

Acts 4:23–31

How God's Prophecy, Purpose, and Power Give His Servants Holy Boldness

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Main idea: The Lord emboldens His servants to speak in Jesus's Name by God's prophecies and promises, God's purpose and plan, and God's powerful providence.

²³ And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, ²⁵ who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

'Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things?

²⁶ The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.'

²⁷ "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. ²⁹ Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Introduction: What those who truly have experienced Christ and threats have always desired is something that we have been needing more than more not just in the culture but even in the church: holy boldness in Jesus's Name. How does God give it?

1. Prophecies and promises

- a. The report back: **emboldened because they have heard something like this before.** The believer has someone who can sympathize: a High Priest Who has passed through the heavens (Heb 4:14). Persecution and trial that we experience in a small way, Christ Himself has experienced in an ultimate way. So we may be much strengthened in ours by remembering that His was very specifically prophesied, and ours is as well. There are over 1800 prophetic predictions of some sort in the Bible, and more than 350 of them specifically about Christ. More than a thousand of the former and three hundred of the latter have already been fulfilled. The rest remain; not a single one has gone unfulfilled. Here is a "bet" that is not a "gamble." There is no such thing as a sure thing except the Word of God.
- b. **Emboldened by knowing that everything is as the Lord has said** (v25a). Everything is from the Sovereign Lord ("despot"! and through Him and to Him (v24). And He Who created by His Word has also spoken to us His own words. Yes, by the mouth of David or Luke, but God Himself speaking to us. And not sugarcoating the present, because there is no need to do so. The future of the believer cannot be sugar-coated because it cannot be improved. But even the present of the believer is to have a God Who sits in heaven and laughs. And to have a Redeemer Who now sits in heaven, Whose enemies are being brought under His feet, Who will shatter them with a rod of iron. So when He tells us "in this world you will have trouble" and "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" and "everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" and "do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you"—and then things are just as He has said—we are wonderfully encouraged that everything is as the Lord has said.
- c. **Emboldened by knowing that Christ Himself is the best example of this** (v26c–27). There are no exceptions; the Holy Servant Himself has experienced the most intense case of this. When we take up our own cross daily, we follow a crucified—and risen!—Savior. And what was His experience? He grew in wisdom. He knew what was written, and that it must happen, and how He should respond. He knew that it was written (and therefore necessary!) that the Christ must suffer and rise from the dead the third day (Luk 24:46). This was how Jesus was able to face His day: "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your Name" (John 12:27–28). And the church in our passage followed Christ's example. And we must now follow their example, following Christ's.

2. Purpose and Plan

- a. **Emboldened by the vanity of what the people, kings, and rulers plot** (v25b–26b). There are two (at least) plotters involved. And though we may be infinitely strengthened by God's predetermining, we may already be much strengthened by the end of v25. The people plot "vain" things. Empty. Powerless. Ineffective. Whatever short term fulfillment they think that they achieve, it is not because things have gone according to their plan, and it is not because things will conclude according to their end. Herod's, Pilate's, the Gentiles', and Israel's plan was not for a resurrected and reigning Redeemer. Yet, there He is, sitting on the throne. They may achieve even the crucifixion of the Incarnate Son of God, and still they have plotted empty. You have no need or reason to fear their threats.
- b. **Emboldened by the fact that God's hand has predetermined this** (v28a): what God intends, God attains by His almighty hand. It is a strange thing to say that someone's "power" has predetermined what would be done. But God's power here (and elsewhere in Scripture) is described as His "hand" so that we can see His power at work not just in the outcome but even superintending and overruling even the actions of the wicked. They are extending their impotent hands for evil, but in the same action He extends His almighty hand for good. This we could see most of all at the cross. Yet, this was happening no less when they were on trial earlier in the chapter. And in a moment the apostles are going to ask for it to continue to happen when they preach. God is always extending His almighty hand. Even now—in every trouble, in every persecution, in every one of your actions—He extends His hand do to what He has predetermined.
- c. **Emboldened by the fact that God's purpose has predetermined this** (v28b): what God intends is the salvation and adoption of sinners! It is not just His power that does He has predetermined, but what He has predetermined always serves His purpose: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion" (Ps 2:6); "I will give You the nations for Your inheritance and the ends of the earth for Your possession" (Ps 2:8); "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him" (Ps 2:12). His ultimate purpose is that believers will be conformed to the image of the Son (Rom 8:29), that they would be like Him when they see Him as He is (1John 3:2), that they would attain to the holiness necessary to see Him (Heb 12:10, 14), that they will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt 13:43). God has predetermined many things to happen between now and then, but they are all predetermined by this glorious purpose; they are all exactly what He has predetermined to bring about this wonderful end for those who believe! When the believer asks, "why did this happen to me?" there are many intermediate answers, but the ultimate answer is always, "So that God would be glorified by Your being perfectly blessed in Him forever: perfectly enjoying the Father, having been made perfectly like the Son, by the perfect fellowship of the Spirit."

3. Powerful Providence

- a. **Emboldened by the fact that God is always observing and acting** (v29a). “Look on their threats.” God sees all that man is doing, not merely as an observer (“Yahweh is in His holy temple, Yahweh’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men,” Ps 11:4), or even as a Judge (“Yahweh test the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates,” Ps 11:5) and Avenger (“Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup,” Ps 11:6), but as the One Whose operations are always in motion. Man threatens (v29) but God’s own threatening should both be our greater fear concerning ourselves and our confidence concerning those who threaten us (“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matt 10:28; see entire context in 10:28–39 and even 10:11–42)
- b. **Emboldened by being connected to Jesus** (v29b): “Holy Servant Jesus” (v27a, 29b) vs. “Your servants” (v29a). We are emboldened by two things here: not only that we belong to God, that we are His, but also that it is as *servants* that we belong to Him. We are on task. We are on mission. He protects and defends us as His own. And He guarantees the ultimate success of our efforts—not instantly and temporally but as it serves His ultimate, eternal end. This was true for the ultimate Servant, “Your Holy Servant Jesus,” and it is true for the lesser servants. So this adds a third: we have fellowship in this service with Jesus Christ. He is not only our Elder Brother, but our Brother-in-arms, the Holy Servant, the “seven star general” of the great company of servants.
- c. **Emboldened by the providence of signs** (v30): They ask for what the Bible elsewhere calls the “signs of an apostle” (v30, cf. Ac 2:43 “then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles”; 5:12 “and through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people”; 2Cor 12:12 “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds”; Heb 2:4 “God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will”). Don’t be discouraged that you have never seen such signs; there are no apostles on earth. But He has not left you without signs. The apostles laid hands on elders who laid hands on other elders and so forth, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership” (1Tim 4:14). “Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2Tim 1:6, cf. also v13, 14). The water that is poured on you goes back to the hands of the apostles, and to the hands of Christ Himself Who pours out His Spirit. The bread that is broken to you goes back to the hands of the apostles, and to the hands of Christ Himself Who poured the cup and broke the bread for them when instituting His Supper. These are moments of providence that God Himself has appointed as signs for you. You should be as emboldened by baptism and communion as the apostolic church was emboldened by crippled people rising up to walk.
- d. **Emboldened by other providence** (v31)
 - i. **Answered prayer** (v31a). “And when they had prayed.” The request was answered immediately. They had spoken into the air; they had lifted up their hearts; and, the Sovereign Lord had heard them.
 - ii. **Unusual providence** (v31b). “The place where they were assembled together was shaken.” Jesus is always upholding things by the Word of His power (Heb 1:3) and working all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11). But sometimes He does them in such a way as to underline that to you. (illustrations, as time allows). It is almost a certainty that each of you have remarkable moments that would stick out in your memory. The Lord gives such providence to overcome our unbelief and underline to us that He *is always work in everything and superintending everything* every bit as much in those moments. Was God working any less, when the ground became calm any more than He had been when it was shaking?
 - iii. **“Spirit”-ual proof** (v31c). “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” This was the immediate answer to the request in the second half of v29; God Himself gave them boldness directly. After employing all of those other means—bringing to mind His prophecies and promises; affirming that His purpose and plan cannot fail; reinforcing the reality of His powerful providence—the ultimate providence was that the Spirit used all of these things as the instrument by which He Himself worked boldness in them. The speaking with boldness at the end of v31 isn’t just the successful use of tools; it was the God of grace Himself using the means of that grace. When we speak with boldness that is one proof, and it will help us speak with boldness again. But there are other proofs. Especially, believing the truth and loving (cf. 1John):
 1. Believing that Jesus is the Son Who dwelt in eternal glory and love with the Father before the cosmos began and then came into the cosmos as a man (1John 3:24–4:6; cf. John 17:5,24 “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the cosmos was [...] Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the cosmos”)
 2. Loving one another. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1Jn 4:7). This love for God and for one another is the first aspect of the Spirit’s fruit in the believer’s life, but also “... joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22–23). We see that we have life from the Spirit (Gal 5:25a) when our walking is by the Spirit (Gal 5:25b). And just as with the speaking in boldness itself being proof of the Spirit’s work that emboldens them further, so also when you consider the way that the Spirit Himself has been growing you it emboldens you that it is the Spirit Who is producing this fruit, and if you can see that it is God the Spirit Who is doing this in you, then this emboldens you further to speak in the Name of Jesus.

Conclusion: We may not have the same office as the apostle, but we have the same God applying the same salvation of the same Jesus through the same bold speaking in His Name. And He gives us to worship Him in Word, sacrament, and prayer (in the assembly) and every day by Word and prayer as people and households which have been set apart by sacrament. He intends to have a people who boldly live in His Name and speak in His Name—bookending our days and frontloading our weeks with His prophecies and promises that declare to us His purposes and plan; bookending our days and frontloading our weeks with the providences of His signs and His answers to prayer. And it is He Himself Who has been using these things to produce the fruit of His work that you may be further emboldened. Don’t just have private and family worship; *live out* of His powerful interaction with you in your private and family worship. Don’t just keep the Lord’s Day and attend well upon the public worship of His holy assembly; *live out* of His powerful interaction with you in the public worship of His holy assembly. And so look to Him to make you to live boldly in His Name and to speak boldly in His Name!

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Acts 4 versus 23 through 31. Let us take heed how we hear these words for. These are the words of God And being let go. They went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. So when they heard that They raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, you are God who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them who by the mouth of your servant.

David have said, why did the nation's rage and the people plot vain things, The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ.

Truly against your holy servant. Jesus, whom you anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles. And the people of Israel were gathered together to do, whatever your hand and your purpose, determined before to be done Now. Lord look on their threats and grant to your servants. That with all boldness, they may speak your word by stretching out your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy servant.

Jesus. And when they had prayed the place where they were assembled together was shaken and There were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. Amen, that sends this reading of God's inspired and an errant wort. Please be seated as we look to him for his powerful working by and blessing upon the hearing of it.

What those who have truly experienced Christ and those who are experiencing the threats of the world. And really of the church. What those who have truly experienced Christ and the threats of the world? Have all desired. Is something that we have been needing more and more not just in the culture.

But even in the church, holy boldness. In Jesus name boldness to live in the name of Jesus Christ, and boldness to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. This is what the Apostles as they return and let the congregation know the threats that they have received and how things went before, the Council of the priests and the elders.

This is what they and that church desire that the threats would not be something that they hear from the culture and from the church and buckle under and quiet down and turtle in. But the threats that they just heard would be something that the living God looks upon and responds to in many ways.

But in one way that they desire, more than anything else, that he would give them the very boldness that the world and the church were threatening against that he would work boldness in them and marvelously. You don't have to wait long for the answer to the prayer, do you?

Because by the end of our text this morning, it says and they spoke the Word of God with Boldness. It's joyous and triumphant and comforting and strengthening. And for us You need boldness. This passage therefore presents, How does God embolden His servants to live in his name and speak in his name?

How does God embolden his servants to live in Jesus's name and speak in Jesus's name? And that doesn't mean by the way, just saying the name of Jesus. While you live, however, you want and applying the name of Jesus, to whatever you wish to say, That means living boldly.

The way Jesus says, in the name of Jesus and speaking boldly what Jesus says in the name of Jesus. And so the passage before us tells us that the Lord emboldens His servants to speak. In Jesus's name by at least these things. These three things God's prophecies and promises God's purpose and plan and God's powerful providence, God's prophecies and promises God's purpose and plan, and God's powerful providence.

First God's prophecies and promises The Lord, emboldens, his servants to live in Jesus's name and to speak. In Jesus's name by His prophecies and promises being let go verse 23. They went to their own companions and reported that all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

So when they heard that they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, you are God, They are emboldened. Because they have heard something like this before. They have heard not only that the chief priests and elders had been gathered against the Lord Jesus, which they had been not too long before this, But they had heard about this all their lives growing up and singing and reading the songs.

The second Psalm was full of exactly what had been done to the Lord. Jesus Christ and more generally, what had just now been done to Peter and John and what they expected as the church would continue to be done to them. God's Word had told them that this is exactly how it would be and God's Son, their redeemer had experienced to the letter.

What was said about him in Psalm 2, You see when you are in trouble as a believer, you have someone who can sympathize a high priest who has passed through the heavens when we come to the throne of grace, Hebrews 4 verse 16. We can come with boldness to the throne of grace and prayer in part because on that throne sits the god man who became a man precisely so that he could suffer and die and rise.

Again on the third day, for all those whom the Lord was saving. And so Jesus grew up reading and singing. Psalm 2 and he grew in wisdom and stature in favor with God and with men but part of his growing in wisdom was reading and praying and singing a part of the Bible that said specifically what was going to happen to him So that when he comes to the cross and he says my God my God why have you forsaken me?

It's not a request for data. It is calling in agony upon the name of him who had already told him all his life. Why he would be forsaken on that day? That God had prepared his son by his word. That's one of the glories of singing the Psalms from so many of which our Lord Himself as He grew as a man learned about himself and his mission and what would be done to him.

And how as a man, he was to call upon God and entrust himself to him who judges justly. So that he would be able righteously to open not his mouth as the shepherd was, spilling his blood for the sheep. Dear Christian. He's given you. The same thing he gave us on.

And when you read and pray and sing the Psalms, when you read the prophecies and promises of God in the Bible, you have a fellowship with Jesus Christ and the same spirit with whom he was full from the womb and whom he has made to indwell every believer applies to you.

The same word to produce. Holy boldness, that is the Holy boldness of the Lord Jesus himself. Worked out in his people, by his spirit, through the instrument of his word Persecution and trial that we experience in a small way Christ himself has experienced in an ultimate way. So we may be much strengthened in whatever we go through.

Remembering that what he went through. Was so very specifically prophesied and the particular experiences that you have have not in detail been promised and predicted to you by the Bible. But they have been generally prophesied and predict it in the Bible and this Bible is wonderfully reliable. So, one of the things that their rejoicing over is the reliability of Scripture, There are 1800 prophetic predictions of some sort.

In the Bible, We're at the time, it was spoken or the time that it was written. It was something yet to come More than 350 of them specifically about Christ. Now more than a thousand of those 1800 and almost 300 of those. 350 about Christ have already been fulfilled and not one of them have failed.

Could you imagine If this was any other collection of writing and speaking from the ancient world with 1800 predictions over a thousand of which had already come true and over and 350 of them about one individual person said or written before and 300 of which had already come true.

The whole world would rise up and form a religion that was based on whatever book that came from and whatever man that had been said about. Unless it was the book of God and that man was the Christ and their sinful nature from their first father, Adam made them in their souls resistant.

And in their minds darkened, We think about it. If it was Nostradamus or Muhammad or Joseph Smith was with his crazy golden plates and angels, and all that Everyone in the world would be a follower of Nostradamus, or a Muslim, or a Mormon, And those who weren't everyone else would pity them for being so foolish as not to believe something.

So reliable, but that is exactly the case with Christianity and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not a single prophecy or promise of God has gone unfulfilled backed your soul on the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not a gamble It's like fixing except for, it's God who fixed it. You know, if all of the 63 tournament games were fixed and you were able to do a 63-bet parley, you would not be more sure or get a greater reward with all the world would not contain the money that a 63-bet parley would gain for you.

You would not be more sure or gain more of a reward than the sinner who bets on, who places his soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what the rejoicing over here. They don't say, oh no, they threatened you what? A horrible time for our young church. We just got started and we're already facing such fierce opposition.

No, they rejoice. They rejoice. Lord, you are God. And it's not even the common word for Lord. It's a word from which we get despot. The one who completely controls everything. Another place where it's used is, where Simeon meets Jesus, the baby Jesus that the temple. And he says, oh Lord, God, now dismiss your servant and peace and he uses the word for desperate.

Oh, you sovereignly rule over all things and for whom it is such a blessing to be the slave. The servant you have brought your salvation into the world. They're having the same response here to the threats that they received because it's just as God. Had said emboldened by knowing because they've heard something like this before with respect to the Lord Jesus emboldened.

By knowing that this is that, everything is just as the Lord has said, Everything is from their, despite their master, the sovereign Lord, everything is from him, and through him, and to him. Lord you are God who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them.

And since everything is from him and through him and to him, we rejoice over his words who by the mouth of your servant. David. Yes, it was by the mouth of David in Psalm 2 or by the mouth of Luke in Acts 4. You say, well it's by the pen and I say, well the genitive there can be exegetical, It might say and probably does say by the mouth.

That was your servant David by the mouth for us. That is God's servant. Luke you. I don't even know what the phrase means. I just know that people insult each other by saying mouth breather. Well, you have a mouth, and you have a nose, and I suppose, if things got really badly, you could squeeze something up through that hole in the sinuses, in the corners of your eyes.

It's not wrong to breathe through your mouth, but when the apostle writes, every word of Scripture is breathed out by God and useful. He says God is a mouth breather of the pages of the words on the pages of your Bible to breathe out just as much as if he were right in front of you speaking, they rejoicing they're not unaware that God used people.

They're not inventing crazy things like the the golden plates.

Yes, it was by David but it was God, who said, why did the nations rage and the people plotting things and so forth? And it quotes a couple of verses, but really the whole Psalm is in view. You see God speaks to us. And he speaks to us. Truly, they're rejoicing that God has told them, honestly, about what the experience of his Christ and His people is going to be God doesn't sugarcoat things to his people.

He hasn't sugarcoated what our experience will be like, because there is no need to do so, You can't sugarcoat the future of believers. Because it can't be improved, it would be like sugar coating steak.

Except for infinitely more. So The future of a believer cannot be improved but even in the present of the believer We have God who sits in heaven and laughs. We have the Christ who has been through the same type of experience in the same with the same supports by the same spirit.

And now sits in glory on the throne having risen from the dead.

And he will shatter his enemies with a rod of iron when they are done, being brought under his feet. So when he tells us in this world, you will have trouble. But I have overcome the world or through many tribulations. We must enter the kingdom of God. As the apostle encourages, the churches, at the end of his first missionary journey, or everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ, Jesus will be persecuted as he says to the young minister to whom he is writing and urging to live a godly life in Christ Jesus so that he can among other things get persecuted.

When the Apostle, the other apostle writes do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you and then you read, and you study those things. And it's all good to think about and agree with and you're sabbath school. And as you sit and hear the sermon preached and then you go out into your life and you actually do have trouble.

And you actually have many tribulations and you actually are persecuted and they're actually are fiery trials. The new should be emboldened by the reliability of the Word of God. That told you all those things. Everything is just as your Lord has said They're emboldened by his prophecies and promises because we've heard something like this before because everything is as the Lord has said.

And because Christ himself is the best example of this. There are no exceptions. If the holy servant got the Psalm two treatment, then all of the other servants, He says look upon their threats and grant to your servants. Wonderful fellowship with Jesus, isn't there? He's the Holy servant verse 27.

He's the holy servant end of verse 29 and you know Jesus gets the capital S but we get lowercase s's look upon your servants. We have fellowship with Jesus. In this he knew what was written. He knew that it was written at the Christ must suffer and rise from the dead the third day.

And he tells them that in Luke. 24:46. This is just as the scriptures had prophesied. And then he tells them and repentance and remission of sins must be preached in his name, to all the nations. And they're about to do that and they have fellowship with Jesus. In the fact that what they are experiencing God had told them about in his word so that when Jesus in John chapter 12 is about to face his day.

It's tomorrow. Now there's about to start the last supper in John 13. He comes John chapter 12 and he says now my soul is troubled. Great comfort. It's not a sin to have a troubled soul. Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from the sour, but for this purpose, I came to this hour.

Father, glorify your name and now, the church in our passage is following. Christ's example, They're not asking to be saved from the threats, They get the threats and they say, what shall we say? It's as if they say, what shall we say save us from these threats? No but for this purpose, we came to be threatened about speaking in Jesus' name, Glorify your name, God who made heaven and earth and everything, that is in them.

God who prophesied? This about your son? God, who does all things according to your purpose? Glorify your name. By giving us boldness to speak the word and those events in our life in which you have granted to us to do so. And so you can take the prophecies and promises of God and you can say so much of that which actually frightens me and troubles me and is hard for me.

Are things that the Bible specifically said I would endure. His word is reliable and that gives me boldness. And the second place. God emboldens his servants to live in Jesus name and speak. In Jesus name by his purpose and plan. This is occurring already. In the end of verse 25.

Yes, there's his purpose in plan, but the fact that it's his purpose in plan means, it's not somebody else's purpose in plan. Conspiracies are real. We generally don't have a clue which ones are real. There's so much information. And the vast majority of it is bogus and there are people on both sides of everything trying to give you disinformation, But the wonderful thing about not knowing what the conspiracies are, that are real, is that all of them fail.

But one God's purpose and plan determines beforehand, what is going to happen and even what the conspirators are going to end up doing? Isn't it neat in history after the fact to read about, you know, agreements between between the dictators of Russia and Germany and they had agreed with one another.

But they're also spying them one another because they were plotting against one another while they plotted together against everyone else. Why did the nation's rage and the people plot vain things? Empty things, things that they could not bring to pass, unless God intended to bring His good to pass by their bringing their wickedness to pass.

You see a wicked conspirator can never achieve his end. He can follow his plan but only if his plan is achieving God's end, whatever short-term fulfillment, they think that they achieve. It's not because things are going according to their plan. Herod's pilots the Gentiles. Israel's plan was not that.

By the time you get to act 4 versus 23:31, there would be a risen ascended, enthroned, reigning redeemer, they made a plan and to some extent. Each of them, followed their plan and seemed to be getting what they intended, but they plotted empty, that's what vain means there. They plotted empty, because God was getting what he planned in good even as they had planned evil.

In their wickedness, They may achieve the world. Even when it achieves, the crucifixion of the incarnate, Son, of God have still plotted Emily. You have no need or reason to fear the threats of the world of the church of anyone. They cannot do to you anything that God has not intended for good.

In fact it's not just in there being emboldened by the vanity of what the people's kings and rulers plot. There are emboldened by the fact that God's hand and God's purpose had predetermined this and we need to take those two things separately. And we also need to preach and hear more quickly.

What? God, intends God. Attains by his Almighty hand. It's very interesting. That it's not just what what your purpose determined before to be done. But also what whatever your hand pretty determine determined before to be done predetermined to be done. We're accustomed to speaking about purposing beforehand but it's to do whatever first.

Your hand had predetermined. What God intends God carries out by his Almighty hand. It is to say his power. He said, God did this by his Almighty hand. We're not saying, you know, God created for himself, some giant physical thing or contraption, We're talking about his power, But God's power here is described as his hand, so that we can see His power at work, not just in the outcome.

But even as He doesn't, that his hand is carrying out his purposes. As it were said, his power is active and involved. His he is not someone who has just predicted really well, what everyone else is going to do. He's one who was always active himself in his own action.

That is to say God is always caught gloriously. White-handed, He's always involved. And we are to see that he's always involved, And so he's superintendents and overrules even the, what the wicked extends his hand to do. They extend impotent hands for evil, and we are not to think that just because they accomplish some wickedness in their wicked intentions.

That somehow they have been powerful because they are extending their hands, impotently in their wickedness, but in the same action, God extends, his Almighty hand omnipotently for good. All powerfully. You can see this most of all at the cross Yet, this was happening no less when they were on trial earlier in the chapter In a moment.

The apostles are going to ask for it to happen. When they preach Earlier in the chapter, the council was gathered together trying to do something, But God was all mightily. Accomplishing his purpose while they were on trial. And now after this crying out to God, they are going to go out and preach again, but they don't want it to be their power, or their purpose because it is God's Almighty power and God's predetermining purpose that they want to see fulfilled.

So you could see it most of all in the cross, There's never been anything more wicked than the cross as there. The crucifixion of the sinless. Glorious Son of God. But there has never been a greater act of righteousness, or love, or power to redeem, or wisdom to carry it out, Then in the cross.

And so if he's done the greatest good that could ever be done through the greatest evil that had ever been done or could ever be done? Is he not also accomplishing his perfect good regardless of whatever. Lesser evil. Others think that they are accomplishing. They are emboldened by the fact that God's hand is predetermined.

This They're emboldened by the fact that God's purpose has predetermined us. What is the purpose that they're talking about here? It's good to know the rest of Psalm 2 Yet. I have set my king on my Holy Hill of Zions. On two verse 6, I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession.

Psalm two verse 8, blessed are all who put their trust in Him. Psalm 2 verse 12. You see, it isn't just that God is working by His power in the midst of what is happening. It's that it all is serving the purpose for which he exerts His power that Christ would be glorified.

That Christ would reign that Christ would shatter His enemies and that Christ would secure perfect. Blessedness for every single one who trusted in him, And so they come out of the trial and they realize that Psalm 2 was, was being worked out, not just in the cross of Jesus Christ.

But in their own trial, as they stood before the council, and, and they were able to speak with boldness and the council was shocked at the boldness with, which they spoke and they couldn't figure it on this. All these people have been with Jesus and that whole situation. They said this is One of the points in the

middle from point alpha, which is, you know, not a point at all God's purpose and decree from all eternity and point omega which is Jesus reigning glorified, all his enemies destroyed eliminated, all his redeemed, perfected and holiness, and perfectly, happy forever and everything.

God does by his Almighty power in every point in between is by His powerful hand and serving that purpose. It's not just theological jargon to say to do whatever your hand and purpose determine before to be done. It holds before us the Almighty power. That is at work and the unimaginable.

Goodness of what that work is producing.

His ultimate purpose, is that believers will be conformed to the image of his son Romans 8:29. He those, whom he fore knew he predestined to be conformed, to the image of his son. That they would be like him when they see him as he is, We what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears we will be likened because we'll see him as he is first.

John 3 verse 2. His purpose is it. We would attain the holiness that is necessary to see him. Hebrews 12 verse 10 and 12 verse 14. His purpose is that we would shine like the sun as you n by being conformed to the Sun. S O N in the kingdom of our Father, Matthew 13 verse 43.

God has predetermined Many things. Everything that happens between now and then. But everything that he has predetermined. He has done by this glorious purpose. That it is exactly the way by which He has determined to bring about the glory of his Son and the Blessedness of his people. That's the why question or that's the great answer to the Hawaii question.

When the believer asks, why did this happen or even more pointedly? Why did this happen to me? There are many intermediate answers, But the ultimate answer is always so that God would be glorified in the glory of Jesus Christ by those whom he saved being perfectly blessed in him forever.

So that God would be glorified by our perfectly enjoying the Father. Having been made perfectly like the Sun by the perfect fellowship of the Holy Spirit. That's why it happened. That's why everything happens. And his power has predetermined this. And his purpose has predetermined this And the third place.

Then God emboldens us. Not just by his prophecies and promises, and his purpose and plan. But by his powerful providence Now Lord they pray Look on their threats. Look on their threats. You see, we have a God who has not absent or out of town or not paying attention or falling asleep.

Those are the kinds of things that you mock bail, for, with the servants of Baal. Yeah. Scream louder. He might be on the potty or taking a nap, maybe he's out of town.

Our God observes and acts even when the foundations seem like they're being destroyed. Isn't that the situation in Psalm 11? What can the righteous do? And the wicked are in a position of such control. They say fly like a little bird, you pathetic and weak believer in the Lord.

And in his Christ We hold all the cards we have. All the power and Psalm 11 is asking what can the righteous do? Well, they can stop buying the wicked view of the situation Yahweh is on his throne, in his holy hill of Zion and his eyes. See his eyelids are testing.

The sons of men kids say, well, I know that we're not supposed to say God has actual eyes. So he can't have actual eyelids, can he No? But it does kind of zoom the image in. Doesn't it to focus on how actually involved and observing God is even in situations like that.

He is judge, you always tests the righteous, but the wicked one who loves violence is. So hates Psalm 11 verse 5. He is avenger Psalm 11 verse 6 upon the wicked he will rain coals fire and brimstone and a burning wind. Shall be the portion of their cup. You see how helpful it is to read and pray and sing the Psalms and know that they're all about Christ and His church.

Because when you pray, look on their threats, you're importing all of those times. When when you say Lord look upon me, don't turn your face from me take and you're taking all of that. Theology of Psalm 11, and the Lord looking. And as eyelids testing and his eyes upon us and you're saying Lord, observe and act.

This is how you obey Jesus when he says, do not fear those who kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul, rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body. In hell. When you say now, Lord, look on their threats, You're not just saying what Jesus said is he can do worse to me than they can.

So I should be more afraid of him than I am of them. That's actually true. And if you don't have the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, then you should probably be nothing. But afraid of hell, and crying out to God to give you faith in Jesus Christ. Until you do nothing else.

You should do and your whole existence except me, terrified of God If you don't have the righteousness of Christ. But he's saying something more than that there in Matthew tennis. And he's saying the Psalm 11 thing and the Psalm 2 thing. And so many others, Those people that you're so afraid of they're destined for hell.

If they don't get redeemed, they're going to perish. That's a big part of the Thessalonians passage for next Lord's Day. And I hope all at home on Thursday. We won't visit there right now in the interest of time. But as you look at first Thessalonians 2 versus 13 through 16 this week and here at next.

Lord's Day. Next Lord, say morning, Remember that when God says, when Jesus says, do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body. And hell, He's not just talking about rejoice over the fact that God has delivered you from?

Hell is saying ponder the fact that he is acting in observing right now? And there is literal hell to pay for whatever is done to anyone who belongs to him. Now we could look we won't take the time for that either at Matthew 10 in broader context as he's sending his disciples out and telling them what will come upon those who reject them, and who persecute them and that they shouldn't fear as they speak.

It's a very strong connection between Jesus's instructions for speaking boldly, in Matthew chapter 10, and this crying out in Acts 4 verse 29, look on their threats because God is observer and judge and defend Avenger. And he is active, We're emboldened again by the connection to Jesus. We've touched on this already.

We won't take the time again, but that marvelous ability to say grant to your servants in between your holy servant. Jesus, your holy servant Jesus and us in the middle. We have fellowship with Jesus Christ as servants. He who is God and did not consider equality with God, something to be grasped.

And of course, the infinite chasm between the creature of the Creator and he's on the other side of the chasm, not catechism other side of that gap from all eternity and he takes what form the form of a slave. So that he has found an appearance as a man, and we now when we say your servants, we have fellowship with God, the Son who took the form of a slave, and we see what it was like for him.

And we say, yes, We are servants too with Jesus Christ. He's not just our elder brother. He's our elder brother in arms. Many of you are serving now or have served in the military. And you know that the fellowship that comes from being under fire together and doing battle together and having had the same training and carrying it out together you have that with Jesus.

He's both your elder brother in the electing and adopting love of God and he's your brother in arms as the holy servant of the same one of whom you pray to a new say grant unto your servant. We say that sometimes, especially for praying for the preaching and right before the preaching, and it sounds and feels so selfish to pray, for me for the sake of us all, because that's how God intends to do things, So you say grant to your servant.

And we remember what we're about. So we're emboldened by the fact that we are in this service with Jesus and that it is with with gee it is in this service that we are with Jesus in this serving that we are with Jesus. And finally we're emboldened by the powerful providence of God.

Not just in the fact that he's always observing and acting. Not just in the fact that we are in the same kind of battle that Jesus was in and we're in fellowship with him as servants, but we're emboldened by the providence of signs. They ask for what the Bible elsewhere calls.

The signs of an apostle. We've already seen it in Act. 2 X2 verse 43. Then fear came upon any every soul. And when he wonders and signs were done through the Apostles, Acts 5 verse 12. And through the hands of the apostles Many signs and wonders were done among the people, The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians and one of the problems that's happened between 1st Corinthians and second Corinthians.

Is there have been visits by these so-called super apostles, but they couldn't make crippled people get up and walk. And so, Paul defending his ministry in second Corinthians 12 says, truly the signs of an apostle. We're accomplished among you with all perseverance and signs and wonders and mighty deeds.

Hebrews chapter 2 verse 4. God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit talking about those who those who are witnesses of Christ and spoken. The Word There were there were particular healings and miracles that were the signs of the apostolic message.

And so when those who were told that they would perform such signs, those who were told that the many things that remained for Jesus to say that the Holy Spirit would teach them all those things After their ministry is complete and the signs are complete Those. Don't function anymore.

As signs of an apostle and those aren't gifts that continue, but you shouldn't be discouraged that you have never seen the signs of an apostle. You know why You have never seen an apostle either, but you have seen Apostolic portion and you have heard Apostolic teaching and you are under an apostolic ministry that has been passed down by the laying of hands.

He is not left us without signs The apostles laid hands on elders and these elders laid hands on other elders. Apparently both had happened to Timothy. Second Timothy 1:6 stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. And first Timothy 4:14, do not let neglect.

The gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Lord willing. We don't know how long from now but we'll have ordination of deacons and Lord willing and sparing us while eventually have to have ordination of other elders, But there is a laying on of hands that literally goes.

Back to the apostles who laid hands on elders who laid hands on elders who laid hands on elders. And if you could see it in a creepy Hollywood way, there would be all of that invisible chain behind those laying on laying their hands on others up in the front area in Hopewell church building and Calleoka Tennessee and the 21st century, and there would be an invisible chain that extends back from the ends of the earth.

Back through Samaria, back through Judea into Jerusalem, to the apostles themselves, The water that is poured. On each of you in baptism, goes back to the hands of the apostles and to the hands of Christ Himself who didn't pource water out on them. But poured his spirit out on them at Pentecost and the mouth of Christ himself, who breathed upon them and said, received the Holy Spirit, The bread that will be broken to you on this table and maybe a little bit onto the floor.

As sometimes happens, It will be broken by hands that are just the most recent and all long chain of hands that has broken bread for the same purpose, according to the same command because it goes back to the hands of the apostles to whom were actually physically broken to them bread at the last supper, which is really the first supper, the first Lord's Supper.

So I don't get to see signs. Well, yeah. You don't get to see a crippled guy healed on the way into church, but you get to see the signs that we're appointed to you.

The these are moments of providence that God Himself has appointed a signs for us and we should be as emboldened by baptism. And by communion as the apostolic church was emboldened by a crippled person rising up to walk because that's what Jesus said, would happen to show the reality of their apostleship and this is what Jesus said would happen to show the reality of his dying for us.

And his soon return, We should be just as encouraged when we eat the bread and drink the cup in a few minutes. As if crippled people were walking and leaping and praising. God.

And we absolutely should not be defrauding or desiring to see the wrong signs, because their value is in Him who appointed them. And what he says, their signs of Was powerful providence that emboldens us by the the signs and emboldens us in so many other ways. And now we'll just have to summarize the, the last three types of Providence are answered prayer.

When they had prayed verse 31. The request was answered immediately. Many times in your life, you have prayed and the Lord answered and I should have said we because whenever you pick on the congregation and pick on yourself, too Many times in our lives, we've prayed and the Lord has answered and we've forgotten.

Don't forget be like someone who was there that day and says, remember that day that we asked that we would pray with boldness and by the end of the day, everyone was just speaking with with unnatural. Spiritual boldness, Remember all those times that we've prayed for things I haven't been diligent enough to do this but I have known other.

Believers who have? They have a loose leaf requests prayer book and they have a hard bound answers prayer book. And then just keep a list just to remind them that the Lord has heard and answered so many times. He answers he emboldens us by unusual providence, He shook the place that they were together.

Many of you have had moments of unusual providence in your life. Russ told us one a very meaningful one and Dave told us another one when we were talking about the providence of God in in the Sabbath school. That's so many and you can be glad that we're out of time because you could get an unending list of stories, a shortcut.

It was a story I've told before, and if you hadn't heard it or don't remember it, I would delightedly tell it to you again. But when when my friend was preaching on the flood second prize of Yazoo. He as he said he mississippi and the sunny sky turned dark and there was crashing and reigning and lightning.

Like you wouldn't believe in the terrifying of my infant daughter Cassidy. Yeah. And I'm gonna end up telling the whole story and the destruction of a wicked woman's barn during the worship service. That one's stuck for me. Sometimes the Lord does things in our lives. Doesn't he? Not to say?

Well in those moments he was really providentially superintending and the rest of the moments he isn't. That's not how it works at all. Is it Those moments are the ones that remind you, that he superintends and and carries out every detail of every moment. And because we are dull of faith.

Sometimes he does it in a way to remind us. That that's the case and we can say you remember the day that God shook the place? As soon as we finished praying and then everybody started doing exactly what they had prayed to be able to do, But they didn't just start doing it because all of these things had worked.

They shook the perfect, they started doing it because of who it was who had worked by all these things. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness. They did not achieve boldness by the promises and the prophecies and all of these other things you've been hearing about.

For the last hours, the Holy Spirit gave boldness. And he did it by those things. The great part of God's providence to you as a Christian, is that your growth in the grace and the knowledge of Christ has given by God the Holy Spirit. It's not given by your family worship.

Family worship is used by the Holy Spirit to give it to you, personally. It's not given by your hearing this sermon the Holy Spirit uses. The appointed means of this sermon to give you love and joy, and peace, and patience, kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-controller You go through Peter's list of everything to add to your faith, on the things that are yours and increasing.

It's because God himself is the one who is using it. And the Holy Spirit is the one who produced that boldness. And then, you know, you may not have the same office as the Apostle, or let me say that more

clearly you do not have the same office as an apostle, but you have the same God applying the same salvation of the same.

Jesus, according to the same purpose and part of what he has planned to do it. By is bold. Speaking in his name, By those whom he sends to speak to you and for others. Should he give you opportunity to give an answer for your hope and how you speak to them?

He has given us to worship him in word and that sounds a whole lot. Like prophecies and promises and sacrament which is the providence of a sign like they had asked for and prayer which is what he responded to in his Providence, by answering. He intends to have a people that boldly lives in his name and speaks in his name, it's by his instruction that our days are bookended.

And our weeks, our front-loaded by word, sacrament, and prayer or word, and prayer at home. No baptizing at home. Just baptized households in word and prayer.

He has bookended our days in front-loaded, our weeks, with the prophecies and promises that declare His purposes and plan. He's book ended our days in front-loaded, our weeks, with the providence of his signs and his answers to prayer. It is he himself. Who has been using these to produce the fruit of his work in you?

So that when you see it, you may be further emboldened. That he is the one who has done it. Therefore do not just have private and family worship live out of his powerful working in your private and family worship. Do not just keep the Lord's day and attend well, upon the public worship live out of his almighty power.

According to his eternal purpose that he carries out through the means of grace and the public worship on the Lord's Day. And in this way, we will all look to him that he would embolden us to live in the name of Jesus and speak in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Our father, what an amazing passage you have given us to preach and to hear. And we thank you. That the reason that it is amazing is because it is about you and how you are towards us. So be towards us, that way by your spirit. We ask In Jesus name, Amen.