

Acts 027

Prayer for Boldness

Acts 4:23-31

October 18, 2023

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All right. Good to see you guys again. Thank you. It was an interesting few weeks. I think Ed Jones is still over there. There was an option that you could do a taste of Italy. So, he's still abroad tasting Italy. And I'm tasting Texas. Well, sorry to disappoint you. I don't have an update on our trip just because I haven't had much time to put anything together. But if we could open our Bibles to the book of Acts chapter 4. Book of Acts chapter 4 and verse 23. I really had to go back and listen to the prior study just to figure out where we were in the book of Acts. It's been so long, but essentially, we're in Acts chapter 4. Peter and John were arrested. They were basically told not to teach anymore in the name of Yeshua, Jesus the Messiah. And then the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body, releases them from prison. And what happens is they now report back to the apostles what has just happened. And the apostles begin to pray. And that prayer, it's an amazing prayer. And the results of it are mentioned in verses 23 through 31. So, I'm hoping we can cover that section this evening. So, here's an outline of the prayer.

Acts 4:1–5:11 Summary

- I. Apostles Arrested (4:1-4)
- II. Apostles Examined (4:5-12)
- III. Sanhedrin's Decision (4:13-22)
- IV. **Apostles' Prayer (4:23-31)**
 - A. Report to the Apostles (23)
 - B. Motivation for the Prayer (24)
 - C. Prayer (25-30)
 - D. Answer to the Prayer (31)
- V. Pre-Ananias and Sapphira (4:32-37)
- VI. Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11)

Peter and John report back to the apostles, verse 23. You see the motivation for the prayer, verse 24. You see the prayer itself, verses 25 through 30. And then you see the answer to the prayer. So, this is really the first formal governmental wave of persecution that's now come against the church. They haven't been flogged or physically injured yet. That's coming in chapter 5, but they're given a gag order not to teach anymore in the name of Jesus. You'll see that gag order given there in verses 17 and 18. The leadership of Israel says, "*But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.*" Verse 18: *And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.* So, the first thing the Peter and John do when they're released from prison is they report this now back to the rest of the apostles, and we pick it up there in verse 23: *When they had been released, (Peter and John) they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.* So, it's the religious authorities, the chief priests and the elders who issued this arrest and this gag order. And as you go through the book of Acts, you'll see that these people, the unbelieving Jews, are really the force behind trying to shut the church down. It's not that God doesn't love Israel and doesn't have a future plan for Israel, which He does, but first century Israel's leadership is-- with very few exception-- caught up in corruption and unbelief. And they're the ones that are coming against the church.

So, it sort of reminds me of Jesus in the Gospels, who seems to get along with almost everybody except the religious authorities. You know, true Christianity and religion never really mix because they can't mix. Because religion by definition is man's attempt to get to God through his own merits. That's what the Pharisees and the Sadducees were teaching. Christianity is the opposite of that, where we are not reaching up to God, but God is reaching down to us in the person of Jesus and offering us salvation as a free gift.

So, you notice that it's the religious authorities that are coming against the church, just like the religious authorities came against Jesus in the Gospels. And then you go down to verse 24, and we have the motivation for the prayer: *And when they had heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them."* So, this is now the apostles sort of giving the motivation for prayer. Now that they've learned from Peter and John that persecution in the form of a gag order has come against the church

for the very first time. So, I find this interesting. Because the first thing the apostles do when they realize they're being persecuted is they go to prayer. You know, they don't start a protest movement. They don't start complaining about their leaders. They don't start sending out a bunch of emails. They don't start picketing. The very first thing they do when they get into trouble is they start to pray. You'll see that same pattern with Daniel in Daniel chapter 2. Do you remember what happened in Daniel 2?

Nebuchadnezzar had said to his wise men: Don't just give me the interpretation of my dream. Tell me what I dreamed. That's a tough job description, isn't it? And of course, the wise men couldn't produce the dream. They just said, tell us the dream and we'll interpret it for you. He goes, that's not what I asked you to do. I asked you to tell me what the dream is. And because none of them could tell the dream, he issued a death warrant on all the wise men of his kingdom. And that word gets to Daniel. And Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego just figured out they're about to die because they're the ones that have been brought in as teenagers into the realm of the wise men of Babylon. So, Daniel understands in Daniel chapter 2 that he's about to die. He's about to be executed. And so, what's the first thing he does? He starts to pray.

It says in Daniel 2:17-18: *Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah about the matter, so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.* So, the very first thing that they do, Daniel, when he thinks he's about to lose his life, is he starts to pray. The very first thing the apostles do when they realize persecution via the Sanhedrin is now coming against the church is they start to pray. And to be frank with you, that's sort of convicting to me, because a lot of times prayer for me is a last resort rather than a first resort. In other words, I'll pray when nothing else is working. But when the protests don't work and the emails don't work and the complaining doesn't work, well, I guess I better pray. You don't see that happening with Daniel, and you don't see that happening with the apostles. Their first order of business is to pray. So, a challenge to all of us is when we get into trouble-- and we get into trouble in this world because we're living in the devil's world. When we get into trouble, not if we get into trouble, we should go to prayer first as a first resort rather than a last resort. But it says here in verse 24: *And when they heard this, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord--*

Now the one accord. People say, well, where are cars mentioned in the Bible? Well, the apostles were in one Accord, you know. Ha ha ha ha kind of thing. "One accord" is talking about unity. The unity of the church. So, the church at this particular stage was extremely unified. They were even unified in persecution. So, you recall the unity of the church back in Acts 2, the first church meeting. The apostles were in one accord concerning doctrine, ordinances, prayer, evangelism, worship, benevolence, and fellowship. And you see that unity taking place here. And notice how they begin their prayer. They said: "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them," And what they're quoting here is Exodus 20:11, which is a reference to creation. It says in Exodus 20:11: For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. That's what they're quoting. That's the first thing they cite when they go to prayer, and they realize that they're in trouble and they need help. They remind themselves that God is the creator of everything. And He created everything in six days. So, if you can believe that, then it's not too hard for God to open prison doors and set the captives free. It's not too hard for God to give the apostles rejoicing in the midst of persecution. I mean, those are easier things if in fact, God created everything in six days.

So, if you can believe Genesis 1:1-- and you know the verse very well. Genesis 1:1 says: In the beginning. See, there's baseball in the Bible. The big inning, right? Okay, one Accord cars, all right. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. I mean, if you can believe that, then everything else taking place in the Bible, miracle-wise, is easy to believe. I mean, parting the Red Sea is not a problem if God spoke the heavens and the earth into existence in six days. Raising His son from the grave is not a problem if God spoke the heavens and the earth into existence in six days. So that's why they begin with a reference to creation. And that's a great way for us to pray. When we get into problems, we just remind ourselves who we're dealing with. We're dealing with God, who is our Creator. He created everything. So, if He's the Creator of everything, certainly He can handle whatever little problems we may be facing.

In Exodus 31:15-17, there is a parallel passage. I don't think that's what's being quoted here, but it speaks the same thing. It says in verse 17: *"it is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on*

the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." One of the things that's very interesting in Greek is this word Lord. Verse 24: *...and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them."* The word for "Lord" there is *despotés*. Where we get the word despotic or despot. It's basically a reminder that our relationship to Jesus is one of master to slave. Paul frequently refers to himself, as do the rest of the apostles, as a *doulos*, which is a servant or a slave. And that's our relationship to the Lord. That's why we call him Lord. We're not here to sort of let Him be our consultant kind of thing. We're not here to take maybe some good advice from Him. We're in a master-slave relationship with the Lord, and He wants us to obey Him. And that's what comes out in that Greek word: Lord - *despotés*.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says concerning that verse: "The apostles address God as 'Lord', or in the Greek *despotés*. The term is used a total of ten times in the New Testament: four times of a human lord (1 Tim. 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18), three times of God (Lk. 2:29; Acts 4:24; Rev. 6:10), and three times of the Messiah (2 Tim. 2:21; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4). In this verse, the apostles used the word in the sense of a master-slave relationship. Thus, they recognized God's authority. He is the One who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all life that is in them. This was a recognition of God's power displayed in the act of creation."

So, they come under persecution, and the first thing they do is they remind themselves that God is the creator. If He can execute the bigger miracle, He can certainly solve the lesser miracle. It's sort of an argument from the greater to the lesser. And the second thing they remind themselves of is the fact that He's the master and they're the slave. So, if that's true and He wants them to go through persecution, then so be it. They're going to go through it. He's the boss. So now that we've had the reports of the apostles and the motivation for the prayer, we have the prayer itself verses 25 through 30. And this prayer has three parts. There's a citation of Psalm 2:1-2 in verses 25 and 26. Then there's an application of the Psalm to these unique circumstances, verses 27 and 28. And then the apostles make to God three requests as they're about to experience persecution. So, notice, first of all, the citation of Psalm 2:1-2. Notice what verse 25 says: *"...who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant said, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples devise futile things?'"* Now they're beginning to quote in this prayer, Psalm 2. And you'll notice how Scripture is connected to their prayer life. One of the great ways to pray is just to pray Scripture.

First John 5, I think verse 14 says, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. Well, how do I know if I'm praying in the will of God? Well, the will of God is expressed in the Word of God. So, the more your prayer life is hemmed in by Scripture, the more you know what to pray and how to pray, and there's a better likelihood of your prayer request and my prayer requests being answered. So, prayer and Scripture, they go together is what you're seeing here. In Daniel 9, Daniel knew that the seventy-year captivity was about to end. And he starts to pray to God accordingly. Give us our future now that the seventy-year captivity is over. And it's one of the great prayers recorded in the Bible. It's in Daniel chapter 9. And the reason Daniel understood that the seventy-year captivity was ending is that he was reading the prophet Jeremiah. You'll see a reference to Jeremiah in Daniel 9:2-3. Only the prophet Jeremiah explains that the captivity would last exactly seventy years. You'll see that in Jeremiah 25:11. And I believe it's also in Jeremiah 29:10.

So, Daniel understood what time it was, and he knew what to pray and how to pray because he was a student of the Book of Jeremiah. That's what you see here with the prophets. They're students of Psalm 2. They're students of Exodus 20. And so, they know how to pray accordingly. And there's a great example here of what we call dual authorship of the Bible. We believe that when the Bible was written, it was written by two authors. Author, capital A-- God. And God when He wrote the scripture, used human vessels. And when God used those human vessels, He didn't override their skills and temperament and life experiences. You see that all coming out in the pages of Scripture. But God is superintending the recording of this book. And so, people you know, you'll find them when they want to argue with you about Christianity. They'll say something like, well, the Bible was written by men. And I'm like, yeah, duh. Of course, it was. But God, capital A, was guiding the authors, little a, to record His word without error. And this is what we call dual authorship. And you see a perfect example of it there in verse 25, related to Psalm 2. It says: *"...who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said,"* well. Who wrote Psalm 2? Was it the Holy Spirit, or was it David? And the answer is yes. It was both.

The Holy Spirit, capital A Author, guided David, small a author, to record Psalm 2 in the original manuscripts, without error. It's what we call dual authorship. Second Timothy 3:16 concerning this aspect of Scripture says: all Scripture is inspired by God. The Greek there is *theopneustos*.. It means God-breathed. God wrote the Bible, but He

guided human instruments in the production of Scripture. Dual authorship. Peter talks about this in Second Peter 1:21, where he says: *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will*-- In other words, when the men who wrote the Bible wrote it, they weren't giving their own opinion. Why not? They were ...*men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*. So, when the authors of Scripture wrote scripture, they were moved by God the Author, as He was superintending the words of these men the other authors. And as they were writing scripture, they were they were being carried along by God. I mean, it's miraculous when you think about it, how God recorded scripture, but He didn't override the writing styles, personality, experiences, temperaments of the Biblical authors. You see all of that coming out. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, talks more about the prenatal activities of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke than any other scriptural writer. Well, that makes perfect sense when you understand that Luke was a by occupation a physician. So prenatal activities are something he's interested in. Early in the book of Acts, it talks about how Judas hung himself and his corpse fell over a ravine and the jagged rocks tore open his corpse, Acts chapter 1, and his intestines gushed out. Now I'm reading that and I'm saying that's TMI. That's too much information. I don't need to know about intestines. But if you're Luke, you're interested in intestines because Luke is a physician. Matthew talks more about money than any other gospel writer. Well, that makes sense when you understand Matthew's occupation as a tax gatherer. In fact, there's this story of Jesus and Peter going fishing. And they go fishing. They grab a fish, they pull in a fish, and there's a coin in the fish's mouth. And Jesus tells Peter, take the coin and use it to pay the temple tax. And only Matthew records that story. Well, if Matthew is a tax collector, that kind of story would be of interest to him. Peter, in his two epistles, talks more about water and the flood than anybody else. Well, that makes sense if you understand Peter's occupation as a fisherman. He likes to talk about water and the flood and all of these kinds of things. So, what you're seeing in the Bible is the unique character of each biblical writer coming out. But the Holy Spirit is carrying them along and they're writing God's Word. It's not like the devil when Satan or demons possess somebody, they subjugate the human being.

Who are you? Jesus says to the man in Mark 5. Well, we are legion, for we are many. In other words, the man wasn't speaking. His personality was being subjugated by Satan and demons. God, when He uses people, doesn't do that. He respects who they are. But somehow used them and guided them and carried them along so that they wrote His word without error. And that's what we call dual authorship. And verse 25

gives you the two authors of Psalm 2. It's the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David. This word "moved" --Second Peter 1:21, *but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*-- is *pherō*. And that is the same word used in Acts 27:15 and 17 of wind that comes alongside a sailboat, fills the sails of the boat and propels the boat. So, in the same way, the Holy Spirit came upon the writers of Scripture in a supernatural way, just like a sailboat, and kind of propelled them along, pushed them along without overriding who they were. And God's Word was recorded. Dual authorship. So, verse 25, it says: *"who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant said--"* now they're in the prayer, quoting Psalm 2. *"Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples devise futile things?"* Verse 26, *"The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ."* Now that's Psalm 2:1-2. And in context, Psalm 2:1-2 is talking about the Gentile nations invading the city of Jerusalem in the last days. I mean, not too unlike what we've seen on the news for the last couple of weeks. I mean, an obvious stage-setting event for future Armageddon. So, the Gentile nations are going to come against the Jewish nation in the end times. That's what Psalm 2 is talking about. It's dealing with the same subject as Zechariah 12:3: It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. That's what Psalm 2 also is speaking of, Armageddon, in other words. It's spoken of in Zechariah 14:2-3, *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered-- the women ravished*. The women violated. I mean, isn't that what we've seen on the news for the last two to three weeks? We've seen women in Israel being raped by Hamas. And this is the identical thing that's going to happen in the end time concerning Armageddon.

...the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fights on a day of battle. So, when Israel has no friends in the world, God is going to show up to protect them. That's what these Zechariah passages and Psalm 2 are speaking about. But what's very interesting about this is although the Gentiles-- In Hebrew, the word for Gentiles is *gôy*, the nations. And in Greek the name for the Gentiles is the *ethnikos*, where we get the word ethnicity. Although Psalm 2 is against the Gentile, *gôy* and *ethnikos*, the apostles take the same psalm, and they apply it to the nation of Israel. In other words, the nation of Israel by rejecting their own King,

Jesus, Yeshua; the nation of Israel by launching now a formal wave of persecution against the new church, they had become as bad as the heathen. So that's why the apostles take this particular psalm, Psalm 2, which is really aimed at the Gentiles, and they take it, and they apply it against the nation of Israel itself. In other words, they take the Psalm and they set it against Israel's leadership. Although the psalm in its original context is not dealing with that, it's dealing with the pagans, or the *ethnikos*, or the *gôy*, or the Gentiles invading Israel in the last days. And the reason that the apostles are doing this is because Israel had become just as bad. First century Israel, in rejecting Jesus and coming against the church, had become just as bad as the pagan Gentiles had become. So, they take Psalm 2 and they apply it against Israel, when the psalm actually is a prophecy against the Gentiles.

So, Arnold Fruchtenbaum says this: "The literal meaning of the verses in Psalm 2 refers to the Gentiles and the Gentile nations that will come against God and against the Messiah during the Campaign of Armageddon. But the application made here is to the Jewish leaders who have now spoken against God and His Anointed One. The psalmist declared that the Gentiles who in the future will rise up against God will include kings, but these Jewish leaders were not kings. Still, they gathered together against God and against His Anointed. That is the one point of similarity. Just as the Gentiles in Armageddon will come against the Lord and His Messiah, even so, these Jewish leaders have now come against the Lord and His Messiah."

In other words, it's not like the apostles are rewriting the psalm or not respecting its context. What they're doing is they're saying, here's the point of similarity. Gentiles will come against the Lord in the last days. Israel, right now, back in the first century, was coming against the Lord. And so, they were just as wicked and just as guilty as any heathen pagan gentile. So, it's a very interesting use of how they're using Psalm 2. Israel had become as bad as the Gentile nations, first century Israel.

C. Acts 4:25-30 Prayer

1. Citation of Ps. 2:1-2 (25-26)
2. **Application (27-28)**
3. Three requests (29-30)

So, after the citation of Psalm 2:1-2, now here comes the application, verses 27 and 28. You have an application to human responsibility, verse 27. And then divine responsibility, verse 28. So, notice, if you will verse 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."* And basically, what is happening here is the apostles are explaining the human side to the crucifixion of Jesus. Why was Jesus killed? Because a choice was made by human beings to kill Jesus. The same truth is expressed in Acts 2:23, where Peter back then said, *"this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you--"* speaking to the Jews-- *"nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."* Who killed Jesus? Peter in Acts 2:23 says, you Jews killed him. So, Peter puts the blame on the Jewish leadership for the execution of Jesus Christ. But when you read this very carefully, Israel was not the only culprit, because you'll see there in verse 27 the word Gentiles. Herod was their anointed ruler and they decided to sic him on, so to speak, Jesus.

But it didn't stop with Herod. It went to Pontius Pilate, who was responsible for the death of Jesus. Pilate, being a Gentile or a non-Jew. And then it says, along with the Gentiles. And then it says, along with the peoples of Israel. So, who killed Jesus? Was it the Jews or the Gentiles? The answer is yes. It's all the above. There's enough blame to go around, in other words. John 19:11, when Jesus was handed over to Pilate: *Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you--"* The Jews, in other words-- *"has the greater sin."* So, first century Israel and its leadership is very, very culpable for the crucifixion of Jesus because they should have known better. They had a Bible that the Romans didn't have, called the Old Testament. And they should have known the identity of Jesus. Instead, they ignored all the proofs He gave, and they handed Him over to Pilate for execution. And so, Jesus says to Pilate: The ones that handed me over to you are guilty of the greater sin. But does that mean that Pilate is off the hook? No, because in Luke 18:32 it says, *For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon.*

So, who exactly killed Jesus? Was it the Jews or was it the Gentiles? The answer is all the above. There's enough blame to go around for everybody. Because people sort of get hung up on this, you know? I mean, do we blame first century Jews for the

death of Christ? Yeah, you could. Should you blame the Gentiles for the first century death of Christ? Yeah, you should. And you know who else you should blame for the death of Christ? You should blame yourself. Right? Because He died for the sins of the world. And since we're all sinners, all of us put Him to death. So, there's enough blame to go around. And Peter here is revealing the human side to the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus's death took place because God's creatures used their free will to reject him. The Jews did it. The Gentiles did it. We all did it. But then when you look at verse 28, Peter gives the divine responsibility side of the issue. He says: *"to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."* Well, who predestines things? God does. So here he's talking about how Jesus was put to death because it was God the Father's plan. Now he's talking about the divine responsibility side of it. So, who killed Jesus? Was it God the Father or was it human beings? And the answer is all the above. The answer is yes. You see both free will and divine responsibility coming out here. It was the will of God the Father that God the Son would die on a cross 2000 years ago. It was the predetermined plan of God. And yet that plan was accomplished through the free will rebellion of God's creatures. So, it's a tremendous teaching here on human responsibility and divine responsibility; how God can use the free will of His creatures in rebellion against Him to execute His plan, which was developed from the foundation of the earth. It's like the betrayal of Jesus. I mean, who betrayed Christ? Zechariah says God did, because God predicted that Jesus would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, Zechariah 11. But when you read the Gospels, you see how Judas used his free will to sell out. He was angry that Jesus wasn't bringing in the kingdom on his time, on Judas's timetable. And he got impatient and used his free will to sell Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver. And when Judas made a free will choice to sell out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, he was executing a plan that was revealed 500 years in advance by the prophet Zechariah. Human responsibility and divine responsibility in the death of Christ, coming together simultaneously.

A. Report to the Apostles (23)

B. Motivation for Prayer (24)

C. Prayer (25-30)

2. Acts 4:27-28 Application

1. **Human responsibility (27)**

2. **Divine responsibility (28)**

Peter made the same point in his sermon back in Acts 2:23, He said: *"this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."* Who killed Jesus? It was the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. But then the rest of the verse says: *"you,"* referring to his Jewish audience. *"you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."* Well, if it was God's plan for Jesus to die, how could human beings be responsible? If it was human beings that caused Jesus to die, how could that be part of God's predetermined plan? And yet you see both free will and divine sovereignty coming together here. Both are in play. And you'll spend the rest of your eternity just praising the Lord that He was able to pull this off. Only God could pull this off. Only God could execute a plan that was developed from the foundations of the earth, using the rebellion of His own creatures to pull it off. And you just sit back and praise the Lord for all eternity, because only God could do something like that. So that's the application from the human side and from the divine side.

C. Acts 4:25-30 Prayer

1. Citation of Ps. 2:1-2 (25-26)
2. Application (27-28)
3. Three requests (29-30)

a. Consider their threats (29a)

b. Boldness (29b)

c. Confirmation via signs & wonders (30)

And then you go down to verses 29 through 30, and the prayer has three requests. Number one, consider their threats, verse 29. Number two, give us boldness, verse 29. And number three, confirm it with signs and wonders, verse 30. Notice verse 29: *"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants--"* see how they see themselves as slaves to God? Compared to God being their *despotés*. *"And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence."* First request is, Lord, take note of their threats. They put a gag order on us. It's kind of interesting that Peter, elsewhere in his epistle writes: But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed and do not fear their intimidation. And do not be troubled. So, when people threaten the church or the body of Christ, rather than being intimidated by that, the apostles in their prayer say, Lord, take note of these threats. The second thing that they pray for is boldness.

Second part of verse 29. *"And now, Lord, take note of their threats and grant that Your bondservants may speak Your word with all confidence."* If we're going into persecution, we need boldness, Lord. Second Timothy 1:7 says: *For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.* God is always telling us to be bold. Be courageous. Don't be intimidated. Don't wilt back at the threats from people.

He said to Joshua in Joshua 1:7 only be strong and very courageous. Joshua 1:9, Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. It's like when Jesus sent out the twelve to offer the kingdom to Israel. He says, don't worry about the fact that they could kill you. Don't fear the one who can destroy your body. You ought to be more afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Besides the very hairs on your head are numbered, is what He says in Matthew chapter 10. I mean, great advice for us when we face problems, to pray for boldness, confidence, courage. And then the third thing they pray for, verse 30, is to confirm God's presence with them through signs and wonders. Verse 30: *"while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."* Now when they pray for signs and wonders, they're speaking as apostles. The apostles are the foundations of the church. Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the cornerstone. And there were certain signs accompanying apostles. Second Corinthians 12:12 says: *The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles.* In other words, there was a level of miracles that was taking place with the apostles that you don't see throughout the church age. You would expect miracles of the kind we're reading about here to follow the apostles, since they are the foundations of the church.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says: "What they were asking in the third prayer request is the continuous ability to perform these miracles of healing for the purpose of authenticating their message to their audience. Again, throughout the book of Acts, the only ones who performed miracles were the apostles and their delegates. [Meaning those on whom the apostles laid hands.] Believers in general were not performing [and there's over 5000 believers now as we've been studying the book of Acts] signs and wonders, as people sometimes teach."

So, when you see the apostles saying, confirm the message through signs, wonders, and healing, they're speaking of their foundational role as apostles. Now, having said that, I do believe that we should pray. And I do believe God does supernatural things today. In terms of opening doors, convicting people of sin, giving us boldness. But don't take a passage like this as if God has to be performing great miracles in your life every single second, or you can't be used by God. These men are speaking as foundations of the church because they were apostles. You look at verse 30, the second part of the verse, it says: *"through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* You'll notice the focus on the name of Jesus. Acts 4:12 earlier in the chapter says: *"there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."* So, there's a huge emphasis on the name of Jesus. And we've talked, I think, in the past about that. So, Peter and John report back to the rest of the apostles about the Sanhedrin's gag order, verse 23. You see their motivation for prayer, verse 24. You see the prayer itself, verses 25 through 30. As they're quoting Psalm 2:1-2 as they're laying out three requests. And then guess what? Verse 31, God answers the prayer.

IV. Apostles' Prayer Acts 4:23-31

- I. Report to the Apostles (23)
- II. Motivation for the Prayer (24)
- III. Prayer (25-30)
- IV. **Answer to the Prayer (31)**

I mean, sometimes we get discouraged because we don't see immediate answers. But sometimes I have to be honest with you, when I pray about something, sometimes I'm surprised at how fast the answer comes. And that's what's happening here with God answering the prayer request immediately on behalf of His apostles. Three things happen in verse 31: The place is shaken, they're filled with the Holy Spirit, and they start speaking boldly. Notice what God does. Verse 31: *And when they had prayed--* Doesn't say two months later, there's an immediate answer. *And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken--* The word for shaken here is *saleuō*, which is used of an earthquake elsewhere in the book of Acts.

Acts 16:26 says: *and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; [saleuō] and immediately all the doors were*

opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. In other words, there was a physical shaking of the building where they were meeting. The second thing God does is He fills all these people with the Holy Spirit. Verse 31: And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit... Now here's an area of confusion, because when you get saved, the Holy Spirit takes residence in you. You're baptized in the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation. And if that's true, why do you need to be filled with the Spirit? First Corinthians 12:13 says: For by one spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Notice that this is something that already happened to us. Gee pastor, I want to get baptized in the Holy Spirit. Well, are you a Christian? Yeah. Well, it already happened to you. Congratulations. At the point of faith alone in Christ alone. So, if they were already baptized in the Holy Spirit, why do they need to be filled? Well, Ephesians 5:18 says this: And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. The word filling is *plēroō*. And the idea is to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit.

And Pastor Jim prayed that before we got started tonight. He prayed for me, prayed that the Holy Spirit would-- I can't remember if he said filled, but would come alongside him and work. But why would he have to pray that if I've already been born again and baptized in the Spirit? Why do I have to be filled with the Spirit? Well, the answer to that is in my natural self; I do things in sin to limit the Spirit's influence in my life. I can resist the Holy Spirit. Acts 7:51. I can quench the Holy Spirit. First Thessalonians 5:19. I can grieve the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30. So before I want to step out and hopefully be used by God in any sense, I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit because in my daily life, I can do things that limit His influence in my life. And when I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, it's not as if I'm getting more of the Holy Spirit. It's more the idea that the Holy Spirit is getting more of me. So even these apostles had to be filled with the Holy Spirit to be bold, to do what God has called him to do, to stand up under and against persecution.

So, the place is shaken. These folks are filled with the Holy Spirit. And then the third answer to the prayer is they began to speak with boldness. Verse 31, very end of the verse: *...and [they] began to speak the word of God with boldness.* Again, 2 Timothy 1:7, For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but love, power and self discipline. We're, as Joshua was told, to be strong and very courageous. Be strong and

courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed. So, they were given boldness to do God's will. They were given boldness to do God's work. And what's interesting about this is when they were filled with the Spirit and given this boldness, it says they began to speak the Word of God with boldness. They weren't running around giving their own interpretations of things. Their whole focus was to speak God's word, not their own word. In fact, if you back up to verse 29. As part of their prayer, they say, *"...grant that your bondservants [doulos] may speak Your word with all confidence."* See when we pray to the Lord for boldness, are we praying that He gives us an opportunity to speak our own mind, or His mind? Because if you're interested in speaking your own mind, God has no obligation to empower us to do anything. But if our commitment is to speak His mind revealed in His Word, then you'll find that you'll have tremendous boldness to do what He wants you to do.

It's His word that has power, not our own. Remember Isaiah 55:10-11? *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bare and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."* God's word never returns void. It accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent. Now my words and my ideas do return void, but His word doesn't. So, you know, sometimes we think, well, I'm just not having the impact I want to have in ministry. Well, whose word are you speaking? Is it your own or is it God's? Because these promises relate to His word. These apostles are interested in speaking His truth. Jeremiah 23:29, *"Is not My word like a fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"* It's his word that's a fire. It's His word that's like a hammer. A simile is used here-- like a hammer which takes a rock and can shatter it. That's what His word will do.

And so you see these apostles focused on God's word. So that ends the apostle's prayer as they are now, the church now is under an initial form of persecution from the Sanhedrin. And then we'll pick it up with verses 32 through 37 next week, where you'll see the church gathering in unity again, just like it did at the end of Acts 2. And that church meeting and the description of it is preparatory for Acts 5:1-11, where two people are going to come into the church meeting with impure motives. And they're

going to be slain in the Holy Spirit. Which is not a good thing, by the way, to be slain in the Spirit. And that's going to happen in Acts 5:1-11.