

## **Sermon: Becoming a Praying People and a Praying Church**

**Scripture: Acts 4:23-31**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

### **Introduction**

The story by Pr Ng Wah Lok. *"Every Time I Pray" is our cry to God for help... We believed in prayer. The church was built through intense prayer. Prayer has always been and will continue to be an important activity in the church. Before every major decision was taken, the leadership would always call for the church to pray for a period of time.*"

### **I) The Disciples' Arrest: Reason & Release (Acts 3 & 4)**

Acts 4:3, *"They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day."*

#### **A) Reason Peter and John were imprisoned.**

The healing of the lame beggar – Acts 3:2.7

The responses of the people - Acts 3:10,12

Peter's response – Acts 3:16

#### **B) Peter and John: Trial and Release (vv 5-7,17,21)**

### **II) The Believers' Response to the Threat: They Prayed (vv 23-24)**

What must they do in the face of threat? They prayed! What happened at the prayer meeting?

#### *A) They took hold of God (v.24)*

He is the Sovereign God; he is also the Creator God.

#### *B) They took hold of God's Word (vv 25-28)*

What we note is that they interpreted whatever that has happened to them, on account of Jesus, in the light of what God had spoken or revealed in his word. Nothing happened outside of God's will and purpose.

#### *C) They presented their request to God (vv 29-30)*

1) <sup>29</sup> *Now, Lord, consider their threats and...*

Again, with eyes fixed upon their Lord, they poured out their concerns to their Lord.

2) *"... enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness."*

Wow! What a prayer! There was a threat! Despite this their prayer to God was to be able to speak with great boldness! They will be the Lord's witnesses. They will stand up for Jesus!

3) <sup>30</sup> *Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*

They now asked for the Lord's favour upon their ministry. They were claiming the Lord's promise. The Lord Jesus had said in Mark 16:17-18. The believers prayed according to God's word. They were praying the scriptures. They were claiming the Lord's promise!

#### *D) Outcome of their Prayer (v 31)*

1) <sup>31</sup> After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.

2) ... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit

3) ... and spoke the word of God boldly.

### **III) Application**

#### **A) When and why do we pray?**

In the context of Acts 4, the believers prayed because they were facing threats from the religious authorities.

The church today still faces threats and outright persecution.

Here in Malaysia, there is no big time persecution or threat. We need to hear the Lord saying to us, “Watch and pray” for he has set us as “watchman” over Malaysia.

### **B) Our Understanding of our God.**

The Acts believers knew who their God is and what he has done and can do. Do we know our God well enough? Do our knowledge of him affect or shape our prayer life? Is our God big or small?

### **C) The connection between God’s word and our prayer.**

The early believers understood God’s word and they remembered the Lord’s promises. That guided their prayers. They prayed according to God’s word. I believe it would really enhance our prayers when we are able to do what is called, “Praying the Scriptures.”

### **D) We need to act upon what we prayed for.**

The believers prayed for boldness to preach God’s word and in faith they went about with boldness to witness for the Lord.

The idea is we need to put hands and legs into our prayer. There is a time and season to pray about something and there is a time and season to act and be the answer to what we prayed for.

### **E) When and how does God manifest his presence?**

How I wish today the Lord would come and shake us; come and fill us. Oh we need a fresh visitation of the Lord by his Holy Spirit. We need the Lord to shake our prayer meeting!

## **IV Journey of becoming people of prayer and a praying church,**

### **1. Personal Level**

Begin to pray 5 minutes a day

### **2. Local Church Level – 2 Prayer Meetings**

Friday evening Prayer Fellowship and the Saturday Morning Intercession.

Perhaps you may set a goal to attend the prayer meeting at least twice in 2019.

### **3. TRAC Level**

TRAC Quadrennium Vision 2018-2021 with the theme, “Come, Follow, Become Like Jesus.” To fulfil this vision we have 4 essentials. The first essential is, “Personal Growth – to know Christ and to become like Christ.” To realise this vision we need to give ourselves to times of Bible reading, prayer and fasting, whether on a personal or communal level.

For a start maybe consider observing lunch fast on either Wednesday or Friday, once a month.

### **4. National Level - Malaysia Year of Prayer 2019 (MYOP 2019)**

The MYOP 2019 is a year-long initiative to stir the church to pray for Malaysia.

Pray along the monthly theme. January’s theme is, “The Church”.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September come together for the Malaysia Day of Prayer.

Brothers and sisters. We have much praying to do. Let us learn from the prayer life of the early church; let us learn from other churches; as a local church, let us hear the call to rise up and become a praying people and a praying church.