

Important Lessons from Acts – Prayer, Power, Provision - Acts 4:23-31

Today we are going to look at an important lesson from Luke as he helps us better understand the need for communal prayer and how praying together can bring about powerful results and supernatural provisions. Three Ps from Acts chapter 4. Before we get to the lesson though, it is important to understand the context which prompted Luke to include such a lesson in the book of Acts for us to read. Peter, who had John as a traveling companion, had just healed an older man who had been lame since birth. And immediately after this, Peter stood in Solomon's Portico and delivered his second major sermon about repentance and salvation. Now, this portico, or porch area had become an important gathering place in Jerusalem for the Apostles and the early Christians, much to the dismay of the Sanhedrin. It was part of the Second Temple, located on the eastern side of the Temple Mount overlooking the Kidron Valley, and offered a covered walkway supported by a series of columns which provided shelter and a comfortable place for teaching and discussion. One note about this meeting place is that it established a connection between the Old Covenant, centered around the Jews and the Temple, and the New Covenant, ushered in by Jesus, carried forward by His apostles, and centered on salvation for and the temple being the heart of the new believer. Solomon's porch stands as a symbolic bridge between Jewish tradition and the newly emerging Christian faith. It was a place where Jews and Gentiles could witness the power of God and hear the message of salvation. Peter's powerful preaching coupled with God's powerful healing continued to infuriate the religious leaders of that day. Look at the beginning verses of chapter 4 in Acts. **Read Acts 4:1-4.**

So, they arrested Peter and John. Of course, waiting till late in the day, so they could hold them overnight and then question them the next morning. The actions on this day from Peter and John annoyed them so much that they deemed it necessary to call in all the important people for the interrogation. Present for this was the high priest, Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander who were members of the high-priestly family. The religious royalty was on hand. Also, the other Temple rulers, elders, and scribes of Jerusalem were present. In other words, the who's who of the Jewish leaders came to hear an explanation for what Peter and John had done. Look at what happens next. **Read Acts 4:5-12.** I love what follows in verses **13 and 14.**

How long has it been since someone has recognized that you have been with Jesus? I don't mean this in an ugly fashion; I simply want to challenge you to consider the answer. If it has been a while, then there are some changes that need to be made.

And then, these highly educated, pious, who's who of the Jews found themselves speechless and with no evidence against Peter and John. But they couldn't just release them. So, they decided to threaten them and strongly encouraged Peter and John to "STOP" doing what they were doing. Boy, I love their response. **Read Acts 4:18-22.**

This brings us to the first point from today's lesson. **Read Acts 4:23-30.** When faced with opposition and the threat of further persecution, upon their release from "jail," the first thing Peter and John did was gather with all the friends and explain what had just happened. Not to

make light of the situation, but to explain what was coming down the road. Aside from this though, Peter and John had good news to report. I can picture them saying, “We got to tell them about Jesus! They realized we were like Jesus! They realized that it was God’s Spirit doing the work and not our own. And then, they told us not to tell others about Jesus!” The people responded by praying. Here we see that the people *raised their voice*: They prayed *vocally*. It is certainly possible to pray silently in our minds, but we focus our thoughts more effectively when we speak out in prayer. Notice also that *Voice* is in the singular. This means that they did not all pray individually, with their own agenda, speaking at the same time. One person prayed and all agreed with that one, so that they were really praying with one *voice*.

The way they prayed is significant as well. First, following what Jesus had taught them, they began by acknowledging God’s sovereignty. We need to make sure we not only recognize God for who He is, but know in our hearts that God, *the maker of heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them*, is the One with control over all things and has power over all things. Two things come from this. 1 – We need to pray together more often. 2 – We need to focus on God’s sovereign involvement in those prayers.

After acknowledging God’s sovereignty, the people turned to Scripture as part of their petition. In this case, they used Psalm 2:1-2. We don’t know specifically who offered these words from Psalm, but whoever did so spoke for all the disciples (remember they prayed together). They recognized that these words of the Old Testament were really the words of God. God had spoken by the mouth of His servant, King David. This is a key point. The apostles and earliest Christians believed that the words of King David, recorded in Psalm 2, were the words of the Lord God, said by the mouth of King David. The earliest Christians had a high view of the Holy Scriptures. If we want to ramp up our prayers another notch, we must have this same regard for God’s Holy Word. Why is praying Scripture important? Scripture provides guidance and direction. Their words help us understand God’s will. They inspire and encourage us. Prayer is how we communicate with God. Praying the Scriptures enriches the conversation. Finally, praying with the Scriptures in mind helps prepare us for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It wasn’t until after they acknowledged God and expressed complete confidence in God’s ability that they got to their request. How often do we skip right to the request? More often than we would admit, I think. Their request is filled with God’s purpose and glory in mind, not the comfort and advancement of the disciples or of the church. It was quite the contrary. They asked for things they knew would lead to more confrontation, not less. They did not ask to do miracles themselves. They understood that Jesus heals by His hand; and that He does it from heaven through His Spirit, through His people. It is a trap of the enemy to desire to be used for doing miraculous things. Often, this desire is rooted in pride that wants everyone to see just how greatly God can use me.

The last point of our lesson is that God will respond to the prayers coming from His people. Look at how He responded in this instance. **Read Acts 4:31.**