

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson # 19

#### COMMENTARY ON: 4:23-32

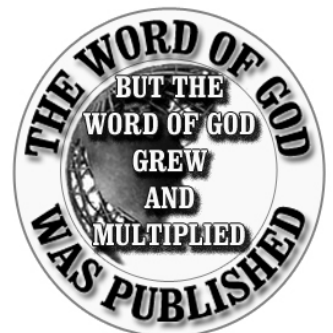
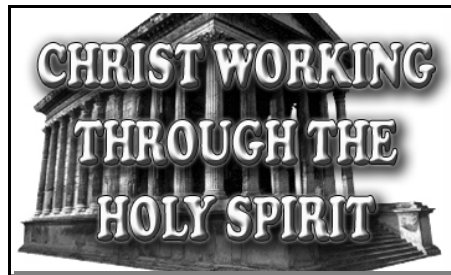
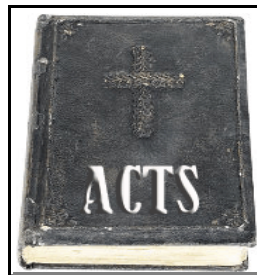
#### THE CHURCH PRAYS FOR BOLDNESS

Because the council could find no cause for punishment in Peter and John, and because they feared the people and were unwilling to trump up charges against them, they determined to let them go with a stern warning. Having been with this council for some time, and because they were devoted to the Lord who gave Himself for them, and had chosen them to be His witnesses, they immediately repaired to their brethren. Because they were not ignorant of Satan's devices, they perceived that a bold and intense initiative was being launched against them. They did not determine to go to another place, for Jesus had solemnly commissioned them to fill Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria with the Gospel. Therefore, having made a report to the brethren, and undaunted by the threats of the council, they all prayed to the Lord, petitioning Him to grant them boldness to preach His word. Their prayer was insightful, gets the attention of heaven, and a great visitation from God was experienced. This is one of the great events of the book.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

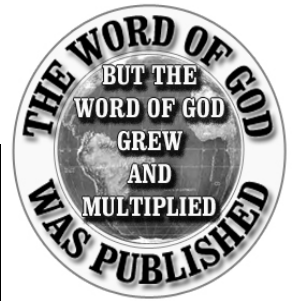


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 19



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = **Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976)**, LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- *Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification* -----

**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# DIALOG BETWEEN PETER AND THE LEADERS

“ 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. <sup>24</sup> 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: <sup>25</sup> Who by the mouth of THY servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD, and against HIS CHRIST. <sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> For to do whatsoever THY hand and THY counsel determined before to be done. <sup>29</sup> And now, LORD, behold their threatenings: and grant unto THY servants, that with all boldness they may speak THY word, <sup>30</sup> By stretching forth THINE hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of THY holy child Jesus. <sup>31</sup> 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.” (Acts 4:23-31)

## INTRODUCTION

Because the council could find no cause for punishment in Peter and John, and because they feared the people and were therefore unwilling to trump up charges against them, they determined to let them go with a stern warning. Having

been with this council for some time, and because they were devoted to the Lord who gave Himself for them, and had chosen them to be His witnesses, when they were released, they immediately repaired to their brethren. Because they

were not ignorant of Satan's devices, they perceived that a bold and intense initiative was being launched against them. They did not determine to go to another place, for Jesus had solemnly commissioned them to fill Jerusalem,

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

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Judea, and Samaria with the Gospel. Therefore, having made a report to the brethren, and undaunted by the threats of the council, they all prayed to the Lord, petitioning Him to grant them boldness to preach His word. Their prayer was insightful, got the attention of heaven, and a great visitation from God was experienced. This is one of the great events of the book. That is a summation of the text before us.

There is much to be learned from this text, particularly when we consider the realities to which we are being exposed.

- ⇨ We are beholding the clash of the Spirit with the flesh, truth with error, and life with tradition.
- ⇨ The initiative of faith is evident, as Peter and John boldly affirm what they have seen and heard.

- ⇨ The full assurance of understanding is evident, which cannot be suppressed by opposition.
- ⇨ We are introduced to messengers that are holy as well as bold, and therefore no legitimate cause of punishment can be found in them.
- ⇨ Among the faithful, there is a total absence of institutionalism.
- ⇨ There is no division in the body of Christ.
- ⇨ There is no absence of the love of the truth among the disciples.
- ⇨ There is no discernable outward pattern that allows for an external duplication of the responses of Peter and John.

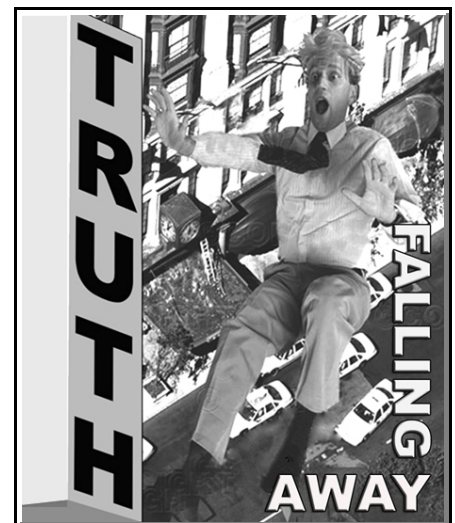
If you were lay the activities of the average mega-church [and most smaller churches as all] beside this record, you would be at a total loss to find any similarities. The message is different. The manner is different. The motives are different. The focus is different. There is a level of zeal that is virtually unknown. There is a degree of confidence that challenges the religious mind. These observations are very evident.

The mitigating factor is that we are beholding **real** life, **real** faith, and **real** commitment. This is how men of God respond to opposition. **The difference between then and now is that a significant departure from the truth has taken place between the time of our text and our day – a “falling away.”**

This falling away was foretold by the Lord Jesus. He traced it to the prevalence of iniquity, and the consequent diminishment of a love for Himself among those professing His name. *“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Matt 24:12). When love grows cold, <sup>NKJV</sup> the fruits that spring from love wither and die.

The Apostles also spoke of a time of falling away, delivering various insights into its cause and nature. It was always an obvious point of concern.

- ⇨ **BECAUSE TRUTH WILL NOT BE LOVED, GOD WILL SEND STRONG DELUSION UPON THE PEOPLE, CONSTRAINING THEM TO BELIEVE A LIE.** *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition . . . And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”*(2 Thess 2:3,10-12).
- ⇨ **FAITH WILL NO LONGER BE PIVOTAL, AND THUS DEMONIC DOCTRINES WILL BE EMBRACED.** *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron”*(1 Tim 4:1-2).
- ⇨ **A POWERLESS FORM OF RELIGION WILL BE EMBRACED THAT ALLOWS FOR SIN TO REMAIN AMONG THE PEOPLE.** *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady,*



*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

*highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”*(2 Tim 3:1-5).

- ⇨ **ABANDONING THE TRUTH OF GOD, MEN WILL STRUCTURE THEIR RELIGION AROUND THEIR OWN FLESHLY INTERESTS.** *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”*(2 Tim 4:3-4).
- ⇨ **DOCTRINES WILL BE BROUGHT IN THAT LEAD MEN INTO CONDEMNATION AND CAUSE THE TRUTH TO BE MALIGNED.** *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of”* (2 Pet 2:1-2).

The falling away foretold was of

own agenda and priorities, ignoring Divine purpose and emphasis. There would be a marked propensity to preaching and teaching that would please those with no faith. That means it would be anchored to the world – the temporal order. Teaching would be man-centered, not Christocentric, or Christ-centered. Note again the traits of this *“falling away.”*

- ⇨ No love for the truth.
- ⇨ An empty form of godliness.
- ⇨ Powerless religion.
- ⇨ An tolerance of worldiness.
- ⇨ A lack of interest in sound doctrine.
- ⇨ Turning away from the truth.
- ⇨ Gathering of teachers who will pacify the desires of sinful men.
- ⇨ Doctrines that push one into the broad leading to destruction.
- ⇨ Inconsistencies in *Christianity* that will lead men to speak evil of truth.

**I am drawing attention to these characteristics because none of them were present at the time of our text.** Their absence, together with the hearty embrace of the truth, is what enabled such mighty works and powerful preaching to take place. It is not that such displays of Divine power and influence were assigned to a specific age,

can only come from powerful causation. If men abandon the truth, they lose all access to the experiences wrought by truth. These include:

- ⇨ Freedom (John 8:32).
- ⇨ Sanctification (John 17:19).
- ⇨ The teaching of Jesus (Eph 4:21).
- ⇨ The experience of hope (Col 1:5).
- ⇨ Salvation (2 Thess 2:10-12).
- ⇨ Believing (2 Thess 2:13).
- ⇨ Godly knowledge (1 Tim 2:4).
- ⇨ A valid ministry within the church (1 Tim 3:15).
- ⇨ Repentance (2 Tim 2:25).
- ⇨ Obedience (1 Pet 1:22).
- ⇨ A godly life (1 John 1:6).
- ⇨ Assurance (1 John 3:19).

If *“the truth”* is removed, all of these benefits go with it – **all of them!** **If there is no *“love of the truth,”* there is no possible way to experience the benefits that come from it.** If it appears as though these things are present while the truth is absent, there really is only a simulation of them. **What is derived from the truth itself cannot be obtained independently of that truth.**

When we are faced with a fundamentally flawed church, it is because somewhere men have chosen to deny or abandon the truth. At some point they cease to love it and demand it. Their ears were *turned away from the truth.*

I have taken the time to say these things because they help to explain the realities that are taking place in our text. The evidences of falling away are totally absent. There is, at this point, no false teaching among professing Christians. Not only are they together, they are *“of one heart and of one soul”* (4:32). The truth is being proclaimed with power, and it has accomplished two things:

- ⇨ Men have been brought to believe.
- ⇨ The enemies of Jesus have been provoked.

**Thus the marks of the New Covenant are being clearly shown.** *“For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”*(2 Cor 2:16).

**It is not that such displays of Divine power and influence were assigned to a specific age, or that they were limited to certain men. The book of Acts is revealing the manner of “the day of salvation.”**

great concern to the apostles. Paul, for example, admonished Timothy to *“preach the word; be instant [ready <sup>NKJV</sup>] in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . ”* (1 Tim 4:2). That is, in view of the coming falling away, he was to make the most of the time, letting no opportunity pass him by. The time was coming when *“sound doctrine”* would not be tolerated by the professing church. It would develop its

or that they were limited to certain men. The book of Acts is revealing the manner of *“the day of salvation.”* It is unveiling the nature of the New Covenant, showing us the results of men being truly reconciled to God and in fellowship with Jesus Christ.

**GODLY RESULTS CANNOT BE REALIZED WITHOUT GODLY CAUSES**

Godly results can only proceed from godly causes. Powerful outcomes

We have every reason to believe that if the professing church will **“walk in the light as He is in the light,”** God will

work through it to bring glory and honor to his own name. This will be done by flushing out those who have no love for

the truth, and by awakening those who do have such a God-given love. When this happens, God will work for good.

## THEY WENT TO THEIR OWN COMPANY

<sup>4:28</sup> **“And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.”**

Here we will see a trait of newness of life: **it moves men to seek out kindred spirits.** Peter and John will not go into hiding, but will immediately join themselves to fellow believers.

### THEY WENT TO THEIR OWN COMPANY

*“And being let go, they went to their own company . . .”* Other versions read, *“their own companions,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“their own people,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“their friends,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“their own fellowship,”*<sup>CSB</sup> *“their fellows,”*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *“their brethren,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“their fellow believers,”*<sup>NET</sup> *“the community,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“the other disciples,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“the other apostles,”*<sup>GWN</sup> and *“their own group.”*<sup>IE</sup>

The word *“company”* means *“pertaining to oneself . . . family . . . generation . . . one’s own people,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> and *“one’s own people, family, household, countrymen.”*<sup>FRIBERG</sup>

One modern translation affirms *“their own company”* to be the apostles themselves.<sup>GWN</sup> **This is not true.** There is no evidence that the apostles tended to cluster together following Christ’s ascension into heaven. **They were not a group unto themselves, but were placed within the body of Christ, being a part of the whole** (1 Cor 12:28). Thus we read in the book of acts of *“the apostles and the brethren”* (11:1). Special gatherings for the examining of issues and drawing valid conclusions involved *“the apostles and elders”* (15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4). Once a mass of people were noted for siding *“with the apostles”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (14:4). Key analysis and decisions were made by James, the Lord’s brother, after the apostle James had been killed (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18).

In our text, *“their own company”* does **not** describe the office they held in

the church – *“apostles”* – but those with whom they had commonality in Christ Jesus.

- ⇨ A common salvation (Tit 1:4; Jude 1:3).
- ⇨ A common faith.

Following Christ’s ascension, the eleven *“continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.”* At that time, we are told, there were *“together”* about one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:14-15). When Jesus rose from the dead, He did appear to *“the twelve”* (1 Cor 15:5), but He also did to James, and to *“above five hundred brethren at once”* (1 Cor 15:5,7). When Jesus appeared to the disciples and *“opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,”* there were others *“with”* the eleven, including several women and Cleopas and his companion (Lk 24:33-44).

After Pentecost, the believers *“were together”* (Acts 2:44). Later, when Peter was miraculously delivered from

**gathering by themselves – not a single one.** What would lead anyone to imagine that, in this text, *“their own company”* means only the apostles themselves?

What we have here is an circumstance similar to that which was experienced in the days of Malachi. *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name”* (Mal 3:16). **In my judgment, we do a great disservice to the church by suggesting the apostles were a group unto themselves.** While they did possess special gifts, and were given a unique role within the church, they did not isolate themselves from the rest of the body. They were part of the *“all that believed”* that were *“together”* (Acts 2:44). While their faith was adapted for their ministry, it was nevertheless a *“common faith,”* and blended perfectly with the faith of those who believed on Christ through their word (John 17:20).

This is actually a critical point of

**Following ascension of Jesus, there is not a single clear account in all of Scripture of the twelve apostles having a unique gathering by themselves – not a single one. What would lead anyone to imagine that, in this text, “their own company” means only the apostles themselves?**

prison, *“he came to the house of Mary the mother of John . . . where many were gathered together praying”* (Acts 12:12).

**Following ascension of Jesus, there is not a single clear account in all of Scripture of the twelve apostles having a unique**

sound doctrine – *the apostles doctrine.* That is why Peter wrote this to scattered believers, *“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and*

Savior, Jesus Christ” NASB (2 Pet 1:1). There is, after all, only “one faith,” and it perfectly joins the people of God together (Eph 4:5). The apostles did not have a different kind faith, but a different “measure”—and there is a vast difference between those two concepts (Rom 12:3; Eph 4:7,16).

**The Preference of Godly People**

Faith brings to the heart a preference for godly people – “the household of faith” (Gal 6:10), or “the whole family” (Eph 3:15). Where this preference is absent, a most serious deficiency exists! For some people “their own company” has absolutely no reference to the children of God.

for the people of God. Such a preference is inherent in brotherly love which, under no circumstances, is to be lacking among the saints of God. That such a love was present is confirmed by what follows. **At this time, the brethren did not require exhortations to love one another, or be mindful of one another, or to labor together.** This will not be a response to an admonition, or the fulfillment of a commandment. It is rather the spontaneous response of those who were walking in the newness of life.

**THEY REPORTED IT ALL**

“ . . . and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.” Other versions read, “gave an

**lively connection between brethren that becomes the channel through which the Head ministers nourishment to them.** As it is written, “. . . the Head, from Whom the entire body, supplied and knit together by means of its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

**As confirmed in Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones, a disjointed and disassembled body it utterly useless.** That is because it has no power, much less mobility and dexterity. An army cannot be assembled from bones, no matter how many there are, and irrespective of their imagined antiquity. It is not that a divided church IS not doing anything, it is rather that it **CANNOT** do anything. This is confirmed by the judgment at the tower of Babel. At the very instant the people became separated from one another, “they stopped building the city”<sup>NASB</sup> (Gen 11:8).

Further, let no man imagine that the marvelous affinity revealed in our text is apart from a lively awareness, or consciousness. Salvation includes the confirming testimony of the Holy Spirit, who “beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). It is within the framework of an acute consciousness of God – called “the knowledge of Him” – that men receive everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:1) – including the abilities to give insightful reports, and to pray with obvious power.

Now the disciples are going to go to the Lord concerning the threats that have been made to Peter and John. It is in view of this that the two reported everything that had been said to them. They know they have “access . . . unto the Father,” and they will avail themselves of it” (Eph 2:18). As Job said he would do, and in keeping with the nature of the New Covenant, they will “order” their cause before the Lord (Job 23:4), and “plead” with Him, (Isa 43:26), producing their “cause,” and bringing forth their “strong reasons” (Isa 41:21).

To assist the brethren in framing their petition, a full report of the cause has been given. Now, like spiritual lawyers, they will present their case to, and reason with, the Lord.

**The fact that people of God do not fear men does not suggest that they attach no significance to their threats. Believers know very well that they are not of themselves equal to the challenges of opposition. Further, their connection with the “Head over all things” is through their faith.**

However, in our text, it provides us insight into the very real closeness among brethren that is produced by fellowship with, and the love of, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter and John sensed they were not alone in this warfare. In their hearts they had already appropriated the truth of Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Here we will behold an example of “striving together for the faith of the Gospel” (Phil 1:27). They will call upon the brethren to “strive together” in “prayers to God” for them (Rom 15:30). This will be an excellent example of being “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10). We will be exposed to a “whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth” (Eph 4:16).

Of course, such things are not even possible if there is not a preference

account of all.”<sup>BBE</sup> “related all,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “showed all,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “told them all,”<sup>MRD</sup> “told them everything,”<sup>NJB</sup> and “declared whatever.”<sup>YLT</sup>

**The fact that people of God do not fear men does not suggest that they attach no significance to their threats.** Believers know very well that they are not of themselves equal to the challenges of opposition. Further, their connection with the “Head over all things” is through their faith. **They cannot live as though their enemies did not exist, or their empowerment and protection were automatic.** I acknowledge that some people appear to live in this manner, but it is not right to do so. To suggest that we have been called into the fellowship of God’s Son (1 Cor 1:9), only to have Him work in us apart from that fellowship, is nothing but an imagination. If we have been “joined to the Lord,” and are “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17), how is it that Divine benefits could possibly pass to us apart from that joining? **It is the**

**THEY LIFTED UP THEIR VOICE TO GOD WITH ONE ACCORD**

*“<sup>24a</sup> And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said . . .”*



We will now exposed to the unity of the Spirit and its utility in Kingdom matters. **Unity is not an end of itself. Its value is seen in its effects.** This is owing to the peaceable environment that it produces – an environment in which *“the fruit of righteousness”* is sown (James 3:18). **No genuine and lasting work of God will be accomplished where division in heart and mind exist.**

In the Spirit, legitimate difference involves differing, yet harmonious, perspectives of the same things. In the Spirit the truth is loved as well as the brethren. The Divine agenda has been adopted, and purely selfish interests are mortified. Therefore, the unity of the Spirit is conducive to godly productivity and advance.

In the flesh, difference results in competition and division. It drives people apart rather than bringing them together. The truth is not loved, nor are the brethren. Carnal interests drive the objectives of those walking in the flesh. Therefore, the work of God cannot be done in such an environment. This is because *“the carnal mind is enmity against God.”* Therefore, *“they that are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom 8:7-8).

Our text involves people that are *“spiritually minded.”* Therefore life and

peace will exude from the assembly (Rom 8:6). When they hear the report, there will be *“no divisions”* among them. There will not be differing and conflicting views of the report. These are people who have *“ears to hear,”* and such ears are tuned to the same heavenly frequency. These are people who are *“perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10).

In modern *Christian* cultures, there must be admonitions to have the *“same mind,”* and to be harmonious in judgment. **That is because corruption has crept into the church.** Now, because the corruption is at the fountainhead of the institution, a great amount of time must be spent correcting, directing, rebuking, and instructing. This condition began very early in the history of the church – like a seemingly harmless crack in a dam. We will see it’s entrance as we progress through the book of Acts.

However, in our text, this condition did not yet exist. There will be no need to admonish the brethren to be of one mind. Peter and John will not have to suggest various was in which this problem can be addressed. Time will not have to spent warning the disciples what to avoid. **Here, we will behold the spontaneous expression of real spiritual life.** When there are no inhibiting obstacles to perception or devotion, this is what the people of God do. Anything less, or where there is a variance with this response, it is always owing to carnality, the flesh, and worldly-mindedness.

**WHEN THEY HEARD THAT**

*“And when they heard that . . .”* Other versions read, *“hearing it,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“having heard it,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“when the apostles heard this,”* <sup>GWN</sup> and *“upon hearing the story.”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

Again, I draw the flawed translations of this text to your attention. As I have already stated, nothing in the text, or the book of Acts itself, justifies the view that this group was limited to the apostles. That is an opinion that is driven by a traditional view of the Kingdom. Secondly, this it not a *“story”* –

a word which should be stricken from our vocabulary when speaking of Scriptural accounts. While the word *“story,”* in an archaic sense, can apply to historical incidents (hi-story), it is too impersonal for use here. What these people heard was the report of a personal experience – one that bore directly upon the work of the church.

By saying *“they heard,”* an interest in what was said is implied. That is, they *“heard”* the report as those who were themselves involved in its implications. They were not simply hearing a report of the experiences of someone else.

Also, the disciples *“heard”* with discernment. That is, they were able to associate the report with life in Christ Jesus, the preaching of the Gospel, and the need for Divine assistance. They could see the source of the opposition. They could discern its relation to the worldly opposition that was revealed in the death of the Lord Jesus. **They knew this opposition had been prompted by the devil, and they realized their personal inability to deal with it.** It was apparent to them that this could not be ignored, as though it never happened, or had no direct bearing upon them. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, they had launched a bold spiritual initiative. Now, Satan had retaliated with an opening move of his own. They knew his efforts would not wane, but would rather intensify. Therefore they immediately called upon the name of the Lord.

**THEY LIFTED UP THEIR VOICE WITH ONE ACCORD**

*“. . . they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said . . .”* Other versions read, *“they raised their voice to God with one accord,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“they raised their voices together,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“they all, with one mind, made prayer to God,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“raised their voices to God unanimously,”* <sup>CSB</sup> *“they were united and loudly prayed to God,”* <sup>GWN</sup> *“unitedly lifted up their voice to God,”* <sup>MRD</sup> *“raised their voices to God with one mind,”* <sup>NET</sup> *“lifted up their voice to God with one heart,”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“all the believers lifted their voices together in*

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prayer to God,"<sup>NLT</sup> "they prayed to God with one purpose,"<sup>IE</sup> "with one united prayer to God,"<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> "lifted their voices together with one united mind to God,"<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and "with one passion lifted voice to God."<sup>LITV</sup>

### Lifting Up the Voice

Here is an aspect of human expression that is rapidly waning in our time – the lifting up of the voice. From an etymological point of view, lifting up the voice is straightforward. The expression "lifted up" comes from a single Greek word meaning, "to lift up, raise up . . . raise upward, elevate."<sup>THAYER</sup> The word "voice" comes from a Greek word meaning "a sound, tone . . . the sound of the uttered voice."<sup>THAYER</sup> When the human voice is lifted up, it is made louder and stronger. More energy is put into speaking. If we say someone lifts up their hands, every knows what we mean. If we ask someone to lift up their eyes, it is apparent we are asking them to raise their heads and focus on some sight above the ground. If we ask someone to lift up their voice, we mean to speak louder.

God commanded the Levites to speak to the people "with a loud voice" (Deut 27:14). When Solomon prayed and blessed the people, he did so "with a loud voice" (1 Kgs 8:55). When the Lord spoke to a troubled and timorous people He said, "Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: **cause it to be heard** unto Laish, O poor Anathoth" (Isa 10:30). When He challenged Jerusalem to spread good tidings He said, "O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, **lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!**" (Isa 40:9). He told Isaiah, "Cry aloud, spare not, **lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins**" (Isa 58:1). When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost he "lifted up his voice" (Acts 2:14). In the book of the Revelation, a "loud voice" is mentioned thirteen times (5:2,12; 6:10;

7:2,10; 8:13; 10:3; 12:10; 14:7,9,15,18; 19:17).

Now the brethren lift up their voice to God in elevated tones. They do not do this to be better heard by God, but to be more focused, and to be of more assistance to each other. **Even their external expression is in harmony with their hearts, confirming the urgency of the situation.** Also, the lifting up of the voice is a kind of sacrifice in which the best of one's ability is thrown into the act of praying.

### With One Accord

There were **not** a lot of examples of men doing something "with one accord" prior to Christ. The Israelites, with very few exceptions were noted for strife and dissension rather than single-mindedness. In all of Moses and the prophets, they are never said to have been "in one accord." The expression "one mind" is never applied to them. Once they were said to have been of "one heart

the LORD, to serve him **with one consent**" (Zeph 3:9). These are not things that should take place in Christ – something like goals to be achieved. Rather, these traits **would** characterize the people of the Lord. They would be the result of being reconciled to God. Where they are not found, "the flesh" is in control, and men are walking in it. Further, walking in the flesh is always willing, for "the flesh" cannot override the Spirit. We know this is the case because it is written, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16). Unity is "of the Spirit" (Eph 4:3), and divisions are "of the flesh" (dissensions, factions<sup>NASB</sup> – Gal 5:20).

Now, in our text, the people are one – "with one accord." They are all of "one mind and **one mouth**" (Rom 15:6), and are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," and therefore will "**speak the same thing**"

**Now the brethren lift up their voice to God in elevated tones. They do not do this to be better heard by God, but to be more focused, and to be of more assistance to each other. Even their external expression is in harmony with their hearts, confirming the urgency of the situation.**

to make David king" (1 Chron 12:38). Once "the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD" (2 Chron 30:12).

However, in Christ, as promised by the prophets, such marvelous oneness occurs. Isaiah prophesied, "they shall **see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion**" (Isa 52:8). Jeremiah prophesied, "And I will give them **one heart, and one way**" (Jer 32:39). Through Zechariah the Lord promised, "For then will I turn to the people **a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of**

(1 Cor 1:10). They will require no exhortation to be this way, for their faith has already done the work. We do not know if they all prayed at once, spoke individually, or one or more spoke for all. The point is that the prayer flowed out from a people who had one mind and one purpose. There was no dissenting voice or heart among them. The flesh had not yet risen in their presence, and no place had been made for the devil.

**This is spiritual life in all of its pristine pureness.** It is how those who have maintained the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace pray to God.

## THOU ART GOD

"<sup>24b</sup> . . . Lord, Thou art God, || which hast made heaven, and earth, and || the sea, and all that in them is . . ."

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

**Reference to Deity**

Before beginning this exposition, I want to draw attention to the many references to Deity that are found in this prayer. **They provide us a glimpse into the nature of effective prayer, which concentrates on the Lord and His will primarily, and human need secondarily.** <sup>1</sup>to God . . . <sup>2</sup> Lord . . . <sup>3</sup> Thou . . . <sup>4</sup> God . . . <sup>5</sup> which . . . <sup>6</sup> Who . . . <sup>7</sup> Thy servant David . . . the <sup>8</sup> Lord . . . <sup>9</sup> His Christ . . . <sup>10</sup> Thy Holy Child . . . <sup>11</sup> Jesus . . . <sup>12</sup> whom <sup>13</sup> Thou hast anointed . . . <sup>14</sup> Thy hand . . . <sup>15</sup> counsel . . . <sup>16</sup> Lord . . . <sup>17</sup> Thy servants . . . <sup>18</sup> Thy word . . . <sup>19</sup> Thine hand . . . <sup>20</sup> the Name . . . <sup>21</sup> Thy Holy Child <sup>22</sup> Jesus.”

- ⇨ **THY COUNSEL** – The death of Jesus is seen as the outworking of God’s purpose.
- ⇨ **DETERMINED TO BE DONE** – God’s will is causal – it makes things happen.
- ⇨ **LORD, BEHOLD** – God focuses on the affairs of men.
- ⇨ **THY SERVANTS** – The disciples pray as bond slaves to God and His purpose.
- ⇨ **THY WORD** – This word reflects God’s purpose, and is empowered to accomplish it.

that has been seen, or comprehended. Elsewhere we are apprised, *“he that cometh to God must believe that **HE IS**, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him”* (Heb 11:6).

“*Thou art God*” is the confession that the people believe that *“He is.”* There is no point in praying if God is nothing more than an idea, or part of a creed, or something other than a real person.

The word “*God*” is intentionally singular. Lexically, and as used in this text, the word means “the supreme Divine being, the true, living, and personal God,” FRIBERG It is true that Satan is also referred to as “*god*” (same Greek word – θεός). However, the domain over which he rules is limited. Therefore he is called “*the god of this world.*” However, the God of our text is appropriated called “*the God of gods,*” for He is over them and rules them all. “*For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward*” (Deut 10:17). Being “*the God of gods,*” He knows all things, thereby distinguishing Him from other gods. “*The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knoweth, and Israel He shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day)*” (Josh 22:22). David also confessed that God was “*the God of gods*” (Psa 136:2). When Daniel interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the king confessed, “*Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings*” (Dan 2:47).

**There are competitors to be sure – other “gods,” as well as men who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. However, they are all under the true God, and must yield to Him at His word. These disciples know this is the case, and therefore they present their supplication to the Lord, knowing full well that their opponents cannot stand against Him.**

Here was a body of people whose minds were immersed in Scripture. They had a grasp of the purpose of God, as well as His Sovereignty. Consider the marvelous scope of their understanding.

- ⇨ **LORD, THOU ART GOD** – they recognized His dominion and power.
- ⇨ **CREATOR** – They traced all things back to Him.
- ⇨ **THY SERVANT** – They saw David as serving God’s interests and purpose.
- ⇨ **THE LORD** – He is Sovereign.
- ⇨ **HIS CHRIST** – The Lord was perceived as primarily serving Divine interests.
- ⇨ **THY HOLY CHILD JESUS** – Only a holy Christ could save men.
- ⇨ **THOU HAST ANOINTED** – Christ’s purpose and power was traced back to God.
- ⇨ **THY HAND** – God is involved in the affairs of men.

One time, while Jesus was yet with them in the flesh, His disciples asked Him, “*Teach us to pray*” (Lk 11:1). Somewhere between Luke 11:1 and Acts 4:24, some Divine tutelage had been realized. **No deficiency in prayer will be apparent on this occasion.** The saints will pray with insight, persuasion, and confidence. They will not ask what they should do, but will pray for boldness to do what they already know to do.

**THOU ART GOD**

“. . . Lord, thou art God . . .”  
Other versions read, “*O Lord,*” NASB  
“*Sovereign Lord,*” NIV/NRSV/RSV/ESV/NAB/NIB/  
WEYMOUTH/MONTGOMERY/AMPLIFIED “*Master,*” CSB  
“*Master of all,*” NET “*Lord, You are God,*”  
PHILLIPS and “*Master, You are the God,*”  
ALT

The sophist sees no need for such a confession. To such, these words appear to be a pointless redundancy. However, this is not the recitation of a formula or a standardized introduction to supplication. This is the confession of faith – the acknowledgment of something

There are competitors to be sure – other “*gods,*” as well as men who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. However, they are all under the true God, and must yield to Him at His word. These disciples know this is the case, and therefore they present their supplication to the Lord, knowing full well that their opponents cannot stand against Him.

**RELATING THE CREATOR TO THE CIRCUMSTANCE**

“. . . which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is . . .” Other versions read, “*Thou didst make,*” NASB “*Maker of,*” BBE “*Creator of,*” LIVING “*the One having made,*” ALT and

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*"You created."*<sup>CEV</sup>

Here is a fundamental view that must not be distorted. It is consistently affirmed throughout Scripture, so that there can be doubt about this – God's association with the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything inhabiting them.

This is the "heaven and the earth" that was created "in the beginning" of time. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen 1:1). It is the first thing about God that Scripture affirms. The "heaven" is the area around the earth, filled with celestial bodies beyond number. The "earth" is the area in which everything housed in a body lives – man, beast, fowl, and creeping things. The sea is the vast collections of water in which both animal and vegetable life is maintained, the number of which is also unimaginably vast.

This is the domain some have called *the universe*. Scripture refers to it as "the worlds" (Heb 1:2; 11:3). It also refers repeatedly to these three domains: heaven, earth, and sea (Ex 20:11; Psa 146:6; Ezek 38:20; Amos 9:6; Acts 14:15; Rev 5:13; 10:6; 14:7). This entire domain, with all three of its components, will eventually pass away according to Divine appointment (Rev 21:1).

**One might wonder why the disciples prayed in this manner. There is a basic postulate behind this confession, and it is marvelous to consider. The One who made these realms governs and controls everything within them.**

It is not possible to have a proper view of God that ignores the fact that He "made heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that in them is." This includes the fact that He made them "in six days," as affirmed in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17. Men may haggle over what kind of days these were – 24 hour days, or very lengthy periods of time. However, each of the six days in which the Lord created the heaven, earth, sea, and everything within them are each summarized with the words, "and the evening and the morning were" (Gen 1:5,8,13,19,23,31). This confirms they were periods of identical length, each consisting of two components. There is not a shred of Scripture – not so much as a syllable – that suggests these days were anything other than the days with which we are familiar.

While I do not stand in judgment of anyone's faith, those who do not acknowledge God as the Creator [as it is presented in Scripture] cannot possibly be serving the true God. They cannot confess God as these disciples did. What I am saying is that God himself is identified as the One created the worlds, thereby distinguishing Him from all other gods, over whom he rules.

#### The Basic Postulate

One might wonder why the disciples prayed in this manner. There is a basic postulate behind this confession, and it is marvelous to consider. **The One who made these realms governs and controls everything within them.** There is no personality, thing, or activity within them over which God does not have absolute dominion. This is particularly good news when facing opposition.

## WHY DID THE HEATHEN RAGE

*"<sup>25</sup> Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?"*

Spiritual minds gravitate to Scripture. There is where the mind of God is articulated, and the thoughts of God are communicated to men. **The Scriptures are the means through which we learn to speak properly concerning the things of God.** That is why it is through them that the man of God is made "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim 3:17).

Now we will behold how a grasp of Scripture impacts upon forming a prayer to God.

#### BY THE MOUTH OF DAVID

*"Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said . . ."* Other versions read, "by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Thy servant,"<sup>NASB</sup> "by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David,"<sup>NIV</sup> "by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant,"<sup>NRSV</sup> "who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit,"<sup>RSV</sup> "who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,"<sup>ESV</sup> "and You said through the Holy Spirit, who spoke through your servant David (our ancestor)."<sup>GWN</sup>

Here is a glimpse of what can be involved in God speaking to men. There are few examples of God speaking

directly to men: Adam (Gen 3:9-12), Noah (Gen 6:13), Abraham (Gen 17:9), Jacob (Gen 35:1), and Moses (Num 12:7-8), etc. Some of the occasions during which God was said to speak to men were actually accomplished through an angel. Some examples are Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:1-4:19; Acts 7:30), and the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ex 20:1-19; Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19). Several other instances where it is stated that the Lord spoke to men could actually have been accomplished through angels, as when Jacob said He had seen God "face to face" (Gen 32:30), yet had actually wrestled with an angel (Hos 12:4).

Here, however, we have a reference to the more standard way of

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God speaking to men – if, indeed, any such way can be called *standard*. The affirmation of the text is that God delivered a word to men through David – a prophecy of the coming Messiah. Some versions read, “by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David.”<sup>NASB</sup> The King James and New King James Versions, together with several others, do not contain the reference to the Holy Spirit. There is no need to balk at this, as we are informed elsewhere that “*holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Pet 1:21). This is what “*the inspiration of God*” means, as stated in Second Timothy 3:16.

We also know that fallen man cannot have direct access to God Himself. Jesus said, “*And the Father Himself, which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape*” (John 5:37). Again He said, “*Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father*” (John 6:46). Additionally, John wrote, “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him*” (John 1:18). All of this shows how Divine communication is, in a manner of speaking, filtered as it comes to man.

Here is a profitable thing to ponder – something that accents the extent to which the human race has fallen. **The manner in which God speaks to us confirms that sin has created a separation between man and God.** Even though in Christ we are reconciled to God, there must still be someone between us and God to deliver His words. In the past, through the Spirit and holy angels, he spoke to men through the prophets. Now, however, He speaks to us through the Son. As it is written, “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds*” (Heb 1:1-2). **Now the Son is in total charge of all communication with men.** If sinners are to be convicted, the Son must send the Spirit to do so (John 16:8-11). If the Scriptures are to be opened to us, and the eyes of our understanding be illuminated, the Son must do it (Eph 1:18). **The**

**government is upon His shoulder, and hearing and understanding the truth is within the perimeter of His Kingdom.**

Now the disciples will speak to God about something He had spoken through the Spirit and by David the prophet. They will discern this particular passage of Scripture, and be able to correlate it with the events that have recently occurred in their presence.

**WHY DID THE HEATH RAGE?**

“*Why did the heathen rage . . .*”

Other versions read, “*Why do the nations rage?*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*Why did the Gentiles rage?*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*Why are the nations so violently moved?*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*Why have the nations raged haughtily?*”<sup>DARBY</sup> “*Why do the nations act arrogantly?*”<sup>GWN</sup> “*Why this uproar among the nations?*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*Why were the nations so angry?*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*Why do the heathen rage against the Lord?*”<sup>LIVING</sup> “*Why were the nations so mad?*”<sup>IE</sup> “*Why did the heathen (Gentiles) become wanton and insolent and rage?*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*Why are the Gentiles so furious?*”<sup>CEV</sup>

The passage to which they are

referring is Psalm 2:1-6: “*Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.*”

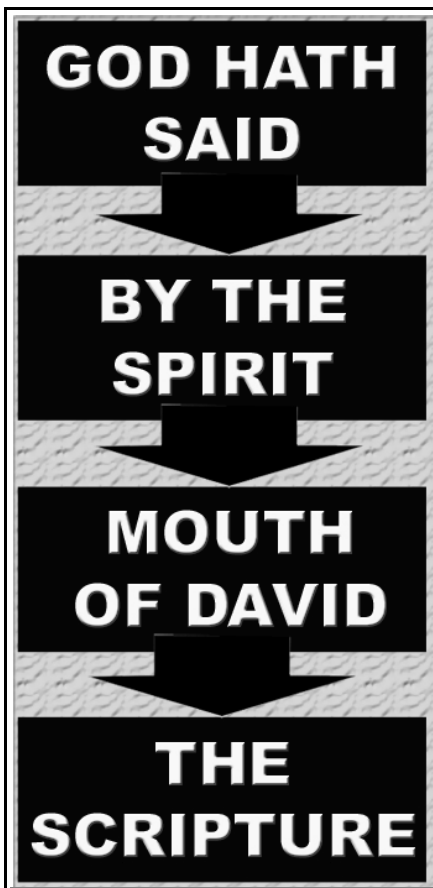
“*The heathen*” is a reference to the Gentile peoples – the nations to whom no revelation was given, and who were not in covenant with God. It speaks of the opposition of the nations to the purposes and objectives of God Almighty. **We will see that it particularly relates to the enthronement of the Lord’s Christ.**

The word “*rage*” speaks of arrogant and haughty behavior – like a prancing horse to stomps on the ground wildly. What caused the nations to be agitated and bluster about against the Lord? Why were they so angry, and moved to violence?

There are numerous examples of this rage. In an introductory manner, it was made known in Cain slaying Abel (Gen 4:8), Ishmael mocking Isaac (Gen 21:9-10), and Esau threatening Jacob (Gen 27:41). The nations raged against Israel, the covenanted people: Egypt, Assyria, Syria, Philistia, Media, Samaria, Chaldea. They raged at a people who were blessed by the Lord, and were given a land of their own. They raged at their religion, their prophets, and their law?

Behind all of this, Satan was at work, seeking to stop the promised Seed from coming into the world. Following Christ’s entrance into the world, the devil focused on Him, making every effort to turn Him from His mission or destroy Him. His efforts were all in vain, as Jesus triumphed over him, destroying Him by means of His death (Heb 2:14).

Following our Lord’s resurrection, ascension, and enthronement, Satan would continue to harass the disciples of Christ, trying to stamp them out from the earth (Rev 12:17). In this effort he would also employ the nations of the



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world – heathen governments. Though seemingly successful in some of his efforts, this too would prove to be futile. **All who are in Christ Jesus will be brought safely home to glory.**

**WHY DID THE PEOPLE IMAGINE VAIN THINGS?**

“... and the people imagine vain things?” Other versions read, “And the people plot vain things?”<sup>NKJV</sup> “And the peoples devise futile things?”<sup>NASB</sup> “and the peoples plot in vain?”<sup>NIV</sup> “and why are the thoughts of the people so foolish?”<sup>BBE</sup> “and the peoples meditated vain things?”

Jews, who were a unique people in the world. However, I am rather inclined to see this as the Jews – particularly since the disciples make that connection in the expressions that follow.

We have numerous examples of the Jews objecting to, and opposing, the words and working of the Lord. They murmured against Moses (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num 14:2; 16:41). They persecuted, and even killed, the holy prophets (Matt 23:31; Acts 7:32; Thess 2:15). They killed Stephen (Acts 7:59), and took delight in the beheading of James (Acts 12:2-3).

things, neither the Psalmist nor the disciples are not seeking an answer. **Rather, through the Spirit, they are declaring the absurdity of their actions.** Although they did not know it, they were nothing more than vassals of Satan, and Satan cannot overthrow God. This is confirmed by the fact that he himself was cast out of heaven with his angels. As it is written, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev 12:9). **His opposition against God in the heavenly realms was futile. It is also futile upon the earth.**

**Imagining vain things is the development of cunning plots that were destined to failure. It is the making of plans that cannot be fulfilled. It is not because the plans are foolish of themselves, but because they are against the Lord, whose purpose cannot be overthrown.**

The futility of all opposition to God reaches an apex in the matter of Christ’s enthronement. After citing the raging of the heathen and the plotting of the people, the second Psalm continues, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. **Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion**” (Psa 2:6). All opposition, from the slaying of Abel to the crucifixion of Christ, was nothing more than an exercise in vanity. God **did** what He had purposed, and there was not a chance that any person or group of persons could thwart or delay it. As it is written, “as I have purposed, **so shall it stand**” (Isa 14:24), and “I have spoken it, **I will also bring it to pass: I have purposed it, I will also do it**” (Isa 46:11).

DARBY “Why do their people devise useless plots?”<sup>GWN</sup> “and the peoples entertain folly?”<sup>NAB</sup> “this impotent muttering of the peoples?”<sup>NJB</sup> “Why did they waste their time with futile plans?”<sup>NLT</sup> “and the foolish nations plan their little plots against Almighty God?”<sup>LIVING</sup> “Why did the people of the world plan things?”<sup>IE</sup> “and the people make vain designs.”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “and the people imagine and study and plan vain (fruitless) things [that will not succeed]?”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> “and [the] people think about [fig., plot futile][things]?”<sup>ALT</sup> and “and the people conspired vain things?”<sup>EMTV</sup>

They hounded Paul in his prodigious travels throughout the world (Acts 9:22-23; Acts 13:45,50; 14:19; 17:13; 18:12; 20:3; 21:27; 23:12; 25:7; 2 Cor 11:24; 2 Thess 2:14). All of this opposition started with “the people” rejecting Jesus, and imagining vain things against Him.

Imagining vain things is the development of cunning plots that were destined to failure. It is the making of plans that cannot be fulfilled. **It is not because the plans are foolish of themselves, but because they are against the Lord, whose purpose cannot be overthrown.**

Some have conjectured that “the people” refers to the heathen in another way – as individuals rather than nations. They reject the idea that it refers to the

**Why ???**

In asking “Why?” the heathen raged and the people imagined vain

Now, the disciples will reason with the Lord. They will build their case upon the truth of the second Psalm. They do so because they know they are in synch with Divine purpose, and thus call upon Him to sustain them in their work. This is a prayer of remarkable insight, revealing how the Spirit works in those whose hearts have been submitted to the Lord. Much can be learned here.

**THE KINGS AND RULERS GATHERED TOGETHER**

**“<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against**

**his Christ.”**

This is heaven’s view of the

conspiracy against Jesus. It is depicted as a bold and deliberate initiative against God Himself and His Christ, or Anointed

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

One – the One chosen to take away the sins of the world, soundly defeat the wicked one, and administrate the Kingdom of God with a mind to bringing many sons to glory.

**THE KINGS OF THE EARTH STOOD UP**

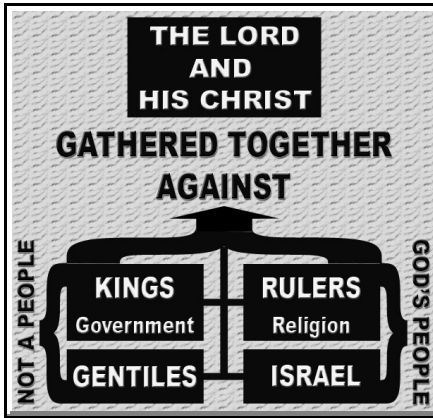
*“The kings of the earth stood up . . .”* Other versions read, *“The kings of the earth took their stand,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“The kings of the earth set themselves in array,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“The kings of the earth were lifted up,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“The kings of the earth were there,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“The Kings of the earth assembled,”*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *“The kings of the earth stood together,”*<sup>NET</sup> *“Kings on earth take up position,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“The kings of the earth prepared for battle,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“the kings of the earth came near,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“The kings of the earth took their stand in array [for attack].”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

From the human point of view – which is never the right one – it may appear as though *“the kings of the earth”* were, from one extreme, only pleasing the people. While, from the other extreme, they may be thought to be nothing more than pawns manipulated by the King of kings. However, such views are too simplistic. **Man does have a will, and he is responsible for the way he uses it.**

*“Kings”* are rulers over large areas of the earth – some were global in their power, ruling the entire world. **This is what the kings of the earth eventually do – stand up against God.** They initiate opposition to righteousness in order to promote their own cause. If Joseph be sited as an example of king who did not do this, it must be remembered that he was king in the earth, **but not of the earth.** He was not spawned by the world’s system, but assumed his office according to Divine appointment.

To be more specific, ***“the kings of the earth”* stand for the governments of the world – the heads over the kingdoms which will all be crushed by the real Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the King of kings”** (1 Tim 6:15). Eventually, *“their kingdoms will “become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ”* (Rev 11:15). Until then, they are in competition with the Lord and the Truth that he has brought to the world (John 1:17). **At some point, “kings,” who stand for the**

**governments of the world, stand up against Christ.** History can boast of no significant or global government that has altered its manner to agree with the truth of God. Even where amiable governments exist who tend to favor *Christianity*, there comes a time when they in some way stand up against Christ. Our own country, the United States of America, is a case in point.



**THE RULERS GATHERED TOGETHER**

*“ . . . and the rulers were gathered together . . .”* Other versions read, *“the rulers gather together,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“the rulers have gathered together,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“the rulers came together,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the rulers assembled together,”*<sup>CSB</sup> *“and the princes assembled together,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“Rulers make plans together,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“the potentates stood up,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“princes plot together,”*<sup>NJB</sup> and *“and the rulers were assembled and combined together.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

As this pray will affirm, the *“rulers of the people”* are not just another way of saying *“kings of the earth.”* **This rather refers to religious leaders, as seen in the leaders of Israel.** More specifically, it is corrupt religious leaders than find the apex of their expression in spiritual Babylon, depicted so vividly in the book of Revelation (Rev 17:1-18:24). There she is depicted as a whorish woman sitting upon a beast – a graphic picture of an religion being carried along by the principles that support worldly governments.

The *“rulers”* of reference lead in the name of God, but they lead people into the ditch, error, and outright opposition to God. This will be clarified when we come to the application the

disciples make of *“the kings of the earth and the rulers.”*

**AGAINST THE LORD, AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST**

*“ . . . against the Lord, and against his Christ.”* Other versions read, *“against the Lord and against His Anointed One,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“against the Lord and against His Messiah,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“against the Lord and against His anointed,”*<sup>ESV</sup> *“against the Lord, and too, against His Christ,”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and *“against the Lord and against His Anointed (Christ, the Messiah).”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

*“The Lord”* is God the Father – *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph 1:3). *“His Christ”* is the Man God has anointed to deal with the human situation. **It is the Lord Jesus Himself, who was sent to remove sin, the inhibiting factor, thereby providing a basis upon which men could be rescued and brought into Divine favor.** The *“Christ”* was also the Divine means of putting a crystal-clear representation of God Himself among the people. It is said of Jesus, *“in Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* (Col 2:9). And again it is said of Him, *“Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person”* (Heb 1:3). Jesus Himself said, *“he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9).

When it is said the kings and rulers *“gathered together against the Lord and His Christ,”* it does not mean they stood up against two perceived personalities. Precisely how do *“kings and rulers”* gather together against an invisible God? **This rather means that when the people opposed “His Christ,” they opposed the God who sent Him as well, for “God was in Christ”** (2 Cor 5:19). Jesus also made this fact clear when He said, *“He that hateth Me hateth My Father also”* (John 15:23). And again, *“he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me”* (Luke 10:16). This is further accentuated by the fact that whoever receives Jesus receives the Father also. As it is written, *“he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me”* (Matt 10:40). **Therefore, whether we are speaking of receiving Christ or rejecting Him, the action is considered to apply to both the Father and the Son – “the Lord and His Christ.”** Thus it is clear that two

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

peoples cannot worship *the same God* while one of them rejects Christ.

It must be clear in our minds that God takes the rejection or neglect of His Son personal. **It is impossible for God to**

**extend His mercy to those who are rejecting, and even opposing, His Son.** That is why it is utterly impossible for those who stand up against Jesus to succeed, seeing they oppose both God and Christ – an opposition that cannot

possibly succeed.

Now, we will see how the disciples employ this understanding in prayer – how they take the truth and work with a situation through prayer.

**GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE HOLY CHILD JESUS**

***“27 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 . . .”***

Here we are exposed to the exactness, or precision, of *“wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Col 1:9).

**FOR**

*“For . . .”* The word *“for”* is “a particle of affirmation and conclusion” <sup>THAYER</sup> That is, it is a way of drawing a conclusion, or applying the truth that was just stated. In other words, in the hearts of the disciples, what follows is an example of the Second Psalm. Two parallels in particular are to be seen.

- ⇨ Opposition to God and His Christ.
- ⇨ The utter vanity of such opposition.

**AGAINST GOD’S HOLY CHILD**

*“. . . of a truth against thy holy child Jesus . . .”* Other versions read, *“holy Child, Jesus”* <sup>DOUAY/PNT/RWB/TNT/WEB/YLT/BISHOPS/LITV/MJKV</sup> *“Your holy Servant Jesus,”* <sup>NKJ</sup> *“Thine holy Son Jesus,”* <sup>GENEVA/MRD</sup> *“Your Son . . . Your holy Servant,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> and *“Your holy Child and Servant.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Again, as in Acts 3:13 and 26, several versions use the word *“servant”* instead of *“child”* (*“Son”* in Acts 3:13 and 26). I offer the following as a brief exposition of this matter because, when referring to Jesus, any alternative to the word *“Son”* must be buttressed with sound reasoning and linguistic expertise.

**“Son” Versus “Servant”**

Nearly all later translations say *“Servant”* instead of *“Son”* <sup>NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV/RSV/ASV/BBE/CSB/DARBY/ERV/ESV/GWN/NAB/NAS/NAU/NET/NJB/NJL/NLT/LIVING/IE/WEYMOUTH/ISV/WILLIAMS, and MONTGOMERY</sup>

Two of the literal translations (Young’s Literal and Literal Translation of the Bible) translate the word *“child.”* The Amplified Bible translates it *“Servant and Son.”*

The Greek word translated *“Son”* and *“servant”* is common in all Greek manuscripts. It is *παῖδα*, (pie-dah), and is in the masculine gender. Its lexical meaning is “a child,” with the second usage

God’s Servant. That is how Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah (Isa 42:1; 49:5-7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). Zechariah also prophesied of the Messiah as God’s *“Servant the Branch”* (Zech 3:8). Matthew specifically confirms Jesus is the *“Servant”* of Isaiah’s prophecy (Matt 12:16). **None of these prophecies had to do with the exaltation or glorification of Jesus.** They rather had to do with Him carrying out God’s commission

**This confirms that those who oppose Jesus oppose God also. Those who reject His words, reject God also. Those who argue with what Jesus says speak against God. Those who are indifferent to Jesus are indifferent toward God. It makes no difference what such people affirm.**

*“servant, slave,”* <sup>THAYER</sup> “in reference to age, child; in reference to descent son, in reference to social position servant, slave,” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> “servant, slave, child,” <sup>UBS</sup> “a young person,” <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> “in relation to Descent, a son, in Relation to age, a child, in relation to Condition, a slave, servant,” <sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup> “child (in relation to parents,” <sup>LEH</sup> and “boy, son, but even more probable is servant, slave.” <sup>GINGRICH</sup>

It is clear from the lexical definitions that the meaning of the word is not cut and dried. It is used in a number of differing ways to denote age, descent, and social status. If this word was used to describe anyone other than Jesus, I would carry the matter no further. However, since this is descriptive of Jesus, it seems to me that we must extend ourselves to be sure we hold a God-honoring view of the term.

The complicating factor is the words modified by this expression: *“His Son (Servant) JESUS.”*

First, this precise Greek word is used five times in Scripture. Luke 9:42 (*“child,”* <sup>KJV</sup> *“boy”* <sup>NASB</sup>), Acts 3:13 (*“Son,”* <sup>KJV</sup> *“Servant,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“Child”* <sup>YLT</sup>), Acts 3:26 (*“ΟΝ,”* <sup>KJV</sup> *“Servant,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“Child.”* <sup>YLT</sup>), Acts 4:27 (*“Child,”* <sup>KJV</sup> *“Servant,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“Child.”* <sup>DOUAY</sup>), and Acts 20:12 (*“young man”* named Eutychus, *“lad,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“youth,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“boy.”* <sup>NASB</sup>

There can be no question about Jesus being

in the earth – accomplishing salvation.

I affirm that, from a technical point of view, **Jesus was exalted in the capacity of the Son of God and “Jesus.”** In this capacity He is the Foundation upon which the church is Built (Matt 16:16-18; 1 Cor 3:11). Our faith involves a persuasion that Jesus is *“the Son of God”* (John 20:21; Acts 8:37; 1 John 5:5). The text loses nothing by retaining the expression *“He Hath glorified His Son Jesus.”* <sup>KJV, DOUAY, GENEVA, MRD, PNT, RWB, TNT, WEB, BISHOP’S BIBLE, MKJV</sup>

Notice how the disciples relate the opposition to Christ with the kings of the earth and the rulers of the people gathering together against *“the Lord and His Christ.”* **This confirms that those who oppose Jesus oppose God also.** Those who reject His words, reject God also. Those who argue with what Jesus says speak against God. Those who are indifferent to Jesus are indifferent toward God. It makes no difference what such people affirm. As *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim 3:15), **the church is to make this clear to the people.** Our attitude

toward Jesus reflects our attitude toward God – the God before whom we will surely stand.

**“Holy”**

Several things are to be noted in this singular expression. It is only mentioned here, and later in verse 30. Coming from the Greek word ἅγιος (hagion), this word has several primary meanings.

- ⇒ **WAY HE IS VIEWED.** Viewed with veneration because of association with God. <sup>THAYER</sup>
- ⇒ **MANNER OF EMPLOYMENT.** Set apart for God, being exclusively His. <sup>THAYER</sup>
- ⇒ **HIS ORIGIN.** Prepared for God – that is, having its origin exclusively for Divine employment. <sup>THAYER</sup>

God” (Luke 1:35).

**This means there was nothing from the fallen race within Jesus, even though he took upon Himself the human “form” (Phil 2:7).** He came in “*the likeness of sinful flesh*,” but Himself was not housed by “*sinful flesh*” (Rom 8:3). He had a body – a specially prepared body (Heb 10:5), but it was not a “*vile body*” (Phil 3:21), or a “*body of this death*” (Rom 7:24). **In other words, there was nothing from Adam in Jesus!** That is why He is called “*the last Adam*” (1 Cor 15:45), and “*the second man*” (1 Cor 15:47).

In reckoning genealogies, the seed is always reckoned through the man. Thus we read, “*And Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness*” (Gen 5:3), and “*This is the book of the generations of Adam . . .*” (Gen 5:1-32). Matthew traces the

existed. If that is not the case, this language would have no meaning, nor would He have been unique.

Now, how successful will “*the kings of the earth*” and “*the rulers of the people*” be in gathering themselves together against this “*holy child?*” The answer to this question will determine whether or not men are ever justified in fearing man rather than God.

**AGAINST THE ONE WHOM GOD ANOINTED**

“. . . whom thou hast anointed . . .” Other versions read, “*who was marked out by You as Christ*,” <sup>BBE</sup> “*Your anointed Son*,” <sup>LIVING</sup> “*the One You made Messiah*,” <sup>IE</sup> “*whom You had consecrated*,” <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “*Whom You consecrated by anointing*,” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*Your chosen Messiah*.” <sup>CEV</sup>

**Not only was Jesus uniquely born, He came into the world for a unique purpose.** Through the prophets, God made known that a diligent search had been made by the Omniscient One to see if there was anyone in all the human race who was capable of addressing the human dilemma. “*And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me*” (Isa 63:5). Again it is said of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice, “*I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me*” (Isa 63:3). The expression “*of the people*” refers to the chosen people, who were the most unique people in all the world. They had been chosen and cultured by God Himself, given every possible advantage to correct their behavior. Yet, among even this people, no one could be found who could take away sin, destroy the devil, and provide a just basis for salvation.

Jesus – the incarnate Word (John 1:14) – anointed to do this work. That is, He was sanctified, or set apart to accomplish what had to be done for men to be delivered from the clutches of the devil, as well as sin and death. There was no other compelling reason for Him to come into the earth. It is true that God the Father was seen in Him (John 14:9), and that He was the appointed expositor of Him (John 1:18). It is also true that “*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an*

**Now, how successful will “the kings of the earth” and “the rulers of the people” be in gathering themselves together against this “holy child?” The answer to this question will determine whether or not men are ever justified in fearing man rather than God.**

- ⇒ **HIS CHARACTER.** In a moral sense, pure, sinless, and upright. <sup>THAYER</sup>
- ⇒ **HIS TOTAL ACCEPTANCE BY GOD.** A quality of one who can be brought into the presence of God with perfect acceptance. <sup>FRIBERG</sup>
- ⇒ **ABSOLUTE SUPERIORITY.** Superior in all respects and possessing certain Divine qualities that set him apart from all other created beings. <sup>LOW-NIDA</sup>

**“Child”**

This has particular regard to Christ’s origin. He was begotten by God through the Holy Spirit, and is therefore properly and fully referred to as God’s “*Son*.” Thus, when providing an explanation for her conception of a child, the angel Gabriel said, “*The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of*

genealogy of Jesus from Abraham to Jesus, always mentioning the men as begetting (Matt 1:1-16). Luke traces the genealogy from Jesus back to Adam, also mentioning the men as begetting (Lk 3:23-38). **From the human point of view, the birth of Jesus was through Mary, not her husband Joseph.** He is properly referred to as the “*seed*” of the woman (Gen 3:15), thus setting apart from all other men. Thus Isaiah prophesied, “*a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel*” (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23).

Jesus, therefore, came from heaven, not from “*the loins of a man*,” as did others (Ex 1:5; Heb 7:5,10). This is why Jesus referred to Himself as “*He that came down from heaven*” (John 3:13). He also said, “*I came down from heaven*” (John 6:38), and “*I am the living bread which came down from heaven*” (John 6:51). **Jesus is, then, the only person ever born of a woman that pre-**

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

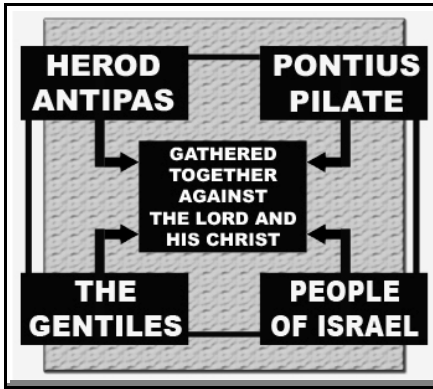
example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet 2:21). But none of these were His primary or fundamental reason for coming into the world. Rather, they all were related to Him laying down His life, and taking it up again (John 10:17-18). Were it not for those requirements, the other things would have no real purpose.

How serious do you suppose it is to be aligned against such a Man – “the Lord’s Christ” (Lk 2:26). Understanding who sent Him into the world, and the “eternal purpose” that provided the reason for sending Him, how successful will anyone be in standing up against Him?

Knowing these things, the disciples will now spell out in their prayer precisely what was involved in the kings and rulers of the people gathering together against the Lord and His Christ.

**HEROD, PILATE, THE GENTILES, AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL**

“ . . . both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together . . . ” Other versions read, “both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations, and peoples of Israel, have been gathered together in this city,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “In this city Herod and Pontius Pilate made plans together with non-Jewish people and the people of Israel,”<sup>GWN</sup> “Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and the congregation of Israel, have been combined together in this city,”<sup>MRD</sup> “in this very city Herod and Pontius Pilate plotted together with the gentile nations and the peoples of Israel,”



<sup>NJB</sup> “In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united,”<sup>NLT</sup> “That this is what is happening here in this city today! For Herod the king, and Pontius Pilate the governor, and all the Romans – as well as the people of Israel,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “These words came true when Herod, Pontius Pilate, the nations of the world, and the Jewish people all came together,”<sup>IE</sup> “Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and also the tribes of Israel,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “Herod and Pontius Pilate actually met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel,”<sup>ISV</sup> “Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the heathen and the peoples of Israel,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and “Herod and Pontius Pilate got together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel.”<sup>CEV</sup>

Now the disciples give the names of the opponents they have experienced, and of their disdain of the Christ. Herod Antipas was the fickle king, and Pilate the crafty governor. There was a time

when these two men did not get along. However, when it came to being against Jesus, they came into agreement and were reconciled. It is written, “And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves” (Luke 23:11-12).

Notice how the people relate the crucifixion of Jesus to the opposition just experienced by Peter and John. They do not consider the opposition to be against Peter and John, but against the Lord and His Christ. This is a liberating view, freeing us from the fear of man, which does bring a snare (Prov 29:15). These brethren know that if the opposition is against God and His Christ, the response to that opposition will be orchestrated from heaven, accomplishing the will of God, not of man.

It ought to be noted that only those who are laboring together with God in His revealed purpose can pray in this manner. Those who have adopted the agendas of men, and are engaged in sectarian enterprises cannot call God to their aid – at least not with any confidence.

Those who choose to abandon the revealed work of God have, by that very action, forfeited the right to ask for His empowerment and assistance. Although a vital view, it does not appear to me that this is commonly known among professed believers.

**TO DO WHAT DIVINE COUNSEL HAD DETERMINED**

“<sup>28</sup> For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

**FOR TO DO**

“For to do whatsoever . . . ” Other versions read, “to do whatever,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “they did what,”<sup>NIV</sup> “they did everything,”<sup>GWN</sup> “to do as much,”<sup>NET</sup> “to bring about everything,”<sup>NJB</sup> “to do all that,”<sup>ISV</sup> “to carry out all.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The purpose of this gathering was to do something. They did not come together to talk, but to fully implement their own desires. These men were meeting to carry out their desires concerning the presence of the “Jesus of Nazareth.” They had analyzed the situation before them and determined what they felt had to be done. In fact, viewing the whole matter according to the flesh, it looked as though they did

carry out their designs, finally ridding themselves of this troublesome Teacher and miracle worker. However, the disciples do not view this matter as something the kings and rulers intended to do. They will confess to God that what they did really had very little to do with their intentions.

**THY HAND**

“ . . . Thy hand . . . ” Other

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

versions read, *“to do whatever Your hand,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“to bring about the very thing that you in your strength.”*<sup>NJB</sup>

The “hand” of the Lord speaks of what He does – of His works, and the execution of his will. The Psalmist said of God’s hand, *“The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly”* (Psa 118:16). The fact that God’s right hand is “exalted” means that He is in a position to do whatever He pleases. The fact that His right hand does “valiantly” means that what He sets His hand to do is effective. As it is written, *“He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”* (Dan 4:35).

Viewed from heaven’s perspective, the enemies of Christ were assembled to execute the will of God the Father. None of this was apparent to them, and at the time it was not even apparent to the followers of Christ. But that is not the case now. At this time they have been enlightened, and are praying with an acute understanding of what really took place when Jesus was crucified.

**THY COUNSEL**

*“ . . . and Thy counsel . . . ”* Other versions read, *“Your purpose,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“and will,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“and your plan,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“and thy pleasure,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“and Your wisdom.”*<sup>NJB</sup>

The “counsel” of the Lord has to do with His purpose, intention, or aim. Men might associate God’s “counsel” with His plan, or what He wills to do. A “council” plotted the death of Christ (Matt 26:59; Mk 14:55). A “council” *“bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate”* (Mk 15:1). A “council” had also forced Peter and John to stand before them, and issued a threat to them (Acts 4:15). But this is not the kind of counsel that is in the minds of the disciples as they pray.

They now see the whole matter of Christ’s death as associated with the will and purpose of the God of heaven – which it was. If God had not purposed that Jesus die, it would not have been possible for Him to die.

**DETERMINED BEFORE TO BE**

**DONE**

*“ . . . determined before to be done.”* Other versions read, *“predestined to occur,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“predestined to take place,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“foreordained to come to pass,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“had been fixed before,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“decreed to be done,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“You had already decided should be done,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“previously marked out to be done,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“had long ago planned to take place,”*<sup>NAB</sup> *“had decided beforehand would happen,”*<sup>NET</sup> *“had predetermined should happen,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“made Your plan come true,”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“had predestined (predetermined) should occur.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

This is something that all of the

much like the saying of Jesus concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The doubters replied, *“This a hard saying, who can hear it,”* or *“This teaching is difficult: who can accept it?”*<sup>NRSV</sup> (John 6:60). However, men do well to mortify such distracting thoughts, for they suggest the absence of God from the affairs of men, as though the world was running independently of its Creator.

**Does God Really Determine Things?**

Some suggest that God really does not determine things, for, say they, this interferes with the free will of man. But what will they do with the worst thing men have ever done – gather together

**Viewed from heaven’s perspective, the enemies of Christ were assembled to execute the will of God the Father. None of this was apparent to them, and at the time it was not even apparent to the followers of Christ. But that is not the case now. At this time they have been enlightened, and are praying with an acute understanding of what really took place when Jesus was crucified.**

disciples saw, for they were praying *“with one accord”* (4:24). At this point we confront a fact that jars against the flesh – a point with which many have a controversy. On the one hand, we have read about *“the kings of the earth and the rulers of the people.”* It might appear on the surface as though they are running the affairs of the earth. However, there is a Divine will that is superimposed upon the human will, and it causes things to happen.

**The second Psalm is a bold affirmation of the futility of opposition to God.** In the case of Jesus, the opposition itself is an expression of God’s determination. This is exactly what Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, not many days before the time of our text. *“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”* (Acts 2:23).

For some, this is too hard to accept. To those so described it is viewed

against the Lord and His Christ and kill *“The Prince of life”* (Acts 3:15). **Here the disciples declare this was done in strict accordance with God’s counsel, and was something He had determined before to be done.**

What kind of reasoning leads people to imagine that God determined the worst things to be done, but left everything else to men? Is it possible to live in God’s world, employing the life that He has given, and yet to do be completely apart from any involvement from Him? And how would a person go about substantiating such a notion?

God once sent a prophet to king Amaziah who *“said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel”* (2 Chron 25:16). The record confirms that Amaziah was not able to avert that Divine determination (25:27). Job confessed that man’s days *“are determined,”* adding that God has *“decreed the number of his*

months and have set limits he cannot exceed" <sup>NIV</sup> (Job 14:5). Isaiah spoke of a "consumption," or "complete destruction" <sup>NASB</sup> of the land that had been "determined" by God (Isa 10:23). Isaiah also prophesied of a time when Judah would be a terror to Egypt according to "the counsel of the Lord, which He hath determined against it" (Isa 19:17). Daniel spoke of "seventy weeks" that were "determined upon the people and the holy city" (Dan 9:24), also affirming "for what has been determined shall be done" <sup>NKJV</sup> (Dan 11:36). Paul announced to the

Athenians, "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26).

In this prayer it comes across that the disciples were convinced of the absolute Sovereignty of God. **They did not have all of the answers concerning their situation, but they knew who did.** They prayed to the God who controls men as well as created them. **With them,**

being aligned with the purpose of God had placed them in a position to pray with such keen insight and holy boldness.

We do well to learn from this account. **If we pray as though this world is governed by men, we pray in error.** It is still true, "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psa 24:1). That includes our opponents as well as our friends. It encompasses the saved and the lost, the tender and the hard.

## BEHOLD THEIR THREATENINGS

<sup>29a</sup> **And now, Lord, behold their threatenings . . .** Other versions read, "Now, Lord, look on their threats." <sup>NKJV</sup> "And now, Lord, take note of their threats." <sup>NASB</sup> "Now, Lord, consider their threats." <sup>NIV</sup> "And now, Lord, take note of their cruel words." <sup>BBE</sup> "Lord, pay attention to their threats." <sup>GWN</sup> "behold and see their menaces." <sup>MRD</sup> "O Lord, hear their threats." <sup>NLT</sup> "Lord, listen to what they are saying." <sup>IE</sup> "Lord, pay attention to their threats now." <sup>ISV</sup> and "And now, Lord, observe their threats." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Why would the saints pray in such a manner, asking the Lord to pay attention to, behold, or look upon the threats that had been made against them? The sophist might perceive this to be rather foolish, seeing that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13). Others might reason, "Is it not true he looks from heaven, beholding the sons of men? (Psa 33:13). Why would we ask the Lord to behold something that is already being assessed by Him? Is it not true that 'by Him actions are weighed' (1 Sam 2:3)? Is there anything that is hidden from Him, or that He does not see? If God is omniscient, why should any informed person pray in such a manner?" Such is the prattling of fools who have no understanding. They do not know of Divine manners, and that is why their thinking is so flawed.

Do you wonder how unconventional it is for believers to bring their enemies to the attention of the

Lord? Those who live by faith do not avenge themselves. They know the Lord has said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people"



(Heb 10:30). Of course, as the statement indicates, there are two sides to that vengeance. The first is His vengeance upon those who persecute His people. The second is the judgment of His people for their omissions, commissions, or folly.

This prayer seeks for God's intervention on both sides. First, toward His enemies, that their ways may not prosper. Second, to give them grace to avoid His judgment for failure to do his revealed will.

Holy men have taken their enemies before the Lord in prayer. These prayers have come under the harsh criticism of those who are not acquainted with His ways. Nevertheless, they are a facet of spiritual life that are to be

addressed in wisdom.

⇨ "Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly" (Psa 3:7).

⇨ "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly" (Psa 6:10).

⇨ "Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded" (Psa 7:6).

⇨ "O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me" (Psa 25:2).

⇨ "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8).

⇨ "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works" (2 Tim 4:14).

We are to understand these prayers as relating to persecutions for the cause of Christ, which threaten to obstruct His servants. I understand that this prayer is of that order. The call for God to "behold their threatenings" is a plea to do something about them.

**The Nature of God in Such Matters**

It is God's nature to bring men into His purpose. He did so in the matter of Christ's crucifixion, as already affirmed in this text, and He also does so in the matter of assisting His people. Through Ezekiel, God once made some elaborate and extensive promises – all related to a specific work among them. Permit me to itemize some of the things He said He would do. They are recorded in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel.

- ⇨ He would be sanctified in them (23b).
- ⇨ He would take them from among the heathen, gather them out of all countries, and bring them into their own land (24).
- ⇨ He would sprinkle clean water on them, making them clean from their filthiness, and cleansing them from all their idols (25).
- ⇨ He would give them a new heart and a new spirit (26a).

uncleanesses (29a).

- ⇨ He would “*call for the corn,*” increase it, and lay no famine upon them (29b).
- ⇨ He would multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field (29c).
- ⇨ They would no more receive the reproach of famine among the heathen (30).
- ⇨ They would remember their evil ways and doings that were not good, and would loathe themselves in their own sight because of their iniquities and abominations (31).
- ⇨ He would not do this for their sakes (32).
- ⇨ In the day he cleanses them from all their iniquities, He will also cause them to dwell in cities, and the wastes will be built (33).

This is the God of heaven with whom there is no restraint, whose purposes are executed flawlessly precisely as planned, when they were appointed, and to the extent they were determined. It is a God with whom many professed *Christians* are not acquainted.

**An Extension of the Promise**

But there is more to these promises than their utterance – although that is quite sufficient to cause them to come to pass. As He said elsewhere, “*I have spoken it, I also will bring it to pass*” (Isa 46:11). Of another purpose He said through Jeremiah, “*because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it*” (Jer 4:28). There is no question, therefore, about the decrees and promises of God coming to pass! It is HOW they come to pass that is of particular interest here. This is matter of “*the ways of God.*”

In the text I have outlined above, God revealed something more. “*Thus saith the Lord GOD: I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock*” (Ezek 36:37). Here we are exposed to the Divine manner. **He moves His people to ask for what He has promised.** This is what is intended by a Psalmic expression: “*LORD, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear*” (Psa 10:17).

Solomon said, “*The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD*” (Prov 16:1). When David prayed for the people, He asked God to “*prepare their heart unto Thee*” (1 Chron 29:16). Hezekiah rejoiced when “*God had prepared the people*” (2 Chron 29:36). Once, in the land of Judah, “*the hand of the Lord was to give them one heart*” (2 Chron 30:12).

**The Lord's Way of Working**

This is the way the Lord works, and we are seeing it in this very text. The people are praying to God with one accord, asking Him to take special note of the threats that have been made against them. They do so because they know the Lord is affected by what He sees. They know He hates unrighteousness, loves His people, and will come to their defense. They know how He feels about

**This is the way the Lord works, and we are seeing it in this very text. The people are praying to God with one accord, asking Him to take special note of the threats that have been made against them. They do so because they know the Lord is affected by what He sees. They know He hates unrighteousness, loves His people, and will come to their defense.**

- ⇨ He would remove their stony heart and give them a heart of flesh (26b).
- ⇨ He would put His Spirit with them, and cause them to walk in His statutes and keep His judgments (27).
- ⇨ They would dwell in the land He gave to their fathers (28a).
- ⇨ They would be His people (28b).
- ⇨ He would be their God (28c).
- ⇨ He would save them from all of their

- ⇨ The desolate land will be tilled, which lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by (34).
- ⇨ Now, the passers by will say the land is like Eden, and places once lying waste would become fenced and inhabited (35).
- ⇨ Then the heathen that are left around them will know that God builds ruined places, and plants that which was desolate (36a).
- ⇨ Solemnly the Lord says, “*I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it*” (36b).

***Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely***

the record He has given of His Son, and of its faithful proclamation among the people. **They are not praying because**

**they are afraid, but because they know the Lord.** They are not praying because they are intimidated, but because they

have a heart to preach the Word. They are not praying in the spirit of vengefulness, but for His kingdom's sake.

## GRANT BOLDNESS TO YOUR SERVANTS

“<sup>29b</sup> . . . and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word . . .”

“ . . . AND . . . ”

“ . . . and . . . ” The disciples do not conclude their prayer with the consideration of their persecutors. **They turn to the consideration of the work they have been sent to do.** Their personal inconvenience is not the issue with them, or person-to-person opposition. They sense they have been “*joined to the Lord,*” and their lives are not their own. This is an expression of people who are living “*unto Him which died for them and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15).

**GRANT! GRANT! GRANT!**

“ . . . grant unto thy servants, . . . ”

Other versions read, “*grant that Thy bond-servants,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*enable your servants,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*give your servants,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*grant that Your slaves,*”<sup>CSB</sup> “*give to Thy bondmen,*”<sup>DARBY</sup> “*allow us,*”<sup>GWN</sup> “*help Your servants,*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*give us,*”<sup>NLT</sup> and “*We are Your servants. So make us.*”<sup>CEV</sup>

The words “*grant unto*” come from as single Greek word which means, “of one’s own accord to give something . . . to bestow, give as a gift . . . give to one asking, let hand . . . to supply, furnish, necessary things,”<sup>THAYER</sup> and “to give authority to carry out a task . . . as a favor or privilege to give . . . as giving something valuable to gain a return investment,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup>

There are several conditions or circumstances that attend a “*grant*” from God.

- ⇒ That the resource cannot be obtained anywhere else.
- ⇒ That there is a willingness on the part of the One granting the favor.
- ⇒ That the work in which the petitioner is engaged is a God-

ordained one.

- ⇒ That there is a willingness on the part of the one receiving the benefit to do the task requiring the resource.

**Note that petitioning a grant from the Lord is not the last recourse of the disciples.** They did not attempt other strategies, or run from the challenge they

*send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell*” (Isa 57:9). Ezekiel was told to tell the people that in sending ambassadors to Egypt for help, they had actually rebelled against God. “*But he rebelled against Him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the*

**Note that petitioning a grant from the Lord is not the last recourse of the disciples. They did not attempt other strategies, or run from the challenge they were facing. Right here, at the threshold of trouble, much of the heart of those being oppressed is discovered. If they immediately resort to flesh-and-blood resources, they are at once displeasing to the Lord.**

were facing. Right here, at the threshold of trouble, much of the heart of those being oppressed is discovered. **If they immediately resort to flesh-and-blood resources, they are at once displeasing to the Lord.** This was precisely the point at which the Lord became displeased with Israel. “*Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay]rely] on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!*” (Isa 31:1). Again, it is written, “*Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him*” (Isa 36:6). By seeking help from heathen rulers, the Lord told Israel they had debased themselves. “*And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst*

*covenant, and be delivered?*” (Ezek 17:15). **The Psalmist contrasted those who trusted in human help and innovations with those who trust in the Lord.** “*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God*” (Psa 20:7). The Spirit even moved the Psalmist to declare true deliverance does not even come from men. “*There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength*” (Psa 33:16-17).

We are categorically told that, when it comes to matters of the Kingdom, the wisdom of this world is worthless. “*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth*

the thoughts of the wise, **that they are vain**" (1 Cor 3:19-20).

It is necessary to say these things because of the propensity of the modern church to trust in men and their wisdom. **This accounts for the staggering increase of counselors and how-to gurus.**

However, you will find none of these inclinations in our text. **The disciples immediately resort to the Lord, and the Lord alone.** This is what people do who are really walking by faith and in the Spirit. This is the manner of *newness of life*.

Also ponder the manner in which they describe the servants of the Lord: "Thy servants." The word "servants" has a rich and strong meaning. It does not refer to a mere social status, or one that is forced upon a servant. **This is a status that is preferred, and is as thorough as though the individual was a bond-slave, being made to serve against his will.** The word used here does mean one that is bound, or tied, to the service of another. Technically, the word "servant" means "a

It is the kind of servant that is primarily depicted in the Lord Jesus Himself, and secondarily in His followers. Here is the law of the willing servant.

"IF THOU BUY AN HEBREW SERVANT, SIX YEARS HE SHALL SERVE: AND IN THE SEVENTH HE SHALL GO OUT FREE FOR NOTHING. IF HE CAME IN BY HIMSELF, HE SHALL GO OUT BY HIMSELF: IF HE WERE MARRIED, THEN HIS WIFE SHALL GO OUT WITH HIM. IF HIS MASTER HAVE GIVEN HIM A WIFE, AND SHE HAVE BORN HIM SONS OR DAUGHTERS; THE WIFE AND HER CHILDREN SHALL BE HER MASTER'S, AND HE SHALL GO OUT BY HIMSELF. **AND IF THE SERVANT SHALL PLAINLY SAY, I LOVE MY MASTER, MY WIFE, AND MY CHILDREN; I WILL NOT GO OUT FREE:** THEN HIS MASTER SHALL BRING HIM UNTO THE JUDGES; HE SHALL ALSO BRING HIM TO THE DOOR, OR UNTO THE DOOR POST; AND HIS MASTER SHALL BORE HIS EAR THROUGH WITH AN AWL; **AND HE SHALL SERVE HIM FOR EVER**" (Ex 21:2-6).

That law is fulfilled in Jesus, who refused to live in self-interest. **He volunteered to remain in a place of subjection to the Father in order that he might be with His children.** Thus it is written of Him, "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, **then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him**

every one that is perfect shall be as his Master" (Luke 6:40). Therefore, the servants of Christ have voluntarily chosen that position. They have willingly laid aside their own interests in preference for "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2). **For them, there is no alternative to serving the Lord.** Now, the disciples of our text know what the will of the Lord is, and they have heartily acquiesced to it. However, they know full well that His will cannot be done in their own self-strength. Therefore, they are asking for what it takes to DO what that will, and they are doing so with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength – that is, they WANT to do this. This is the manner of the Kingdom. Where this spirit is missing, there is a fundamental spiritual deficiency. Furthermore, it is quite possible that a state of full-blown alienation exists because of a lack of conversion and consequent divine acceptance. It is rather startling to consider that this situation actually exists in many professed churches.

**THAT WITH ALL BOLDNESS THEY MAY SPEAK THY WORD**

"... that with all boldness they may speak thy word..." Other versions read, "may speak Thy word with all confidence,"<sup>NASB</sup> "to speak your word with great boldness,"<sup>NIV</sup> "to be preachers of your word without fear,"<sup>BBE</sup> "may speak Your message with complete boldness,"<sup>CSB</sup> "to continue to speak your word with all boldness,"<sup>ESV</sup> "that they may proclaim thy word boldly,"<sup>MRD</sup> "to speak your message with great courage,"<sup>NET</sup> "with all freedom to speak Thy word,"<sup>YLT</sup> "great boldness in their preaching,"<sup>LIVING</sup> "speak the things You want us to say without fear,"<sup>IE</sup> "to proclaim Thy Message with fearless courage,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> "with perfect courage to continue to speak your message,"<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> "[full freedom] to declare Your message fearlessly,"<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and "brave enough to speak your message."<sup>CEV</sup>

Remember, what is being asked will come by means of a "grant" – by God's willing conferment of the required blessing. That means that the petition is in keeping with His will (1 John 5:14), and that the ones making the request are "meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim 2:21). You

<b>SPEAKING THE WORD</b>		
<b>PLAINNESS</b>	<b>CONSPICUOUS</b>	<b>FEARLESS</b>
<b>ASSURANCE</b>	<b>BOLDNESS</b>	<b>COURAGE</b>
<b>CONFIDENCE</b>		<b>CLEARLY</b>
<b>FRANKLY</b>	<b>OPENLY</b>	<b>FREEDOM</b>

slave, bondman, man of servile condition . . . one who gives himself up wholly to another's will."<sup>THAYER</sup> The distinction here, however, is that this is a **willing** servant, or slave. This is not a slave such as those during the era when black people were treated as mere chattel, purchased and sold as personal property without any respect or fairness. The kind of "servants" referenced in this text are described in the ceremonial law.

**that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all**" (1 Cor 15:28). That is the ultimate fulfillment Exodus 21:2-6.

However, the true disciple of Christ possesses the nature of Christ. As it is written, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord" (Mat 10:25). And again, "The disciple is not above his Master: but

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

must not allow yourself to think of this text independently of these considerations.

**“With All Boldness”**

As used in Scripture, the word “boldness” carries a more weighty meaning than is reflected in its common usage. The lexical meaning of the Greek word is, “freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech . . . openly, frankly, and without concealment . . . without ambiguity or circumlocution [unnecessarily large number of words] . . . without the use of figures and comparisons . . . free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance . . . of the confidence impelling one to do something . . . the deportment by which one becomes conspicuous or secures publicity,” THAYER “in attitude of openness that stems from freedom and lack of fear; (1) in speech boldness, plainness, outspokenness . . . in public work openness.” FRIBERG

As is apparent, the disciples are not asking to appear bold, but to actually be forward and fearless in the proclamation of God’s Word. This involves the following characteristics, which are integral to spiritual boldness.

- ⇒ **PLAINNESS.** That is, without ambiguity or vagueness; being unequivocal in the proclamation of the word.
- ⇒ **CONSPICUOUSNESS.** That is, obvious, not hidden, and apparent; attracting the attention of the people.
- ⇒ **FEARLESS.** That is, brave, and without fear; not intimidated by the enemy, or challenging circumstances.
- ⇒ **ASSURANCE.** That is, being certain in the mind of what is being said; freedom from all self doubt or uncertainty.
- ⇒ **COURAGE.** That is, mental, moral, and spiritual strength that enables one to speak in difficult situations.
- ⇒ **CONFIDENCE.** That is, a consciousness of Divine support and acceptance; knowing the certainty of what one is proclaiming.
- ⇒ **CLEARNESS.** That is, purity, clarity, unmistakable. Because of its contrast with darkness, the spoken Word becomes more readily apparent.

- ⇒ **FRANKNESS.** That is, forthright, sincere, candid, willingly and without hesitation declaring what is clear to the one speaking.
- ⇒ **OPENNESS.** That is, not hiding behind commonly accepted traditions, or veiling the truth with words that tone it down and make it more acceptable to the disinterested.
- ⇒ **FREEDOM.** The absence of coercion or a sense of mere obligation; free from the cares and worries that proceed from the fear of man, a defiled conscience, and the restraints of ignorance and uncertainty.

**“May Speak thy Word”**

This has particular reference to

**I do understand that it is not necessarily sinful to employ the use of figures, parallels, illustrations, and the likes. However, when they become the focus of preaching, that preaching becomes nothing more than a means of entertaining the people.**

the Gospel – “the record” God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). If it is, as the Spirit affirmed, “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), then it must be courageously and forthrightly declared, or affirmed. While explanations, or expositions, of the Gospel are important, they are never in order until the Gospel itself has been reported, declared, or announced. **Before Jesus and the salvation He has wrought can be clear, the facts in the case must be presented by someone who himself discerns them.**

These disciples do not pray for boldness to present the view of some sect, or the historical perspective of a movement, or a peculiar list of the tenets of a belief-system men have created. They rather seek to declare what God has revealed – His Word.

**What Is “Thy Word”**

Although it may sound rather simplistic, preaching God’s Word is affirming, or announcing, what God has actually said. It is not merely saying

something religious or theoretically helpful. It is not declaring what one may think God meant by what He said. It is not surrounding God’s Word with all manner of humanly-devised parallels and stories, and pawning it off to men as though that is what God said. I do understand that it is not necessarily sinful to employ the use of figures, parallels, illustrations, and the likes. **However, when they become the focus of preaching, that preaching becomes nothing more than a means of entertaining the people.**

That is precisely why Paul confessed, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined

not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). **He knew that the employment of such things tends to upstage the Gospel, for they have more of an appeal to the soulish part of man, and leave only a small impact upon the heart.**

This condition is owing to the fact that the Word of God is the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17). He simply does not use other means to bring Divine power to bear upon a situation. If you want the Spirit to actually work, convicting the world (John 16:8-11), or comforting and edifying the saints (1 Thess 4:18; 5:11), then you are going to have to preach, or declare, the word of God. You will have to tell the people what God has said – i.e., “thus saith the Lord” (Jer 15:2; Ezek 12:23), “the Scripture saith” (Rom 10:11; 1 Tim 5:18), or “hear what the Spirit saith” (Rev 3:22).

Once a person knows what is to be declared, and is firmly resolved to do so, this prayer will make perfect sense –

particularly when significant opposition is faced. However, until that happens, it

will appear to be only a historical record. Perhaps it will be viewed as novel, and

maybe even interesting. However, in such a case, it will be void of power.

## STRETCH FORTH YOUR HAND TO HEAL

<sup>30</sup> *By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.*"

If a person is living with an acute awareness of the current *Christian* environment, this request will have a strange sound. It might be viewed as peculiar to the times, and thus is

As simplistic as that may appear, it significantly alters the way the passage is perceived.

### STRETCH FORTH THY HAND TO HEAL

*"By stretching forth thine hand to heal . . ."* Other versions read, *"by stretching out Your hand to heal,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"while Thou dost extend Thy hand to*

that when Jesus was among men, He went about *"healing all who were oppressed of the devil"* (Acts 10:38). When He sent out the twelve, He told them *"Heal the sick"* (Matt 10:8). When He sent out the seventy He said, *"heal the sick"* (Lk 10:9). When He delivered what is called *"the great commission"* to His disciples, He said those who believed would *"lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"* (Mk 16:18). **At no time did Jesus suggest this healing was only a temporary.** Now, those are just the facts in the case – facts that were apparent to those who were praying.

Notice that they did not pray that their lives might be preserved, or that their enemies might go away, or that they might be directed into another area. They did not pray for protection, but for God to stretch forth His hand. They did not pray for eloquence, but for boldness that would flow from a perception of the working of the Lord.

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completely irrelevant for our times. It might also be considered to be idealistic, and thus impractical. However, such conclusions will become repugnant to us when we consider the purity and commitment of these brethren. This is the expression of real spiritual life. Institutionally structured thinking was not yet in place. There was no bad leaven among the brethren – no hypocritical people. To be sure, such would soon surface, but none were known at this time. **The disciples had not been distracted to lesser things, but were totally absorbed with the will and word of the Lord.** When they thought of the work of the Lord, they were not thinking of relief work, community service, impacting the youth, familiarizing the community with their *church*, and the likes. None of those corruptions were present at the time.

**This is the pouring out of a petition from pure hearts that are acquainted with the ways of the Lord, and are wholly devoted to doing His will.**

*heal,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"Stretch out your hand to heal,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"while your hand is stretched out to do works of mercy,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"while You stretch out Your hand for healing,"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"By stretching forth thy hand to cures,"* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *"So that thou stretch forth thine hand, that healing,"* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *"Show your power by healing,"* <sup>GWN</sup> *"Stretch out your hand with healing power,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"and send your healing power,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"Show your power: make sick people well,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"whilst Thou stretchest out Thine arm to cure men,"* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *"Show your mighty power, as we heal people,"* <sup>CEV</sup>

People with a theological background like my own, approach this text with a turtle-shell mentality. That is, they withdraw into their shell – a theological shell – for this text does not fit into their theology.

First of all, this was not a mechanical prayer – something uttered without the involvement of spiritual minds. This prayer was birthed by faith and understanding. These disciples knew

Furthermore, this entire episode of opposition had been initiated by a *"miracle of healing"* (Acts 4:22). The *"natural man"* (1 Cor 2:14), or *"the carnal mind"* (Rom 8:7), would reason that healing would not be the wise thing to pursue. Such a mind would see this as fundamentally disruptive, and would associate wisdom with choosing another approach to preaching the Word. **Of course, these were not carnal people, so they did not think in such a manner.**

The fulfillment of this prayer is described in these words: *"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen"* (Mark 16:20). The book of Hebrews also alludes to this. *"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders,*

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

**and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?** (Heb 2:4). It is important to note that the words “at the first” specifically refer to the words that “began to be spoken by the Lord.” Another version reads “After it was first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.”<sup>NASB</sup> **What we are reading of is the confirming – that is, the disciples were preaching the same doctrine Jesus preached, and the signs proved it.**

**The Source of the Healing**

The disciples do not pray that God would merely give them power to heal, but that He would **stretch forth His hand** to do so. That is, they knew healing was only possible through Divine discretion.

By saying “*stretching forth thy hand,*” the disciples were pleading for God to exert His mighty power by focusing it on their situation. In other words, no legitimate mighty work can occur independently of Divine involvement, and they knew it. **God did not wind up the Kingdom like a clock, and let it tick away of its own accord.** There really is no such thing as a ministry or heavenly-approved activity that does not require the hand of the Lord! The activities of the modern church would be radically revolutionized if this was seen.

**Should We Pray In This Manner?**

Let me first be clear about this. **There is nothing in the Scriptures themselves that suggest this prayer became obsolete after the death of the apostles.** There is no point of apostolic doctrine that clearly affirms such a thing. It is to be acknowledged that some have taken certain texts and presented their reasoning on those texts to justify such a claim. Allow me to give two examples.

⇒ **TEXT #1.** “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor 13:10). Here, some reason that “that which is perfect” is the completed canon of Scripture – the compiling of the full sixty-six books. It is further conjectured that “that which is in part” included the working of miracles, which were required to buttress, what is conceived to be, partial revelations. Once the Word of

was in written form, they hypothesize, there was no further need for miracles, because they confirmed the spoken word. Therefore, the miracles ceased to occur, for they were no longer needed. This composite blob of human reasoning is then presented as apostolic doctrine. Any work that is contrary to it is considered to be spurious. Now, keep in mind that the text did not really say these things,

manuscript. Further, the words “them that heard Him” are conceived to be only the apostles. However, there were others who heard Him, including the seventy, the holy women, the two on the road to Emmaus, Joseph called Barnabas, James the Lord’s brother, a cluster of above five hundred brethren, and a host of others. The text does not forbid men to think that God still stretches out His hand to heal.

**This is a matter that requires the merging of faith, insight, and a fervent commitment to the proclamation of the Word. If those things are not present, there is no need to even discuss the matter.**

but that is the meaning assigned to it by certain men. What the text DID say is that when what was perfect came, what was in part would be done away. That can more properly be perceived as meaning at least two things. First, it obviously explains the next verse, which speaks of spiritual maturity, which is a form of perfection. “*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*” (1 Cor 13:11). Second, it also explains what will happen in, what Jesus called, “the regeneration” when everything that is partial, introductory, or in a first-fruit form, will be done away. With this in mind Paul continued, “*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*” (1 Cor 13:12).

⇒ **TEXT #2.** “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb 2:3). Here the text is read as though it said, “at the first only, the Word was confirmed.” However, that is not what it says – in any version or

So, is it right to pray this prayer? Why would a person ask such a question? Remember that God placed “*gifts of healing*” within the church (1 Cor 12:9,30), and there is no word that clearly states He has taken them out. Also, James, who was not an apostle, gave a procedure to be followed dealing with the sick (James 5:14-16). His words were addressed to the twelve scattered tribes – believing Jews who were in a state of retrogression. Nothing in his book suggests his word was only for the first century, or that there would come a time when God would no longer honor the approach he makes known.

**This is a matter that requires the merging of faith, insight, and a fervent commitment to the proclamation of the Word.** If those things are not present, there is no need to even discuss the matter.

**THAT SIGNS AND WONDERS MAY BE DONE**

“... and that signs and wonders may be done . . .” Other versions read, “and signs and wonders *take place*.”<sup>NASB</sup> “and perform miraculous signs and wonders,”<sup>NIV</sup> “performing miracles, and *doing amazing things,*”<sup>GWN</sup> “and *prodigies*” [something extraordinary and beyond explanation ],<sup>MRD</sup> “to bring about

*miraculous signs and wonders,*<sup>NET</sup> “and to work miracles and marvels,”<sup>NJB</sup> “and may miracles and wonders be done,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “give proofs, and cause miracles to take place,”<sup>IE</sup> “and to give signs and marvels,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “grant too, that signs and wonders may be done,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “and work miracles and wonders,”<sup>CEV</sup> and “and grant that wonders and miracles may be performed.”<sup>GNB</sup>

Following the initial events of the

come. As long as we remain in the body, it is ever true that “*it doth not yet appear what we shall be*” (1 John 3:1-2). Of course, if we have unbridled control of the Kingdom, that saying would be true, and we all would be very evident, even to the world.

Even extraordinarily gifted men cannot employ their gifts at will. Paul, for example, who had wrought several healings (Acts 13:11; 14:10; 16:18; 19:11-

no longer proper to approach God in this manner. However, if anyone does come to the Lord with a petition like this, they had better have something insightful to say, and refuse to be silenced in the saying of it. If that is not the circumstance, they should pray for other matters.

#### IN THE NAME OF THY HOLY CHILD JESUS

“... by the name of thy holy child Jesus.” Other versions read, “done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “by the name of Thy holy Son Jesus,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “by the power of Jesus, Your holy servant,”<sup>IE</sup> “by the authority of your holy Servant Jesus,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “through the authority and by the power of the name of Your holy Child and Servant Jesus,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “through the power and the name of your holy servant Jesus.”<sup>GW</sup>

Here is the real circumstance. Jesus had been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. He had returned to heaven, and had been invested with all power in heaven and earth. Through Him, men may receive forgiveness of sins, and an eternal inheritance.

Everything is subject to Christ, with the only exclusion being the Father Himself. Jesus is bring many sons to glory, and the government is on His shoulder. That is the way things really are! However, it does not look as though these things are true. Appearance does not seem to support such a message. Jesus did not appear to be preeminent, and His power was not evident.

It is in view of this circumstance that the disciples pray. **They are praying for the honoring of Jesus, not for their own exaltation.** They desire for it to become apparent to the minds of men that what they are saying is true, and that salvation is within the reach of fallen man. They know Jesus is on the throne of the kingdom (Acts 2:30-31), ordering and establishing it, and causing it to increase (Isa 9:7).

Now, they ask for God to **draw attention to this fact** by stretching forth His hand to heal, and to do signs and wonders, for that is the message they are bringing.

**Perhaps you have heard some prideful person say to some who were noted for seemingly doing miracles: “If you can really work a miracle with me, come to the hospital, and raise a few sick people.” Or, “Why don’t you go to some of those oppressed countries and cure all of their sick?”**

day of Pentecost, “*many wonders and signs were done by the apostles*” (Acts 2:43). There was also the healing of the lame man at the gate beautiful (Acts 3:6). Yet, here they appear to pray as though such things had never taken place – at least that is how a novice would view it. Perhaps some would even dare to say there was unbelief among the disciples, else they would not have prayed in this manner. Others might suppose they were fearful, and that is why they so addressed the Lord. However, such notions are nothing more than worldly nonsense, and betray a mind that is out of synch with heaven.

It is true that the apostles were truly gifted men. Yet, it is clear from this text that they could not go about healing people at will. It is true that the Kingdom will be given to the saints of the most high God (Dan 7:18,22,27). Now, the saints are in the Kingdom (Col 1:13), and have been given the first fruits of that Kingdom. However, they do not possess the whole of it yet, nor are they yet significant participants in its government. Jesus is presently administrating the Kingdom. From time to time, we may participate in that rule in some extraordinary way, **but it is presently only a sampling of what is to**

12; 28:8-9), lay in a cell with sick Epaphroditus, and could not heal him (Phil 2:27). He did not heal chronically ailing Timothy, but admonished him to treat the matter medicinally (1 Tim 5:23). He could not simply summon up the gift, and heal people at will – nor could any other man.

Perhaps you have heard some prideful person say to some who were noted for seemingly doing miracles: “If you can really work a miracle with me, come to the hospital, and raise a few sick people.” Or, “Why don’t you go to some of those oppressed countries and cure all of their sick?” For some, this is an infallible argument. **However it really displays a remarkable level of ignorance.** First, miraculous power was never used in such a way (Luke 4:27). Second, a sign will not be given to an unbelieving generation (Matt 12:39). Third, any spiritual aptitude is strictly administered by the Lord (1 Cor 12:5), are operated by God (1 Cor 12:6), and come through the manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:7).

With the knowledge of such things, the disciples implore the Lord to work in a special way, in order that they might preach His word with boldness. Nothing in Scripture suggests that it is

*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

**THE PLACE WAS SHAKEN, AND THEY WERE FILLED**

*“<sup>31</sup> 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.”*

After men have speculated about this prayer, they must consider how heaven received it, for, after all, that is the most important thing. We know that certain promises are made concerning answered prayer.

**When Answers Are Guaranteed**

- ⇨ **AGREEMENT.** *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matt 18:19-20).
- ⇨ **ASK BELIEVING.** *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”* (Matt 21:22).
- ⇨ **ASKING IN JESUS’ NAME.** *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it”* (John 14:13-14). *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you”* (John 16:23).
- ⇨ **ABIDING IN CHRIST, AND HIS WORDS ABIDING IN US.** *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”* (John 15:7).
- ⇨ **BEARING FRUIT THAT REMAINS.** *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you”* (John 15:16).
- ⇨ **COMING BOLDLY.** *“Let us therefore*

*come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:16).

- ⇨ **KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS, AND DOING THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT.** *“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”* (1 John 3:22).
- ⇨ **ASKING ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL.** *“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him”* (1 John 5:14-15).

Now, according to these texts, we will see if this prayer qualifies for heaven’s approval and a favorable answer. **The condition of the people themselves is vital.** They must be in agreement, be abiding in Christ and His words abiding in them, bearing fruit that remains, and keeping his commandments

**The condition of the people themselves is vital. They must be in agreement, be abiding in Christ and His words abiding in them, bearing fruit that remains, and keeping his commandments and doing the things that are pleasing in His sight**

and doing the things that are pleasing in His sight. **How they come to God is critical.** They must come believing, asking in Jesus’ name, and approaching the throne with boldness. The nature of this petition appears to me to require that all of these things be found in the ones presenting it. For those who associate spiritual maturity with lengthy periods of time, these people have not had a lot of time to mature. Yet, the circumstance requires that condition.

**THE PLACE WAS SHAKEN WHERE THEY WERE ASSEMBLED**

*“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together . . .”* Other versions read, *“the place where they were was violently moved,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the place in which they were assembled shook,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“their meeting place shook,”*<sup>GWN</sup> and *“the house where they were assembled rocked.”*<sup>NJB</sup>

The word “shaken” comes from a word meaning, “the motion produced by winds, storms, waves, etc: to agitate or shake . . . to cause to totter [tremble or rock as if about to fall] . . . to shake thoroughly,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “to shake, cause to move to and fro, cause to waver or totter, make to rock,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “to cause something to move back and forth rapidly, often violently - to shake,”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> “to cause to rock, make to oscillate, shake to and fro,”<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup>

The environment in which they resided was disturbed, moving too and fro as though situated on a stormy sea. **Yet, there appeared to be no fear, even though, judging from appearance, the place where they were meeting appeared to become suddenly unstable.**

This was the effect of God’s

presence in the natural realm. It is caused by the impact of Divine purity and holiness upon a defiled and decaying domain. There are other instances of such disruptions.

- ⇨ **WHEN THE LAW WAS GIVEN AT SINAI.** When God came down on Sinai there were thunders, lightnings, smoke ascended from the mountain like a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly (Ex 19:16-18)

- ⇨ **THE DEATH OF CHRIST.** When Jesus died, the gigantic Temple veil was ripped in two from the top down, the earth quaked, the rocks split, and many bodies of the saints that slept rose from the dead (Matt 27:51-52).
- ⇨ **THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.** When Jesus arose, and an angel came down from heaven to the sepulcher, there was a great earthquake (Matt 28:2).
- ⇨ **THE DAY OF PENTECOST.** On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out by Jesus, there was a sound from heaven as a mighty rushing wind, it filled all of the house where they were sitting, and there appeared tongues of fire that separated and rested upon the heads

reached the ears of Herod, “*he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*” (Matt 2:3).

In our text, however, there will be no disruption, agitation, or fear among the disciples. Instead, the powers of darkness will be shaken.

**THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

“... and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost . . .” Other versions read, “*they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,*” <sup>NKJV</sup> “*and they all became full of the Holy Spirit,*” <sup>BBE</sup> “*and they were, one and all, filled with the Holy Spirit,*” <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “*and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.*” <sup>ISV</sup>

I have mentioned before that the

*assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness*” (Acts 4:31).

Thus far the results of being “*filled with the Spirit*” all have to do with **intelligent speech:** <sup>1</sup> speaking with other languages that were understood by the audience, <sup>2</sup> Peter speaking to the ruler and elders of the people, and now, <sup>3</sup> speaking the Word of God with boldness.

We also know that being filled with the Holy Spirit was not a unique or one time event.

- ⇨ Stephen is described as a man who was “*full of faith and the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 6:5).
- ⇨ When Stephen died by stoning, he was “*full of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 7:44).
- ⇨ Ananias told Saul of Tarsus he had been sent to him in order that he might receive his sight and be “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 9:17).
- ⇨ Barnabas is described as “*a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 11:24).
- ⇨ When Paul confronted Elymas the sorcerer who was seeking to turn someone to whom Paul was speaking away from the faith, he was “*filled with the Holy Spirit,*” and soundly rebuked him, even striking him blind for a season (Acts 13:8-11).
- ⇨ All believers are admonished to “*be filled with the Spirit; speaking . . .*” (Eph 5:18-19).

**It is most arresting to consider that every one of these instances involved speaking in the behalf of God.** Whatever one may conjecture about the meaning of being filled with the Spirit, all of the instances we have did equip people to speak with boldness and absolute truth. We know from other occasions, that this was not a kind of robotic response, but involved the consciousness, minds, and intelligence of the people. Being filled with the Spirit sanctifies human capacities so that a flawless and relevant word is delivered

**the era of the New Covenant is appropriately described as “the ministration of the Spirit,” or “ministry of the Spirit. Salvation itself involves the shedding forth “abundantly” of the Holy Spirit upon the regenerated ones. It should not surprise us, therefore, to read of people be “filled with the Spirit.”**

of those present (Acts 2:1-3).

- ⇨ **THE PHILIPPIAN JAIL.** When Paul and Silas sang praises at midnight, suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and the doors opened (Acts 16:26).

**Both naturally and spiritually the earth becomes unstable when the Lord draws near.** Spiritually, for the ungodly, there is fear and dread, agitation, and disquietude. For the godly, there is comfort, empowerment, and holy aptitude.

There are also times when peace and tranquility are the signs of the Lord’s absence. Such times are described by Jeremiah. “*They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace*” (Jer 6:14). When Jesus was born, and news of the birth of a King

era of the New Covenant is appropriately described as “*the ministration of the Spirit,*” or “*ministry of the Spirit.*” <sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Cor 3:6). Salvation itself involves the shedding forth “*abundantly*” of the Holy Spirit upon the regenerated ones (Tit 3:5-6). It should not surprise us, therefore, to read of people be “*filled with the Spirit.*”

This is now the third time in the book of Acts when people are said to have been filled with the Holy Spirit.

- ⇨ “*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2:4)
- ⇨ “*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel*” (Acts 4:8).
- ⇨ “*And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were*

from God to the people through one of their peers. Such will be the case in our text also.

**THEY ALL SPAKE THE WORD OF GOD WITH BOLDNESS**

“. . . and they spake the word of God with boldness.” Other versions read, “and began to speak the Word of God with boldness,”<sup>NASB</sup> “and spoke the Word of God boldly,”<sup>NIV</sup> “preaching the word of God without fear,”<sup>BBE</sup> “and began to speak God’s message with boldness,”<sup>CSB</sup> “and they spoke the word of God with confidence,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “and continued to speak the word of God with boldness,”<sup>ESV</sup> “and began to speak the word of God courageously,”<sup>NET</sup> “and began to proclaim

word of God with boldness!

This would be equivalent to a scenario that Paul posed to the Corinthian church. “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? **But if all prophesy**, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all” (1 Cor 14:23-24). Paul’s secondary point related to a stranger coming into the assembly and being convicted by the absolute oneness of many people insightfully declaring the word of the Lord. In our text, conviction

religious institutionalism and pumped up enthusiasm. You cannot nominate and choose someone to lead people into this condition. It is something that comes from receiving from God, not human leadership.

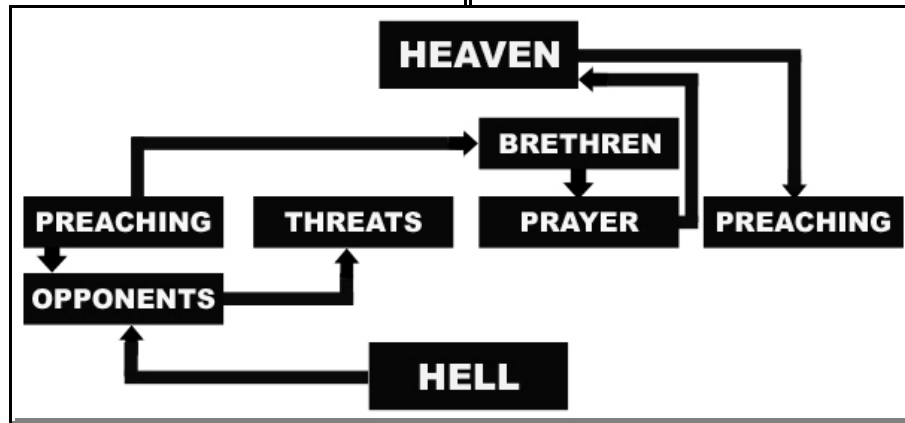
When “all” assuredly speak the Word of God, those present are edified and provoked “to love and to good works” (Heb 10:24). They are built up “in the most holy faith” (Jude 1:20), and comfort one another with insightful proclamations of the truth of God.

**A FINAL NOTE ON THIS**

I am compelled to comment on the role of encouragement, confidence, and freedom when preaching the Word. Anyone who has publicly declared the truth of God knows how discouragement can impact the speaker. Such a condition cannot be avoided by organization, scholastic preparations and the likes. This is something that is ministered out of the Throne from which Jesus is administrating the Kingdom. **As seen in this text, it is in order to seek the face of the Lord for boldness when men are in a spiritually cast down state.**

A person must have recourse to some brethren who will react properly when religious threats are leveled against those who preach the Word. Peter and John went to “their own company” when they faced this challenge. They reported in detail what had been said to them, and the brethren knew what to do about it.

As in the text before us, this kind of relationship is to be initiated and cultured. **Somewhere in our religious connections, we must have access to a group of holy people.** If such are not in the house of Gpd or among religious leaders, they still must be found. There must be someone with whom the preacher or teacher is of “one accord” – someone with the same heart and mind – likr Timothy was to Paul (Phil 2:20). This is not the fabled accountability approach, where men make themselves accountable to one another. Rather, this is a means of survival – the cultivation of friendships that are based solely upon the life that is in Christ Jesus, and working together with Him.



the word of God fearlessly,”<sup>NJB</sup> “Then they preached the word of God with boldness,”<sup>NLT</sup> “and were speaking the word of God with freedom,”<sup>YLT</sup> “and boldly preached God’s message,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “and they began to speak God’s message without fear,”<sup>IE</sup> “and proceeded to tell God’s Message with boldness,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “and continued courageously to speak God’s message,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “and they continued to speak the Word of God with freedom and boldness and courage,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “and bravely spoke God’s message.”<sup>CEV</sup>

The request of these brethren was, “grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word” (Acts 4:29). **Now, no sooner have they finished their petition, than Jesus sends forth the Spirit to fill them, and they begin (or continue) preaching the word of God with boldness.** Then ALL spoke the

was not the point, but courageous and confident proclamation. They spoke with great freedom, confidence, and clarity.

In them the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, “the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to **speak plainly**” (Isa 32:4). Again, as it is written, “The Lord GOD hath given me **the tongue of the learned**, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (Isa 50:4).

And how was all of this done? By the Lord filling them with his Holy Spirit, sanctifying all of their expressive capacities. Their minds were able to navigate in the truth, and their mouths were able to utter it. This is truly an experience much to be coveted. It is sorely needed in this day of dead

**CONCLUSION**

As the work of the Lord proceeds, it is as though Satan has been caught off guard. At the very first, the believers are described as “*having favor with all the people*” (Acts 2:47). However, we see, this did not last long. The reason for this is the very real enmity that exists between “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4), and the people of God. Jesus said it succinctly and powerfully when He told His disciples, “*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me*” (John 15:19-21). Now, this is the way it really is. Jesus has chosen us OUT of the world, and the world takes it personally.

The fundamental enmity that exists between the person born of the flesh and the one born of the Spirit cannot be neutralized or removed. It is there because heaven and earth are at

war. This is owing to Satan being the prince and god of this world (John 12:31; 2 Cor 4:4). In fact, “*the whole world is under the control of the evil one*”<sup>NIV</sup> (1 John 5:19). He will not allow his children to make peace with God’s children, and God will not allow His children to make peace with them.

This condition is why it is true in every age, “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Tim 3:12). The persecution may take differing forms, but it will be there. This too is being played out in the book of Acts.

The first opposition the church faced was from the religious world – the Temple authorities. It was not bloody or unto death in the beginning. As confirmed in this text, it only consisted of words – threats. These enemies, however, will not be content to spout words. Soon they will be throwing stones, and rejoicing when one of the apostles is beheaded.

**For this, and a number of other reasons, it is utter folly to attempt to adapt the truth to the carnal mind. First,**

if it is the truth that makes men free (John 8:32), what have you accomplished when you water it down to make it palatable, or even withhold it altogether? If the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God (Eph 6:17), what can you possibly achieve by mixing it with the wisdom of the world, or becoming something other than a preacher of the Word? If the Gospel is God’s power in order to salvation – all of it from “A” to “Z,” what have you really done when you build your theology or your work around some other message? If the church is actually “**the pillar and ground of the truth**” (1 Tim 3:15), what can possibly be more important than declaring it and bringing it to bear upon the affairs of men?

All of these things are issues in our day – **but they were not in the time of our text.** That is precisely why the disciples knew what to do. **They were in an environment where the Spirit of God could move about and work freely.** But it will not be long, until some tares will be sown among the wheat, and corrupting influences will begin. We must remember, however, that tares were sown “*while men slept*” (Matt 13:25). They still are!

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/19/2007. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Twentieth lesson will cover verses 32 through 37 of the fourth chapter: “THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.” Following their insightful prayer and the filling of all of the disciples with the Holy Spirit, the Apostles give a powerful witness of the resurrection of Christ. Heaven again responds, and grace is found upon them all. A totally selfless spirit rapidly spreads throughout the group, and, in view of the pressing circumstances, they have all things common. Here we behold some of the practical things that take place when people are filled with Spirit, and are bathed with an outpouring of the cleansing Word of the Lord. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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*Unintimidated by their enemies, the disciples immediately pray for boldness to preach, and are heard – by Given O. Blakely*

**A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.**

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