

Where to Begin?

“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.
They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.
Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants
to speak your word with great boldness.”

Acts 4:27-29 (NIV)

The infant church was suffering government and religious persecution. The situation was desperate for the Christian community. It is interesting to note how the believers responded to their critical situation.

First, the people prayed. They did not set up a committee to investigate the issue and report back to the church with recommendations on how to respond to the threat. Instead, they turned to the One Who was the answer to anything life could offer.

Second, the prayer begins with worship of God the Creator and moved into a quote of Scripture relevant to the situation at hand. It is amazing that they state how the evil plans and action of the enemy were somehow exactly what the Lord “had decided beforehand should happen”.

Through the ages, God’s people have wrestled with the problem of how a holy God could use evil to enact His holy will. Theories come and go, but no explanation is satisfactory. The early church acknowledges that God uses evil and moves from that fact to making a request. They refer to the evil demand that they stop preaching and ask that they be given boldness to preach in defiance of the

demand they be silent. Because the believers understood that the issue was fulfilling the will of God, they did not ask for the problem go away rather that they have courage to proclaim Christ.

Where do we begin? Can we pray like the early church? Are we bold enough to maintain our faith in the wisdom of the Lord even when we do not know why the sovereign will of God seems to harm His people? Can we withhold our cry for an explanation for the evil forces in our lives and say with confidence, “Father, Your will be done.”

Where do we begin? Will we make worship the beginning of prayer? Will we use our biblical knowledge to shine a light on our predicaments? Will we pray for resolve to endure, rather than always praying for an escape route out of the problem?

Will you read the story in Acts 4 asking the Lord to teach you a lesson on how to pray? We have an excellent example in Acts 4 on how to deal with a crisis that might cause us to ignore our responsibility of obedience to the commandments of the Lord. Look again at the challenge you face today and begin to pray following this excellent example in Acts 4. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints,
fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

- William Cowper

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