

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon August 7, 2022

“Understanding and Responding to Persecution, Part 4 – Filled with the Holy Spirit”

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

## I. Introduction

- a. Have you ever longed for revival to occur around us, during our lives, so that we could see it with our own eyes, experience the poured out Presence of God together like that?
  - i. “First, let me tell you what I mean by revival. An evangelistic campaign or special meeting is not revival. In a successful evangelistic campaign or crusade, there will be hundreds or even thousands of people making decisions for Jesus Christ, but the community remains untouched, and the churches continue much the same as before the outreach. In revival, God moves in the district. Suddenly, the community becomes God-conscious. The Spirit of God grips men and women in such a way that even work is given up as people give themselves to waiting upon God. In the midst of the Lewis Awakening, the parish minister at Barvas wrote, “The Spirit of the Lord was resting wonderfully on the different townships of the region. His Presence was in the homes of the people, on meadow and moorland, and even on the public roads.” This presence of God is the supreme characteristic of a God-sent revival. Of the hundreds who found Jesus Christ during this time fully seventy-five per cent were saved before they came near a meeting or heard a sermon by myself or any other ministers in the parish. The power of God, the Spirit of God, was moving in operation, and the fear of God gripped the souls of men - this is God-sent revival as distinct from special efforts in the field of evangelism.” From a message by Presbyterian pastor, Duncan Campbell, “When the Mountains Flowed Down” (“It describes some of his experiences and thoughts on the revival which occurred from 1949-1953 in the Hebrides Islands of Lewis and Harris, off the north-western coast of Scotland.”)
    1. [https://www.revival-library.org/revival\\_histories/evangelical/twentieth\\_century/hebrides\\_revival.shtml](https://www.revival-library.org/revival_histories/evangelical/twentieth_century/hebrides_revival.shtml)
- b. Today’s Sermon: Acts 4:31 “Understanding and Responding to Persecution, Part 4 – Filled with the Holy Spirit”
  - i. Context: When they had prayed; Assembled Together
  - ii. Answered Prayer: The Place was Shaken
  - iii. Answered Prayer: They Spoke the Word of God with Boldness
  - iv. Power & Presence: All Filled with the Holy Spirit
  - v. Questions to know, love and obey God
- c. In the first sermon on this section, we looked more closely at Psalm 2, noting a few simple Biblical principles:
  - i. All resistance against the Lord Jesus Christ is futile. Even all the collected power and knowledge of all mankind, combined with all the abilities of the entire demonic realm, cannot ever thwart the King of kings and His plan His people, His Kingdom and this world.

- ii. The rebels against Jesus Christ hate His law and want to remove His Holy Standard from the face of the earth.
  - iii. Such rebellion stokes anger and wrath within God the Father, Who responds with derisive laughter at His foes. In spite of their best efforts to destroy Christ, the Father raised Jesus from the dead and placed Jesus on the throne of the universe, at the Father's right hand.
  - iv. The Lord Jesus Christ was placed on the throne of the universe at His ascension, even though Herod and Pilate and the Jews murdered Him on the cross. These same enemies continue to persecute the Church in Acts and throughout history.
  - v. The entire planet and all its rulers have been given to Christ as His inheritance, His possession. All authority in heaven and on earth is His.
  - vi. All those political and ecclesiastical rulers who do not repent of their rebellion against Jesus and gladly serve and worship Him will eventually be destroyed by Him.
- d. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> sermon, we looked at how the disciples responded to persecution by being together, sharing their common plight together, and by remaining of one mind and one heart, of one accord together. The attack did not separate them. It more deeply united them around Christ, His Kingdom and His commandments.
  - e. Last week, we looked at how the disciples prayed together, primarily noting how they called out to God based upon His Word, focusing upon His Power in Creation, His Promises in Psalm 2, and His overarching sovereignty and Providence in all things. Their request for boldness shows their humility. Their request for God's displayed power also shows their humility, their commitment to His glory, His Name being elevated on high.
  - f. Now, this week, we see the Lord's response to their prayers. May this encourage us all more and more toward right response to persecution and stronger desire for corporate kingdom prayer.
- II. Context: When they had prayed; Assembled Together
- a. "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."
  - b. Assembled Together
    - i. As noted earlier in verse 23, the disciples are all together in one place. Their common threat and their common love for Christ and for one another draws them together. They know they need one another. Even more, they know they need to be before the throne of grace together.
  - c. "They"
    - i. Note the emphasis here. It was not one person or just a few people who prayed. The entire group of disciples participated in the prayers that were lifted up before God. While it's unlikely that every person prayed, they were all listening and agreeing with the prayers that were being lifted up to God. They all agreed to cry out to God, praising Him as the Mighty Creator, extolling Christ as the King of kings, and rejoicing in His

supreme sovereignty over all of history, including their current persecution. They all agreed together regarding their need for God to join them in considering the severe threats, their need for boldness to overcome their tendency to panic and flee, and their need for God to demonstrate His power via healings, signs and wonders.

- ii. They are filled with hope and expectancy as they cry out to God, NOT despair, self-focus or hopelessness. They remember the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ. They remember that all resistance to Him is futile. They remember He will destroy His and their enemies as they pray. They pray with the certainty that their persecutors will fail in their attempts to thwart Christ's Kingdom's advancement in the earth. They know their own death and suffering may await them, but their focus is upon Christ and His Kingdom. They know death cannot separate them from eternal life with God and His people. They know their own death will not thwart the Kingdom's growth, but will rather assist its growth via the passion that martyrs spark amongst God's people.

d. "Prayed"

- i. δέομαι = to want, lack; to desire, long for; to ask, beg; to pray, make supplications
- ii. Prayers to God flow from hearts aware of their deficiencies. The disciples at that time were keenly aware that they lacked the necessary power and wisdom to deal with the severe threatenings from the Sanhedrin. They knew they were impotent and ignorant compared to the powers of the Jews and the Romans. They knew they were cowards apart from God's help. They knew they had no power in themselves to carry out healing, signs or wonders.
- iii. So, they long for God to move, and they cry out to Him, with a desperate asking that knows He is their only hope. They know they will die or be destroyed and the Gospel will not go to the ends of the earth, unless Christ moves from His throne in heaven.

e. Immediate Answers from God: "When they had prayed"

- i. In this particular situation, the Lord chose to grant an immediate answer to their supplications.
- ii. We know God immediately hears the prayers of His beloved children in Christ. Sometimes He answers immediately, sometimes later, but He always answers the prayers of faith.

III. Answered Prayer: The Place was Shaken

- a. "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

b. The Place

- i. τόπος = place, any portion or space marked off, as it were from surrounding space; an inhabited place, as a city, village, district.

- ii. The text does not explicitly state where this place is. We know it's in Jerusalem, and it's very likely a large place close to the temple, or even a large room within the temple complex itself. Some postulate it's the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Her place is mentioned in Acts 12:12. Others postulate it's an upper room in the temple complex itself. Either way, this place is in the temple or likely within close walking distance to the temple.
    - c. "Shaken"
      - i. σαλεύω
        - 1. a motion produced by winds, storms, waves, etc; to agitate or shake; to cause to totter; to shake thoroughly, of a measure filled by shaking its contents together
        - 2. to shake down, overthrow; to cast down from one's (secure and happy) state; to move, agitate the mind, to disturb one
    - d. So, as soon as the disciples finish their corporate prayer together, the entire space where they are praying is shaken, not shaken down to the ground and destroyed, but shaken in a way similar to strong power experienced via weather or earthquakes. Luke's inclusion of this shaking and its timing shows us this is an act of God in response to their prayer.
    - e. This is an immediate and direct answer to their prayer request in v30
      - i. "'Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."
    - f. Does the Lord still do such wonders? Yes.
      - i. "And in that moment the stone-built house literally shook like a leaf. I immediately went to the Acts of the Apostles where it is recorded that they prayed and the place where they were assembled was shaken. As soon as this dear man stopped praying, I pronounced the benediction a little after two o'clock in the morning and went out to find the whole village ablaze with God. I went into one house and found nine women on their knees in the kitchen crying out to God. One woman saved that night has written some of the finest Gaelic hymns in our Gaelic hymnal. On the following Sunday, the road was black with the people walking two miles to the church. The drinking house in that particular village closed that night and had never reopened since. This is God at work. A God sent revival is always a revival of holiness." Duncan Campbell
- IV. Answered Prayer: They Spoke the Word of God with Boldness
  - a. "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."
  - b. "They" – Not just one person prayed, and not just one person received boldness to speak the Word of God. They prayed together. They spoke the Word of God

with boldness together. Corporate Kingdom Prayer leads to Corporate Kingdom boldness in speaking the Word of God.

c. Spoke the Word of God

- i. Note the single purpose of their boldness. This is the same purpose behind God granting the gift of tongues in Acts 2, as we have learned. The boldness of God is given to the people of God for the purpose of speaking the Word of God unto the advancement of the Kingdom of God for the glory of God.

d. With Boldness

- i. παρρησία = freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech; openly, frankly, i.e without concealment; without ambiguity or circumlocution; without the use of figures and comparisons; free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance
- ii. When a person speaks with “boldness”, they open up to their hearers all that is necessary to fully and clearly communicate the desired message. They do not hold back any information necessary to clarify the message, no matter what this may mean for their own well-being. Because they are focused upon Christ and His glory, they are freed from the fear of personal loss and brought into a cheerful form of courage and assurance in communication that sets them apart. People will spot that they have “been with Jesus” (2:13).
- iii. Motive of boldness: Their single aim is to ensure the message is delivered fully, accurately and clearly. They are not held back by fear of persecution or fear of being rejected or disliked or shamed. They are not motivated by personal gain or loss, but rather they desire to obey and honor Christ by speaking the Word of God just as He has commanded.

V. Power & Presence: All Filled with the Holy Spirit

- a. “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”
- b. “All”
  - i. Again, note the corporate outcome of corporate Kingdom prayer. The entire place where they assembled was shaken by God. They all spoke the Word of God with boldness. How did this occur? Only one way. They were “all” filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - ii. Note how the Lord works in the setting of corporate worship and prayer. This is an essential spiritual discipline to grow up in Christ, to be sanctified.
- c. “Filled” with the Holy Spirit
  - i. Filled = πίμπλημι = to fill; to be fulfilled, to be filled
  - ii. Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:15; Lk 4:1)
  - iii. Repetitive filling (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 9:17, 13:9)
    1. The disciples/apostles: Repetitive filling

- a. Acts 2:4 "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
    - b. Acts 4:8 "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel"
  - 2. Paul: repetitive filling
    - a. Acts 9:17 "And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
    - b. Acts 13:9 "Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him."
- d. How does our Lord bless us with boldness and with His powerful Presence? Only by the filling of His Holy Spirit. And, He is ever-glad to give His Holy Spirit to all who ask Him!
  - i. Lk 13:9-13 ""So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 "Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

VI. Questions to know, love and obey God