

Acts 4:23-31 FEFC Bold Prayer

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REVIEW

Last week we learned that when the Spirit of God moves there will be resistance. When the Spirit of God moves ground that used to belong to Satan is being seized. Therefore you can expect resistance when the Lord moves. By His Spirit God can prepare us to overcome and stand against the resistance of the enemy.

Peter and John healed a crippled man and preached in the name of Jesus Christ. The religious and political leaders were used by the devil to push against the message and ministry of Peter and John. However, Peter and John stood. They stood because they were operating under the word of God and the power of The Holy Spirit. If we do not use the word of God as our source and starting point we lose. If we do not minister in the power of the Spirit but instead minister in the flesh we will also lose ground.

Over 5000 families came to faith in Christ up to this point. And the religious and political powers were threatened. But Peter and John stood their ground in the word and Spirit. The leaders were baffled by the wisdom given to Peter by the Holy Spirit. They were stalemated and could not decide what to do with Peter and John so they threatened Peter and John and let them go.

READ THE TEXT

Acts 4:23-31 (NIV)

23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

““Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

26 The kings of the earth rise up

and the rulers band together

against the Lord

and against his anointed one.[a]’[b]

27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

INTRODUCTION

Acts 4:23-31 (NIV)

23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

WENT BACK TO THEIR OWN

It was pretty difficult for the powers of the Sanhedrin to jail Peter and John for healing a lame man. So Peter and John were released and they headed back immediately to the family of God.

THEY WERE NOT ALONE

They reported the events to the entire church family. They shared in this experience as a family of God. God did not call us to go through things on our own.

Our love for one another comes through the Spirit of God that we share. And so when any of us goes through something we all go through that same struggle or same joy.

So Peter told the story of how he and John had healed this man and how they had presented the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And of course he shared the reaction of those who did not want to receive the truth about Jesus Christ, as well as their story of being jailed and harassed. They went through this challenge together. They were not in this alone.

ARE YOU ALONE?

I want you to think of the last really difficult struggle that you went through. Did you feel like you were alone in that struggle? Is that how you feel today? If so, know that there are other people that are willing to stand alongside you. We want to share both the victories and also the difficulties of your life.

Not only does God himself bear our sorrows, God uses the people of God to uphold you. In our cell group one of the great privileges is to share honestly our struggles, failures and weaknesses with one another. We do not go through things alone. One person admitted struggles with depression. Another admits fear before going into a clinical procedure. And we are able to bear one another's burdens according to James.

You do not need to be alone. If you don't have a cell group you can join ours tonight. Or we can make another one so you do not have to walk alone.

So Peter and John go back to the people of God and fill them in on both the persecution and also the blessings and God sightings that occurred.

24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

I believe one of the things they heard and that stood out to them and got a strong reaction was the surprising reaction of Israel's leaders to the miracle of the crippled man's healing. Instead of rejoicing and praising God and receiving Jesus Christ as their Messiah over this healing, Israel's leaders threaten Peter and John and try to silence them. They try to shut down the Messiah. This is shocking to them and that is why they pray in the manner they do. And so they raise their voices together in prayer. We will look at their prayer in a minute.

RAISING OUR VOICE TOGETHER IN PRAYER

First I want to point out that raising their voices in prayer is the FIRST reaction. They don't take the time to sit down and figure everything out.

They don't worry about strategy first. They do not go off on their own to figure it out.

REASON FIRST?

In our culture our first reaction is to first figure it out and second to pray about what we have figured out. That is actually a very secular way of doing business. Our first trust is in our reason rather than the Spirit of God and prayer. We need to learn and I need to learn that God comes above my reason. My reason might be one way I can figure out what God is doing. But I think the bible puts my reason and figuring things out WAY behind prayer and the word of life. How about in all decisions and circumstances we put the word of God and spiritual discernment ahead of figuring things out in the flesh?

Their very first move is to raise their voices together in prayer.

“Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.

They begin their prayer with acknowledging God's greatness. They begin with worship and praise. They do not begin with the request. They begin with praise. They begin with raising up the name of God in praise and prayer. That is a good pattern. Begin not with the wish list. Begin instead with God and with praise. Praise and worship puts us in our right place and puts God in His right place.

God inhabits the praises of His people. If you want God to inhabit and bless and answer your prayer begin with praise and begin with worship. In short, begin with God.

The second thing that this group does is to call on the word of God in

their prayers. So first, they lift up the name of God in praise and second they claim the word of God in their prayers. Are your prayers filled with both praises and filled with the word of God? Psalm 2 was quoted in their prayers.

**25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant,
our father David:**

[Psalm 2:1,2]

“Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

26 The kings of the earth rise up

and the rulers band together

against the Lord

and against his anointed one.[The Messiah or Christ]

This group is praying the word of God. Their prayer applies the word of God prophetically to the past, present and future.

In the past the nations gathered against God's elect nation. And when God moved His hand the nations scattered like a house of cards on an airboat.

In the future the nations will gather around the influence of the Anti-Christ. And they will find themselves gathered against the one whom with one command could remove the ground on which they walk or pull the plug on the seas and oceans of the world. He could consume the world like a piece of magicians flash paper. The powers of this world will gather against the Lord and His people. Any plot against God and His people is a waste of time. God is too great to fear the gathering of forces. But even

God's own people conspired with the world powers against Jesus in order to kill Him.

27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.

The Sanhedrin knew about this prophecy. They hated the idea of nations gathering against God's people. Surrounding nations in the past gathered against king David. But God stepped in and protected His people and won the victory.

Here is the interesting thing; now the leaders of Israel had become the nations that conspire against The Messiah. When they thought about the nations that rage in vain against the Lord and His people they thought of those wicked nations surrounding Israel. But now they jumped into the text. Now they are the ones that conspire in vain against their very own Messiah.

This reiterates the theme we visited a few weeks ago. That we need God's help so that we can never be against something that God is for. We want to keep our name out of this text and never conspire against brother or sister or anything that God is blessing.

So people conspired against the Lord Jesus and killed Him. How did that happen if the nations rage in vain? Isn't it a waste of time to conspire against God and His people?

28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

They only had success against the Messiah because it was God's

plan to allow Jesus Christ to suffer for the sin of the world. If God said no, then they would have had no success. They would have been like the Pharaoh's armies on the other side of the pillar of fire and smoke. And then perhaps at the bottom of the sea.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND SATAN'S ATTACKS

There are times when it will appear that Satan is gaining ground. He is on the attack. Just when you are getting somewhere Satan hooks your shame and derails that good efforts that you are putting forward to build the kingdom of Christ.

Sometimes you are called to stand in the Spirit and sometimes you are called to advance. The truth is that any attack that is allowed against you is an attack that you better pay attention to closely. Because God usually allows attacks to occur for a purpose. God is Sovereign. And if he allows you to fall into temptation then you probably have not adequately addressed or confessed that issue. There is more poison to get out of the wound before God sews you up.

And if you get easily discouraged when you come against resistance or a negative comment. Then you have not dealt with your identity issues and your sense of security in Christ. And God will allow attacks to come until you deal completely with the issue. So when you are on a roll and really taking ground for the Lord, what avenue does Satan usually use to freeze you in your tracks?

And the next time that happens can we just fully clean out that wound so there is no more foothold to mess with in the future? I will be honest about my failures. I will be honest about my insecurities and temptations. I

hope that gives you permission to deal fully with the stuff that keeps coming up to derail you.

If Satan is attacking and something is sticking. Don't hide in shame and be alone in that struggle. Let's get out loud about the struggle and deal with it together without shaming one another.

STANDING IN THE SPIRIT

The next idea related to the attacks that come our way is this. Sometimes we are called to be filled and stand. We have our hands out waiting for the marching orders and our spiritual ears open ready to listen to God. But we are content to stay put until God says "rise up and charge." Waiting in the Spirit until God clears the battle field might be just as important as the advancing.

God will allow attacks. He will do so either to help purify us. Or to show that by His power we can stand and advance. Or sometime He will just prove that He is God and He will just handle it and we can keep our head down and our faith up and our focus completely on Him. Not figuring it all out but trusting and obeying Him.

The prayer of the church continues in verse 29.

29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

The church could have prayed about anything? In the flesh they might have been tempted to pray that God would smite the Sanhedrin. But they were not in the flesh. They were in the Spirit and there are two things

they prayed for.

REQUEST ONE - BOLDNESS

The first request is that they would have the supernatural power to preach the word of God with miraculous boldness. They did not ask God to remove the people that were a threat. They asked for the power to stand and speak boldly. If we have an attack we can pray that God would purify us or show us what we need to learn through what He is allowing.

REQUEST TWO - SIGNS AND WONDERS

The second request is that God would perform signs and wonders.

STORY - ANGUS

I woke up at two in the morning one day last week and the guy after whom the movie “faith like Potatoes” was made was being interviewed. There was a whole documentary on his life of faith. What an amazing ministry of faith. At one crusade with tens of thousands gathered Angus realizes that he was getting nowhere. People were not listening to him. His mostly Muslim audience was walking around paying no attention. Then God told Angus to go down to the crowd and pray for a paralyzed person. So he obeyed God. And on camera and in front of thousands of people this man’s leg was miraculously healed. And I believe it happened.

Through this sign and wonder the message of Angus was authenticated. The mostly Muslim crowd knew that God was real and thousands came forward to receive Christ.

-----End Story-----

I am not sure if it is a good idea to limit God. God has a way of authenticating His word. My Father-in-law is in heaven right now because

God healed him when he cried out in despair.

I did not hear about other signs and wonders often. But when a sign is needed to authenticate the message God can do it. On the other hand there are people that saw Jesus risen from the dead and they did not believe. So a miracle alone will not change a hard heart. But know this, God does miracles every single day. First, God fills us with His Holy Spirit so that we can live a holy life. That power to live holy IS a miracle. God gives us the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is not a talent and learning thing. That is a miracle of God delivered based on God's own promise. And God convinced each one of you that He is real. His word came alive. That is a miracle. God spoke to your heart. That is a miracle. God healed some of you. God will authenticate His word and your testimony when you share it. He will authenticate it with His own power. And that is what the church is asking. God give us the guts to speak the truth and then back us up and convince people of the truth.

So the second thing that the gathering of God's people pray for are signs and wonders. So what happens? How does God answer?

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

THE ANSWER

The answer is exactly what they prayed for. The meeting place was literally shaken. God performed a sign that gave them the boldness and confidence to know that God was with them.

And the second part of their prayer was also answered. They were

able by God's power to speak the word boldly. This power to speak came about through the filling of the Holy Spirit.

MULTIPLE FILLINGS

When did they speak the word of the Lord with boldness? When they were filled with The Holy Spirit. This is a recurring theme.

BOLDNESS IN PRAYER

I want to finish by making the connection between the Holy Spirit and bold prayer.

Eph 5: 18

..., be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a command. God's command is that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. So how does that occur?

Ephesians 6:18

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? It is my belief that praying in the Spirit is prayer that occurs on two levels. I believe that in the deepest part of our inner being is the human spirit. And our human spirit wants to lean into the Spirit of God and discern the will of God. But rather than starting with the spirit we begin with the flesh.

If we begin deep within and lean in our heart of hearts toward the

Holy Spirit and ask God; “what do you want to do right now?” And “who do you want me to pray for right now?” God will begin to shape our prayers in such a way that we are actually praying out the will of God. And then since we are hearing from God first we can take confidence as we pray that we are in the will of God. We pray out what God thought up. Do you think God is going to move in power in the things that He Himself thought up?

And when our heart connection is made with God then all kinds of things come to mind and we can bring all sorts of prayers and requests because they are coming into our mind from our spirit.

But if our prayers come from the flesh then we have no confidence. With my human eyes I see something I want and I pray that God gives me the right car or success or whatever I want. Those prayers are coming into the flesh first and then into my mind.

Jude 1:20

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,

Romans 8:26

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

We can't come up with words in our minds and in the flesh. But God's Spirit will carry us along if we allow Him. Sometimes we don't even have to pray words. Sometimes we just rest in God's presence and know that our mind and spirit are leaning into Him. And that is enough. This wordless groan means that we don't even make noise. It is an inner groaning and

learning and pressing into God. And as we lean into God suddenly we are filled with His Spirit. As we ask God suddenly we are filled with The Holy Spirit. What is the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

The result is that our fear is gone. We can talk to anyone about the Lord. We are no longer a slave to fear.

And our words take on more power and more boldness. God through The Holy Spirit does the convincing and makes His own word come alive as we speak it out.

If you want to pray boldly then grab ahold of God's word and God's Spirit. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit and with the boldness that you can not come up with on your own to share His word and face persecution. Are you more afraid of what your friends will say than you are concerned with speaking to word of God boldly? Then you are in the flesh and you need God's boldness today. Let me stop right now and pray that God's boldness would come to you through His Holy Spirit.

SUMMARY

Begin with God. Begin with prayers and include the word as you pray.

Resist the temptation to figure it out first and pray second.

We learned that when under persecution Peter and John did not ask God to remove the obstacles. Instead they prayed for the boldness to stand up against persecution and preach with a godly boldness.

We saw that boldness to share their faith come, but only after they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

And we also learned that they asked God to affirm their work through signs and wonders.

And then we saw that God thought that was a good prayer. God gave them boldness and He also did miracles to authenticate His word.

TAKING IT HOME

1. When is the last time you were bold enough to share your faith?
2. What do you think would happen if you prayed with sincerity and passion for God to give you the boldness to tell others about Christ?
3. When is the last time you leaned into God or asked Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit?
4. Do you begin your prayers with Spirit led praise or do you begin with something else?
5. Are you willing to make more room in your life for prayer and spiritual discernment? If so what do you think that will look like in your daily life?

BAPTISM

David Smoczyk, James Smoczyk, Jean Milczak

Baptism is an outward symbol of something that happened inside of each of these three believers. The waters represent death. When believers go under it is a symbol of being baptised into the death of Jesus Christ. That means our old way of life is dead and crucified with Christ. And when we come up it symbolizes the resurrection life of Jesus Christ at work in those whom are born again.

Baptism is something that is both a command and a consistent pattern in the New Testament. David's testimony is that baptism means that Jesus washed his sin. Finally, baptism does not save us. It is however an act of

obedience. And it is a way of making a statement to other people that your desire is to be dead to sin and alive in Christ.