

**On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.**

**<sup>24</sup> When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup> 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?**

**<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand  
and the rulers gather together  
against the Lord  
and against his Anointed One.’**

**<sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. <sup>29</sup> Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. <sup>30</sup> Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”**

**<sup>31</sup> After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (NIV84)**

Theme: Be Bold!

Fight of Flight? What do you do in a stressful situation or when your life is somehow in danger? Experts tell us that there are two overarching responses—to stay and fight, or to turn and run away from the problem. What type of person are you—what do you usually do? Are you bold and stay and fight? Or are you a coward and run away? To tell you the truth, it probably all depends on the situation—what or whom you are dealing with, and what exactly is being affected. You do some sort of calculation in your mind as to whether or not you can defeat and overcome the problem at hand. If you think you can win

the fight, you might dig in and prepare to fight. If you can’t, you’d do well to run away from the issue before you get in trouble.

What do you do in spiritual situations—do you try to fight sin, death, and the devil on your own, or do you turn and run? What about a different kind of spiritual battle—when your friends and family look down upon you because of your faith, or when society attacks you because of your faithful convictions about the creation of the world, homosexuality, the resurrection of the dead? Are you bold? Do you stand up and fight for the truth? Or do you cower and keep your mouth shut, maybe even agreeing with the attacks on the truth?

David’s world wasn’t really all that different than the world we live in today. People have their own agenda. Some are motivated simply by hate. Others want to live their lives the way they want to and they don’t want anyone to tell them that what they are doing is wrong. Still others let reason, logic, and science rule their life.

All these various groups gather together. They join forces against a common enemy—the Lord and his anointed. They don’t like what he says in his Word about the origins of the world. They don’t like what he says about the way they are living their lives. They despise a God who would love his enemies so much that he would suffer and die for them. And so they hate God; they hate his Word; and they hate all who believe in God.

And so David writes, **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.**

David was conspired against. After he was anointed and before he became king Saul and his men chased him throughout the land trying to kill him. Later it was his own sons who rebelled against him and tried to take over his throne.

But this Psalm really isn’t about David. It is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. The Christians in Jerusalem testified to it in their prayer today. As we mentioned last week, Christ is the Greek word that means the Anointed One. The people of this world, the kings, and leaders join forces against Christ. Remember Pontius Pilate, the Romans governor, in charge over Jerusalem. He questioned Jesus again and against and found nothing wrong with him. Yet he had Jesus flogged and then caved under the pressure and sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion.

It was the Roman soldiers who carried out all these horrible tasks. Think of Herod, the King of the Jews who questioned Jesus by mocking him and when he got nowhere, he sent him back to Pilate. It was the chief priests, the Sadducees, Pharisees, and other Jewish leaders who made up the Sanhedrin and arrested Jesus, relied up the other Jews and eventually convinced Pilate to crucify Jesus. And of course we know the result. It seemed as if they were victorious. It seemed as if they got rid of their problem and they could back to their lives as they lived them before. But that question raised by David is a rhetorical one. Why? Why do they do it, why do they even bother setting themselves up against the Lord? David continues in Psalm 2, **The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.”** Whenever someone tries to rebel against God; he can’t help but laugh at them. It’s like when a young kid gets angry at his teenage brother and tries to beat him up—there is no possible way it could ever happen, it is a complete mismatch and all the teenager can do is laugh. There is no possible way that any human or group of humans could do anything to defeat God, so he laughs at all their attempts. You see the Lord had placed Jesus in his position. This is something the Lord had planned and willed from the beginning of time. Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and Jews in the Jerusalem, they were carrying out the Lord’s plan. This was something the Lord had set up so that Christ could save us from our sins. It may have seemed as if God’s enemies had the upper hand, but in reality God was in control the whole time.

It wasn’t long, perhaps 2-3 months, after Jesus was arrested and stood trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council that sentenced to death, that Peter and John entered the temple. On their way in they met a man who was crippled. The Lord gave them the power to heal that man and give him the ability to walk. Those in the temple recognized the man as the cripple and were amazed. Peter and John took this opportunity to preach about Christ, whom they had killed but was then raised to life. They urged them to repent so that they may receive the forgiveness of sins. But the Jewish leaders weren’t thrilled that Peter and John were preaching about Christ and the resurrection of the dead so they had

them arrested and they spent the night in jail. The next day they were brought before the Sanhedrin, the same Jewish ruling council that had sentenced Jesus to death perhaps 2-3 months before.

They wanted to know by whose power they had healed that crippled man. Then Peter stood up and gave this wonderful confession—just listen to how bold Peter was, **It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is “‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”**

Everyone was amazed that the crippled man could now walk and they were praising God for what he did through Peter and John. The Sanhedrin wanted to punish them, but because of the people they couldn’t risk it. So they warned Peter and John not to preach about Christ any longer to which Peter and John both replied, **Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.** With this, the Jewish leaders let them go.

What a bold confession by Peter and John! They stood before the Jewish leaders, the court, the same group that had sentenced Jesus to death not long before, and they told them that they had killed Jesus, the Messiah. But that Jesus had been raised from the dead by God. And it is through Jesus alone that salvation is found. So they told the Jewish leaders that they had killed the Messiah! And then when they were warned not to talk about Jesus ever again they essentially answered, we must obey God rather than you!

How could they be so bold? Because Jesus was victorious. Because Jesus had already risen from the dead. They knew what Jesus had done. And so they also know that the Sanhedrin could do no real harm against them. They have already won through Christ. So they could be as bold as they could possibly be and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ so that others may hear and believe and be brought to faith. If it made them enemies of some or got them in trouble, so be it. It was worth it to spread the message of free salvation!

If we were left by ourselves to fight the battle against sin, death, and the power of the devil, there would be no chance that we would win; we would be utterly defeated it. It would be better for us to turn and

run—trying to escape sin by denying that we do anything wrong, going through all sorts of medical procedures or even freezing your brain to somehow cheat death, and try to downplay the seriousness or the reality of the devil and hell. You can try to run all you want, but eventually you will be tracked down and you will lose that fight. By yourself. But we aren't alone in this fight. And as you know, Christ has already won this victory for us! He did not turn and run away from those who were arresting him. He willingly took on that fight and let himself be killed so that on the cross he could save us from our sins. He willingly died so that he could rise from the dead defeating death and crushing Satan's head. Christ fought the fight in our place and won; and he gave us this victory!

Those prophecies written by David in Psalm 2 some 3000 years ago were all fulfilled by Christ and they still give us comfort today. The people of this world take their stand against Christ and against his children. Even though they all have different agendas they join forces against their common enemy. And looking at the world around us today, it may seem as if we are outnumbered and without hope. But the Lord has seen this before and he laughs at them. Jesus is our king who sits victoriously on his throne despite the plans and the wickedness of man who were outmatched against him.

And so, like Peter and John we are able to be bold. When the world attacks us because of our faith, when they mock us and call us stupid, gullible, or ignorant, when they complain about certain aspects of our faith by claiming that we are intolerant, we don't have to be afraid. We don't have to run into a corner and cower or cave under the pressure and agree with them. No, we are able to stand up for ourselves, for Christ, and for his Word.

We know the truth, and we know that the truth will be victorious. So we can boldly stand up and defend that truth, just as the believers in Jerusalem prayer for. May we be bold and freely proclaim all of what the Lord says in his Word no matter what, even if we are under attack. So that others may hear and believe and come to the knowledge of the truth!

And we don't just have to be bold with our words, we can also be bold with our actions. Bold to stand up for what is right. Bold by not joining in with the sins and wickedness of the world, bold by setting a good example for a life of worship and the study of God's Word. Again, you may be attacked and vilified. But instead of cowering and

running away, because of Christ you are able to stand boldly and confidently do what is right.

Fight or flight? What type of person are you? Are you bold and stay and fight? Or are you a coward and run away? There are many things that play into what you do when your life is threatened. No matter what you might normally do, in spiritual matters the situation is entirely different. By ourselves we may run away. But Christ fought that fight and has already won the victory for us! So there is no reason to be afraid or run away from those who attack us. We are victorious and so we can be bold like Peter and John and defend the truth. We can be bold because salvation is ours. Amen.