

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 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 heaven 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 take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.

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 miraculous 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.

44-04-03-Corporate Prayer's Power

prayer, fellowship, threats, empowerment, evangelism

Acts 4:23-31

Powerful things happen when believers pray powerful prayers.

INTRODUCTION:

–Today's **text** is about God's people praying powerful prayers. The OT tells of powerful praying. Jesus prayed powerfully in the Gospels. Such examples bless us. Those in Acts should guide us—Acts is our own era.

–**HOM.idea**. But **corporate prayer's power isn't in meeting** or even in **praying**. Jesus promised in **Mat 18:20**, "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." People all over the world pray together, but they are missing something: the presence of God's risen Son. **Powerful praying, back then or now, shows one thing: Jesus is not done yet!** This passage tells us how to pray **powerful corporate prayer in Jesus' name**.

I. Powerful Prayer Recognizes God's Sovereignty— v.23-24a, *On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God...*

A. Prayer is a direct recognition that limited power needs help from a Higher Power. (Why not a discussion? Why not form a committee on handling bad news? NO, they went to the Source of Power for dealing with bad news. No fretting or worrying, just praying!)

B. They began by confessing faith in the fact of God's sovereignty...

1. Some people see *creation or circumstances* as having no plan or purpose. ("Things just happen. No Almighty Mind involved.")

2. We can act that way, too, if we forget that our (v.24b) "Sovereign Lord... made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them." (Before all else, **powerful prayer remembers reality**: God, "the Maker of **heaven and earth**" is in control over "everything in them.")

C. And God is not silent! In v.25, their prayer recalls how God spoke in the OT foretelling that (v.26) "kings of the earth [would] take their stand and the rulers [would] gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One." (Restating fulfilled prophecy in prayer increases the faith of those praying— v.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.")

D. *Powerful praying is faith making a logical connection*— v.28, “*They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.*” (God **never** lost control of any situation! He always remains in charge....

TRANS: Accidents happen, but *nothing happens by accident!* Nothing surprises “the Maker of heaven and earth.” Perfect *love* and *wisdom* guide His *power* over whether *accidents* or *evil human plans* “*should happen*” or not. Unless God reveals His reasoning to us, our finite minds can’t see the big picture which unfolds under His complete control. But *when we proclaim His sovereignty* over “*everything*,” stating confidently that His love and wisdom are in control,... *when we really mean it when we say*, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” then **we are praying powerfully and powerful things happen. A second thing we learn is that...**

II. Powerful Prayer Realizes the Situation— v.29, *Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.*

A. They recognized their *situation* in two important ways:

1. 1st, they were realistic about the threats. (Those making them had *crucified Jesus*, had *rejected the fact* that God resurrected Him, and *would use force* to keep that Good News from spreading.)
2. 2nd, they were realistic about themselves. (Just like us, they didn’t like *persecution*; they didn’t want to *suffer* or *to be killed*).

B. What would be logical in this situation? To *stay quiet*? Or go into *hiding*? Maybe *flee the city* to preach the Gospel elsewhere?

C. **BUT** they weren’t consulting logic! (They had turned to God in *prayer... prayer in Jesus’ name*, and Jesus was there in the midst of them, *still saying what He always said*: “*Follow Me.*”)

TRANS: Facing *threats*, they prayed “*enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.*” When trouble comes, Jesus wants us to face it boldly using His Word. Situations and circumstances must not control our prayers. The *Holy Spirit* is our *Guide*, moving us to pray in the *will of Jesus*, Who may still have work to do in Jerusalem. **Powerful praying happens by praying what Jesus wants to happen**. Persecutors’ *threats* may say, “*You’re asking for it!*” but faith is asking for something else:

III. Powerful Prayer Requests Divine Intervention— v.30, “*Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the*

name of your holy servant Jesus.”

A. Notice 3 things very carefully:

1. They **did not pray** for God to get rid of their persecutors.
 - a. OT imprecatory prayers prayed curses on enemies. Jesus said— Luke 6:28, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
 - b. Paul, had been a persecutor. He knew why Jesus said this. He explained why in Eph 6:12, For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (God may have a better plan: *converting persecutors!*)
 2. They **did not pray** “*Stretch out*” our hands, but “*your hand*,”— Jesus is still in control; He does the healing, the miracles, the wonders. (Remember, Peter said in Acts 3:12, “...Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”)
 3. They **did** pray for “*miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*” (It *wasn’t* to win attention to themselves, but to the Savior Who held “all power,” the Lord Jesus Christ— Acts 4:12, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*”)
- B. This prayer asks for powerful things to happen, but that’s not what makes it a powerful prayer. It’s powerful, because...
1. Jesus was there with them as they prayed it: He is still present!
 2. The Spirit was making Christ’s will known: He’s still speaking!
 3. Jesus wasn’t finished doing miracles: He is still working now!

CONCLUSION:

—**Powerful things happen when we pray powerful prayers**. In this case— v.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. Having the place “shaken” was a dramatic prelude to a more dynamic shaking up of their lives* by being “*filled with the Holy Spirit.*” They were having their witness empowered to speak God’s Word “with great boldness.”

—Some may indeed need an earthquake under them to get them moving to serve the Lord! But but what’s important isn’t physical shakings. Jesus wants our *lives* and *tongues* stirred up to move boldly in the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s what He wanted that back then and what He still wants now. After all these many centuries, *Jesus is not done yet*: He’s not with us, and He’s not with our world.