

When life feels threatened

Acts 4:23-31

The context of this passage is that the disciples have been threatened by the same religious leaders who so recently crucified Jesus. Whilst the threats we face in life are different, nevertheless we can face situations where life as we know it feels threatened. What can we learn from these men in responding to such circumstances?

Knowing Where You Belong

When the disciples were freed, they could have gone anywhere, but they went to their friends in the church. Why? Because they know that is where they are going to find the encouragement they need. They went where they knew they belonged. And when life is uncertain, that sense of belonging is crucial.

Notice what they do when together: they talk about the problem, but then they pray. It does not descend into a pity party! Feeling threatened by circumstances can distort our perceptions, that is when we need one another to steady, to speak truth to us, and to help us take our eyes off ourselves and our situation, and onto God.

We can find that kind of community in church, but especially in homegroups.

Knowing Who's in Control

The first thing they do as they pray is to remind themselves of who God is, and who is in control. You can feel overwhelmed by what you are facing, wondering how you will ever cope. Instead, these men remind themselves of how great and sovereign God is, and of how much greater God is than their situation.

They remind themselves that God is Lord of everything – of every circumstance of life, even the people who are threatening them. Knowing that God is in total control gives you solid ground on which you can stand, trust, pray and live when everything else around you is shifting.

Knowing the Whole Story

In quoting from Psalm 2, they realize that what they are experiencing is just a part of God's great story of redemption in Jesus. They see what they are facing in the light of the gospel. That tells them that everything will be ok, that the enemy will not triumph, and that God will work everything for their good and for Jesus' glory, even if the leaders carry through on their threats.

Bold Obedience

Incredibly, they don't pray for protection, or for the persecution to go away: they pray for boldness and for miracles. They want the message of Jesus to keep spreading and they want Jesus to get even more glory. That's what is motivating them. How can you and I respond the same way when life feels threatened? By finding a place to belong among God's people, by knowing who is in control, and by seeing what we are going through in the light of the gospel of God's love for us in Jesus.