

When We Pray

1. Last week we looked at the spiritual attack...whose purpose was to attempt to remove the power or name of Jesus...out of the ministry
 - a. As a quick recap...what we have seen is...a miracle...performed by the apostles...in the healing of the lame man...through the name of Jesus
 - b. Then Peter takes advantage...of amazement within the crowd of people...to preach the name of Jesus
 - c. The religious leadership persecutes Peter and John...by putting them on trial...trying to stop them from teaching or using the name of Jesus
 - d. Last week...the Holy Spirit emboldens Peter and responds to the religious leaders...by revealing Jesus in prophecy
 - e. What we are going to study this morning is...the results of this persecution
 - f. Two things came about as a result of this persecution
 - g. The first result is prayer in verses 23-31...the second result is unity in fellowship in verses 32-37
 - h. Have you ever wondered if there is a proper way to pray
 - i. I know I have...most of the time I just start praying about what is on my heart...or I pray for others...or I force myself to pray sometimes
 - j. If that's you too...pay attention...because what we are going to study is a great model of prayer...this is not the only model of prayer in the Bible

2. Acts 4:23-24, 23 As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. 24 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.
3. Slide...The very first thing to notice is...Their first instinct is to gather together and pray
 - a. When Peter and John were released...they went to where the believers are gathered...and gave their report...of what we studied last week
 - b. After the report...they lifted their voices to heaven...in prayer...to God
 - c. Notice they don't start the pray...oh God help us...Jesus...this situation is all messed up...oh Lord send bolts of lightning to kill them
 - d. Notice they didn't start a rally cry against the religious leaders
 - e. They didn't create some clever face book post...of how they were treated unfairly
 - f. Notice...pay attention...They didn't carry the problem...pause...they didn't hold a grudge...they prayed...in unity
 - g. Notice they didn't go out to protest...do vandalism...write an opinion peace for the local paper...the Jerusalem press
 - h. Instead they took the problem...to the creator of everything...the One who has everything figured out...to include this very issue
 - i. One that is so powerful...that He created this very situation...because He there is a higher purpose...for the glory of His kingdom

- j. Last week we read Luke 12:8-12...where Jesus warned the disciples this kind of persecution would happen
 - k. They didn't feel shorted...or picked on...but rather they called out to God
 - l. Notice how they start the prayer...oh Sovereign Lord...think about that...the Creator of heaven and earth... the sea, and everything in them
 - m. The Greek word used here for Lord...comes from the root word...for husband
 - n. The word actually means...the dictator...or the absolute dictator in charge...and is not used very often in the Bible to describe God
 - o. What they are doing...is copying the prayer of Jeramiah 32...who also was praying to the creator Lord
 - p. When Jeramiah was praying...he knew the coming invasion of the Babylonians...was also the Lord's doing...because there is bigger plans
 - q. Coming to the understanding...that the Lord is sovereign...who is incapable of making a mistake...is an important aspect to prayer
 - r. So often I want to carry my own limitations into prayer...what I am doing ...is lacking the faith...that God has everything under control
 - s. When we realize nothing is too hard for God...and God desires to hear our prayers...and then what is really cool...He wants to answer our prayers
4. Acts 4:25-26, 25 you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, 'Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? 26 The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.'

5. Slide...The second thing they do in prayer is...They quote scripture for their own benefit
 - a. When we pray scripture...it is like God Himself commanding the same thing...after all it is His Word
 - b. As you are getting to know me...you will see...I want to look at the scripture they are quoting...to see if we can get some more insight
6. Ps 2:1-2, 1 Why are the nations so angry? Why do they waste their time with futile plans? 2 The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the Lord and against his anointed one.
 - a. The first church realized the Psalm of David was a prophetic warning...for the people of the world to not waste their time fighting against Jesus
 - b. I see the world today being very angry...and the world is still trying to get rid of Jesus...Israel...and Christianity
 - c. Really this should bring us some comfort...knowing that God knows the world is against Jesus and His church
 - d. Here is the great news...God wins...and we are on the winning team
7. Ps 2:3-6, 3 "Let us break their chains," they cry, "and free ourselves from slavery to God." 4 But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them. 5 Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury. 6 For the Lord declares, "I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain."
 - a. This prophecy now speaks of the 1000 year reign when Jesus will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem to rule with a rod of Iron for 1000 years

8. Ps 2:7-12, 7 The king proclaims the Lord's decree: "The Lord said to me, 'You are my son. Today I have become your Father. 8 Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession. 9 You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.'" 10 Now then, you kings, act wisely! Be warned, you rulers of the earth! 11 Serve the Lord with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Submit to God's royal son, or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities—for his anger flares up in an instant. But what joy for all who take refuge in him!
- a. This don't sound like much fun...for the people of the world
 - b. Notice the last sentence of verse 12...But for those who accept the Messiah or Jesus...will have great joy
 - c. The first church strengthens their faith...by reading...and quoting the plans of God back to God in prayer
 - d. They know that taking refuge in Christ...will bring joy
 - e. Even when there is persecution...they put their trust in the scriptures...the word of God...and His promises
 - f. Next they pray...the fulfilment of the prophecy of Psalms 2...how Jesus showed them the way...by example
9. Acts 4:27-28, 27 "In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. 28 But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will.

10. Slide...They acknowledge that Jesus was delivered by God according to the predetermined plan of sovereign God

11. Acts 4:29 And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.

12. Slide...This prayer has balance

- a. Notice the prayer moved from acknowledging who God is first...then to coming into agreement with God's plan...and then
- b. To petitioning God...or asking God...there is an order to this prayer
- c. We don't want to treat prayer...like a trip to the emergency room
- d. What I mean by that statement is...we only pray when there is an emergency
- e. Who goes to the ER unless there is an emergency
- f. If we only pray...when there is an emergency...then Jesus becomes our emergency doctor
- g. Who stops by to visit the ER doctor to fellowship...I don't...
- h. Prayer in relationship looks like this...We acknowledge God as our Lord first...then we come into agreement with scripture
- i. And then...we make our request
- j. Please notice what they ask for in verse 29...boldness...boldness to preach the word of God against the threats of the enemy of God
- k. It wasn't oh Lord...take this away from me...but give us boldness to preach the gospel
- l. Here is what they ask for next

13. Acts 4:30 Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

14. Slide...This prayer has bearing

- a. They are not just praying prayers that make us sound good
- b. Their prayer is very specific...first to be empowered by the Holy Spirit...so they can speak the word of God...boldly
- c. Then for more of the same signs and wonders...so they can preach the gospel with boldness
- d. Realize...their boldness is what got them in trouble in the first place...now they are asking to be more emboldened...and for more trouble to come
- e. Boy...That take faith...this boldness requires the work of the Holy Spirit
- f. What they are asking for...is more changed lives...because the last time this happened...2000 more men came to faith in the name of Jesus
- g. They are asking for more opportunities to share Jesus...pay attention...pay attention...they never prayed for the persecution to stop

15. Acts 4:31 After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

16. Slide...The fifth result of persecution is...Leave the result up to God

- a. There was a physical shaking to their prayer
- b. I tend to get excited...when things were shaken up...even when a church is shaken up...when my life is shaken up...true growth comes with shaking
- c. When God answered their prayer...and according to verse 31... Then they filled with the Holy Spirit...and preached the word of God with boldness

- d. Back in verse 20 it says that we are to be witnesses by telling others what you have seen and heard...
- e. You do this by telling others what God has done in our lives...
- f. How God has saved you...how you were shaken by God's work in our hearts...how God has answered your prayer
- g. How your study time of God's word has shaped you...created you into a different person...and then boldly tell others what God has done
- h. Quote scripture to them in a loving manor...then allow the same Holy Spirit...to work in their hearts
- i. I was able to do that yesterday with a young man named Zack
- j. What they are asking for...is to be un-afraid to speak of the Lord Jesus
- k. Here is the result of this event in the shaking of the church

17. Acts 4:32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. 33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all.

- a. The thing I want us to see in verse 33...is the great grace offered

18. Slide...There is great grace found in humility and unity

- a. This is very similar to the situation in chapter 2...where they are selling land to give to the apostles for the needs of the church
- b. This is very confusing for us Americans...what it is...is a spiritual deeper truth...that takes the Holy Spirit to understand this truth

- c. Listen I don't fully understand this scriptural truth myself...it goes against everything I have ever known as an American
- d. I was taught worldly values...to work hard...and you will get rich and be happy...to covet...to depend on myself...not to offer grace to others
- e. Maybe we can gain some insight to what James writes...about what is keeping us from experiencing this great grace of the Holy Spirit

19. James 4:1-10, 4 What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? 2 You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. 3 And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure. 4 You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. 5 What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the spirit God has placed within us is filled with envy? 6 But he gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but favors the humble." 7 So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. 9 Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be

sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.

- a. Verse 6 is the key...God gives us even more grace...to stand against such evil desires...for God opposes the proud but favors the humble

20. Acts 4:34-35, 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

- a. I mentioned this in chapter 2...there is a huge difference between socialism or communism...neither of these ism's are voluntary
- b. What the early church was doing...was common ism...which is voluntary
- c. Communism say what is yours is mine...while common ism says what is mine is yours...or Love your neighbor as yourself
- d. All Israel was being taxed heavily and so many were very poor
- e. The Sadducees were in charge of the temple...the same people who put Jesus and Peter and John on trial
- f. These Sadducees also taxed its people to worship God in the temple of God...with money changers...selling sacrificial animal
- g. Here is the first church is acting totally opposite of the world...and the opposite of religious leaders who are in charge of the Jewish temple
- h. Because the church humbled themselves...they are now being filled with the Holy Spirit...raising money to help those who were in need
- i. It got so bad in Jerusalem...that Paul...on one of his missionary journeys collected an offering to take back to the church in Jerusalem

21. Acts 4:36 For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed

Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. 37 He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

- a. This guys name is Joe...or Joseph...and the apostles give Joe a nickname...
Barnabas
- b. Those who are Bible students should ask...why is a Levite owning land
- c. In the book of Numbers...chapter 18...tells us the Levites were not to own
land in the promised land...
- d. But notice this land is not in Israel...it is on the Island of Cyprus
- e. Many will try to make Joe...Barnabas...into a bad guy who is getting right
with the Lord...not so
- f. It is not illegal for Levites to own land...maybe he married a woman
whose parents owned the land in which they inherited the land
- g. This is not the point of the story...the point is...Joe or Barnabas was a big
encouragement to the apostles...enough for him to get a nickname
- h. There are some Biblical truths to giving...Malachi talked about how God
feels about giving a tithe
- i. Many say giving or tithing is not a new testament principal...I don't wish
to debate the principal...
- j. But if I don't teach that there is a blessing that comes in giving to the work
of God...I feel like I haven't done my job as a teacher

22. Phil 4:15-17, 15 As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. 16 Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. 17 I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness.

- a. What Paul is telling them...is he is not asking for more...but asking for the fruit of the ministry work...to go on the Philippian's account in heaven
- b. Paul understood the principal...that when you give for the Lord's work...that God keeps account books in heaven
- c. Paul also understood when you offer service to the Lord...or labor for God...you will also be rewarded in heaven
- d. We just read in James...how great grace will come to those who value the Lord and His work...more than your own wealth
- e. How the Lord gives us even more grace...so we can stand against the evil desires of the world
- f. Don't miss what I am saying...God has given us everything...He created everything...and He made us to be stewards over what He has given us
- g. But also know...that God has books in heaven of our stewardship...of what God has placed in our hands
- h. Which determine...in part...how we will receive rewards in heaven for the things we do on the earth
- i. Satan is trying so hard...to defeat the early church...through persecution and poverty...which is not working...

j. So next week Satan changes tactics...to attack the church...through the people from within the church

k. 30:30