

“That They May Be One”
Acts 4:23-37

Introduction:

1. Let's Turn Back In Our Bibles Tonight:
 - To Acts 4 - Where Last Sunday:
 - In Our Journey Through Acts:
 - We Found Peter & John On Trial:
 - In Jerusalem - Before The Distinguished Council Of The Jewish Sanhedrin!
 - And The Men On That Council:
 - Who - Just Weeks Before:
 - Condemned The Lord Jesus:
 - To Be Crucified:
 - Where The Same Men:
 - Who - In 4:17-18 - Decided To “Straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. / And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus!”
 - And So:
 - Those Same Rulers & Priests & Elders & Scribes:
 - Continued To Resist:
 - The Name & The Work Of Jesus!
2. But - Jesus Was - Without Question:
 - Continuing To Do Mighty Works Before Them!
 - And So - According To 4:21 - “When they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done!”
 - And This Is What Happened Next!
 - 4:23 - “And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them!”
 - The Phrase Here Translated In The King James:
 - “Their Own Company” Is Translated In Other Ways As Well!
 - Its Been Translated As:
 - “Their Companions” Or “Their Own People” Or Even “Their Friends!”
 - All Good Translations!
 - But The Word Itself:
 - Simply Means:
 - “Their Own!”
 - What A Fitting & Beautiful Description:
 - For Those 5,000 Plus People:
 - Who Had, By Now, Believed In Jesus Christ As Their Savior!
 - No Matter Their Past!
 - No Matter Their Country Of Origin!
 - No Matter Their Treatment Of Jesus!
 - They Were All United In Christ:
 - As One - And Were Simply “Their Own!”
3. Now - We Don't Know **Where** The Disciples Went:
 - In Order To Meet Up With “Their Own” - But:
 - It Was Probably Somewhere In Jerusalem:
 - And Possibly Back In The Upper Room!
 - More Than Likely, Not All 5,000 Were Together, But The Place Would Have To Have Been Large Enough:
 - For A Good-Sized Assembly Of New Believers!
 - But - What Was The Very Next Thing:
 - This Young & Growing Church Did:
 - After Hearing About The Threats:
 - Against Peter & John:
 - As Well As Themselves?
 - They Prayed!
 - And We Find The Prayer And:

1. *The Appeal Of God's People:*

- In 4:24-30 - Where They Prayed Together - "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: / Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? / The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. / For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, / For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. / And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, / By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus!"

- What An Amazing Prayer We Have Recorded For Us!

- A Prayer Born Out Of Persecution & Breathed Out In Faith!

- They Prayed & Appealed To:

- God As The Great Creator!

- In 4:24 - To The "Lord" - Who Had "Made Heaven, And Earth, And The Sea, And All that In Them Is!"

- They Knew That The God Who Created All Things:

- Cared For All Things & Would Certainly Care For Them!

- He Did Not Leave Them:

- To Fend For Themselves:

- As They Were Threatened By All The Powers That Be!

- They Also Prayed & Appealed To:

- God As The Great Communicator!

- In 4:25-26 - They Remembered & Repeated:

- God's Own Words To Them From The Second Psalm:

- "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? / The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ!"

- They Realized That What Happened To Them:

- And What Happened To Jesus:

- Was Something That Came As No Surprise To The Lord!

- Instead - It Was All Part Of His Plan To Provide Redemption For His People - For Those Who Would Believe In Him!

- They Also Prayed & Appealed To:

- God As The Great Controller!

- In 4:27-18 - They Admitted - "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, / For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done!"

- They Were Confident That:

- *All* That Was *Done*:

- Had *All* Been *Determined* By The Lord!

- And This Is Why - Back In:

- 4:24 - They Addressed Him As "Lord!"

- Now - Usually - When You See The Word "Lord" Translated - It Is From The Greek Word That Means "Master!"

- But Here - The Word Translated "Lord" Is A Bit Unusual! It Is A Word That We Use To Call Someone A *Despot* - Which Is A Supreme Ruler With Absolute Power & Authority!

- And This Is How That Early Church:

- Saw The Lord & Prayed To The Lord!

- They Also Prayed & Appealed To:

- God As The Great Comforter!

- They Knew That:

- If They Asked:

- It Would Be Given Them!

- If They Sought:

- They Would Find!

- And If They Knocked:

- It Would Be Opened Unto Them! (Luke 11:9)
- And So - In 4:29-30 - They Prayed In Faith & With Great Expectation - “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, / By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus!”
- And Their Prayer Did Not Fall On Deaf Ears!
 - Because Immediately - In 4:30 - We Read About:

2. *The Answer To God's People!*

- 4:30 - “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness!”
 - What An Amazing Display:
 - Of God's Own Approval Of & Answer To:
 - Their Prayer!
 - And This Would Have Encouraged:
 - *All* The Disciples:
 - From The Apostles To The Common Members:
 - To Speak Up & To Speak Out:
 - For The Lord - “With Boldness!”
 - But Even As They Continued:
 - To **Reach Out** To Others:
 - With The Gospel - Through The Presence & The Power Of the Holy Spirit:
 - They Also **Reached In**:
 - To Each Other - Because Of:

3. *The Affection Of God's People!*

- Which We Also Find Taking Place!
 - And In 4:32-35 - We Read About:
- A Great Expression Of Their Love & Unity:
 - “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. / And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. / Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, / And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need!”
 - We Find In That Early Church:
 - A Great Communion & A Great Charity!
 - The Communion Of The Church:
 - Was The Result Of Being:
 - “Of One Heart And Of One Soul!” (4:32)
 - And This Led To:
 - The Charity Of The Church:
 - Where They Did Whatever It Took:
 - To Meet The Needs Of One Another!
 - The Christians In That Early Church:
 - Saw Each Other & Treated Each Other:
 - As Family!
 - And The Love That Was Shown & Shared:
 - Was Spontaneous & Voluntary & Passionate!
 - There Have Been Some:
 - Who Have Used These Verses:
 - To Promote Political Ideas:
 - Like Communism & Socialism!
 - But What Happened In That Early Church:
 - Was Nothing Of The Sort!
 - Because - First - The Church Was Not & Is Not A Political Body!
 - It Was & Is A Spiritual Body!
 - But Also - Everything Given:

- Was Voluntary & Was Used - Not To Make Everyone Equal - But To Meet Everyone's Legitimate Needs!

- And It Was, Truly, A Great Expression:

- Of Christian Love & Unity!

- But We Also Are Given A:

- Great Example Of Their Love & Unity:

- In 4:36-37 - Where We Are First Introduced:

- To A Man Who Would Come To Be Known As Barnabas - "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, / Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet!"

* One Of The Things We Can Learn From These Verses:

- Is That The Early Church Was A Unified Church!

- And I Believe It Was In Answer To Jesus' Own Prayer:

- For His People - Back In John 17:11:

- "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are!"

- But - What Was It:

- That God Used:

- To Answer Jesus' Prayer For His People?

- What Was It That God Used & The Church Used:

- To Foster Such Unity - As We Just Read About?

- In The Time We Have Left:

- I Would Like To Go Back And Look At:

- Some Of Those Factors:

- That We Too Can & Should Use:

- In Our Own Church - So That We Might "Be One" As Well!

* The First Thing We See Is That:

1. Persecution Unifies The Church!

- I Think This Is The Testimony Of The Persecuted Church:

- From The Very Beginning!

- Because - Even When - In 4:23 - Peter & John Were Let Go - They Immediately:

- "Went To Their Own!"

- And Where Was "Their Own?"

- They Were Meeting Somewhere - **Together!**

- The Trial Of The Sanhedrin:

- And The Threats Of The Sanhedrin:

- Brought God's People Together!

- And So - Even Though This Does Not Mean:

- That We Should Seek Out Persecution:

- We Should Not Be Surprised Nor Petrified:

- When It Happens! Instead - See It As One Way That God Uses:

- To Purify & To Unify His Church!

* Another Thing We Need To Recognize Is That:

2. Prayer Unifies The Church!

- Because - What Did The People Do:

- After Hearing The Report Of The Apostles?

- 4:24 - "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord!"

- And They Prayed!

- We Need To Remember That:

- Prayer Unifies The Church!

- And This Is Why We Need To:

- Pray For Each Other!

- The People Especially Prayed:

- That The Lord Would - 4:29 - "Grant Unto [His] Servants!" - Who Were Likely The Apostles &

- Other Preachers - "That With All Boldness They Might Speak Thy Word!"
- We Need To Pray For Each Other!
- But We Also Need To:
- Pray With Each Other!
- Even As They Did!
- They Were **Together** In **One Place** & With **One Accord**:
 - And - 4:24 - They "Lifted Up **Their Voice** To God!"
- One Thing That Is A "Sweet Savor" To The Lord:
 - Is A Chorus Of Prayer:
 - From His People - Meeting Together As One!
 - And God Often Chooses To Bless In A Special Way The Church That Prays For Each Other – With Each Other!
 - But We Also Need To:
- Pray Like Each Other!
 - The Prayer Recorded For Us Here:
 - Was The United Prayer Of All Their Hearts!
 - Yes - There Probably Was A Single Member Who Led This Prayer!
 - But - The Church - As A Whole:
 - Prayed Along With This Prayer:
 - With All Of Their Minds & With All Of Their Hearts - Until The Final "Amen" Resounded Through The Place Where They Met!
- It Is This Kind Of Prayer:
 - That God Will Use To Unify & To Bless Our Church!
 - When We Pray:
 - For Each Other!
 - With Each Other!
 - And Like Each Other!

* Another Important Element That We Find In Acts 4 - Is That:

3. Truth Unifies The Church!

- The People Of That Church:
 - Believed In Some Fundamental Truths:
 - About The Nature & The Work Of God!
 - And Instead Of Dividing Them - As They Humbly Believed & Submitted Themselves To God's Truth Found In God's Word:
 - It Strengthened Their Unity!
 - They Were Unified In:
- The Truth Of God's Creation:
 - Of All Things!
 - Isn't This Something That The Church Today:
 - Needs To Hear & To Heed!
 - But - They Were Also Unified In:
- The Truth Of God's Control:
 - Of All Things!
 - He Is Sovereign Over Everything:
 - And Everybody!
- There Are Other Truths:
 - That May At Times Be Difficult For Us:
 - To Understand & To Believe!
 - But When We Are Humble Before The Lord & His Word:
 - His Truth Is What Will Unify The Church!

* One More Thing That I Think We Can See Is That, Ultimately:

4. The Spirit Unifies The Church!

- According To 4:31 - In Answer To Their Unified Prayer:
 - "The place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness!"
 - We Need The Holy Spirit Of God:

- To Fill Us!
- Individually & As A Church!
- We Need The Holy Spirit:
 - To Fill Us With His Purity!
 - To Fill Us With His Power!
 - And To Fill Us With His Purpose!
- Because When The Spirit Of God:
 - Fills His People:
 - There Will Be Unity!
 - Because Our Thoughts Will Reflect His Thoughts! Our Heart Will Reflect His Heart!
 - Our Will Will Reflect His Will! And Our Life Will Reflect His Life!

Conclusion:

1. And In This Way:
 - Christ's Prayer Will Continue To Be Answered!
 - "That [We] May Be One!"
 - How Will You Pursue After:
 - This Kind Of Unity In The Church Today?
 - Will You Commit Yourself:
 - To Prayer?
 - Not Just For Each Other, But With Each Other & Like Each Other?
 - Will You Commit Yourself:
 - To Truth?
 - Are You Willing To Be Humble & Teachable:
 - Before God And His Word?
 - Will You Commit Yourself:
 - To The Holy Spirit?
 - To Walk In Him & To Seek To Live Your Life:
 - Being Filled By Him?
2. These Are What God Can Use:
 - To Bring About The Purity:
 - And The Unity - That We Need:
 - Within Our Church!

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