

Prayer is Power
October 14, 2007
Acts 4:23-31
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Synopsis:

Last week we looked at how the good news is both *deed* and *word*.

God acts, we speak (Peter heals and speech)

Table and pulpit

This is the good news of Jesus Christ.

But what happens when the good news hits resistance?

-People persecute you

-You get sick

-You mess up

What do we do then?

The early church learned through persecution to pray for boldness. Here's why: The all-powerful God is at work even through resistance to bring the good news of Jesus Christ.

I.

Something Happens

Acts 4:23 "They reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them"

READ v 23

The early believers were in the middle of a crisis

What happens when the crisis comes?

-Cancer diagnosis

-Family struggles

-Spouse dies

-Job fails

-House mortgage

-Persistent depression

*Here, actual persecution by authorities
(GO BACK THROUGH ACTS 3-4)

What do we *think, do* in these circumstances?

Pray: Help Lord! Get me out of this!

II.

We Respond

Acts 4:24 “When they heard it, they raised their voices together”

Let’s watch what these people did

The rhythm of the book of Acts is

God Acts	= Pentecost, healing
They Speak	= Peter speaks
Witness Happens	= People respond
Worship Happens (prayer)	= Community gathers

Here we look at the worship section

Prayer: What is prayer?

- meditation? OM!, Centering, stress reduce
- Email request? Waiting for reply (Answer-er)

We know that Jesus prayed (Lord’s Prayer)

We know that apostles prayed (Book of Acts) (1:14, 24; 2:42)

What are we doing when we pray?

What does God do when we pray?

III.

God Acts

Acts 4:24 “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea and everything in them”

READ v24 (notice Greek *despotes*)

Prayer: God is sovereign

- they witness to God in charge
- use Ps 146:5-6
- modeled on Hezekiah (Isa 37) and Ezra (Neh 9)
- When disaster comes, people pray
- Starts with God is sovereign

Sovereignty:

- Bible: God is creator, sustainer, redeemer

- Kushner *When Bad Things Happen*
 Good versus Evil (Manichaeism)
 God is good, powerful; there is evil
 -Heidelberg Catechism Question 1 (READ)
 -Reformed Church: God is in charge
 -Lord's prayer: "Thy will be done"

Prayer is engaging an in-charge God
 When you pray, God is already in charge, awake, present

IV.

God Plans

Acts 4:28 "To do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place"

God has a plan:

- Isaiah preaches this
- Campus Crusade (God has a wonderful plan)
- Does God's plan include suffering?

READ vv25-26

- Scripture quoted is Psalm 2
- Gentiles, peoples, kings, rulers
- Lord, Messiah
- *conflict

Does conflict mean God isn't there?

READ v27

- Herod, Pilate (rulers)
- Gentiles (Romans)
- Peoples (Israel leaders)
- God, Jesus
- *conflict

READ v28

- hand, plan (will), predestined (Rom 8)
- God's plan includes conflict and suffering

*If this is true, how do we pray?

- Jeff: Get me out of pain

- Psalms: Get me out of pain
- Help me!

God's plan in the world goes right through suffering, persecution, pain.
Jesus on the cross isn't a mistake.

*Suffering does not take you out of God's hand.

IV.

God Engages

Acts 4:29 "Look at their threats . . . speak your word with boldness"

Prayer recognizes pain

- real threats from leaders
- real trouble in our lives

Prayer seeks God's plan in pain

- We pray for relief from pain
- They pray to speak with boldness through pain

*When we come to worship, pray, understand God present, the Holy Spirit shows up

- fills you
- enables your courage to speak