

Lord, Teach Us to Pray – Part 11
When the Church Prays – Acts 4:23-35
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – July 10th, 2022

Intro:

- In the early church and in effective churches throughout the ages, prayer has been a priority and one of the essential functions of the church. The book of Acts records how the church developed after Jesus ascended, and we find the church praying and prayer on almost every page.
- When they selected and commissioned leaders to ministry, they prayed. When they needed divine intervention and empowerment, they prayed. It looks like they had a daily prayer meeting and the two primary tasks of the apostles were that they devoted themselves to prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:4).
- This morning we are going to immerse ourselves in one of their prayer meetings to understand what happened and how they prayed. And, by their example, we will be motivated and instructed as to how we should pray together as a church to see God work among us in greater ways.

Pray acknowledging the authority and sovereignty of God

Acts 4:23-28 ESV

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"— (Ps. 2:1-2)

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.

- God has all authority in heaven and earth because He created all things. That is his right as the creator. At times he delegates His authority to others who will give account to Him as to what they do with what has been given to them. He is ultimate and can do whatever He wants with all that He has created.
- They also acknowledged, as we see through the pages of scripture, that what had taken place was in fulfillment of scripture. Their prayers were informed and guided by scripture, as we are to have scripture inform us as a guide in our praying as well.
- God, with His own Hand, ensures that His predestined plan is fulfilled according to His purpose. No one can stop the predestined plans of God. There is debate as to what extended things are predestined and how our prayers impact the will and workings of God. But this we know: God is both sovereign over all things and responsive to our prayers. Because God is sovereign and responsive to our prayers, gives us ample reason to pray.

Pray the word of God would be spoken with boldness

Acts 4:29 ESV

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

- And now, because we are being threatened, give us all boldness to speak your words. Notice that they did not pray that God would change their (the rulers) hearts but that God would empower them to speak the word of God boldly.
- We need continued boldness to do this because we are afraid of paying the consequences of speaking the word of God. Notice again that it is speaking God's word, not just our minds or opinions. Therefore, we must continue to pray that we do this ourselves and that from this pulpit and all pulpits, the word of God will be proclaimed in boldness because many people give into fear as to what would happen to them if they do so. Let the love for God and the Love for people drive out the fear in our hearts, and my God empower us to be bold in the proclamation of His word.

Pray God would stretch out His hand through the name of Jesus

Acts 4:30 ESV

while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

- Speaking the word of God boldly and God demonstrating His power overtly is a powerful combination for evangelism and the development of faith in Christ. It is good for us to ask God to do this; that He would "stretch out His hand" to heal, to do signs and display wonders through the name of the holy servant, Jesus.
- The miraculous power of God on display is about God and the identity of Jesus as the savior and Lord of the word and of the world. God still works in these ways, especially in "power cultures" in places on this earth. We are to ask Him to do this when we pray.

Pray expecting to see God moving among us

Acts 4:31 ESV

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.

- *The place was shaken* – I would love to see more physical manifestations of God moving among us, building our faith knowing that He is powerful and mighty to save.
- *They were filled with the Holy Spirit* – we need to be filled and refilled with the Holy Spirit on a continual basis, that God will pour into us and then pour out of us. We need the Spirit of God to empower us, change us, and move in and through us to touch and transform our world.
- *They were empowered to speak the word of God boldly* – because of God's response to their prayers, because they were praying the will of God, God answered their prayers, and they were

enabled, equipped, and empowered to speak the word of God with boldness. And we need to recognize and rejoice when this happens.

- Here are some more things that resulted from the church praying together.

Acts 4:32-33 ESV

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

- *They were one in heart and mind* – there was unity in the church. They were of one heart (to know Christ, follow Him, and make Him known). There was sweet unity that satisfies, brings peace, and power and, protection and partnership. This is a result of God working among us in answer to our prayers.
- *They were generous and cared for one another* – they shared and sold things to take care of the congregation's needs. They were generous in the work of the Lord. This is a sign that God is working in our hearts and working among us. It is a sign of spiritual health and life.
- *They continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus* – notice what they focused on and testified about; "the resurrection of the Lord" – in all theology, this is the thing that matters most in terms of salvation and eternity. Everything hinges and hangs together on this fact; that people know that Jesus was resurrected and the implications of this truth.
- *God's great grace was upon them all* – what a beautiful statement – that God's grace was upon them all. Grace to be in His love, grace to be forgiven, grace in our relationships with other people, grace in the family of faith, in our homes, and in the community at large. This is also a sign of God working among us in response to praying together.
- May we see these things more and more.

Conclusion

- So, I am calling you to prayer, church. And if I can be so bold, God is calling us to prayer. And there is a special place in this building that has been set aside for this purpose and is available to you any time this building is open and also at special times of prayer.
- Interview with Larry and Jacqui Smith about the prayer room.
- Closing Prayer