

PRAY WITH PURPOSE

Read: Acts 4:23-31

- The apostles were criticised and imprisoned
- In these circumstances, what would people do today?

1/They recognised the sovereignty of God (24)

- They acclaimed God's sovereign power and creation
- This was for their sake, not God's. They needed to reinforce their faith
- All prayer begins like this: unless God is sovereign there is no point in praying.

2/They based their prayer on scripture (25, 26)

- This is the basis of faith. Faith comes through God's Word (Romans 10:17).
- Pray with your Bible on your knees
- Pray through Scripture: read a passage and turn it into a prayer

3/They saw God's power and purpose being worked out (27, 28)

Even in time of trouble they saw—

- the hand (= power) of God
- the will (= purpose) of God

4/They prayed for greater boldness (29)

- They were but slaves (*doulos*). They realised their own inadequacy.
- So they needed boldness. Their troubles did not intimidate them.

5/They prayed for signs and wonders (30)

In other words, they prayed for the very thing that had got them into trouble in the first place!

- Healing (to demonstrate God's power)
- Signs (to give direction)
- Wonders (to bring us to worship)

6/They did not

- Pray against the devil.
- Rebuke the devil
- Bind the spirits

7/They prayed in the name of Jesus (30)

- The basis for prayer is always in the name of Jesus. See John 14:12ff.
- It means praying as if Jesus were praying. Cf power of attorney where one person is given the authority to act on behalf of another.

8/The prayer was answered (31)

- The place shook.
- They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. We cannot minister apart from the Spirit.
- They spoke the Word of God with boldness.

9/Challenge

We need to pray—

- biblically
- confidently
- in faith in a sovereign Lord
- in the name of Jesus
- through the power of the Holy Spirit

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Remember: You don't have to answer all the questions: choose those that seem most relevant

Read: Acts 4:23-31

Biblical

1. What was the report about? (23). Give a summary.
2. Luke, the author of Acts, tells us that there was a 'sign of healing' (22, ESV). What was the message of this sign? (See 4:8-12).
3. Why do you think they addressed God as 'Sovereign Lord' (24)
4. What does 25 tell us about the authority of Scripture? (compare 2 Timothy 3:16).
5. What do we learn from this passage about the will and purpose of God? (27-28)
6. What did the apostles pray for? (29-30)
7. The apostles had been filled with the Spirit at Pentecost. So what does 31b mean? (Compare 4:8; 4:31; 6:3; 7:55; 11:24; 13:9; Eph 5:18)
8. Do you think the building actually shook? Why or why not? (31)

Personal and practical

9. When trouble comes, what are some of the ways in which people react today?
Compare these with the reaction of the apostles to their trouble.
10. People often blame the devil for their troubles. Sometimes he may be responsible. But what does this passage teach us?
11. In a sense, the apostles were missionaries to their own community. What does this passage teach us about how we should pray for missionaries? Make a list.
12. What can we do to ensure we are continually filled with the Holy Spirit?
13. Memorise: Acts 4:31

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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