

Sermon: Finding Strength for the Mission

Delivered by: **Ben Panner**, college pastor; Date: **December 31, 2017**

Bible text explored: Acts 4:23-31

²³When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

““Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’^[a]—

²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹And 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. [ESV]

^[a]*Psalm 2:1-2*

Review and application:

1. What assignment (*Acts 1:4-8*) had the risen Lord given to his disciples, commencing from their empowerment by the Holy Spirit?
But what powerful forces (*Acts 4:1-3, 5-6*) were aligned against Peter and John?
With what ultimatum (*Acts 4:17-18*) had the authorities threatened them?
2. What rise in cultural pressure against voicing the exclusive claims of the gospel have you observed in our day?
3. When the arrested duo were released (v. 23), to whom did they promptly turn?
(See also *Acts 1:13-14* and *12:12*.)
4. For a divine perspective on their apparently defenseless position, to what Scripture (vv. 24-26) did the gathered believers turn?
Read Psalm 2. Against whom (*Ps. 2:1-3*) have the earthly rulers plotted?
What (*Ps. 2:4-12a*) is the divine reaction to this plotting?
But what is the outlook (*Ps. 2:12b*) of those protected by the LORD’s anointed one?
5. In what sense (vv. 27-28) did the disciples understand that God had willed to use the freely chosen acts of both gentile and Jewish leaders to accomplish his saving purpose?
6. Was the disciples’ praying (vv. 29-30) focused on asking God to overpower their opponents or on energizing *them* to get on with their assignment?
How did they ask God to affirm the validity of the good news they were sharing?
How (v. 31) did God choose to respond to their corporate praying?
7. What temptations to remain silent about the good news have you faced among . . .
. . . extended family over the holidays?
. . . fellow employees on the job or students at school?
. . . neighbors or other community residents?
8. In the year just begun, how can we together draw on the power of the Holy Spirit to bear witness for Jesus in our community, state, nation, and world?