

Acts 4:23-37 - The Believers Pray and Share
October 18, 2020 - Scripture and Outline

Scripture (New Revised Standard Version)

23 After they were released, they went to their friends[a] and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. **24** When they heard it, they raised their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them, **25** it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant:[b]

‘Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples imagine vain things?

26

The kings of the earth took their stand,
and the rulers have gathered together
against the Lord and against his Messiah.’[c]

27 For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant[d] Jesus, whom you anointed, **28** to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. **29** And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants[e] to speak your word with all boldness, **30** while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant[f] Jesus.” **31** When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

32 Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. **33** With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. **34** There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. **35** They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. **36** There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). **37** He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Footnotes

Acts 4:23 Gk *their own*

Acts 4:25 Or *child*

Acts 4:26 Or *his Christ*

Acts 4:27 Or *child*

Acts 4:29 Gk *slaves*

Acts 4:30 Or *child*

Outline

1. Greet one another, begin with prayer, and read Acts 4:23-37.

2. Review Acts 4:1-22 very briefly.

3. Discuss the boldness of the Christian community in Acts 4:23-31.

— Peter and John, upon release, go to their friends with a report of what happened

— The response? Not fear or “time to get out of Dodge,” but instead a time of united prayer as a community

— Prayer begins with a theological assumption: God is in control and in charge

— Next, this development has been anticipated by Scripture in Psalm 2

— Then the community prays not for release from persecution, but boldness in the midst of persecution, as God acts with signs and wonders through Jesus

— The gathering place shaken with power as the Spirit fills all inside with the requested boldness

— Remember when you faced a past situation for which you had no answers or solutions. What did you do? What would you do the same today? Differently?

— The stereotype is that prayer is our last resort when we can't (or won't) do anything else. But the Jerusalem Christians do not think this way. How do they look at prayer? What can we learn from them about prayer?

— Define boldness as described in Acts 4. What accounts for this boldness on the part of the Jerusalem Christians? What situations may call for similar boldness today? How can we receive and live in such boldness?

4. Discuss the generosity of the Christian community in Acts 4:32-37.

— Christians continue to help out one another in extraordinary and self-giving ways (previously noted in Acts 2)

— An extraordinary unity in v. 32 and an extraordinary message in v. 33 lead to extraordinary demonstrations of generosity in vv. 34-37

— Joseph, nicknamed “Barnabas” (“son of encouragement”), exemplifies this generosity by his selling of a field and giving the proceeds to the apostles

— As noted in Acts 2, not a political requirement but a voluntary expression of caring for those in great need

— It has been said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive, and it's also harder!” Where do you struggle with receiving from others? What needs to change?

— How does God's grace shared with us invariably lead to our sharing of resources with others, as in Acts 4:32-37? What is the connection?

— How do we cultivate and develop a generous heart? What perspectives and practices do we need to change to make this a reality?

5. Close in prayer.