

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 17

I. Exposition of Chapter Four (Continued).

A. The Church prays for Boldness.

1. Verses 23-24 – Peter and John return to their fellow believers.

- a. Verse 23 - “...they went to their own companions...” – The word “companions” means, “friends” or, their “own people”. This is not speaking only of the other apostles but of all the disciples, or believers who were gathered.¹

“This is one of the most important things we can learn as we begin our exploration of the New Testament. In the Scriptures we see portrayed a church in which those touched by Christ discover a new capacity to love and to care for one another. The church is more than a group of people who agree in their beliefs. The church is a family of brothers and sisters who experience the reality of Jesus’ presence in and through their growing love for one another (cf. John 13:33–34).”²

- b. Verse 24 – After Peter and John reported everything the chief priests and elders had said, all the believers “...raised their voice to God with one accord...”

- 1) It’s worth noting that the word “voice” is in the singular, indicating that there was a unity involved here. Stanley Horton asserts:

“No one groaned or complained. Instead they responded immediately by raising ‘their voices’ (‘voice’ is actually singular, indicating they prayed in unison) in one accord, with one purpose, praying to God. Probably the prayer the Bible records here was given, however, by one of them who became the spokesman for them all.”³

- 2) “...Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.” In this prayer, they begin to acknowledge the supreme authority of God. The word “Lord” is a word meaning, “one who holds complete power or authority over another—‘master, ruler, lord, Lord (as a title for God and for Christ).”⁴

“God alone is “Sovereign Lord” (*despota*, indicating absolute mastery) over this threat, and they begin by turning everything over to him. He is in complete charge not just of the saints but of the Jewish authorities as well. His sovereign power is proved by the fact that he “made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.” As Creator God, everyone and everything is answerable to him, an echo of Psalm 146:6, where it is part of a thanksgiving to God for his watchful care over the righteous. The God who has created every single thing and person in this world can be counted on to take care of his people in their time of need.”⁵

2. Verses 25-26 - They pray using the Word of God.

- a. “Who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:...” – This phrase affirms the inspiration of Psalm 2:1-2 which is quoted, and certainly infers the inspiration of the entire Old Testament. God spoke through the Psalmist David. This psalm is understood to be a “Messianic” psalm which means it dealt with the coming Messiah (Christ). It prophesies that the “nations” would plot against God and the Messiah. In essence, by quoting this the disciples are acknowledging that this persecution was to be expected, yet it would be in “vain” (meaning “fruitless” or “without success”)⁶

3. Verses 27-28 – “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 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”

- a. In these verses, we see the disciples specifically applying the Scriptures to their situation. Dr. Horton makes it very clear:

“Just as the nations rage (Ps.2), Herod (Herod Antipas), Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people (lit. ‘peoples’) of Israel truly were gathered together (in a hostile way) against God’s ‘holy servant Jesus.’ As before, ‘servant’ here means the dedicated, consecrated Servant of the Lord (as in Isa. 52:13 through 53:12).”⁷

¹A.T. Robertson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. III, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 54.

²Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 768.

³Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 109.

⁴Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 478.

⁵Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, *Osborne New Testament Commentaries* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 91–92.

⁶Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

⁷Horton, 111.

- b. **“to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”** – In this verse, and in similar verses, a question often arises in people’s minds. If Christ’s crucifixion was **“determined before to be done”**, then how can God blame those who carried it out?

1) Dr. Robert Picirilli states:

“There is fine interplay here between Divine and human responsibility. On the one side, Jesus’ crucifixion was according to God’s eternal plan. On the other hand, blame and responsibility – worthy of condemnation – are emphatically placed on the men involved...If, in fact, those who crucified Jesus had to do so, if God’s foreordination by its own efficacy made their actions unavoidable, then they were not free to do otherwise – could not do otherwise – and were therefore not responsible.”⁸

- 2) So, the conclusion must be, if God is just, the people involved in crucifying the Lord Jesus, must have had a choice NOT to crucify Him. It seems apparent then that God, in His foreknowledge, knowing the nature and character of the men involved before they ever were born, had a Divine plan to allow their character to bring about His eternal plan of redemption. God’s foreknowledge didn’t cause men to do it, God simply knew beforehand but men still had freewill to choose.

4. Verses 29-30 – They make their Requests.

- a. **Verse 29 - “...and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.”** – They didn’t pray judgment on those who threatened them, and they didn’t ask God to remove the responsibility of preaching from them. Chances are, they were being attacked with fear and asked God for a fresh courage so they could continue to carry out the Great Commission.
- b. **Verse 30 – “...by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”** – It seems apparent that the disciples recognized that the boldly preached Word would continue to bring about confirmation of that Word by healings and signs in the Name of Jesus (cf. **Mark 16:15-20**).

5. Verse 31 - Their prayer is Answered.

- a. **“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken...”** – The word **“shaken”** means; **“to cause something to move back and forth rapidly, often violently”**⁹ Dr.
- b. **“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”** – **“A marked evidence of the Holy Spirit’s superintendence of the work of the Church was the way He continued to give fresh fillings to meet new needs and new challenges.”¹⁰**

B. The Church Sharing in all Things.

1. **Verse 32 – “...the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul...”** – There was a unity of purpose which seemed to have grown stronger as a result of the persecution.
2. **“...they had all things in common”** – As was pointed out in Part 12 of this series, there was no forcing people to do this, this was an expression of love and concern for one another as they saw others had need.
3. **Verse 33 – “And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.”**
- a. **“great power”** is what was demonstrated with the lame man walking and the apostles continued doing much of the same kind of things in spite of the threats. God’s power gives proof that Christ is Risen!!
- b. **“great grace”** – The word **“grace”** has different meanings. One meaning is **“enablement”** and another is **“favor”**. The disciples found favor with God and possibly many of the hearers of their message and they had Divine enablement operating in their lives to fulfill God’s purposes.
4. **Verses 34-35** – More reference to sharing with each other **“...as anyone had need.”**
5. **Verses 36-37 – “And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostle’s feet.”** – Here we are introduced to a man who became one of Paul’s team members in at least one missionary journey. Barnabas went with Paul on the first missionary journey (**13:1-3**) He’s also seen here as an example of a believer with integrity in contrast to Ananias and Sapphira who we will see in Chapter 5.

⁸Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free will, Contrasting views of Salvation: Calvinism and Arminianism*. (Nashville: Randall House Publications, 2002), 80.

⁹Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 211.

¹⁰Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 150.