**Prayer Under Pressure**

***23****When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.****24****And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,****25****who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,*

*“‘Why did the Gentiles rage,
    and the peoples plot in vain?****26****The kings of the earth set themselves,
    and the rulers were gathered together,
    against the Lord and against his Anointed’—*

***27****for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,****28****to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.****29****And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,****30****while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”****31****And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.*

 When pressure situations come, our response is called to be prayer, and not to give in. Greetings in the Lord to you all as we talk toy about an extremely important principle in our faith lives. What are we supposed to do when the pressures of life accumulate? How are we supposed to deal with others around us when they come at us with negative expressions? Within this Scripture passage, it is clear that the church’s answer to pressure was prayer – not anger, fear or a wrong reaction, but rather a decision to focus their attention on God. This is our topic for today – that when the pressure comes, our response is to be prayer and not surrender. Let’s go into a bit more detail about this response…

 In the face of pressure, we are called to connect to God even more. The Apostles had just been released after an interrogation, and they had returned to their people. The church already considered itself as a unique group of people with a certain family feeling. When the Apostles returned and told the church about the things that happened, the church was predictably moved, but also driven to prayer. The latter was not a prayer of a defeated group of people, or one coming from the mouth of a helpless individual, as if the world was falling apart. On the contrary, the church family had a prayer marked by deep faith and trust in God. They said, “*Lord, you are the Creator.”* Also, *“You said through the mouth of David ‘Why do the nations rage…?’”.* They said to God, “*This city rose up against your Holy Son, who is your Anointed.*” And then they asked, “*Lord, look upon these threats, and grant us to preach your word boldly.”* They even asked for miracles, saying, *“Let there be healings, sings and wonders by your hand in the name of your Son.”* In other words, they expressed their faith and trust in God through the prayer (rather than doubt or defeat). They trusted that He is the Lord and Ruler of all. Justice and judgment were in His hands. He was the one who anointed and sent Jesus. It He that does miracles and gives boldness to His children. In a word, the church used her faith instead of becoming depressed, pulling out from ministry or slipping into fear from what happened to Peter and John. The church did not retreat and surrender to the pressure against her but prayed that God would help her to go *advance* and *continue* the work of evangelism.

 This is like a runner in a marathon who begins to feel the fatigue from the hills and valleys of the course, from the bad weather, from thirst, insects, the other runners, and various other factors. If he or she does not stay focused on the goal, s/he will not be able to complete the race.

 Similarly, we are also in a faith-race and faith-war. Our general is the Lord Jesus along with the Holy Spirit to help us. Our race is one of loyalty and perseverance. If we aren’t able to keep our focus on the Lord and His calling for us or remember that His Spirit is within and among us, or that He has defeated death for us, we may weaken and become hopeless in the face of trials. That is why the Scripture passage in question is an example to us of trust in Father God’s identity as the true Giver of Justice; it is God that answers the enemies to our faith, and He will bring us through those pressures and ups and downs.

 May we prayer with even greater faith and keep going in the face of pressures, so that we can get through them and remain faithful to our Lord’s calling for us.

 Yes, each of us is and will go through pressures in this life. What is important is to keep our prayer life strong and constant. In the face of pressure, we are called to connect to God even more. In trials and tribulations, our response is called to be fervent prayer, and not surrender. May the Lord bless you all. Amen.