

Acts 4:23-31
Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam
January, 2022

Like a mighty army, the forces of Satan are mustered for battle. The anti-Christian forces of godlessness, love of evil, and false teachings are fighting against God and His people. What should we do? Should we allow the devil's forces to overwhelm us and destroy us? NO! When our enemy is ready to destroy us, we must be ready to defend ourselves. We **must** be ready to fight!

For the protection of our souls, God's Word offers us the proper **Christian reaction to antichristian action**. To battle against Satan's forces we will need:

- Fellowship with believers
- Reliance on God's power
- Trust in God's Word
- A life of prayer.

One day Peter and John went to the temple. A beggar asked them for money, but Peter offered him something better and the Holy Spirit gave the beggar the ability to walk again. When the beggar saw what God had done, he praised God. That gave Peter the opportunity to speak about Jesus to the crowd that gathered.

Peter and John, however, were taken to jail and had to appear before the Jewish religious leaders. After their release, Peter and John reported to their friends what had happened. It wasn't a good report! They had been warned to not preach or teach about Jesus anymore.

That didn't stop the apostles from teaching and preaching. But Peter and John are good examples for us. Life can be difficult at times. Talk about your concerns with other Christians. Ask for their advice. Read Scripture together. Friends can encourage us; we can encourage them.

Life has gotten more difficult during the pandemic. We need to

Speak to friends, neighbors and members of our Christian family. We can speak to others, encourage them in their faith and remind them that the Lord still loves them, is still in control, and that everything will be all right.

Horses in a storm will crowd together. Christians should gather together when possible, and encourage each other as life gets us down. If you are sitting around a fire for warmth do you separate each piece of wood? No, the wood is placed together to give off more heat.

So, when the devil musters his forces against us, we need more fellowship with Christians, in person or over the phone, not less! When we feel like giving up, we need the Lord's Supper more often, not less often. When we need guidance in our lives, we need more Bible Study, not less Bible Study. This is proper Christian reaction to antichristian action.

In times of trouble, we should think of the awesome power that God can use on our behalf. When the Christians that Peter and John spoke to, heard what the enemies of the Church had done, they immediately thought of God's power. They said, Lord, You made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 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? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One."

Those Christians knew God's Word. They knew that God created all things in the beginning. They knew that God had dealt with the Egyptian Pharaoh and the Assyrian and Babylonian kings. They had seen Jesus force devils to leave people they had possessed. There is no one, absolutely no one, who can fight against our God and win!

Today we might be worried about the weather, the pandemic, inflation, our health, or if we have enough money to retire comfortably. When we worry about things, we often forget who is

in charge of all things: our Lord Jesus. With God all things are possible!

Like Peter walking on the water, there are times we are afraid as we face troubles in our life, and our faith wavers and we take our eyes off our Lord and we begin to sink in deep water. The courage to stand firm and the boldness to live as Christians comes from trust in the promises of God and His power to care for us. The early Christians had confidence in God's power and praised God for His help. We have the same trust in God's Word. We have the same confidence.

Soon after Jesus' Ascension, the Church suffered persecution. The unbelievers were raging against them just as they had raged against Jesus. The believers remembered the words of Jesus, The time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.

Let's realize that there will always be bad days for Christians. In the past, Christians suffered. Christians are suffering in some parts of the world today. Our children and grandchildren will suffer in the future. But there is help. There is hope. Trust in God's promises:

- I will be with you to the very end of the age.
- Fear not, for I am with you, don't be dismayed, I am your God, I will strengthen you and help you.
- I will never leave you or forsake you.

Although the world may be falling to pieces around us, we are still in good hands, the strong hands of a loving Savior who proved His love by dying to take care of our worst problem; sin.

We prepare for the troubles that will come by praying for spiritual strength from the Holy Spirit. The more problems we have, the more we need to pray! Listen to the prayer of the people in our text: Lord, look at their threats and give to Your servants the ability to keep on speaking Your word with all boldness as You stretch out Your hand to heal and as signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant, Jesus.

Notice that those believers not only prayed for help, they also prayed for opportunities to tell their enemies about Jesus. You might wonder if praying helped those believers? Listen: After they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken. Also, everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak the Word of God with boldness.

Listen to this prayer in one of our hymns: Lord Jesus, since You love me, Oh spread Your wings above me And shield me from alarm. Though Satan would assail me, Your mercy will not fail me; I rest in Your protecting arms. In today's world, we need a life filled with prayer!

The Holy Spirit gave the believers the help they needed: boldness, joy, strength, courage and trust. The Holy Spirit will answer our prayers too.

What is the Christian reaction to antichristian action?

- More fellowship with believers;
- More trust in God's power;
- More confidence in God's Word; and
- More prayer in our lives!