

Acts 4:15-31

Introduction

We left off two weeks ago in Acts chapter four with the leadership of the new, eschatological Israel (two poor, comparatively uneducated, and socially inferior men [Peter and John]) having been arrested and placed in the midst of the leadership of the old Israel—the Israel of the broken and now obsolete Old Covenant (at least 71 of the wealthiest, most highly educated, and most influential and powerful men in Judaism). By all human standards, in the presence of this Jewish high council, Peter and John were “nobodies.” But they weren’t intimidated or fearful. Instead, they were filled with a Holy Spirit empowered confidence and boldness. So after reading about their witness before the counsel, Luke tells us:

- Acts 4:13–14 — Now as they [the leadership of the Old Covenant Israel] observed the confidence [boldness; *parresia*] of Peter and John and comprehended that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them [3:1-4:12], they had nothing to say in reply [no way to refute them; *anteipon*].

And now, this morning, we continue in verses 15-22:

I. Acts 4:15–22 — But when they had ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, they began to confer with one another, saying, “What should we do with these men? For the fact that an obvious [*gnostos*; cf. HCSB; 4:10a] sign has happened through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But lest it spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.” And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this sign of healing had occurred.

While Peter and John (representing the leadership of the new Israel) have powerfully answered the Sanhedrin by proclaiming the name of Jesus, the Sanhedrin (the leadership of the old Israel) cannot answer Peter and John (“they had no way to refute them”). While Peter and John (representing the leadership of the new Israel) have sanctified Christ in their hearts as Lord over all, the Sanhedrin (the leadership of the old Israel) is blinded by zeal only for its own power and prestige (“...we cannot deny it. But lest it spread any further among the people...”). While Peter and John (representing the leadership of the new Israel) are bold and fearless when threatened by the Sanhedrin, the Sanhedrin (the leadership of the old Israel) is calculating and controlled by fear of the people (“they let them go... on account of the people”).

But, of course, this doesn’t mean that Peter and John are no longer in danger of punishment and persecution. Whereas before, the Sanhedrin could find “no basis on which to punish them,” now, with the Sanhedrin’s order “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus,” the basis for future

punishment has been established. In fact, the Sanhedrin’s response to Peter and John saying that they could “not stop speaking about what [they had] seen and heard” was to “[threaten] them further.” Peter and John have been let off this time, but they know they won’t be able to count on the same thing happening next time. They would have remembered the words that Jesus spoke to them before His death:

- Luke 21:12–16 (cf. Jn. 21:17-19) — “...they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. It will result in an opportunity for your testimony. So set in your hearts not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute [*anteipon*]. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death...”

It’s in this light, then, that we go on to read in verses 23-24:

II. Acts 4:23–24a — So when they were released, they went to their own [people; the new/eschatological Israel] and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard this, they lifted their voice to God with one accord¹ and said...

There’s a simple, but profound lesson for us here. In response to the threat from the Jewish high counsel, the believers lifted their voice to God. In short, their first response was not to strategize, or plan, or take counsel among themselves, but rather to pray. Their first response was not to fixate on the “problem,” but rather to lift their eyes above that “problem” to God in order that they might see that “problem” in its true and proper context. What is our first response when confronted with danger, or threat, or problems of any kind? Is our first response to lift up our voice to God?—To turn our eyes and our attention to Him? We need to remember that these believers are still completely human—just as human as we are, and so their natural, human tendency would be to be anxious and fearful. Even Peter and John, for all the confidence and boldness that they’ve exemplified so far, are not—in themselves—above anxiety and fear. No human being is.

The expression, “they lifted their voice” appears only here in the New Testament, but it’s a more common expression in the Old Testament. Whenever people “lift up their voice” in the Old Testament, it’s always in a context of some emotional intensity and/or of loudly calling out (cf. Gen. 39:15, 18; Judg. 9:7; Job 38:34; Isa. 40:9; 42:2; 58:1; Ezek. 21:22). So we see the nations lifting up their voice in arrogant rebellion against God (2 Kings 19:22; Isa. 37:23; Jer. 12:8; cf. Ps. 93:3); we see people lifting up their voice with (loud) weeping and lamentation (Gen. 21:16;

¹ Here again, we see Luke’s emphasis on the unity of the believers (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:46; cf. 2:1, 44). At the very least, they were all in wholehearted agreement with the one leading in the prayer. But is there more here than just an emphasis on unity of heart and mind? Is it possible that everyone was actually praying out loud and in unison, together? One commentator “suggests they may have followed the Jewish liturgical procedure of using a leader who prayed a phrase at a time, with the others repeating phrase by phrase” (Polhill, referencing Marshall). A related possibility (and one that might seem to be supported by 4:31a) is that Luke is piecing together different parts of a much longer corporate prayer service into one, much shorter, summary prayer—a condensed version of the whole, as it were. In this case, it is possible that a part of this prayer service was the corporate singing of Psalms 2 & 146 in their entirety.

27:38; 29:11; 1 Sam. 24:16; 2 Sam. 3:32; 13:36; Jer. 22:20); and we see people lifting up their voice with (loud) shouts and singing and expressions of praise (2 Chron. 5:13; Isa. 42:11; 52:8). Here in Acts chapter four, Luke doesn't simply tell us that the disciples "prayed." When he says that the disciples "lifted their voice to God," he's assuming a level of emotional intensity that arises from a felt sense of their own vulnerability and helplessness in the world and so also from a felt sense of their absolute dependence upon God. Isn't this, in a sense, what all prayer should be? But especially when we face threats or dangers or trials in this world—when we face those things that would normally cause us to be anxious and to fear—then, and especially then, our first response ought to be to lift our voice to God. When we feel our vulnerability and helplessness in the face of some overwhelming obstacle or threat, we can either fret and worry or we can lift our voice to God in conscious recognition of our absolute dependence upon Him. It's simple, isn't it? But how often do we instinctively choose to fret instead of to pray?

The disciples, confronted for the first time with the threat of the Jewish high counsel, "lifted their voice to God with one accord and said..."

III. **Acts 4:24b** — "O Master [of all]..."

The NASB and the KJV both say "[O] Lord" (cf. NKJV; ASV) but the usual Greek word for "lord" is *kurios* (appearing some 500x's in the New Testament as a reference to God or to Jesus), while the Greek word here is *despotes* (cf. Eng. "despot"), a word that's used of God or Jesus only 6x's in the New Testament. I believe "master" is the best English equivalent for the Greek word *despotes* (LSB; HCSB), but then it's essential for us to understand that the believers are not addressing God as uniquely *their* Master (Jude 4)—as if the point is that they would be pledging their service and obedience to God; instead, they're addressing God as the one who is Master of *all* (NET; cf. Wis. 6:7; 8:3)—the one in whom they can repose all their confidence and trust (cf. "O Sovereign Lord"; ESV, NIV). In short, they're not saying "O *our* Master," but rather, "O Master of *all*." Eliphaz says in the book of Job:

- Job 5:8–9 (LES) — I will implore the Lord [*kurios*], and I will call upon the Lord [*kurios*], the [one who is] **master** [*despotes*] of all [*pas*]...

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *adon* [lord/master] is used for God only eight times. Five of these times are in Isaiah, and in each of these five cases, the context is one of God's determination to pour out his wrath and judgment upon His enemies (cf. Isa. 10:16; 19:4). In three of these five examples the Hebrew *adon* is translated with the Greek *despotes*.

- Isaiah 1:24–25 [concerning Israel] — Therefore the **Lord** [*adon; despotes; the Master*], **Yahweh of hosts**, the Mighty One of Israel, declares, "Ah, I will be comforted concerning My adversaries, and I will avenge Myself on My enemies. I will also turn My hand against you..."
- Isaiah 3:1–2 [concerning Israel] — For behold, **the Lord** [*adon; despotes; the Master*], **Yahweh of hosts**, is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support, the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water, the mighty man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder...

- Isaiah 10:33–34 [concerning Assyria] — Behold, **the Lord** [*adon; despotes; the Master*], **Yahweh of hosts**, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash; those also who are high in stature will be cut in pieces and those who are lofty will be made low. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

Here in Acts chapter four, confronted with their own vulnerability and helplessness in the face of hostile threats and aware of their absolute dependence on God, the disciples lift their voice to God and address Him *in this way*: “O Master of all [O *despotes*].” “O You who exercise complete mastery and total dominance over the enemy...” (cf. Oswalt on Isa. 1:24).

But how is it that the Lord is master of all? What is it that underlies this reality and makes the believers so full of this glad and joyful certainty? If the believers were thinking of the Lord as uniquely *their* master, then that which underlies this reality would be the covenantal bond by which God had come to be their Master in the covenant and they His slaves in the covenant (cf. Gen. 15:2, 8; Dan. 9:8, 15-19; LES). The point, then, would be relational and redemptive. In Luke 2, Simeon prayed with these words:

- Luke 2:29 — “Now **Master** [*despotes*], You are releasing **Your slave** [*doulos*] in peace, according to Your word.”

We read in 2 Peter, and then in Jude:

- 2 Peter 2:1 — ...there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the **Master** [*despotes*] who **bought them**...
- Jude 4 — For certain persons have crept in unnoticed... ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into sensuality and deny **our** [*hemon*] **only Master** [*despotes*] and Lord [*kurios*], Jesus Christ.

If the believers, here in Acts, were thinking of the Lord as uniquely *their* master, then that which underlies this reality would be the covenantal bond by which God had come to be their Master in the covenant and they His slaves in the covenant. But the believers are addressing God not just as their Master, but as the “Master of all,” and that which underlies this reality is not a covenantal bond or the payment of a ransom price, but something else entirely. This explains why the believers continue their prayer with these words:

IV. Acts 4:24c — “O Master [of all], it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM...”

God is the master of all because God has made all. We need to stop and let that reality sink in. God is the master of all because God has made all. This is the reality that underlies the prayer of the devout Jew in the apocryphal book of Sirach (ca. 200-180 B.C.) *when God’s people were being oppressed by foreign nations*:

Sirach 36:1 (NRSV) — “Have mercy upon us, O **Master** [*despotes*], **God of all** [*pas*]...”

Again, the apocryphal Judith (written ca. 100 BC) prayed to God *in the face of Assyrian persecution and oppression*:

Judith 9:12 (NRSV) — “Please, please, God of my father, God of the heritage of Israel, **Master [despotes] of heaven and earth, Creator** of the waters, King of all **your creation**, hear my prayer!”

And again, in the apocryphal book of 3 Maccabees (ca. 30 BC – AD 70), the high priest, Simon, prayed:

3 Maccabees 2:1–3 (NRSV) — “Lord, Lord, [*kurios, kurios*] king of the heavens, and **master [despotes] of all creation...** the only ruler, almighty, give attention to us *who are suffering grievously...*”

While each of these books are apocryphal (not part of the inspired, canonical Scriptures), they give us added context for reading this prayer of the believers in Acts chapter 4 when they, too, were faced with the threat of persecution not from foreign nations, but from the leaders and rulers of their own nation. “They lifted their voice to God with one accord and said, ‘O **Master** of all, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM...’” “Master (*despotes*),” then, isn’t just an honorary title that God carries; it’s a description of the *de facto, active* relationship which God sustains to all of His creation and to all of His creatures, whether they have acknowledged Him as master or not. If God is the master of all, then God exercises an absolute and complete mastery—a total dominance—over all. He *is* Despotes. He *is* MASTER in the most active and absolute sense of that word. And God is Master of all because “it is [He] who made [all]” (cf. Wisdom 6:7); “it is [He] who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them...”

Like the apocryphal Judith, and Sirach, and Simon, so also these New Covenant believers are praying using the language of Scripture (cf. Exod. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 115:15; 134:3). When Jerusalem was shut up because of the threat of the Assyrian army, King Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh saying:

- Isaiah 37:16 — “O Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. **You have made the heaven and the earth...**”

When the Psalmist was threatened by enemies, he prayed:

- Psalm 124:6–8 (cf. 121:1-8) — Blessed be Yahweh, who has not given us to be prey for their teeth. Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper; the snare is broken and we have escaped. Our help is in the name of Yahweh, **who made heaven and earth.**

But if there’s any one Scripture that these believers in Acts chapter 4 had in mind, it would be the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 146.² (In fact, they may have sung this entire psalm.)

² Acts 4:24 — ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς
Psalm 145:6 — τὸν ποιήσαντα τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν, τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς

- Psalm 146:1–10 — Praise Yah! Praise Yahweh, O my soul! I will praise Yahweh throughout my life; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. Do not trust in nobles, in merely a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his plans perish [so do not fear him either!]. How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in Yahweh his God, **who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them**; who keeps truth forever; who does justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. Yahweh sets the prisoners free. Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind; Yahweh raises up those who are bowed down; Yahweh loves the righteous; Yahweh keeps the sojourners; He helps up the orphan and the widow, but He brings to ruin the way of the wicked. Yahweh will reign forever, your God, O Zion, from generation to generation. Praise Yah!

Notice how this Psalm begins and ends with praise. So, too, when the disciples pray, “O Master [of all], it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them...,” we hear in this the note of praise, and even of rejoicing. They’re obviously not informing God of something He doesn’t know. Instead, they’re rejoicing themselves in, and praising God for, this wonderful truth—and so they’re also strengthening and fortifying themselves in the face of threat and persecution. What is a mere son of man? When “his spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his plans perish.” “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in Yahweh his God, **who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them...**”

Faced with their own vulnerability and helplessness, the disciples lift their voice to God and address Him *in this way*—with glad and joyful certainty: “O Master of all, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them...”

V. Acts 4:25–26 — “...who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘WHY DID THE **GENTILES** [*ethnos*] RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES [*laos*] DEVISE VAIN THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE **EARTH** [*ge*] TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE **RULERS** [*archon*] WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST [His anointed].’”

Psalm 2 celebrates the installation of the Davidic king on the throne in Jerusalem and Yahweh’s promise to His “anointed” of universal rule as His answer to the vain plots of the nations (2:4-9). Psalm 2 is a triumphal psalm — a psalm of victory. And now the disciples confess that this Psalm has been fulfilled in Jesus—only in a very different way than what we might have expected. They go on to pray:

VI. Acts 4:27–28 — “For truly in this city [*polis*] there were gathered together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed [*chrio*], both Herod [king] and Pontius Pilate [ruler], along with the Gentiles [*ethnos*] and the peoples [*laos*] of Israel[!], to do whatever Your hand [*cheir*] and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

The disciples are obviously thinking here of the *sufferings* and even of the *death* of God’s “anointed”—Jesus.

But doesn't the psalm they just quoted ask: "*Why* did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise *vain things*?" Doesn't this psalm speak of the universal and everlasting rule of Yahweh's Anointed? Doesn't Yahweh promise His Anointed:

- Psalm 2:7b–9 — “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like a potter's vessel.”

Clearly, the disciples don't see the sufferings and death of Jesus at the hands of Herod the “*king*,” and of Pontius Pilate the “*ruler*,” along with the “*Gentiles*” and the “*peoples*” of Israel as in any way compromising the fulfillment of Psalm 2. Instead, they confess that these were all “gathered together against... Jesus... to do *whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur*.” Even in the sufferings and death of Jesus—in fact, precisely and especially in the sufferings and death of Jesus—they see that God is “Master of all... [the one] who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them.” And, of course, this means that they see the rest of Psalm 2 (which they may have sung in its entirety) also fulfilled in Jesus. That the peoples have devised “*vain things*” is proved once and for all not by Jesus' escape from the cross, but by His resurrection from the dead. And having now raised Jesus from the dead, God has installed Him on Zion, His holy mountain, and promised to give *Him* the nations as His inheritance, and the ends of the earth as His possession. Therefore, it's this same Jesus who will break the rebellious nations with a rod of iron, shattering them like a potter's vessel.

What does this mean for the disciples who are facing the threat of the Jewish high counsel? On the one hand, they're certain that just as God delivered Jesus, so He will also deliver them from death, and from all the vain plots of the enemy. They know that all those who refuse to submit to Jesus—and who threaten and persecute His people—will finally be destroyed. On the other hand, they know that in the meantime they've been called to suffer, just as Jesus suffered—and even in some cases to die for their testimony and witness to Jesus. Because they see their own sufferings as a participation in the sufferings of Jesus, they know now with certainty that no enemy can do anything to them except it is according to the “hand” and “purpose” of the one who is “Master of all... who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them.” They know now with certainty that no enemy can do anything to them except it is according to the “hand” and “purpose” of the one who raised Jesus from the dead—and who will also raise them. This, then, explains the amazing thing that they ask of God:

VII. Acts 4:29–30 — “And now, Lord [*kurios*], **look upon** [*epeidon epi*] their threats, and grant that Your slaves [*doulos*] may speak Your word with *all* confidence, while You extend Your **hand** [*cheir*] to heal, and **signs** [*semeion*] and **wonders** [*teras*] happen through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

At the beginning of their prayer, the disciples addressed God as “Master of all [*despotes*]...” Now they address God in terms of His lordship over them as His own blood-bought “slaves”: “And now, **Lord** [*kurios*]... grant that Your **slaves** [*doulos*]...” If God is Master of all [*despotes*] by virtue of having “made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them,” we know that He is also “Lord” [*kurios*] of each one of *us* by virtue of the blood of the Covenant.

“And now, Lord, look upon their threats...” Do you remember those three devout Jews in the apocryphal books of Judith, 3 Maccabees, and Sirach? Each one of them was facing the threat of an enemy, each one of them prayed to God, addressing Him as “Master [*despotes*],” and each one of them called upon God to “look” and to “see” and to “pay attention.”

Judith 9:7–14 (NRSV) — “**Look** [*blepo*] at their pride, *and send your wrath upon their heads...*”

3 Maccabees 2:1–3 (NRSV) — “[**G**ive attention [*prosecho*] to us who are suffering grievously... *For you... judge those who have done anything in insolence and arrogance.*” (We’ll come to Sirach in a moment.)

Were these Jews wrong to pray like this? The inspired psalmist often prayed the same way. When Jerusalem was shut up because of the Assyrian army, Hezekiah prayed:

➤ Isaiah 37:15–20 — “[**O**]pen Your eyes, **O Yahweh, and see** [*eisblepo*]... listen to all the words of Sennacherib... **save us from his hand...**”

So here, we might have expected the disciples to pray something along the lines of what we hear from the Jewish author of Sirach:

Sirach 36:1–9 (NRSV with LES) — [**L**ook upon [*epiblepo*] us, **and put all the nations** [*ethnos*] **in fear of you.** Lift up your **HAND** [*cheir*] against foreign **nations** [*ethnos*] and let them see your might... Give new **SIGNS** [*semeion*], and work other **WONDERS** [*thaumasios*]; make your **HAND** [*cheir*] and right arm glorious. Rouse your anger and pour out your wrath; destroy the adversary and wipe out the enemy.

But instead, what do the disciples pray? “And now, **Lord, look upon** [*epeidon epi*] their threats, **and grant that Your slaves may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your HAND** [*cheir*] **to heal, and SIGNS** [*semeion*] **and WONDERS** [*teras*] **happen through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.**” The disciples ask God to “look upon their threats,” and then by all the “old” standards it’s as if they leave that thought entirely unfinished. Only, they don’t. They already know that the ultimate destruction of the wicked and their own ultimate deliverance from death is assured. They see this in the fulfillment of Psalm 2 as Jesus has now been raised from the dead and installed by God on Mount Zion (“Why do the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise vain things?”). They know that God is the “Master of all... who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them,” and who even “predestined” by His own hand all that Herod and Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, would do to Jesus. And so they understand that deliverance from death will come to them, too, after the pattern of Jesus (cf. Heb. 5:7-10). All of this, they’ve confessed already in their prayer. **THEREFORE**, instead of asking for escape from suffering or for the immediate pouring out of God’s wrath upon the “enemy,” what they pray now—what they desire first of all—is that they might have boldness and confidence to continue doing the very thing that they know will result in suffering, and that could even result in their death (cf. Rev. 6:9-10 [*despotes*]). “Look upon their threats” and see not how they would harm us, but how they would seek by intimidation and fear to silence our witness and testimony to the powerful, saving word of God. “Look upon their threats,” and

overrule those threats. How? *By* granting that your slaves may speak Your word with all confidence.

VIII. Acts 4:31 — And when they had prayed earnestly, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with confidence.

The confidence and boldness of these disciples is not to be attributed to any innate fearlessness of their own, but rather to God’s answer to their earnest prayer. When we’re faced with our own vulnerability and helplessness in the face of some overwhelming obstacle or threat, do we worry and fret and fear—or do we pray? When we pray, do we pray earnestly, truly lifting our voice to God? Do we pray in the full light of God’s revelation of Himself to us in the Scriptures? Do we joyfully confess to God that He is “Master of all,” the one who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who even predestined by His hand all that Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, would do to Jesus? Do we pray, then, according to the will of God—not seeking our own fleshly pleasures and temporal comforts (cf. James 4:3), but seeking first—with all our heart—His kingdom and His righteousness (cf. Mat. 6:33)?

- Matthew 6:9-10 — Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
- 1 John 5:14-15 — [T]his is the confidence [*parresia*] which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.