

The Apostles' Prayer And Its Answer.

Acts 4:23-31.

Sunday morning, October 4, 2009.

I. Two kinds of people and two agendas.

A. Being let go by the Sanhedrin, after being threatened, the apostles went to their own companions.

B. They report all that the Sanhedrin had said to them; threats and all.

C. Note the contrast between these companions and the Sanhedrin.

1. There is no animosity expressed toward the Sanhedrin; no outrage like the Sanhedrin had expressed toward them.

2. There is no conferring with flesh and blood; no plotting among themselves as to

what their next move might be, unlike the Sanhedrin had done.

3. There is a going to the Lord, acknowledging His sovereignty (vs. 24), and petitioning Him for His agenda and for their faithfulness to it. No prayer of any kind is mentioned on the part of the Sanhedrin.

4. From their hearts the apostles represent the Lord's agenda as is seen in their prayer; and from their hearts the Sanhedrin represented their own agenda as is seen from their plotting.

5. The apostles are possessed by a holy boldness and pray for continued boldness in standing for the Lord's agenda. The Sanhedrin is possessed by a fear of damage to their reputation and power over the people.

Applications:

1. Like the Sanhedrin you can never know the Lord and walk in fellowship with Him as long as you are possessed of your own agenda. You must get into the habit of quickly surrendering your agenda before the Lord. "Your will, not mine be done." The Lord will bring you to places, and into circumstances, where you don't want to be if only to teach you to have no higher ambitions in life than to be a humble servant of the Lord's agenda in whatever circumstances He places you. Joseph had to learn to become a humble servant in Potiphar's house, and after that in prison, before he could be a faithful servant of God over Pharaoh's kingdom.

2. Like the Sanhedrin you will be enslaved by your own agenda until you die to it, and in your Christian walk with the Lord you will attempt to enslave the Lord to your agenda as well. Take a close look at the nature of your prayers here. It is this what creates the distance between us and the Lord. He wants nothing to do with your agenda. You will never be free in your walk with the Lord until you surrender your agenda.

3. Like the Sanhedrin you will be in the grips of fear in the face of any prospect of loss to your agenda, and out of that fear flow most of our anger, bitterness and resentment.

II. The apostles' prayer.

Three things stand out:

A. This was united prayer. "They raised their voice to God with one accord."

These were people who not only had given themselves to the Lord, they had also given themselves to each other, and as one body they come before the Lord.

B. The theme of God's sovereignty.

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1. First in creation: “You are God who made heaven and earth and the sea, and that is in them.”
 2. In providence; in the unfolding of history.
 - As seen in the fulfillment of prophecy (Psalm 2) in the life of the Lord Jesus.
 - As seen in how God used the wrath of man and the sinfulness of man to further His own agenda.
- C. The theme of God’s agenda and the apostles’ faithfulness.
1. We are to see these petitions as an application of vs. 25-27.
 2. As the sovereign Lord had furthered His agenda even by the wrath and sinfulness of man in the Life of the Lord Jesus, so now the apostles are asking the Lord to do the same for them. As the Lord Jesus had faithfully endured the wrath and sinfulness of man unleashed on Him, so now the apostles are asking that boldness and faithfulness might be given to them, so that they also might endure the present wrath and sinfulness of man.
 3. Most striking is the absence of any request that these hardships might pass away from them. On the contrary there is a giving of themselves to these hardships as humble servants.

Applications:

1. Do you have faith in God’s sovereignty, and His wise purposes, and His goodness, when it comes to your hardships and your sufferings in this life?
2. Does this faith enable you in humility to embrace your hardships?
3. Are you more prone to ask for faithfulness and boldness in the face of hardships, and for the Lord to turn them for good, than you are to ask the Lord to take them away? What would godly wisdom have you do?

III. The shaking of their meeting place. Vs. 31.

- A. In the Spirit they were gathered before the throne of God in the heavenly sanctuary; the one which from our earthly perspective is just beyond the veil. From here the universe is governed and providence is dispensed.
- B. This temple both Isaiah and the apostle John saw in their visions. In both visions the temple is shaken and there is smoke. Isaiah 6:1-4 and Rev. 8:4,5 .
- C. Hebrews 12:26-29 tell us the significance of this shaking. Quoting Haggai 2:6 it is said to be nothing but the removal of temporal things from the stage of history. So the OT economy would perish in the great judgment on unbelieving Israel, and this present world will perish in the great judgment at the return of our Lord, so that the Kingdom that can not be shaken may remain.
- D. As such it was a tangible answer to their prayer, God saying as it were: “Through your faithful humble service I am shaking the earth; removing temporary things; and bringing in the kingdom that can not be shaken.” Accompanied by the shaking were a whole new empowering and boldness that came over the apostles to continue the work of the Lord.

Application:

Do you have an eschatological outlook in life; do you see the end of all things approaching? Does this drive you, like the apostles, to ask for faithfulness and boldness in your little sphere of influence? Does it empower You?