

Introduction:

- Success guru Bob Harrison shares the story of a twelve year old boy who was snorkeling in a river when he was bitten on the head by an alligator: Seeing the emergency, the boy's mother reached out and yanked her son from the mouth of the eleven-foot alligator. The ensuing struggle broke the child's leg but saved his life. **In times of emergency**, many people somehow receive the courage and ability to do what is seemingly impossible. However, in the normal course of life, if something seems too difficult for them or when they are confronted with what seems impossible, either they don't try or they give up. **Application:** The gator threatened the life of the child but it did not stop that mom. Could it be that your problem isn't the impossible task before you as much as the lack of urgency within you?
- In Acts 4, we see threats going out against the apostles and the early church. From the urgency that filled them, they responded with boldness and with prayer.
- The flags on the wall behind me today are to remind us of our roots and to stir a sense of urgency in us.
 - The flag was the first flag of MA. In addition, it was the flag commissioned by George Washington to fly over the first six Navy cruises of the continental navy. It was an appeal to heaven. "If God does not help us we are sunk!" But more so, was the thought that we are appealing to a higher power than the King of England.
 - Dutch Sheets An Appeal to Heaven: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3w8CnD6j5E>
- "When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: "O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—" (Acts 4:24, NLT) The NKJV reads, "They raised their voice to God with one accord."

I. The Age Old Adversary

- A. The challenges we face are not new. Your adversary the devil wants to shut you up, shut you down, and take you out. (And it does not have to be in that order.)
 1. "The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy..." (John 10:10, NLT) That has been his job from the beginning. All three of those words are intimidating when taken at their literally level.
 2. Acts 4:1-4 The 'few Pharisees were disturbed' at the many 'who believed' the apostles preaching and teaching.
- B. The age-old enemy response to the movement of God's people is to threaten them. When God's Spirit is moving or about to move in a place the enemy seems to always rise up with lies and threats to shut down the people of God from being used by the Spirit of God. Ie. Our government has taken God out of the classroom. We have taken God out of the courtrooms. They are taking God out of the military. Moreover, those who are attempting to let their light shine are being threatened and intimidated not to do so.
 1. When life started flowing so did the threats.
 - a) vs. 3, The religious leaders isolated the apostles by taking them into custody.
 - b) vs. 17, NKJV says they severely threatened them to never speak of 'this man' Jesus.
 - (1) Webster - threat - an expression of intention to inflict evil, injury, or damage, a statement saying you will be harmed if you do not do what someone wants you to do.
 - (2) The purpose is to control by creating a fear.
 - c) vs 21, the council further threatened them.
 - d) 5:28,40 this time they are flogged and threatened!
 2. Other examples in scripture:
 - a) Elijah and Jezebel - she threatens the prophet of God.
 - b) David and Goliath - Goliath threatens the unarmed boy who comes out to fight him.
 - c) The King of Judah threatens Jeremiah the prophet.

II. The Heavenly Appeal

- A. What is an appeal?
 1. To make a serious or urgent request.

2. To appeal to a higher court for a reversal of the decision of a lower court. IE. This was personal for Kelly and I when she was pregnant with Caleb. My request in Haiti was an urgent one. I called for a reversal of the doctor's diagnosis in Melbourne! I appealed to a higher authority!
 3. The first Continental Congress and George Washington understood first of all they were appealing to Heave to reverse the ruling of the King of England and secondly as they took steps in the natural to reverse rulings in England, if it meant war then they needed God more than ever.
- B. When are appeals to be made?
1. Scriptural context: Peter and John have just healed a lame man while on their way to a prayer meeting. They are guilty of healing a man in the name of Jesus (3:6-8). They are guilty of preaching faith in that name (3:16). They are guilty of teaching about Jesus (3:19-26). This is all good! A man is healed! People are putting their faith in God/the Christ. The Word of God is being fulfilled! (3:25). Sin is being turned away from! Streets are filling with laughter and joy. Life is flowing!!! Every thing the river touches is living! This is the context! Their crime is that they have REVELATION OF GOD and they cannot keep quiet!
 2. Appeals should be made immediately when threats are present. Do not wait.
 3. Appeals to heaven are made when believers understand who they are in Christ and reversals must be made in current rulings. It is appealing to a higher authority!
 4. Appeals to heaven are to be made when believers are under a threat by an opposing force.
 - a) Anything that is not life is a threat to believers.
 - b) If it steals, destroys, and kills it is not life giving.
- C. An appeal to heaven is the intercession of a Believer on earth in agreement with heaven. Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done.
1. Jehoshaphat 2 Chron 20:1-ff. Walked in the ways of David. Fasted and prayed.
 2. David. A man after God's heart. Called on God. Shall I attack?
 3. God is looking for his church to put on that mantel of intercession and Appeal to Heaven.
 - a) God is bigger than the threats!
 - b) The Kingdom of God is a higher law in the earth.

III. The Happiness of Obeying God

- A. Vs. 23, They came out of isolation and into the fellowship of companions.
- B. vs. 23, They reported all that the religious leaders had said to them.
- C. vs. 24, They raised their voices to God in one accord.
 1. homothymodon - The term denotes common interest rather than personal feeling and expresses reaction to some outside event. In the NT it stresses inner unanimity in response to teaching (Acts 8:6) or in prayer (1:14). Theological Dictionary of NT. They were together in heart and spirit.
 2. Many a revival has been birthed in the past by people coming together before God for the purpose of calling upon His name on behalf of a community, a city, a nation!
- D. Revival starts with you! It is not just something that is out there in the future that we are believing for. It is something that starts on the inside of believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and wanting to give God away to others.
 1. The disciples were already alive! They were walking in the revelation that Jesus is the Christ. He was dead but He is now alive! And God worked with them with signs and wonders.
 2. Yet in the midst of threats, they made their appeal. Acts 4:29-30
 - a) Give us boldness to speak. To over ride/overcome their threats.
 - b) By stretching out Your hand to heal. Signs and wonders.