



World Christian Fellowship

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Prayer – Lesson 04

Prayer of the Early Church

Let us look at very intently on the subject of prayer in the book of Acts. We did have look at the prayers prayed to the early church and prayed by Apostles in our previous lessons. But the book of Acts records the prayer meetings happened as a church.

‘Continued steadfastly in prayers’ **Acts 2:42**

Greek word *‘proskartereo’* in prayers at 2.42.

This word means, ‘to be earnest towards, to attend assiduously, be instant in’

The words prayer, prayers, prayed, praying and pray are found 29 times in Acts.

1.14,24; 2.42; 3.1; 4.31; 6.4,6; 8.15,22,24; 9.40; 10.2,4,9,30,31; 11.5; 12.5,12; 13.3; 14.23; 16.13,16,25; 20.36; 21.5; 22.17; 28.8.

The first reference of churches praying together is mentioned in **Acts 1:14**, *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.* (NKJV)

From the account written through the Apostle Luke we can see that the early churches were gathering for prayer. Also prayer was not a ritual activity rather it's a way of life for them.

There are two prayers which they early church prayed are mentioned in the scripture.

Acts 1:23-27, ²³ *And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.* ²⁴ *And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen* ²⁵ *to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."* ²⁶ *And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (NKJV)*

When they wanted to choose the replacement for the Judas they prayed together and cast lot as per their custom, which was practiced before the Pentecost.

Acts 4: 23- 31, 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,* 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 together²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.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.”

³¹And 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 us examine what they had prayed for.

The apostles were beaten and warned that they will face severe persecution if they continue to do so. Instead of praying for saving them from persecution they have been, but they prayed for more boldness.

This prayer is so relevant in our church life even today.

1. Relevant because of whom it was prayed to

V 24 gives the clarity the early church had about God. Read they have addressed God and the confidence they have God in Him.

2. Relevant because of who is praying

The apostles have been given a clear commission from the Lord to preach the Gospel. They were fulfilling the mission of the Lord, who promised that He will be with them always.

3. Relevant because of the circumstances

They had healed a lame person in the name of Lord Jesus Christ. The religious leaders instead of embracing such a huge miracle they started beating them and warned them not to preach the name of Jesus.

4. Relevant because of what was prayed

They did not ask for safety. They did not ask them to stop the persecution. Rather they put the mission in the forefront of their lives. They did ask for more boldness not safety.

5. Relevant because the prayer was answered

V31, says that the place shook and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Not only that they spoke with more boldness.

What a great prayer prayed by the early church!

What did the early church pray for?

1. For their Leaders

Acts 1:24, *And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen.(NKJV)*

Acts 6:6, *whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.(NKJV)*

Acts 14:23, *So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (NKJV)*

From the above we can see whenever a leader was elected or appointed the whole church got together and prayed for their work in the Kingdom. The apostles laid their hands and prayed over them so that they will receive the Holy Spirit for their ministry.

2. To receive the Holy Spirit

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

3. Sinners to Repent

Acts 8:22, *Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. (NKJV)*

Acts 8:24, *Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." (NKJV)*

Acts 26:29, *And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains." (NKJV)*

4. Commissioning to Missions

Acts 13:3, *Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. (NKJV)*

Acts 20:36, *And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. (NKJV)*

In Acts 27:29, in some translation it's been translated as prayed but it's only a wish. Only twice it's been translated as prayed but in KJV as well as Tamil Bible has got the word right. **(Acts 27:29, Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. NKJV)**

In Acts 28:8, Apostle Paul did pray but then He healed the father of Publius. **(Acts 28:8, And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. NKJV)**

What is the result of the early Church prayers?

1. Earthquake and people got saved

Acts 4:31, 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.*(NKJV)

At Philippi after the miracle of the deliverance of the evil possessed girl who was a fortune teller. Paul and Silas were imprisoned and at midnight this had happened.

Acts 16:25, *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.* (NKJV)

Please understand the important lesson that they were not just praying for their release, if they had done so then they would have run away as soon as the prison doors were opened because

of the earthquake. This is the how the church was born today we have the letter of Philippians in our hands.

2. Miracle release

Acts 12:5, *Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.* (NKJV)

Even though Peter got released form the prison the people were not able to comprehend the miracle. So it's obvious that they were not praying for Peter's release.

Conclusion:

From the prayers of the early churches we can see that they did not pray for

1. Any material blessings
2. For physical healing
3. For any financial blessings
4. For any protection
5. For God to save their physical life

Rather they were willing to go through any kind of difficulty and prayed only for the following.

1. Prayed for the Anointing of the Holy Spirit on their Elders, Leaders, New believers, etc.,
2. Prayed for sinners to repent
3. Prayed for Missions
4. Prayed together as church regularly and steadfastly.

We can almost everyone had the habit of praying in the early church, Peter, Paul, Stephen, Cornelius, Jewish women etc.

Could we learn from them and pray like them consistently and fervently for things of God?