

“The Power Of Prayer”

Acts 4:23-37

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Teaching Aim: To understand the incredible power of prayer available when believers pray to God in one accord. To realize how important praise and thanksgiving are to our prayers, no matter what we are going through in life. To see the resolve of the apostles to obediently follow God no matter what the consequences. To recognize the importance of regularly being filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him for ministry. To understand that great power and great grace make for a great church.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: Praying in one accord is a powerful way to pray (Acts 4:23-28)

1. In **Acts chapter 3**, Peter and John had been used by God to heal a man over 40 years old who had been lame from his mother’s womb. This miracle was done in the name of Jesus publicly in the temple complex. The miracle along with the gathering crowd infuriated the High Priest, his family, and the Jewish ruling council, “*the Sanhedrin.*” Why?

2. The infuriated High Priest kept Peter and John under arrest overnight as they awaited trial. What verdict did the High Priest come to in the morning? (See **Acts 4:18**) How did Peter and John respond to this command straight from hell (**vv. 19-20**)? Why didn’t the Sanhedrin punish them on the spot (**vs. 21**)? Have you ever had to stand against public opinion because of your faith in Christ? What caused this? What was the outcome?

3. According to **verse 23**, what did Peter and John do once they were released by the religious leaders? Where do you think the apostles were meeting? What do you think was going on in Peter and John’s mind at this point. Have you ever been threatened because of your faith in Christ? How did you respond to the threats?

4. How did the group of believers respond once they heard the warnings of the chief priests and elders (**vs. 24**)? Why is it important for us to begin our prayers with praise and thanksgiving no matter what we are going through? Do you find yourself naturally praising God and giving Him thanks, or do you go directly into requests when praying? Why is it so hard to praise God in prayer?

5. What Psalm did the group refer to as they prayed in one accord to the Lord (**vv. 25-26**)? (Hint: See Bible footnotes) As King David wrote these words, he did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What can we learn about inspiration of Scripture from the following verses? (See **2 Tim. 3:16-17**; **2 Peter 1:20-21**)

6. **Psa. 2** is a Messianic prophecy. What is a “*Messianic prophecy*?” (Hint: Search online) Although used here in **Acts chapter 4**, **Psa. 2** specifically refers to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. What can we learn about the foolish nations who refuse to love and worship Christ? (See **Psa. 2:12**) **Phil. 2:9-11** informs us that every knee will bow to the name of Jesus, even those of unbelievers. In light of **Psa. 2:9**, what will cause the unbelievers to bow? Why is it that so many people refuse to worship the Lord Jesus? (See **2 Cor. 4:3-4**)

7. According to **verse 27**, what two individuals along with two groups of people turned against Jesus? What special positions did Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate hold? In **verses 25-27**, David quoted from **Psalm 2:1-2**, but his main point is found in **verse 28**? What is it?

8. The Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 3, section 1 states: “*God, from all eternity, did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*” Was the cross part of God’s eternal purpose determined beforehand (**vs. 28**)? Is God ever the author of evil? (See **Jam. 1:13-14**; **1 Cor. 14:33**) Does God use and override the evil acts of man to bring about His own purposes and glory? Was that true in the case of Christ’s death on the cross?

Part II: Praying for boldness and the ability to do signs and wonders in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:29-31)

1. Notice the apostles didn’t ask for their problem to be removed. Instead, they asked God to deal with the individuals who were causing the problems and to help them boldly continue to proclaim the Word of God despite the overwhelming challenges they were facing (**vv. 29-30**). Pastor Mel Wiggers used to say, “*Prayer is the air war that prepares the way for the ground troops...Pray specifically, pray persistently, and pray expectantly.*” What did he mean? Why should we pray like this as we go through the struggles of life?

2. What three things did the believers pray for in **verses 29-30**? Did they tell God how He should respond to the threats of the High Priest, his family, and the Sanhedrin? How can our prayers be like that of the apostles as we deal with the political climate in our own land?

3. The believers had been praying in one accord. How did God respond to their prayer of unity (**vs. 31**)? What significance is there in the place where they were assembled together being shaken? (See Commentaries) What is the difference between *“the baptism of the Holy Spirit”* and *“the filling of the Holy Spirit?”* Why should every believer seek *“the filling of the Holy Spirit”* every day of their lives, but not *“the baptism of Holy Spirit?”*

4. Boldness enables us to push through our fears and do the ministry God has called us to do, particularly the sharing of God’s Word with others (**vs. 31**). Why can this be a frightening experience? Why did the early church pray for boldness in proclaiming God’s Word. Do you think Christians will ever be persecuted in the United States for sharing God’s Word?

Part III: Great power and great grace make for a great church (Acts 32-37)

1. What can we learn about the early church from **verse 32a**? What is meant by being *“of one heart and one soul.”* (See **Psalm 133:1-3**) William MacDonald wrote, *“When hearts are aflame with love for Christ, they are also kindled with love for one another.”* How do we see this kind of love demonstrated in **verse 32b**? (See **Acts 2:44-45**) What are some ways that you have seen Christian generosity at work in the local church?

2. Notice the filling of the Holy Spirit caused two things to happen in the early church: 1) It led to the bold preaching of God’s Word by the apostles and early believers, and, 2) Christians were willing to share their possessions with brothers and sisters in need. According to **verse 33**, what did the apostles teach about? Hadn’t the apostles been forbidden by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin from preaching or teaching in the name of Jesus? Wasn’t it their preaching about the resurrection that had gotten them into so much trouble (**vs. 1-3**)? If so, why did the apostles continue preaching in the name of Jesus about the resurrection (**vv. 18-20**)? What was the resurrection of Christ God’s stamp of approval on?

3. Two great marks within the early church were “*great power*” and “*great grace*” (**vs. 33**). A church with “*great power*” and “*great grace*” makes for a “*great church*.” In recent years, Christian churches in the United States seem to be getting weaker and weaker. Why?

4. What can we learn about the early church from **verses 34-35**? Does this mean that the early church operated like a pyramid scheme today? What does this mean? What can we learn about the generosity of the early church? Do people still donate large sums of money to churches today? Why do you think only 4% of modern Christians tithe (meaning 96% don't)? Is it that they can't afford to give, or is it that they don't want to infringe on their lifestyle? Have you ever asked a longtime tither if they regret tithing? Why don't they?

5. Luke uses this opportunity to introduce one of the key characters in the New Testament (**vs. 36**)? Was Barnabas this man's original name? What was it? Who changed this man's name to Barnabas? What does the name Barnabas mean? Where was Barnabas from?

6. What did Luke use Barnabas as an example of (**vs. 37**). How does Barnabas contrast the husband and wife mentioned in **Acts 5:1-11**? According to **Num. 18:20-24**, Levites were not allowed to own land in Israel, the LORD was to be their inheritance. What are some possible explanations for Barnabas owning land? (See Commentaries)

7. Barnabas will become a major figure in the New Testament. What can we learn about him from the following Bible verses? (See **Acts 9:27; 11:21-26; 15:36-39**) What are some of the stronger attributes of this godly man? We may not all be able to be a Peter or Paul, but we can all be a Barnabas (a son of encouragement). What are some ways that you can better encourager of others?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- When the church raises its voice in one accord (or in unity) to God, great things will happen.
- Our prayers should be more “*You*” oriented to God and less “*Me*” oriented (or full of wants).
- Today our worship music has shifted from being God oriented to being about me.
- The apostles prayed for boldness to proclaim God’s Word during difficult times, they left it to God to deal with those who were persecuting them.
- After pouring their hearts out to God in prayer, the place was shaken, and the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Because of the great love in the early church, believers sacrificed their own possessions to help other Christians in need.
- The apostles continued to preach the resurrection of Jesus Christ in spite of threats from the High Priest, his family, and the Sanhedrin.