

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ACTS 2:40-4:31

The book of Acts and the Gospel that bears his name, were both written by Luke. And there is a second century prologue to the third Gospel that gives us a personal peek at its author. It reads, “Luke was a Syrian from Antioch, a doctor by profession, a disciple of the apostles: later however he followed Paul until his martyrdom, serving the Lord blamelessly. He never had a wife, he never fathered children, and he died at the age of eighty-four, **full of the Holy Spirit...**”

Acts is the story of how Jesus continued to “do and teach” through the outpouring and filling of the Spirit.

This is why it’s so interesting what’s said of Luke, “*he died full of the Holy Spirit.*” Apparently, Luke practiced what he preached. He took the Father’s promise seriously, and lived his life filled with the Holy Spirit.

The early church wasn’t a perfect church, but they possessed the key ingredients that all churches need.

They had an overcoming joy. They believed in a truth worth dying for. They loved like family. And there was a supernatural quality to all their interactions.

In Acts 4:32 we’re told God blessed His first Church with “great grace” and “great power.” Tonight we’ll read about both... We’ll study from 2:40 through 4:31...

Of course, last time, we saw how the Father fulfilled His long-awaited promise on those gathered in the upper room. At Pentecost, the sound of a rushing wind, flickers of fire, and a miracle of language accompanied the filling of 120 disciples with the power of the Spirit.

That's when Peter provided the crowd a biblical explanation of what had happened. He followed it with a sermon that "cut to the heart." His listeners begged Peter, "*what must we do?*" His answer was to "repent!"

That's where we pick it up, 2:40, "And with many other words (Peter) testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." Wow, what a great start to a church plant. On the first day 3000 souls get saved!

But notice what they were saved from... We usually conclude we're saved from sin - and sin's effects - but Peter has a broader view of salvation. He exhorts his listeners "*Be saved from this perverse generation.*"

There is a spirit within the culture from which we need to be saved. Since all humans are born in sin, each new generation is tainted with a "*perverse*" or "*twisted*" nature. It's displayed in different ways, but rebellion - independence from God - underlies society.

Peter saw salvation in Christ as a way to escape this surrounding twisted-ness. When saved, we transfer

citizenship from man's kingdom to God's kingdom. We're saved to live together with a new set of values.

Verse 42 outlines the agenda of the first church.

Here's what occupied the early Christians. **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”**

Church life didn't revolve around *committee meetings*, and *political rallies*, and *social clubs*...

Luke doesn't mention *softball leagues*, or *Zumba classes*, or *Weight Watchers*... although I'm sure those activities have their place. What strikes me about life in the early church is that it was **simple** and **spiritual**.

The early church swirled around four basic activities... First, **they delved into the Scriptures**. They taught and studied the Bible. They were Bible junkies.

Second, **they fellowshiped and spent quality time with each other**. The emphasis among them was on knowing and being known - loving and being loved.

Third, **they broke bread, or took communion**. They worshipped God at the Lord's table and in other ways.

And fourth, **they prayed**. They learned to pray as one voice. The church that prays together stays together.

And that's it!... The church calendar wasn't full of superfluous, temporary stuff. They were all about the big ideas - **Word, worship, fellowship and prayer**.

Here's an outline... *They learned of God, they loved on God, they shared in God, they spoke with God - and they did it all together!* The church was all about God!

And noticed the results of sticking to their agenda...

“Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.”

This was a group of people serious about their faith.

And God validated their faith by working *“wonders and signs”* among them. When a church is sincere God sanctions it with the miraculous and the supernatural.

And there was great love as well. Verse 44, *“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”*

It's easy to talk about being a spiritual family, but the church in Acts put their money where they mouth was.

They pooled their resources to meet each other's needs. They functioned on the logic, *if Jesus gave His all for me - how can I not give my all for others.*

Some observers called the early church the first expression of *communism*. Not so! This was **common-ism** - not *communism*. Communism is forced sharing. Resources are taken from the rich and given to the poor. Here, they freely and voluntarily combined their resources. The rich had a love for the poor and gave.

Actually, there may've actually been a better way to meet each other's needs than their **common-ism**.

Later, a famine will strike Judea, and the Gentile churches will be asked to collect an offering for the first church. Apparently, the church at Jerusalem wasn't on a solid-enough financial footing to weather the storm.

It could be it was their abandonment of personal property and ownership that crippled their ability to endure hardship. Remember, God never *commands* us to pool resources - *only to show love and generosity*.

Common-ism might not have been the best strategy.

Verse 46, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.” I’ve heard it put, “A healthy church will be growing larger and smaller at the same time.” This was the dynamic combination that existed in Acts.

On the one hand they enjoyed the excitement generated by a large meeting with lots of people. This occurred in the Temple... But they also cultivated more intimate fellowship in small groups that met in houses.

It was this larger and smaller dynamic that combined to produce optimal spiritual growth. This is what we try to do with our weekly Bible Studies, **and** our small group gatherings... *the After, Time-Out, OFC, LBS, etc.*

We need the larger groups and the smaller groups.

And notice the results... “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” *The Lord added.* There was no striving on the church’s part.

They had no programs or pushes. It was just God's supernatural work. And I believe "When any church becomes a healthy church God will add to that church."

Chapter 3, "Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*." 9 AM.

Recall Peter and John were Jews, as were all the first Christians, and they still lived by Jewish custom.

One of the Jewish rituals was to pray for an hour in the Temple three times a day - at 9 AM, noon, and 3 PM. Devout Jews living in Jerusalem would suspend their normal activities and come up to the Temple for these times of prayer. It was the people's daily ritual.

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb (crippled since birth) was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple..."

Sadly, there wasn't any vocational training for the disabled in first century Jerusalem. All a paralytic could do was beg. So every morning this man's caregivers would put him on a stretcher, cart him to the Temple, lay him out by the gate, and let him beg the day away.

And notice they placed him strategically at the *Gate Beautiful*. This was the entrance into the Inner Court. This is the spot that got the most traffic in the Temple.

And just inside the gate were the 13 trumpet-shaped offering boxes. The beggar was hoping to catch devout Jews while they had a few coins in their hand.

Verse 3 speaks of the lame man, “who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, “Look at us.” So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.” Realize this man was a professional beggar - he was as calloused toward the people walking by, as the people were to him.

He never looked into anyone’s eyes. His head hung down. He was looking only for expensive sandals. He would see a pair and shake his cup in their direction.

And the worshippers were as oblivious to him as he was to them. They may’ve dropped a coin in his cup, but they never locked eyes with him either.

What was it that caused Peter to “*fix his eyes*” on the beggar? Perhaps a dozen different beggars worked this spot in the Temple. Why did Peter lock onto him?

I’m sure it was a mixture... *of love, the Spirit’s leading, his own openness, the gift of faith...* Suddenly, Peter felt a tug in this crippled man's direction...

“Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” Earlier Peter and John had sold their possessions and pooled their resources. They no longer had any silver and gold of their own.

The story is told of the Pope and Thomas Aquinas.

One day the Pope was counting the money in the church coffers when Aquinas entered the room. The Pope pointed to

his cache of treasure, "*Thomas, we can no longer say, 'silver and gold have I none'?*"

Aquinas responded, "Yes, and neither can we say, 'in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'"

It's a sad indictment against the church when we substitute *prosperity for power* - when we put more trust in *money than in miracles*. No amount of money can buy what we need most - *the power of the Spirit*.

Verse 7, "**And he (Peter) took him (the lame man) by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.**" In the Greek, the wording used by Dr. Luke implies that the man's inability to walk was due to severely dislocated ankles.

That's where this healing occurred in "**his feet and ankle bones.**" *They both received strength!*

Whenever I read this passage I always marvel at Peter's faith. Peter was a man like you and me.

Imagine the thoughts that raced through his mind before he grabbed the man's hand. "**What if he doesn't stand up? Or if his legs collapse? If this doesn't work I'll be accused of humiliating a handicapped fellow.**"

A thousand "**what ifs**" raced through Peter's mind.

Yet, he felt the leading of the Spirit so strongly he refused to second guess. He took a risk to obey God. Spiritually speaking, Peter is walking on water again, but this time he refuses to take his eyes off Jesus.

We all want to walk on water - do some supernatural surfing - participate in God's miracles, but it takes faith.

We've got to be willing to set aside fear, muster a little courage, and step out when the Spirit nudges us.

So Peter grabs his hand, and lifts him up, and “He, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God.”

And notice the completeness of the miracle. Not only had the man's ankles been dislocated, surely his leg muscles had atrophied from decades of immobilization.

Normally, it would take weeks of physical therapy for him to regain his balance and the use of his legs. Yet, just seconds after the miracle took place this man is running and leaping through the Temple. Jesus is not only *a Great Physician* - He's *quite a physical therapist*.

“And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; (they identified who it was) and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John...” He'd been plagued by *lame legs*, but he wasn't a *lame brain*. Rather than run home to show off his new wheels, he held on to Peter and John.

There was more he could learn from these two men.

It's vital when God does a miracle that we hold on to it for awhile. Often when God works, we revel in the results,

without realizing a lesson comes attached. This man's legs had been healed, **and** his heart is still open.

“Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.”

Solomon's porch was the portico east of the Gate Beautiful. “So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this?” Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

How refreshing it is for Peter to so quickly disavow any personal responsibility for this miracle. Peter's earlier failures had humbled him. There was now no lingering in the limelight. He and the lame man won't be appearing together on Christian television. There won't be a photo shoot in his ministry's next newsletter.

Peter won't even start a healing ministry.

Instead he proclaims, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go.” He reminds them that they rejected Jesus. This miracle was meant to focus them on that issue.

“But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” What an irony, the Jews “*killed the Prince of Life.*” But God

has now raised Him up - and He's still knocking at their heart's door.

Walter Wink once said, "Killing Jesus was like trying to destroy a dandelion by blowing on its head."

Jesus ascended to the Father, but returned in the person of the Holy Spirit - no longer confined by human limitations. He reveals Himself in countless hearts and in every corner of the planet. Peter is confronting the Jews. They can't duck Jesus. He won't go away.

You can even kill Him, and He's not backing off.

He's on you - *like white on rice*. His love keeps Him coming, hoping you'll repent and let Him run your life.

Verse 16, "And His name, through faith in His name (His name was the powerful name of Jesus), has made this man strong, whom you see and know.

Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Peter doesn't even take credit for the faith he exercised. Even *the faith* he exhibited came from Jesus. I believe Peter's faith was the special gift of faith spoken of 1 Corinthians 12:9. There Paul is listing various spiritual gifts, when he writes, "and to another wonder-working faith." When you need a miracle don't just pray for the miracle - pray for the faith to receive.

There is such a thing as a supernatural gift of faith.

Jesus told us in Matthew 17:20, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here

to there,' and it will move.” A mustard seed is first planted in the soil, then it takes root and sprouts.

Likewise, the gift of faith is **a planted faith**.

The Holy Spirit sows it in the soil of our heart, so that with it we can move mountains. This is a strong faith.

It's the kind of faith that's "dead to doubts, dumb to discouragements, and blind to impossibilities.” To do great things for God, pray that He'll give us *His* faith!

“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers.” Peter shows pity on the Jews. He says their rejection of Jesus wasn't simply willfulness - it was the result of their ignorance.

This is hopeful. They can do this again and repent!

He's giving them a second chance. He says, “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”

Notice, unlike 2:38 this invitation does not include baptism. If baptism had been essential for salvation Peter would've been sure to mention it, yet he doesn't.

His emphasis here, as in Chapter 2, is “*repent*.”

Repentance is more than remorse or regret. It's the willingness to change. It's not the power to change. We lack that power, that's why we need Jesus. But repentance is me providing God the willingness.

And I love God's response to our repentance. It's threefold: He *converts*. He turns us around. Gives us new drives and desires... He *blots out*. The Spirit is like Bounty paper towels. He's the quicker picker upper. He's multi-ply. He soaks up the deepest stains.

And He sends *times of refreshing*. The Spirit is like a warm day after a cold winter. You can open the window. Let in the fresh air. A rejuvenation occurs. He puts a smile on your face - a bounce in your step. New possibilities are in the air. *This is the filling of the Spirit.*

Verse 20, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Whenever I give an invitation to come to Christ, I track with Peter up to this point...

I tell people, *Repent... You'll be converted... Your sins will be blotted out... Refreshment will come...*

But I would never say, repent and Jesus will return and restore all that sin has destroyed. Yet on this day that is exactly what Peter promises - the end times.

His terminology "*the times of restoration of all things*" is an idiom for the Kingdom age - a future time - when Jesus will reign over the earth. Peter is saying to Israel, *if you get saved all God's promises will be fulfilled.*

In the days of their exile in Babylon, God promised the Jews a New Covenant. Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and even the Prophet Joel promised Israel three "Rs"...

God would **regather** the Jews to their homeland.
He would **regenerate** their evil hearts.
And He would **restore** to them the Kingdom.
At this point in history they'd been regathered to the land.
Through Jesus, regeneration - or new birth - was possible.
The third promise was the physical kingdom.

Apparently, if Israel had repented and believed they could've had what was next - *on the horizon was the return of Jesus, and the restoration of the Kingdom...* The end time scenarios would've been activated.

It's provocative, but if Israel in mass had received the Gospel at the Feast of Pentecost, the Church could've been raptured at the end of Acts 3, the Gentile world plunged into Great Tribulation - and according Daniel, seven years later Jesus would have returned.

That is exactly what Peter is implying!

Historians tell us that in the year 40 AD the Roman Emperor Gaius, or Caligula as he was known, dispatched a legion of soldiers to Palestine, along with a statue of his likeness. Orders had been given to erect the statue in the Holy of Holies within the Temple precincts and require the Jews to worship the emperor.

A key event in Daniel's vision of the end times, will be Antichrist's desecration of the Temple. He'll one day set up his image and force the world to worship him.

Apparently, it could've happened in 40 AD. If the Jews had accepted Peter's offer of salvation, God was prepared to set in motion the end times prophecies.

As it turns out Jewish leaders rejected the Gospel, and Caligula was assassinated before his statue arrived in Caesarea. His soldiers returned to Rome.

When the Israelis leaders rejected Peter's invitation God put the end time prophecies on pause, and reached out to the Gentiles. And this is where we've been on God's timetable ever since. We're in a holding pattern waiting on the last of the Gentiles to be saved.

This also explains Peter's quotation from Joel 2 on the Day of Pentecost. In his mind the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a companion with the final judgment.

This is why he spoke of "wonders in heaven... blood and fire and vapor of smoke... the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood." It all would've happened then, if the Jewish nation had believed.

Today, God is reaching the Gentiles, but one day the invitation of Peter will be repeated to the Jewish nation.

This time they'll trust Jesus as their Messiah - all Israel will be saved - and God will release the pause.

Verse 22, "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.'" The prophet like Moses was Jesus! "And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Peter is quoting from Deuteronomy 18.

“Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, *‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’* In other words, all of God’s promises were targeted toward Peter’s generation.

“To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.” Jesus taught that the Gospel was to the Jew first; then to the Gentiles. This was echoed by the early Church. Everywhere Paul went he went to the synagogue first. He targeted Jews.

But eventually, with the Jews rejection of Jesus, Christianity emphasized outreach to the Gentiles.

In Chapter 4 we see the tragic response by the Jewish hierarchy to Peter’s message. “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”

Recall the Sadducees were anti-supernaturalists. They rejected the notion of miracles and the afterlife. Thus, they opposed any talk of a resurrection. *And it’s time for a joke... “that’s why they were sad-you-see!”*

While Jesus was on earth His primary opposition came from the Pharisees. They didn't like His application of the Law and His disregard for tradition.

But the early Church preached Jesus' resurrection so their chief opposition came from the Sadducees.

Verse 3 “And they laid hands on them (that is, Peter and John), and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

Notice the rate of growth of the Early Church... and it was all conversion growth. Nobody transferred from other churches since there were no other churches...

In just a few days the Church in Jerusalem went from 120 in the Upper Room - to 3000 on the Day of Pentecost - to now 5000 men - and that's not including women and children. It could've been 15,000 total.

“And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.” This family of Annas was an extremely powerful Jewish family. After being arrested, Jesus appeared before both Annas and Caiaphas.

Annas and his sons held the highest positions in Judaism. Five sons were High Priest at one time or another. In Temple Judaism nepotism ruled the roost.

“And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” Deuteronomy 13 warns that a false prophet with demonic

powers can come and work miracles to draw people away from Yahweh, the one, true God.

Such a person was to be stoned to death.

And it was up to the Sanhedrin - the Jewish Court's duty - to ask in who's name a miracle was performed.

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (Notice, it happens to him again! He's filled with the Holy Spirit), said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.”

Again, notice Peter's boldness. This is what the filling of the Spirit provides a Christian - *fearless courage!*

Recall too, **“Christ”** is **“Messiah.”** It means **“Anointed One.”** Peter tells the Jews **“Your Messiah came, you crucified Him, but God raised Him from the dead.”**

Verse 11, **“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’**

Peter quotes a familiar Psalm, 118:22. Jesus was the stone that was rejected by the architects of Judaism, yet He became the foundation stone of the Church.

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” *Exclusive? Yes. Ambiguous? No.*

Without hesitation Peter makes it crystal clear, without Jesus a person is lost and damned forever.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled.” Annas’ family had been trained in elite yeshivas. Whereas, the apostles were the blue-collar types. These were the Harvard scholars versus the High School drop-outs. Yet the disciples were the ones who spoke with clarity and authority.

At first the Jewish elite was stunned. How can it be? Then “they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

And this is the key! *Fluency in Greek - mastery of systematic theology - proficiency in comparative religion - seminary stuff...* has some value, but none of it is ever a substitute for spending time with Jesus.

You know the meaning of the letters “PhD”?

It means “*Piled high and deep.*” That's what a formal theological education is worth if the person who gets it, hasn't been with Jesus. “*Spending time in the halls of higher learning is not nearly as important as spending time at the feet of Jesus.*” What Peter and John possessed, made what they lacked, totally obsolete.

Verse 14, “And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.” The lame man himself - wiggling his toes, and bouncing about - was irrefutable evidence.

“But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 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*. 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.”

A few weeks earlier the Jews thought this Jesus Movement would die out if they killed its leader - now there're new sprouts. Recall what Jesus said in John 12:24, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." This is what's happening. A harvest has begun. The Jews are realizing it can't be stopped.

“So they called them (the two disciples) and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.” The Jews try to intimidate them into silence. “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. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Peter says he has no choice. He's been commanded by God to add speech to his faith. He has to speak out!

Let me ask you, what thoughts cross your mind when someone tries to silence your witness? "*This could cost me my job.*" "*This will hurt my popularity.*" "*I better not push the issue.*" None of that should matter.

Is it ever right for us to listen to man more than God? How can we be silent about what God has done?

“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.” Even Christianity’s critics marveled over the miracle. “For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.”

It was a stunning miracle. Albert Camus once said, "What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out, loud and clear... in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could arise in the heart of the simplest man." In my opinion that's the perfect description of the witness of the early church.

Verse 23, “And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.” They probably returned to the Upper Room - *it seemed to be a headquarters*.

“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said...” And here pay attention to their action once they’re threatened? They don’t protest, or boycott, or file a lawsuit... they pray!

As the old saying goes, “When your knees knock knell on them.” That’s what the early Christians did!

And here’s their prayer, “Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them...” First, notice they **get their eyes on God**.

Their starting point isn’t their fears, or their enemy - it is their God. He made all things! He knows all things! God can do all things! CS Lewis once said, “The first prayer of all prayers

is... may it be the real God to whom I pray, and may it be the real me who prays.”

The Church reminds itself that their God is sovereign over every situation. There’s nothing He can’t do.

Then they **turn to His Word**. “Who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: (and they quote Psalm 2) ‘ *Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.*’” God foresaw how *the rulers* would gang up on Jesus. The Lord wasn’t caught off guard.

“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.” On that fateful night Herod, and Pilate, and the Priest thought they were in charge. In reality these power brokers were puppets on a string - fulfilling God’s purposes. And nothing had changed in the last few months. God was still the boss!

So they pray, verse 29, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

This is not how we usually pray... When we face persecution, we ask God to take it away... Not here.

Some of us would ask for wisdom that we could appease the authorities. *“Lord, help us go along and get along - show us a nice, low-key approach.”*

But that’s not how this church prays...

Winston Churchill once said, *“An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile - hoping it will eat him last.”*

Rather than appeasement, this church *prayed* for boldness and victory! *“Lord, look on their threats, but make us a greater threat by speaking Your Word and doing your works - healings, and signs, and wonders!”*

Rather than lay low, these men want to up the ante’.

Rather than pray for protection they pray for courage and a broader impact. The ole Puritan, Phillips Brooks, once said, *“Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks.”*

And in verse 31 God answers their prayer in a very emphatic way. Luke records, *“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.”*

The foundation of the building shook. Walls wobbled. The floor did the wave. The disciples caught another spiritual gust, and again were filled with the Holy Spirit.

It resulted in a renewed desire to speak boldly!

Remember, these are many of the same people who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Now two chapters later they're being filled again!

RA Torrey once wrote, "We need to be filled again and again with the Holy Spirit. I am sometimes asked, "Have you received the second blessing?" Yes, and the third, and the fourth, and the fifth, and hundreds beside, and I am looking for a new blessing today."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is *a point-in-time experience*, but it's not *a one-time experience*. There are multiple fillings. This is why all Christians need to be continually seeking the power of the Holy Spirit!