

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: A New Way Of Life: Acts 4:13-14, 18-20

Answer to Prayer Requires Preparation!

A rather lazy student noticed that a fellow student always recited her lessons well, so he said to her, "How is it that you always say your lesson so perfectly?" She replied, "I always pray that I may say my lessons well." "Do you?" said the boy somewhat surprised. "Well, then, I will pray, too." However, the next morning he could not even repeat a word of his assigned lesson. Perplexed, he ran to his friend and reproached her as deceitful. "I prayed," said he, "but I could not say a single word of my lesson." "Perhaps," rejoined the other, "you didn't study hard enough!" "I didn't study at all," answered the boy. "I thought I didn't have to study after praying about it."

Prayer Limited

There was a sexton in a church who was very devoted to the pastor. A new pastor came, and someone asked the sexton what he thought of the new preacher. "Well," said the sexton, "I like him pretty well, but when it comes to praying, the former preacher asked the Lord for things the new preacher doesn't even know the Lord's got." Our immaturity and finite nature many times do not permit us to see what God has for us, blessings which are far better than those we want for ourselves.

PERSECUTION, PRAYER, AND POWER

The early church had none of the "advantages" that some ministries boast of and depend on today they did not have big budgets provided by wealthy donors. Their pastors lacked credentials from the accepted schools, nor did they have the endorsement of the influential political leaders of that day. Most of their ministers had jail records and would probably have a hard time today joining our churches, let alone leading them. What really was the secret of their success? This chapter provides the answer the Christians of the early **church knew how to pray so that God's hand could work in mighty power.**

When asked to explain the secret of his remarkable ministry, the noted British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon replied, "My people pray for me." St. Augustine said, "Pray as though everything depended on God, and work as though everything depended on you.", **Prayer is not an escape from responsibility; it is our response to God's ability. True prayer energizes us for service and battle.**

Once again, the focus of attention is on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ

(Acts 4:7,10,12,17-18). In this chapter, we see what three groups of people do with His name.

The Apostles: Defending His Name (Acts 4:5-14)

The court (vv. 5-7). The court was essentially composed of the high priest's family. The Jewish religious system had become so corrupt that the offices were passed from one relative to another without regard for the Word of God. When Annas was deposed from the priesthood, Caiaphas his son-in-law was appointed. In fact, five of Annas' sons held the office at one time or another. Somebody has defined a "nepotist" as "a man who, being evil, knows how to give good gifts to his children." Annas certainly qualified.

This was an official meeting of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:15), the same council that a few months before had condemned Jesus to die. In fact, these officials recognized Peter and John as the associates of Jesus (Acts 4:13). **The Sanhedrin was charged with the responsibility of protecting the Jewish faith, and this meant that they had to examine every new teacher and teaching that appeared in the land (Deuteronomy 13).** They certainly had the right to investigate what the church was doing, but they did not have the right to arrest innocent men and then refuse to honestly examine the evidence.

Their question was legal, but they did everything they could to avoid admitting that a miracle had taken place (Acts 4:14). They were evasive and merely referred to the miracle as "this." They were probably scornful as well, so that their question might be paraphrased, **"Where did common people like you get the power and authority to do a thing like this?"** It was once again the question of "By whose name?" After all, the Apostles might be in league with the devil! Even Satan can perform miracles!

The case (vv. 8-14). Peter spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Note that Peter was again filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4) and would experience another filling before the day ended (Acts 4:31).

Peter respectfully began with an explanation of how the miracle occurred. Certainly the members of the Sanhedrin had seen the crippled beggar many times, and perhaps they had even given alms to turn and piously prayed for him. How was this well-known man healed? **"By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth!" Those words must have pierced the hearts of the members of the council!** They thought they had finished with the Prophet from Nazareth, and now His followers were telling everybody that Jesus was alive! Since the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, Peter's statement was almost a declaration of war!

But the Spirit was telling Peter what to say (Luke 21:12-15), and the apostle quoted Psalms 118:22, definitely a messianic reference (Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:4-8). He made it clear that the members of the council were "the builders" and that they had rejected God's Stone, Jesus Christ.

The image of "the stone" was not new to these men who were experts in the Old Testament Scriptures. They knew that the "rock" was a symbol of God (Deuteronomy 32:4,15,18,31; 2 Samuel 22:2; Psalms 18:2; Isaiah 28:16), and that the Prophet Daniel had used the rock to picture Messiah and the coming of His kingdom on earth (Daniel 2:31-45). The Jews stumbled over the Rock (Romans 9:32; 1 Corinthians 1:23) and rejected Him, just as Psalms 118:22 had predicted. However, to those who have trusted Him, Jesus Christ is the precious Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-8) and the chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

Peter went on to explain that Jesus is not only the Stone, but He is also the Saviour (Acts 4:12). Peter saw in the healing of the beggar a picture of the spiritual healing that comes in salvation. **"Made whole" in Acts 4:9 is a translation of the same Greek word that is translated "saved" in Acts 4:12, for salvation means wholeness and spiritual**

health. Jesus Christ is the Great Physician who alone can heal mankind's greatest malady, the sickness of sin (Mark 2:14-17). Of course, Peter also had "all the people of Israel" in mind as he spoke (Acts 4:10) because the message was still going out exclusively to the Jews. Even Psalms 118, from which Peter quoted, speaks of a future national salvation for Israel.

I. God's Way of Life:

God's kingdom is nothing like the kingdom of the world. It functions on different principles with different purposes. It is ruled by love, not power, humility, and not ambition. God wants the world to see and know Him and His ways not you and your ways.

What does it mean to be holy?

God is holy in the sense that He is all pure and righteous, both in character and in deed.

- Isaiah 6:3 (And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.")
- Revelation 4:8 (Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.")

The word sanctification means a separation or a setting apart unto God.

1. Of People

- Leviticus 20:26 (You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.)
- Numbers 8:17 (Every firstborn male in Israel, whether man or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself.)
- Deuteronomy 7:6 (For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.)
- Nehemiah 10:28 (The rest of the people--priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand--
- Jeremiah 1:5 (Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.)

God's way is perfect: Psalms 18:30-32

- PS 18:30 As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.
- PS 18:31 For who is God besides the LORD? And who is the Rock except our God?
- PS 18:32 It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.

God's ways are not like man's: Isaiah 55: 8,9

- ISA 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.
- ISA 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Sinners stumble at His ways: Hosea 14:9

- HOS 14:9 Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

His ways are everlasting: Habakkuk 3:6

- HAB 3:6 He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.

God's ways are unsearchable: Romans 11:33 - 36

- RO 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!
- RO 11:34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"
- RO 11:35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?"
- RO 11:36 For from him and through him and to him are all things.

God's ways are Just and True: Revelation 15:3

- and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

II. Looking at men through God's eyes: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

- 2CO 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.
- 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
- 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:
- 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
- 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.
- 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Christian's men must be kingdom citizens and function by kingdom ways. Jesus guided ordinary men such as fishermen, tax collectors, and students to become His servants in their world, working through them to turn the Roman Empire upside down. Multitudes entered the Kingdom because of their faithful witness.

And God does it still today, like when someone in the business community were moved to begin a Bible study. They obeyed God and trusted He was already working in their marketplace. To their joy, others responded. Some over time were saved. Others found their marriages changed. God's word was multiplied many times over as the truth changed lives. This is God's way, and He can do it through your life too.

Kill the Spider

A Christian who attended prayer meeting faithfully always confessed the same things during testimony time. His prayer was seldom varied: "O Lord, since we last gathered together, the cobwebs have come between us and Thee. Clear away the cobwebs, that we may again see Thy face." One day a brother called out, "O Lord God, kill the spider!"