

Praying For & Speaking The Word With Boldness

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- [0 : 0 0] It was good a number of weeks ago to be with you just a fortnight ago looking at the first part of Acts chapter 4. And on that occasion we read through to verse 22.
- And what I'm going to do this now is read from verse 23 through to 31 and then pray. And then we're going to open up this particular part of God's Word.
- Acts chapter 4, reading from verse 23. It says,
- And grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness. While you stretch out your hand to heal, And signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.
- 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.
- [2 : 4 0] Amen. Amen. Now that's a prayer meeting I would love to have been at. And let's pray together as we consider this Word this morning.
- Our gracious Father, we come before you. And we thank you for your Word which is living and active. And we pray that that living and active Word this day would speak into our hearts and into our lives.
- And we pray, Lord our God, that as we listen to your Word, you would take time by your Spirit to apply it to our lives, to our situation, to our circumstance, and that we would hear it and respond to it in a precious way.
- In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to continue looking at Acts chapter 4. If for some reason you were unable to catch the first part of this message too, some days ago it will be on the website.
- You can go there and revisit it. And in some respects, some of what I'll say today relates to where we were a couple of weeks ago when we looked at the first half.
- [4 : 0 4] But there's a beautiful little note there that reminds us in verse 23, when they were released. And that takes us back to where we were a couple of weeks ago. Because there, a couple of weeks ago, you'll remember that Peter and John and the man whom they had healed.
- You'll remember that man who used to sit as a beggar at the temple gates and the great words that were spoken, silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- Rise up and walk. And of course the healing had taken place and the council of the Jews was not happy.
- Those that were involved in the teaching in the temple were unhappy with these preachers. Those that were involved in maintaining order in the temple were unhappy with these men.
- And of course those that didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead were certainly unhappy with these men. And so Peter and John and the blind man found themselves in the presence of the temple rulers, in the presence of the court.

- [5 : 18] And they were being questioned and they were being tried because of their witness for our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact they'd been bound and held over.
- And they were interrogated by those who were responsible. And we pick it up there just at the verse 17 it says, But in order that it may spread no further among the people, that is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In order that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that the power of Jesus Christ to transform lives, in order that that may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.
- And so they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.
- For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and what we have heard. And when those in charge had threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people.
- [6 : 34] For all were praising God for what had happened. For they all knew about the miracle that had been performed in the blind man, who was more than 40 years old.
- Well, when they were released, Now I said at the time, the same gathering of people had gathered eight weeks before this. The same gathering of people had gathered to interrogate Christ.
- The same gathering of people had reached the conclusion that Christ must die. And eight weeks later, Peter and John, with great boldness, were giving testimony to the resurrection power of Jesus.
- And they were not going to go quietly. And they were not going to cease proclaiming the good news. It was a great victory for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- When they were released, they went to their friends. And they reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.
- [7 : 47] Now, do you know what I love? What I love is that after all of that incident, after all the way in which God's name was honored, God's name was revered, God's power at work, it was not stopped by those who would have loved to put a stop to it.
- When they were released, they went straight back to the gathering of their friends, straight back, as it were, to the early church there. And they reported all that God was doing, all that the chief priests and the elders had said.
- And here's the part that I love, verse 24. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God.
- Do you know there's a note of praise? And there's without doubt a call to prayer in what takes place here.
- The church of Christ gathers together and they rejoice because they lift their voices up to the sovereign God of heaven.
- [9 : 08] There's a note of praise. You know, my friends, I trust that when we read of what God is doing in revival around our world, when we read about what God is doing in other fields, other than our own, that the response in our heart is not simply, oh Lord, do it here.
- We want them to do it here. But the response of our heart should also be one of incredible adoration and praise and prayer for the march of our God and His kingdom throughout the earth.
- You know, there's a very real sense in which in the church of Jesus Christ we should be Catholic, small c, never large c. Catholic, small c, in actual fact, is to do with the church universal, the church all over the world where God is moving regardless of its denomination.

God is at work. God is building His church. God is extending His kingdom. And so the reality here was that when they came back and reported all that had happened, the people of God, their friends in the local church, they lifted their voices in praise and in prayer.

Do you know, there's a great need in our day and in our age to lift our voices in praise and in prayer. you know, we may be working with restrictions to do with the spread of a virus that has caused us to have to put masks on.

[11 : 11] Somebody sent me a text during the week saying, I'm longing to be on the same road that Paul was on, the road to demask us. And he was longing for that day to come and I'm looking forward to it.

But it ought not to, it ought not to stop us as the people of God whenever we hear what God is moving for the response to be one of praise and prayer.

And I want you to notice something about praise and about prayer. praise and prayer are always first and foremost about putting God first and man second.

Whenever you look at our Lord Jesus Christ teaching us about prayer, what does he do? He begins with teaching us about what it is to put God first. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

It's all about what is God longing for? What is God doing in our midst? What is God in the midst of doing in our situation and in our circumstance?

[12 : 40] But praise, praise should also first and foremost be about who our sovereign God is and what he is doing and the work that he is accomplishing in our midst.

You know, there are some songs that have an unhealthy emphasis upon man. But in actual fact, first and foremost, we should begin with what God is doing and what the plan and purpose of God is.

She's getting a little bit of support there for her sister. Prayer, praise and prayer are the fitting response to the move of God.

But look what it says there. It says, when they heard it, they lifted their voices to God and said, sovereign Lord, the one who made the earth and the sea and everything in them.

And what they do is they draw on their knowledge of scripture to see the way in which God is at work. And so they go back to Psalm 2.

[13 : 56] That's what they're quoting from there when they talk about the Gentiles raging and the people's ploring in vain. But what they do is the earth, the Old Testament scripture in all that had taken place in the very place where they had been tried just a couple of months before.

So what they do is they say, truly in this city they were gathered together against your holy servant, the one that you'd anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel.

They were all gathered together against Jesus. But your word has spoken about this. Your word has said that this will happen. Your word has declared that in order for the plan and purpose of a sovereign God to be fulfilled, Jesus Christ must not only come from heaven, but he also must take the sin of the world upon himself.

And so he's going to be tried. And he's going to be sentenced. And he's going to be crucified. And he's going to be raised from the dead. And he's going to ascend. They realized that the Old Testament was all pointed towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

And when they entered into a time of praise and of prayer, they drew upon their knowledge of God's word. That's why for you and I, one of the greatest things we can do is learn what it is to pray in the light of the revealed word of God, in the light of what God has spoken.

[15 : 17] And so for these believers gathered together, look at what they say. They gathered together against Christ, but there at verse 28, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

Now the key to this is in the way in which they begin their praises and their prayers. Sovereign God, your plan, your purpose.

You see, God is in control. We live in a world where very often we think it's out of control. It is not out of control. God is in control. We live in a world where sometimes we wonder why God's people are persecuted for what they believe because God's word said they will be persecuted for what they believe.

God's word said that if we take a stand with Christ, those who are against Christ will come against us. The whole of scripture reveals to us that the sovereign God is working out his plan and his purpose and there is nothing that will happen in your life or in my life that God is not in control of.

It's a little thing called the providence of God. And the providence of God is operational even in the midst of a society like our own where, you know, there are threats to our health in terms of infection that we cannot control ourselves.

[16 : 44] You know, one of the things that I often say at the funeral service of those folks that have died is this, that the Lord appointed the day of their birth and the Lord appointed the day of their death regardless of the circumstances from which they've died.

Now, for you and I as believers in the midst of a world that many of our freedoms have been restricted at the present moment in time, we need to first of all stop and learn what it is to praise and to pray to the providential God who is working out his plan and purpose regardless of circumstance.

And so the thing is when we look to our Lord Jesus Christ being tried by Herod and Pontius Pilate, there were some who looked at that at this time saying, this man doesn't deserve to die and he didn't deserve to die but this man was always going to die on Calvary's cross because he was laying down his own life for the sin of the world and it was part of a sovereign God's plan and the providence of God and the sovereign purpose and plan of God will always come to pass.

you know, when you in your Bible reading sit there trying to work out all the various aspects of the book of the Revelation or the book of Daniel, my goodness, you give your mind some mental gymnastics, don't you?

But you know, I always love the simplicity of the janitor of the university that was sitting in his janitor's house reading Revelation and along came the great professor and he looked into the janitor's house and he says, what are you reading?

[18 : 50] And the janitor said, I'm reading the book of Revelation and the professor made a face and he says, and tell me, do you understand it?

And the janitor said, oh, I understand it perfectly. You understand it perfectly? He says, what do you understand? He says, Jesus wins.

You know, and he's right. He's absolutely right. Jesus wins. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will stop Christ from accomplishing his plan and his purpose, from bringing his church, his bride, into his eternal presence.

God's but as the people of God, we need to learn to pray in the power that the sovereign God provides into the plan and purpose of the sovereign God and exalt him in our praises and bring him first into all of our praying.

What is the will of God for us as a congregation? what would glorify the sovereign God in our midst? Well, first and foremost, it's that he might mobilize his people in praise and in prayer and then with great boldness into proclamation.

[20 : 16] And so the reality is, as we marvel at all that was going on in Peter and John's life, we don't just marvel at that, we bring that right into our presence.

Because we're in the footsteps of Peter and John. We're brothers and sisters in Christ with him. We will spend all eternity with him.

We declare the same sovereign God. We believe in the same Christ. We are in communication with the same God. We know the same scriptures.

In fact, you and I are blessed to have the full revelation of God, Old and New Testament. And so what we need to do is we need to learn what it is to wrap our praises and wrap our prayers first and foremost around the sovereign plan and purpose of God.

Truth be told, sometimes in our prayers we're a little bit self-centered, aren't we? Sometimes in our prayers we begin with us. We begin with the list of people we'd like God to bless and the people we'd like God to be at work in the light.

[21 : 36] And we understand that and God understands that. He knows the intimate care that he has for each one of us. But every time we're taught to pray in Scripture we're always taught to begin with God.

The holiness of his name. In actual fact, what was the whole incident about? In whose name did you do this miracle?

And what was the bold proclamation of Peter and John? In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one in whom alone there is salvation.

It was about the holiness of God's name. And so when they got to praising and praying, the adoration was God centered, the praying was God centered.

Do you know the interesting thing is? They don't even start to pray imprecatory psalms against those that had said they weren't to preach.

[22 : 52] Notice how they actually pray for those that were the enemies of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They actually leave them to God.

what he says in verse 29, and now Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

They've got two prayer requests. Not Lord, would you stay the hand of those who are opposed to the church of Jesus Christ. He says, Lord, you know their threats.

you deal with them. You know, I tell you, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God unrepentant.

That's why our Lord Jesus Christ said, you know, you pray for your enemies and pray for those that persecute you. You don't need to be prescriptive in terms of your prayers for them.

[23 : 58] You know, sometimes we're a bit like that, aren't we? you know, we feel the injustice and we want to call down, you know, God's judgment on them. You know, God's judgment rests on them already, unless they repent and believe.

That is a fearful thing. I think that's why our Lord Jesus Christ says, you know, pray for your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Pray that the eyes of their heart might be open.

It's one of the songs we'll sing later. Lord, you know, open the eyes of our hearts. A great prayer for the enemies of the gospel. But their prayer's beautiful, isn't it?

Lord, consider the threats. Now in there, my friends, don't lose sight of that. It's that little glimpse into the providence of God. There is nothing that happens to you that God doesn't know about.

Nothing. God hears everything we say.

[25 : 05] Even when we like to take it back by saying we didn't really mean it. You know, the reality is, you know, God knows the hearts of man and he hears the words that men speak.

So they say, consider the threats. But what does he do? What they do is they pray specifically for the believers. And here's the prayer.

Lord, look upon their threats, but grant to your servants to continue to speak the word with all boldness.

My friends, if ever there was a need for the church of Jesus Christ to be called together to pray and to ask that believers in every church that claims the name of Jesus Christ might proclaim him with boldness, it is today.

We've got a national church that for the most part in many places does not preach Christ. There are many brothers and sisters who do preach Christ within it and they continue to try to reform and we are so thankful for that.

[26 : 21] But there is a need for us to pray for great boldness. We've got a Baptist church where many brothers and sisters in Christ preach boldly, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, but there are many who do not preach boldly the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and we need prayers for revival.

We have churches of all denominations the length and breadth of our land. I can speak because the national church takes that name. That's the only grounds I've got for saying that.

I can speak for the Baptist church because I'm a Baptist minister. But the reality is I do believe in these days our churches should be open because they can be open and we should be preaching with boldness the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to a society that desperately needs it.

We've got people that are living in fear of their own mortality every single day and we are the people with the message that says you don't need to be afraid of your own mortality because there is a Savior Jesus Christ and if your trust is in him you will live not just for a moment but for all eternity.

That's why we need boldness in the church of Jesus Christ and that's why our prayers should not be prayers about what they're saying and they're thinking about doing and they're planning but instead it should be for the church that God by the spirit of God would give boldness to the people of God and they would make the solid foundation and the first thing in their life a proclamation of the saving message of Jesus.

[28 : 02] You know my friends if you take anything from today let's go home and pray for boldness in those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. Notice I didn't just say ministers. You know pray for boldness in those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that God would loosen their tongue that they might speak of what they know of the eternal Jesus.

That's what we need. You know I dare say if we were a black Pentecostal church we'd probably be on our feet shouting Amen by now but we're bells held right?

But at the end of the day let's pray for boldness. That's what the church needs today. Boldness in the things of Jesus Christ.

You know the interesting thing is some people say well you know we don't want to be arrogant. That's not what I said. Boldness is not arrogance. Boldness is boldness.

A deep conviction that there's only one saviour his name is Jesus. He should be preached in love. He should be preached in grace. He should be preached in truth with love.

[29 : 18] Boldness is just a deep conviction that we actually believe what we claim to believe. that we're convinced of the saving power of Christ. And so their prayer is a beautiful prayer.

Lord would you continue. Notice what it says. Lord would you continue to speak your word with boldness. That your servants would continue to speak your word with all boldness.

It's your word they're speaking. I was preaching last week and I was preaching some of the eternal truths of Jesus and I had to say if you've got a problem with that it's not with me it's with Christ.

Sometimes when people have a problem with what we're saying we take it personally. The problem is not. It's with Christ. Lord would you empower your servants to preach and speak the word with boldness.

because you are the one who's working out your plan. And my friend looks what flows out of it.

[30 : 28] Notice what he says. He says well you stretch out your hand to heal and to do signs and wonders that are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

Remember the context they've been in. A blind man. A lame man. You know silver and gold have you none but such as I have give I unto you. He's a lame man preaching in so many places.

And the reality is that he rises up. The power of Jesus at work. By whose power was this man made well in the power of Jesus of Nazareth.

Lord we call out to you that you would give boldness to your church and that we would see you know signs and wonders performed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend you know God is capable of doing anything and all things but what is the greatest thing that God does? What is the greatest miracle? Let me tell you the greatest miracle is what I call the great exchange.

[31 : 26] You know what the great exchange is? His righteousness for your sinfulness. That's the greatest miracle. His righteousness for your you know your sinfulness.

You know I'd love to see miracles every week in this church but you know the miracle I want? is the miracle of an unrepentant sinner becoming a repentant sinner and putting all their trust in Christ.

The miracle of salvation. Verse 31 and I'm going to finish with this. And when they had prayed the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and notice how immediately their prayer is answered and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

That's what the requested of God ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will open. Lord would you give great boldness to your believers? And they continued to speak with great boldness.

You know I love that. I'd love to have been at that prayer meeting. And when they had prayed the place in which they were gathered together was shaken. You ever been at a prayer meeting where the power of God was truly present?

[32 : 48] You ever been at a prayer meeting where God answered so instantly the prayers of his people? Do you know I over the years at different times I've been a student of revival.

I've always looked at the ways in which God has moved. And it will come as no surprise to you that one of the things that is always fascinating to me is the little revival that broke out in Lewis.

I love the Isle of Lewis. I used to when I was Ileran I used to get the opportunity to preach quite often up on the Isle of Lewis. Natural fact I once began a youth event in Lewis that I was preaching at with these words Duncan Campbell is dead.

Right? Now if you know anything of the Lewis revival you'll know that Duncan Campbell is rightly revered for the work that God used him to do in that place. But I base my text of course on the words to Joshua Moses my servant is dead.

You now Joshua. And that's why I said Duncan Campbell is dead. You now. Let me just read this. In 1949 a new minister came to the church in Barvis.

[34 : 01] It's a church that I've been in. It's a pulpit. I didn't get a chance to preach in it actually. I preached a number of places that time about the standing. And in 1949 a new minister came to the little town of Barvis.

And on Tuesday and on Friday night she started a prayer meeting. Tuesday night and Friday night. We didn't have enough bothered getting people out to one a month. Tuesday and Friday night or one a week in some churches right.

Tuesday and Friday night they were gathering together. They gathered together for three months. Well they were gathering together. They won't stop to this. But three months into their gathering Tuesday and Friday night one evening the Lord broke through.

The Lord broke through in a powerful way. And the revival really began to take hold. And prayer meeting sprang up as a result of that all over the island.

And Duncan Campbell himself describes a prayer meeting in one village. This is not the one that started. This was another village. He said there had been bitter opposition in the village and although many attended the meetings from other areas very few locals attended.

[35 : 11] Listen to this. Because of the opposition of the minister. God was doing a work throughout the island but in this particular village they were divided because the local minister was opposed to the revival.

a church leader suggested that you should go to prayer and 30 or so moved into the home of a friendly farmer. Prayer was hard and about midnight Duncan Campbell turned to the local blacksmith who had been silent so far and said I feel the time has come when you ought to pray.

And the man prayed for about half an hour. Oh that would just do some of us writing wouldn't it right? But the man prayed for half an hour because in revival time doesn't matter.

And then drew his prayer to a close with a bold challenge. God do you not know that your honour is at stake? You promised to pour floods and dry ground and you're not doing it.

He paused for a while and then concluded God your honour is at stake and I challenge you to keep your covenant engagements. At that moment Duncan Campbell recalls that whole granite house shook like a leaf and whilst one elder thought of an earth tremor Duncan was reminded of Acts 4 and 31 after they prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken.

[36 : 50] 1949 that's just to update Acts 4 31 I've seen the house nobody in it I've seen it when I used to minister up in Lewis the granite house that was shaking at the end of a prayer meeting I've got no reason to doubt it because what God did there was extraordinary revival is also that always the extraordinary work of God how bold will we be in our prayers gracious father you're the one that knows all of our hearts simple prayer that you would give us great boldness in Jesus name amen so speak in the hearing voice