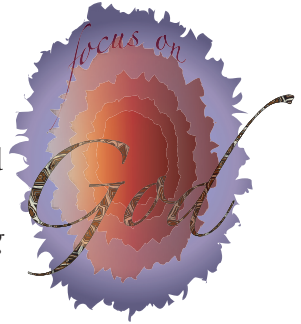


Prayer in Crisis! The Disciples



When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And 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, who 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?
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 Pontius 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, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your 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. Acts 4:23-31 ESV

The Christians in Jerusalem offered this prayer to God after the Jewish leaders had commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. This threat was a response to their healing of the crippled beggar (ch 3) and subsequent bold preaching of Jesus’ resurrection.

To appreciate the surprising attitude of these Christians, it might be helpful to project yourself into this group. ***How would you respond to Peter and John’s report of their encounter with the Jewish leaders? Considering what these same leaders had done with Jesus, wouldn’t you feel deep fear, almost panic? Wouldn’t you want to pray earnestly for God’s physical protection from this threat? Wouldn’t you want to ask God for a new strategy that would be less offensive to these powerful men?***

But these Christians asked for none of these things. Instead, they opened their prayer by first proclaiming the sovereignty and creative nature of God. Then they reviewed some history concerning the struggle between God and rebellious man and how God was the one in control. Up to this point we might have prayed similarly.

But, instead of asking God to use that power and control to protect them, their request was, “*grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*” They were asking God to *continue* to grant them to speak boldly and perform wonders. It’s as though they said, “Lord, you’ve got them on the ropes. Let us follow you as you go in to strike the knockout blow.”

They saw this whole series of events from the perspective of the Kingdom of God; not from their own interest of protection. God loves such praying. He answered immediately! Perhaps our prayers would be answered in such a fashion if we were to reach into the mind of God and discover His heart. With the Kingdom of God as our focus, we will be praying Kingdom-expanding prayers.

The essence of this teaching is that when we pray, “Give us each day our daily bread,” we need to pray that phrase within the context of the stronger imperative, “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.” Daily bread is essential for physical life, but God’s Kingdom and His will are essential for spiritual and eternal life. Our prayers should reflect the centrality of God’s Kingdom in this world and our lives.