



*April 7, 2024*

*“Trust Fully.”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.*

*News:*

Wednesday Evening Classes at 6:30  
Church Cleanup on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> ★ VBS June 17-21

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**ACTS 4:23–32a ~**

They had been ordered to cease all teaching so, what was their response? What would you do?

- 1) Is it easier to be bold when you're in a group?
- 2) Do you suppose that the Holy Spirit made everyone think the same?
- 3) Did their belief that the end was near change anything?

The prayer wasn't necessarily a liturgical recitation, but simply the gist of what they all agreed upon. It starts with an address to God...

The transition sets the stage for the application of Scripture that follows. In this case, it is Psalm 2.

Who wrote that Psalm?

Do you accept the Bible as God's Word?

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

What we believe about the Bible's origin sets the stage for everything else.

Why, because Christians base their Christianity on something.

Unfortunately, nearly all Christians base their Christianity on what resonates with them.

I don't feel guilty about not going to Famous Dave's if I don't want what they have for me – right?

Do you practice the Christianity of Jesus and His disciples as depicted in the Bible?

In Psalm 2 God had decided on a program and mere mortals disagreed. David marveled at the insanity of it all by asking a purely rhetorical question, "Why?" Yet aren't we all guilty of that at times?

Because we now have Bibles at the ready that anyone can read, organized by chapters and verses, instead of saying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?", we simply say Psalm 22. The problem with our method is that we don't usually have the contextual setting of the whole Psalm memorized.

We tend to think that verses are independent nuggets of Truth that we can freely untether from the whole.

The Church back then recognized their own Jewish government as in the same camp and on the same path as the anti-God Gentile nations. They all stood against God's plan and purpose by murdering Jesus. And now they were arrayed against the disciples of Jesus.

In light of that, what did they pray for?

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



Last week was great. I want to thank all the people who worked so diligently to pull it off. I'm well aware of your individual and collective efforts. Many did things that were obvious, and many did things that were inconspicuous. What you need to know is that I see your dedication to the Lord and appreciate you, but far more importantly, the Lord sees your dedication to Him and He appreciates you.



Three weeks ago, we left Peter and John as they were being set free after their one-night incarceration and trial by the Jewish ruling council. We pick up the action in...

Acts 4:23–32a, 23When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported everything that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24And when they heard this, they raised their voices to God with one mind and said, “Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything that is in them, 25who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘Why were the Nations insolent, And the peoples plotting in vain? 26‘The kings of the earth Took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’ 27For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28to do whatever Your hand and purpose predestined to occur. 29And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, 30while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” 31And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

32a And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul...



The first thing the two Apostles did was rejoin their brothers and sisters in Christ. That is one of the most natural things you can imagine. Of course that's what they would do. Their companions would have been extremely concerned about their treatment and fate as well as keenly interested in the result of their audience with the High Priest and his associates.



You might remember that the Jewish elites killed Jesus out of fear. Sure, there was the fear that Jesus might cause a commotion big enough to force the Romans to intervene, among other related concerns, but it was primarily the fear we label jealousy. What is jealousy, other than the fear of someone gaining something that you think you deserve, whether it's ice cream, influence, popularity, attention, affection, whatever.

You're afraid that they have what you perceive, comes at your expense?



They had been able to rid themselves of Jesus and assumed that all would return to normal. Imagine their chagrin, their annoyance, and their frustration, when these disciples of Jesus began doing the same things that He had done.

Try as they might, they could not find a way to deny, or discredit, or in any way diminish, the miraculous healing of the crippled man. Too many people had seen him as a crippled guy over decades and too many of those same people had seen him fully well.



How was such a thing possible? Peter and John explained that it was because Jesus the Messiah had been bodily Resurrected from the dead. Jesus was Alive and was presently at the Right Hand of Majesty in

Heaven ready to return and it was through His Mighty Name that the Holy Breath of the One True God had reformed the man.



The Council couldn't refute the miracle, but they could place a gag order on teaching, what was to them, a false and blasphemous message to their people, in their Temple Courts. That's exactly what they did as they released them.

That's exactly what the guys reported to the rest of the Christian community. We were ordered in no uncertain terms to cease and desist from all teaching and preaching. We were commanded by the highest Jewish authority to stop proclaiming the name of Jesus.

So, what was the response of the entire Christian community? I mean think about it. Put yourself in that situation. What would you do if the governing authority prohibited you from publicly witnessing to people about Jesus? Would you say we better obey the order, maybe keep a low profile for a while? Would you advocate teaching in a less conspicuous way? Would

you encourage the church to move to a more hospitable locale?

What did they do? If you cut straight to the chase, what they did was with one voice and in one accord, fully unified in purpose and united in vision, beseeched God to grant them boldness to continue publicly proclaiming Christ without hesitation.

That's quite amazing. There are three things that I want to add to that before we dig deeper.



1) First, it's always easier to be bold when you have a group. Having friends can help you do things that you'd be too cautious to do alone. That cuts both ways. A group can help you do the right thing when it's not the expedient thing. But a group can also encourage you to stray into wrong things. You must choose your friends and associates wisely. If you do, they will support you in doing what's right even when it's not easy.

How do you choose good friends and associates?  
That's simple, gravitate towards and stay in the orbit of



people who make you more Christlike. Ask yourself, “Am I closer to God when I’m in this company, or not?”

2) Second, we wrongly assume instant unity because there is so little information about what actually happened. People are people and I know enough about people to assure you that there was some disagreement on what to do.

We do our Christian forebears a disservice when we suppose that the Holy Spirit just made everyone think the same. That would be called brainwashing and while many religious groups practice it, the Holy Spirit never has. There was dissension and disputing as they wrestled with what Jesus would have them do.

That’s why Luke emphasized their unity. You don’t emphasize something that is easy and normal. The Christians respectfully and no doubt passionately discussed and prayed and when they came to a consensus every one of them got fully on board and agreed with the plan in the unity of the Holy Spirit. By definition that means some of them, perhaps all of them agreed fully with a plan that they disagreed with initially. We seem to think unity is when everyone finally sees it our way.

The prayer and the preface to it is a summary. We should imagine hours of prayerful discussion culminating in them all raising their voices to God with one mind. We are still called to the very same unity today.



3) The final thing I want to mention is that at this point, the Christian community led by Apostles, and by the family of Jesus, and by so many of His close disciples, believed that the end was at hand. They thought that they would win over the true remnant of Israel and that Jesus would return to the Mount of Olives in glorious power and that He would ride once again through the East Gate in triumph, but this time mounted on a fiery war horse with a supernatural army behind Him.

That belief gave them greater confidence to stand up to the opposition. There is always a certain idealism that leads to conflict and war. The thought is that it will be a quick victory with minimal suffering and acceptable losses that are well worth the investment.

That's not how it goes. I bring this up to show that while there is bravado and confidence in the beginning it always turns to disillusionment when reality sets in, when idealism gives way to reality.

The first Christians were still idealistic which helped them step forward in faith. We will see that it did not turn out the way that they thought it would and the danger in such a case is that the disillusion can easily become despair, and then despondency, and then defeat.

It speaks of the tremendous faith of the early church that they would not allow the horrors of the conflict, diminish their faith in the cause. After discovering the true cost, they continued to trust in Jesus and the Kingdom that He was building through them, in the way in which that He chose to build it.

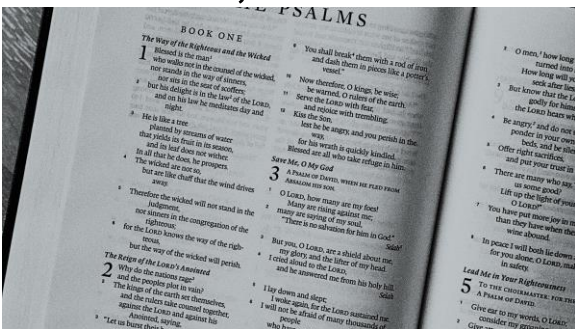


The prayer in unison wasn't necessarily a liturgical recitation, but simply the gist of what they all agreed upon and prayed together. It starts with an address to God that comes from Genesis but is stated in this

format first in Exodus 20:11 as the preamble to the Ten Commandments. Every Jew knew it by heart. “Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything that is in them.”

It's much like the opening of the Lord's Prayer, “Our Father Who Art in Heaven.” We're defining to Whom we're praying and at the same time recognizing Him for Who He is and for what He is.

Then the transition “who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant,” sets the stage for the quoting and applying of Scripture that follows. In this case, it is the second Psalm.



The Jews back then believed that King David wrote that Psalm, along with most of the others, about 1,000 years earlier. Modern naysayers love to dispute that, without any evidence, I might add, but here, we have New Testament Scripture attributing instrumental authorship of the second Psalm to David as given to him through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – the ultimate author.

You cannot question the source of the second Psalm and claim to hold the New Testament as inspired Scripture. The Authority of the Bible has been greatly complicated by the sheer volume of humans voicing various opinions about it.

Most people, many of them in churches around the world, mischaracterize and so misuse the Bible. That leads to seeming mistakes, errors, and contradictions, within it. When we take the Bible for what it is and interpret it appropriately there are no mistakes, errors, or contradictions. The fault is with us, not with God's Word, the problem comes from our inconsistent and naïve interpretation, not from the Bible itself. In verse 25, God through Luke plainly confirms that He through King David wrote Psalm 2. We either believe that or...

It's quite simple really, we each have a choice that we have to make, and the easiest way to make complex choices is to reduce the seemingly endless possibilities down to just a few. I've reduced them to only two. Here they are: 1) You can either accept the Bible as the inspired Word of Almighty God in written form, preserved through the ages by the Holy Spirit, and therefore precisely what the Lord wants us to possess

and use, and as such what is completely valid and entirely authoritative for all people, in all circumstances, in all places, and at all times, or 2) not. That's it. When it comes to the Bible, what we believe about its origin and provenance sets the stage for everything else.



Why, because Christians base their Christianity on something - period. I'm saying that each and every one of us does that, whether we could define it, or not, whether we're aware of it, or not. Now, what is that basis for you? In Roman Catholicism it is the Church through the Pope. In Eastern Orthodoxy it is tradition. In Pentecostal circles it's the individual witness of the Holy Spirit. In liberal Protestant denominations it is culture. In conservative Protestant denominations it is culture. You might need to think about that one for a while. At the risk of offending, I'll help. Liberals dismiss the clear teaching of the Bible regarding moral issues and make Salvation about being charitable.

Conservatives dismiss the clear teaching of the Bible regarding political issues and make Salvation about being Republican. There is an alternative, it is Biblical Christianity where the foundation would be the Bible as

it is today, reasonably interpreted for what it actually is without distortion.

If you're not too angry with me over the liberal versus conservative thing, you might say let's do that last one. I would agree and that's precisely why the name of the church for over 20 years has been *Alêtheia* – Truth.

Unfortunately, nearly all Christians base their Christianity on what resonates with them. If you miss everything else that I say on this topic, please at least get this... Nearly all Christians base their Christianity on what resonates with them personally.

When we make our own judgment the determiner of what Christianity should and shouldn't be, we commit the same sin of our original, mutual matriarch. When we pick and choose what we will and will not abide, that makes us, not servants of Jesus, but servants of ourselves. When we decide what is good and what is evil, we dismiss God, and make ourselves our own god.

So many Christians today look at Christianity as a smorgasbord of all kinds of different practices and beliefs that they can mix and match. So many justify

their unbiblical hodgepodge of Christian ideas with the Bible itself through their grievous misinterpretation. Others warrant it by their own personal revelation of the Holy Spirit through their misidentification. Some rationalize their unbiblical Christianity by appealing to institutional authority, or time-honored tradition, or cultural conformity, or political activism, or through, what is becoming the go-to excuse nowadays, by directly appealing to their own individual authority to fashion Christianity to fit their proclivities. It's basically the conviction that God wants me to be happy... and this is what does it for me, for now.

One example is the millions of self-identifying Christians who refuse to be actively involved in a local church.

Last week I alluded to something similar. We make church about us and so if I don't feel like getting what church offers me today, I have no guilt about skipping it. It's like Famous Dave's. I don't feel guilty about not going to Famous Dave's if I don't want what they have for me – right?





If church is about me, then there's no problem, but what if church is about Him? What if worship service means corporate unified worship of Him and not what the program can do for me?

I could give endless examples and belabor the point further, but I think you get it... What I'm trying to say is what I mentioned to a friend last week... We do not practice the Christianity of Jesus and His original disciples as depicted in the Bible. We don't. And I'm not talking about style, practices, procedures, or organization, I'm talking about devotion.

The obvious question should be, how far can we deviate from that level of devotion and still be Christians. I can't give you the answer because it's different for every person, but what I can say is that the closer you approximate the Christianity that Jesus and His Apostles lived, and taught in the Bible, the closer you will be to being a Christ following Christian.

My advice is to take the Bible as it is, for what it is, and beg the Holy Spirit to conform you to it and therefore to the ultimate Word, rather than taking the Word of God and conforming it to better fit you.



Psalm 2, written by King David 3,000 years ago, confirms much of what we just talked about. Almighty God decided to do something in a particular way to achieve a desired outcome and mere mortals disagree with Him. They think that they have a better plan.

In the opening of the Psalm David marvels at the insanity of it all by asking a purely rhetorical question, “Why?” Why do humans kick against the goad of Almighty God their Loving and Benevolent Creator and Savior?

David wasn’t surprised by it, he was, just like me and perhaps just like you, perplexed at the sheer folly of us human beings constantly usurping God’s position as God. Like I have tried to indicate here this morning, we are all guilty of that. The most mature and most devout

among us still drift into self-sufficiency and the struggle to get our own way.

If you don't think that such a comment applies to you, you're not looking at yourself hard enough. It is our nature to take control. Don't believe me? Just take a look at your prayer life as one small example. Over the last year, let's say, what word or phrase would best summarize your prayers?

Could your prayer life be characterized as beseeching God to give you boldness to preach the Gospel to those you meet? Could it be summed up as asking God to conform your will to His? Was it typified by praying that He would use you to build His Kingdom even if it cost you your life? Or were your prayers more about you asking Him to make things turn out the way you thought best – prayers seeking to conform His Will to yours – trying to get your will done in Heaven instead of His Will done on earth?

We all have it within ourselves to be intensely self-focused,



but today, we're talking about people who are so self-focused they not only don't try to seek God's Will, they actively oppose it. They are so opposed to God's reign that they live in open rebellion and defiance. They rage against God and His plans; they plot their course to defy Him.

Why? It seems crazy to raise your fist skyward and curse God, but that's precisely what people do. It's certainly what I once did. The issue is the same thing that we've been talking about all morning. I want life to be what I want life to be, and it isn't. I want God to be Whom I want God to be, and He isn't. So, I rage and plot against life and against God.

I'm disappointed in God, in others, and in myself. Life is not fair and so I take control because I simply do not trust that God has my best interests at heart, or if He does, He's unable to orchestrate what I believe is what is in my best interests. He's either incompetent, impotent, or is more focused on the best interests of

the whole, at my expense. So, I need to take over the orchestration.

Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 22, verse 1, and read it to yourself. Okay, just hold that thought for a moment. You may have heard that when Jews back then quoted a few words of a Bible passage they were including, encompassing, or applying, the entire passage. Arguably, the most important instance is what you just read.



Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus saying from the Cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”, obviously He was quoting this Psalm. Many people conclude that Jesus despaired and lost His faith as He died, but what Jesus actually did was apply the whole of Psalm 22, which begins with those words, to Himself.

Psalm 22 is Messianic, meaning that it is a prophecy about the Messiah, Jesus. That Psalm is ultimately a declaration of trust and confidence in, as well as worship and praise of, God.

The main reason I want to talk about it is to remind us that we need to do the same thing as they did, in principle. What I mean is the reason that the ancient Jews could indicate an entire Psalm, or an entire passage, by quoting just a few words was because their quotation came from memory of the whole passage being read or heard and then recited. They didn't do verses and chapters; they did contextual blocks of Scripture. They didn't have a Bible at hand, and most couldn't read anyway, so they memorized those contextual blocks and then when someone wanted to bring one of those blocks to mind, they quoted a part, and everyone knew the whole.



Because we now have chapters and verses and Bibles at the ready that anyone can read, instead of saying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?", we simply say Psalm 22. The problem with our method is that we don't usually have the contextual setting of the whole Psalm memorized. What ends up happening is that we think that verses are independent nuggets of

Truth that we untether from their setting within the fabric of the whole.

The Bible cannot be properly understood that way. God put the words in a contextual flow and when we lose sight of that flow, lose sight of the context, we are deriving meaning from thin air, which, in practice, means that we derive meaning from what resonates with our own desires. Again, me making myself my god.

In this case, by quoting the first two verses of Psalm 2 they were applying the entire psalm and the flow of that Psalm in the Book of Psalms. Psalm 1 talks about the blessed person delights in the plan and purpose of God, but the wicked do not and they will perish. Psalm 3 on the other end talks about the wicked persecuting the blessed and ends with “Salvation belongs to the Lord; May Your blessing be upon Your people!”

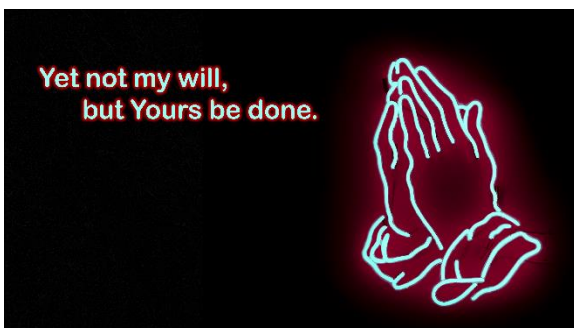
So, Psalm 2, in between talks about the wicked and encourages them to reject their fear-driven path, repent, and embrace the Lord’s path and be Saved.

What does it all mean? The thousands of Christian disciples led by the Apostles were recognizing their

own Jewish government as in the same camp and on the same path as the wicked, heathen, evil, corrupt, anti-God, Gentile nations. Rome, of course, but all the nations that rage against God.

Here we see the concept of the remnant again. God always had and still has a true remnant or portion within the whole. It wasn't all of Abraham's family, but Isaac. It wasn't all of the Israelites released from bondage in Egypt. It wasn't all the Jews returned from Babylon. It wasn't the whole Hebrew nation 2,000 years ago, and I promise you it will not be all the people claiming to be Christians today.

It is always only those people who fully trust in the Lord. Those who delight in His plan and in His purpose. Those are the ones whom He blesses.



What did they pray for? Was it for their personal success? For their wealth, health, and prosperity? Did they pray that they could get the wisdom and resources needed to build bunkers, stock up on food and medicine, to assemble an arsenal of weapons, to start



a revolution, or civil war? Did they pray for the overthrow of their own leaders, or of the occupying Government?

What they did was recognize that “Herod” representing the Jewish aristocracy, “Pilate” representing the Roman government along with the pagan “Gentiles” of the world as well as the “peoples of Israel,” stood against God’s plan and purpose by murdering Jesus. And now those same wicked men were arrayed against the disciples of Jesus.

So, in light of that understanding what did they pray for? “Grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence.” Why? Because they knew that through their Holy Spirit anointed public testimony about Jesus and through the miracles wrought to confirm that testimony, souls would be Saved. Enemies would become brothers.

What did God think about their prayer? The place was “shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they all began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

When they had put God's plan and purpose foremost and had appropriately prayed that, come what may, they wanted to be found fully trusting in the Lord by publicly preaching His Word, they were once again reanointed with the Holy Spirit.

And whenever the church gets that straight... Gets our priorities in line with His priorities we have unity. Whenever the church, and when I say church, I hope you know that I mean the people in the church, when we, get our priorities out of sync, we devolve into negativity, gossip, backbiting, and disunity.

Focus on the things that you think are important and have other do the same and we will be as divided as the U.S. Congress. Let us all focus on what God thinks is important, namely allowing Him to build His Kingdom through us, and we will be reanointed by the Holy Spirit, this place will be shaken, we will preach the Word, and we will be "of one heart and soul."