting themselves, to the Sovereign Lord:
 - address God as **Sovereign Lord**
 - remember that he is the **Creator**, who purposed all that was to be made and it came to pass
 - call to mind David's words in **Psalm 2:1-2**, where he asks why the nations bother plotting against God - since "**The One enthroned in heaven laughs**" at their presumption; how can any man challenge God's purposes!!
 - *seeing in David's prophesy the plot against the Lord's Anointed One that culminated in the Cross, and still raged against his followers, expressed most recently through the Sanhedrin's threats!*

Summary

- God knew in advance that there would be opposition to his will
 - he chose to give us free will, and he knows there will be those whose choice is to oppose him, actively, vigorously, even viciously
 - but God knows about it all; he's not panicked by it;
 - and even as the disciples did, he invites us to trust him!

May we speak out...

- (29) **Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. (30) Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."**
- The disciples' reaction is not a fatalistic one, however
 - we don't see them standing around saying, "whatever will be will be"
 - rather we see them entrusting themselves into God's purpose for them, and asking him for the strength to do that.
- In particular, knowing that there will be opposition, threats, trouble, they ask God for help:
 - **not that the opposition would be taken away**
 - **but rather that they would have the courage, strength of character and ability to continue to speak out for Jesus!**
 - that they would continue to do the very thing most calculated to get them into further trouble!

Story

- Prayer meeting in Soviet Union; small group gathered; suddenly KGB burst in: "**renounce Jesus and you are free to go...**"; one by one most of the group left; **pastor rubbed his hands and said, "Right, now for the real prayer meeting!"**
- Almost in and through opposition are we forged into the reality of what God calls us to be!
- Do our prayers reflect a desire to avoid trouble and discomfort, rather than seek obedience
 - I know mine do!
 - this is a **real** challenge!

Shaken, not stirred!

- (31) **After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.**
- Bond afficianados will know what 007's preferred tipple is:
 - **vodka martini, shaken not stirred...**
- As we finish this passage, we find the believers **shaken not stirred!**

- following confrontation with the authorities, threatened - implicitly with death - and told not to speak of Jesus...
- they could easily have been all stirred up inside, questioning what they were doing, "did Jesus really say...", "do we really have to..."?
 - is this following Jesus worth it?
- Instead, they chose to entrust themselves to the Sovereign Lord:
 - to say, "you know what's happening - help us be faithful to your call on our lives!"
- And God's response was to earthquake, sign of his presence, and to answer their prayer, to grant them power!

- May we pray for God's will to be done, in specific ways, and not simply seek for our own comfort!