26. The Book of Acts—4:23-33

(11/4/26)

Acts 4:18–24 (NKJV)
18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. **23 And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,**

First, they acknowledged the greatness of God—**"Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them"**

Someone has said,
"When you put that address on the prayer the battle is already over. From whom am I asking for help? The Lord who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them. I mean that puts things in perspective!"

Perspective is more important than we often think—a proper perspective of life is vital to living a fruitful life for God—as well as a satisfying and meaningful life for ourselves.

The right perspective can mean the difference between victory and defeat—between joy and depression.

The armies of Israel were paralyzed with fear as they looked at the 9 ½ ft. Philistine champion named Goliath—but David ran to meet him in battle with the words, *"You come to me with sword and spear, but I come to you in the name of the living God—and it is <u>He</u> who will deliver you into my hand!"*

The armies of Israel saw the situation from an *earthly* perspective, and it brought fear and defeat into *their* hearts—whereas David saw the situation from *God's* perspective, and it brought strength and victory into *his* heart!

There is no truer principle for living a joyful, victorious Christian life than having the proper perspective.

The problem is we often become overwhelmed by our problems; we get so close to them that they block out our view of the greatness of our God!

When we start our prayers by acknowledging how big and powerful our God is—everything is put into perspective, and we see our problem is nothing by comparison!

Jeremiah found himself facing some incredibly difficult circumstances that had him feeling overwhelmed because the Babylonians were at the gate and he cried out to God in desperation—and God answered him, reminding Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 32:27 (NKJV)
27 "Behold, I *am* the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?

Remember that next time you feel your problem is overwhelming and seems unsolvable—pray to God and see it in perspective.

That happens when you put the *'right address'* on your prayer—and suddenly things are put into the proper perspective.

Acts 4:24–28 (NKJV)
24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: *'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.'* 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of

Israel, were gathered together [28] to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

In this prayer, Jesus' disciples are acknowledging that nothing that happens is a surprise to God or catches Him off-guard or unprepared.

There is a doctrine known as "open theism" which states that God doesn't know the future so that when things happen, they catch God off-guard and causes Him to have to *react in the moment* to bring about His will.

But contrary to open theism, Psalm 139 verse 4 and 16 state, *"Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD...All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

How could God predict intricate details in the Old Testament about Jesus Christ if He does not know the future?

How could God in any manner guarantee our eternal salvation if He does not know what the future holds?

These early Christians destroy the doctrine of open theism in their prayer by affirming—

"Lord, you knew all about this over a thousand years ago. This isn't a surprise to You. This hasn't caught You off guard—a thousand years ago You wrote about them and now they're happening!"

Here at Calvary, we believe in the sovereignty of God—that God knows the future and is in complete control of the future—without violating man's free will. (Explain)

And this belief, that nothing happens in my life, but what God knew about and allows for His divine purposes—is a great source of comfort to us as Christians.

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)
[28] And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

The disciples are acknowledging that God spoke about the events that they were living through a thousand years before through David.

This gave them great comfort and strength to believe that God is in control—He knows what's going on in the situations in our lives and that we are not at the mercy of our circumstances!

"Lord, this is coming down according to Your plan. The plan which You, according to Your divine purposes determined long ago. That Your enemies would gather together against Your Messiah, and against those who serve Him—just like You said they would."

These men had the awareness of God's sovereignty—they did not look at the cross as some *'out of control'* experience, but as something that God had ordained, had determined and planned before the foundation of the world (Rev.13:8).

And please notice that they didn't just barge into God's presence with their petition, they took time, first of all to acknowledge His greatness and give Him worship (verses 24-28)—and then they brought their petitions to Him.

I think that this is the proper way to pray—when you set aside a time to really get in His presence to pray. (Comment)

I think that prayer should always begin by taking a little time to quiet your heart in His presence followed by recognizing and acknowledging the greatness of God—that He is the only true and living God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible.

This then should be followed by taking the time to exalt His character—that He is a God of infinite holiness, righteousness, truth and justice—but also that He is a God of infinite love, mercy, grace, kindness, patience and forgiveness.

Not only is this the proper way to enter into His majestic, holy presence—but it helps us to remember Who we are coming to with our requests—the sovereign, Almighty God of the universe to Whom nothing is impossible or even difficult.

This helps us to realize that God isn't just *'reacting'* to man's actions—He is in complete control of the situation, and that gives me strength and faith when I come to Him with my requests.

This is what the disciples did before they brought the Lord their petition—

Acts 4:29–30 (NKJV)
[29] Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, [30] by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

Take note that they didn't pray for God to take their enemies' threats away or to wipe them out or for God to take them (Jesus' disciples) out of this situation—they prayed for boldness to continue speaking the Word of God:

"Lord, help us to do the things that they threaten us not to do. Give us the boldness, Lord, in the face of these threats to speak Your word faithfully—no matter what!"

Acts 4:31 (NKJV)
[31] And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Let me stop and say once again, that here at Calvary we believe in one baptism with the Holy Spirit accompanied by many subsequent fillings.

The filling of the Holy Spirit that these men experienced in Acts 2:4 was not a one-time event—it was something God wanted to keep doing in their lives.

When Paul admonished us in Ephesians 5:18 to be "filled with the Holy Spirit", the literal Greek of Ephesians 5:18 says, *"Be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit."*

"I want the baptism with the Holy Spirit—how can I receive it?"

First of all, you need to pray <u>specifically</u> for it—

Luke 11:13 (NKJV)
13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who <u>ask Him</u>!"

There are many Christians who believe that since the Holy Spirit was given as a gift to the Church on the day of Pentecost—why should we pray for what has already been given?

But salvation was also given as a gift to the world through Jesus Christ at Calvary—and yet each person has to pray to receive it!

The same is true of the gift of the Holy Spirit which was given to the Church as a whole on Pentecost but still needs to be appropriated by each individual believer—and that is done through prayer.

Luke 11:13 (NKJV)
13…how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who <u>ask Him</u>!"

Acts 8:15 (NKJV)
15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

There are examples in the NT after Pentecost of people getting saved and then praying to receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8 and 19).

So, first of all, you have to ask specifically for the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, you must have <u>faith</u> that God, as He promised, will give you this baptism and the continuous filling with His Spirit each and every day.

Galatians 3:14 (NKJV)
[14] that…we might receive the promise of the Spirit <u>through faith</u>.

God has given us many great and precious promises in His Word but every one of them need faith to be received and realized—for example 'wisdom.':

James 1:5–7 (NKJV)
[5] If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. [6] But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

R.A. Torrey—*"There are many who ask God for the baptism with the Holy Spirit and yet they do not receive, simply because they do not believe. They do not expect to receive and they do not receive."*

Acts 2:39 (NKJV)
[39] For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

1 John 5:14–15 (NKJV)
[14] Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15] And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

Mark 11:24 (NKJV)
[24] Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them,* and you will have *them*.

The Results of Being Baptized and then filled with the Holy Spirit

1. *First, you become acutely aware of your own sinfulness and desire more than anything else to live a life of absolute obedience and holiness to God.*

2. *Jesus becomes near and real and there is a deeper sense of fellowship, communion and intimacy with Him than anything you've ever experienced before. Your love for Jesus becomes all-consuming.*

3. *There is a renewed hunger for the Word and prayer. As you read the Word, the Scriptures seem alive with meaning and full of richness.*

4. *There is supernatural strength against temptation and victory over habitual sins.*

5. *There is a great increase of spiritual power. Where there was once dryness and bareness in ministry there is now freshness and fruitfulness.*

6. *There is a boldness in witnessing and a burden for the lost unlike anything you've known before.*

7. *The emphasis of your life moves from the temporal to the eternal.*

8. *There is great joy and a heart full of praise for God—which is what Paul mentions in Ephesians 5:19 as one of the evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 4:31 (NKJV)
31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Notice that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke—not in tongues—but the Word of God!

Never forget that the purpose of the empowering of the Spirit is not that we might speak in tongues—the purpose of the power of the Spirit is that we might be bold witnesses (Acts 1:8).

Acts 4:32 (NKJV)
32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul…

By this time, their members had grown so much that they were no longer numbered!

This incredible growth was the direct result of the action recorded in verse 31, when those who were **"filled with the Holy Spirit … began to speak the word of God with boldness."**

The unity of the believers, who **"were of one heart and soul",** was also a powerful testimony manifested by their love for and sharing with each other—

Acts 4:32 (NKJV)

[32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

Jesus said in John 13:35, *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

In His high-priestly prayer, Jesus prayed that *"they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."* (John 17:21).

And in verse 32 we see that the Father answered the Son's prayer!

One author said—

"The basis of their shared life was twofold—

***First**, they were preoccupied with ministering to each other. So intent were they on meeting each other's needs that they had no concern for gratifying their own desires. Theirs was a humility stemming from seeing themselves in relation to Jesus Christ, and others as more important than themselves (Phil. 2:3).*

***Second**, they were focused beyond themselves to reaching the lost world with the truth of the gospel. That left them little time to bother with trivial personal matters. Their unity stemmed from focusing on those priorities Jesus had left them: selflessly loving each other, and reaching the lost world."*

Acts 4:32–33 (NKJV)

[32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. **[33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.**

The **"great power"** of the apostles came from the **Baptism with and then the continual filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)**—which as we have said is an empowering for service.

It was in His power that they were giving **"witness to the resurrection"**—the very thing the Sanhedrin had forbidden them to do.

The imperfect tense of the verb translated **"were giving"** shows that that was their continual practice—as Peter expressed it to the Sanhedrin, **"We cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).**

"And great grace was upon them all."

Grace is a word that is a staple in the Christian's vocabulary—we use it all the time.

We talk about grace, we sing about God's amazing grace, we name our churches and even our daughters 'grace.'

The Bible says we are saved by grace (Eph.2:8); we stand in grace (Rom.5:2); and we live our Christian lives according to the power of God's grace (4:16).

And yet as important and integral as grace is to our Christianity, I think many Christians would have trouble defining grace if someone asked them to.

Grace (Greek-'charis') means *'a gift'*, but more preciously, a gift from God that we cannot earn, do not deserve and desperately need if we are going to be saved and live the life on this earth that God desires us to live.

Some define grace as *"getting what you don't deserve; unmerited favor, undeserved blessing."*

One author put it this way—
"Grace is the gift of God as expressed in his actions of extending mercy, loving-kindness, and salvation to people. Grace is the dimension of divine activity that enables God to confront human indifference and rebellion with an inexhaustible capacity to forgive and to bless."

G.R.A.C.E.—*"God's riches at Christ's expense"*

Ephesians 2:5 (NKJV)
[5] even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)
[16] Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)
[7] In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

The vastness and comprehensiveness of our forgiveness is seen in Paul's statement that it is according to the *'riches of His grace.'*

God's grace—like His love, holiness, power, and all His other attributes is boundless.

It is far beyond our ability to comprehend or describe, yet we know it is according to the riches of that infinite grace that He provides forgiveness.

We need never worry that our sin will outstrip God's gracious forgiveness—*"Where sin increased,"* Paul assures us, *"grace abounded all the more"* (Rom. 5:20).