

Prayer in the Book of Acts

Preacher: Harold S.

Date: June 07, 2026

Church: 16th Avenue Gospel Chapel

References: Acts 1-27, Acts 1:13-14; Acts 1:24-25; Acts 2:42; Acts 3:1-3; Acts 3:6; Acts 6:4; Acts 12:12-14; Acts 16:25; Acts 20:36; Acts 21:4-5; Acts 27:33-35; Luke 18:1

Introduction

If you will, and we'll just spend some time considering some truths there. Acts chapter 1, I guess, is where we'll start. I've been impressed recently reading through the book of Acts about the great subject of prayer. I want us to consider prayer in the book of Acts this morning.

We all believe in prayer. We all understand a little bit about prayer. I think we probably all can say that we don't pray as much as we should pray. And going through the book of Acts, I think we're going to find that that is true, and also that we don't always pray as we should pray.

So just some thoughts now—random, not random thoughts, thoughts from the book of Acts, not in any particular order, but thoughts on prayer from the book of Acts.

Choosing a Replacement for Judas

So first of all, Acts chapter 1 and verse 24. Acts 1:24 says,

[Acts 1:24-25 NKJV]

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."

The whole issue was, how will the replacement for Judas be chosen?

And having said that, we probably should pray before we carry on, that the Lord help us this morning.

Lord, we want to thank You for the fact that we can pray. And we're going to find out as we go through Acts that the brethren in Acts probably prayed more than many of us do, and we apologize for that. We thank You now that we can pray, and that You will teach us about prayer. And so that's our prayer. And then for all these other items mentioned, Lord, we pray that You'll just work in each of those situations for Your glory. We give thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

How are you going to replace Judas? And so the question would be asked, if we had a similar circumstance today, what would we do? And the answer is, we would probably pray, but we would also say, "You know, we're pretty intelligent people, and we're—we are disciples. So we'll just vote." And it is true that they prayed, but having prayed, they cast lots as to what the solution should be. They prayed and they relied on the Lord, but they realized that even their vote would be insufficient.

The Lord was going to have to work through prayer to provide the solution to the problem. We often pray as an add-on to our thinking. I think this illustrates that prayer is foundational. Our thinking is an add-on. And so instead of resting on their vote, they rested on the fact that the Lord would add on. So He answered prayer and provided the right solution, and they got that by lot. Well, very interesting.

Devotion in the Upper Room

Verse 13 says,

[Acts 1:13-14 NKJV]

¹³ And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

What did they do in those days, waiting for the Spirit of God to come? They had prayer meetings. They were all at the prayer meeting. It wasn't just men, it wasn't just disciples, it was all the men and the women, and they were all there for the prayer meeting.

Now you sit back and you say, "I guess if I were in a situation like that, I would have been at that prayer meeting too." What would you do waiting for the Lord? You'd pray. And so I just—

I contemplate what they were doing, how many of them. They were all praying together, the men and the women.

And I'm interested to note that in our prayer meetings, there's usually more women than men. Why is that? Because women, as well as men, realize we've all got to pray. Women don't pray audibly, but the women are there praying silently. And we're all praying, and we all say hallelujah. So just another thought there. The women were praying.

Deliverance and Hospitality in Acts 12

There's a similar situation. There's a similar situation that appears, you'll remember, in Acts chapter 12. And we won't turn there, but Acts chapter 12, you remember the story that Peter was in prison. I guess we'd better turn there. Acts chapter 12, Peter was in prison, and they decided that they should do something about him. So they prayed. James had just been killed. Chances that Peter would survive were pretty slim. And so they decided to pray.

Acts chapter 12, verse 12 says,

[Acts 12:12 NKJV]

So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

This is Peter saying he considered that he'd been delivered from Israel, from the prison. And so he said, "All right, I'm going to go." He knew where to go. He went to Mary's place. And he assumed that the people would be praying there. They were all praying. Where did he go? He didn't go to some man's house. He went to Mary's house.

Women are often outstanding hospitality providers. And that's good for them. They provided hospitality for prayer. You remember that Lydia, down in the book of Philippi, Lydia was sort of the one who put together the prayer meeting, and they prayed down by the river. Here, it's at Mary's place that they are praying. And the prayer meeting was very important in those days.

Healing at the Hour of Prayer

All right, I want to go back now to chapter 3. Acts chapter 3, and you remember the story in Acts chapter 3, we'll pick it up in verse 1.

[Acts 3:1-3 NKJV]

¹ Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; ³ who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

And you'll remember that Peter healed this dear man, and it was a marvelous miracle. The question is, why was this such an important miracle? I was going to say that it was a miracle—it was important in this sense, that many thousands were saved. It's important in this sense, that it raised the ire and the opposition of the Jewish leadership, who put the apostles and the man who was healed in prison, and then they were released, and then back and forth. It was a very, very, very powerful impact from the fact that the lame man was healed.

So my question is, why was the lame man healed? And you would say, "Well, prayer." Do you think Peter and John prayed before they went to the temple that day? And I think the answer is yes.

But it's interesting, when did this miracle take place? And you remember in verse 1 that it says it took place at the hour of prayer. So at the hour of prayer in the temple—not outside, but at the hour of prayer in the temple—what were they doing? Well, there were many who were praying. How many might that have been? Well, of course, we don't know. But it's not surprising if we thought that there maybe were a thousand praying. It was the hour of prayer. And the Christians would have gone. And probably some of those who had not yet become Christians but were practicing the hour of prayer would have gone as well.

So Peter and John prayed, and those who were in the temple prayed. But it was the hour of prayer. What had happened at the hour of prayer the day before? People had been praying. What would have happened at the hour of prayer the week before? People were praying. And what would have happened at the hour of prayer a month before? And a year before? What happened when Zacharias was in the temple, probably at the hour of prayer, when he was told that John the Baptist would be born?

Why did this miracle happen at the hour of prayer? And I think because it was a cumulative impact, or the impact was cumulative from all of those who prayed, and all of those who prayed—Peter and John at the last. But they prayed and prayed and prayed.

Does God answer prayer? Yes. What kind of prayer have we been talking about? We've been talking about corporate prayer, haven't we? Any of these items that we've mentioned so far,

not corporate prayer? Corporate prayer is when people get together to pray, and they pray together.

What are the benefits of that? Frankly, it's a little easier to pray with other people. We find it easier because they do a lot of the praying, and all we have to do is say, "Amen, I agree with you," and say to ourselves, "What's the matter with you, Harold? Why didn't you understand it enough to pray that?"

Do you learn from being in a prayer meeting? The answer, of course, is yes. We learn when we're lectured, we learn when somebody says, "I am planning to teach you this," but we learn through all the other experiences of life, and we learn a great deal about life from prayer meetings. And I look back at my early years as a Christian and I say, "Harold, you learned. You learned from the way Brother So-and-So prayed, and you learned from the way Brother So-and-So prayed." And I can often go back in my mind to listen to the prayers. You can almost pray like some other people, can't you, if you listen to their prayers often enough? And you say, "I learned. I learned from those prayers." So this was an amazing time.

A few other thoughts on prayer.

The Assembly Prayer Meeting

Chapter 2 and verse 42. We know chapter 2, 42 very well. It says,

[Acts 2:42 NKJV]

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

So my question was, what kind of prayers were they continuing steadfast in? And I believe the answer is they continued steadfast in the assembly prayer meeting. It's true, when you become a Christian, you pray on your own. But here they were continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. That means they went to church. They went to the teaching meetings.

In fellowship, they went to the working meetings and the fellowship teas and so on. And breaking of bread, that's a communal activity. And is prayer private? No, prayer is a communal activity as well. And so those who say they know the Lord and walk in His ways, they're involved in those four things, and the fourth is they're active in prayer meetings—many prayer meetings, not just the corporate prayer meeting, but all the private prayer

meetings. Keep on attending private prayer meetings as well as the public prayer meetings, the more announced prayer meetings.

Prayers and Praises at Midnight

Chapter 16. Chapter 16. You remember the story, Paul and Silas had been put into prison in Philippi. And verse number 25:

[Acts 16:25 NKJV]

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

What's that mean? Does that mean that they sang out loud and the prisoners heard them at midnight? And you say, "Yeah, that's what happened." Does that mean that they not only sang out loud, but they prayed out loud and the prisoners heard them? Or does it mean they only sang out loud and the prisoners heard them sing, but when they prayed, they mumbled quietly so that Silas could hear when Paul was praying and Paul could hear when Silas was praying? So what do you think about it?

Well, you think it was that they prayed out loud. They prayed out loud. They sang praises out loud. And the Lord responded with an earthquake out loud.

What do you learn in the book of Acts about prayer? Prayer was **corporate**. It was a community of people praying. They didn't just pray privately; they prayed together. But they didn't pray—they didn't mumble their prayers. They prayed out loud. What a wonderful thing to pray out loud.

Bold Thanksgiving Amid Shipwreck

Chapter 27. Chapter 27, and verse number 35.

Verse 33 says, when the day was coming, Paul besought them all to take food:

[Acts 27:33 NKJV]

³³ And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing.

They fasted for 14 days when they were in that shipwreck.

[Acts 27:34-35 NKJV]

³⁴ Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you." ³⁵ And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.

Good for you, Paul. When you pray, do you always pray quietly when you pray out?

And I told you this story—Trevor Kamster made reference to it, I think, on Tuesday night. We all, one day after the family Bible hour—a lot of us, probably a dozen or 15 of us—went to Olympia Pizza over on Broadway for lunch. And we sat down for lunch. The pizza came. And we thought, "Well, it's probably time to pray." So I think I prayed. And I had to pray loud enough to be heard on the other side of the table in a restaurant with a lot of people. So I prayed pretty loud. And I said, "Lord, thanks for the food." And I prayed a few other things. And I said, "Amen." And all the people at the next table said, "Amen." They were all listening.

Well, is that a bad idea? If we had to do it over again, what would we do? I would have prayed louder. Thank you. It's marvelous. They prayed out loud.

Kneeling on the Shore

Chapter 20. You remember the story of chapter 20. Paul was heading to Jerusalem. He called for the elders of Ephesus. They went down to Miletus and they met with him. Chapter 20. Paul outlined to them some wonderful truth, and then verse 36. And it says,

[Acts 20:36 NKJV]

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

That was kind of nice. They had the preaching meeting and he told them all these wonderful things, and then he prayed with them all. But they kneeled down to pray. Do we always kneel down? And the answer is no. Sometimes, and that's very good, we do, but not always. But they, on this occasion, they kneeled down to pray. And I suppose that the others who were around probably watched and thought, "This is quite interesting."

Chapter 21. They move on, as you'll remember. Verse 4 says,

[Acts 21:4 NKJV]

⁴ And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days.

Tyre, you remember, was a prominent city, and certainly not a city given to following the Lord. But they—

[Acts 21:4-5 NKJV]

They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. ⁵ When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.

Sometimes when you go to the beach you see strange things. Can you imagine going to the beach one day and there's all these people—I'm not sure, probably a hundred if not more. And all of a sudden they all kneel down—the fathers, the husbands, the men, the women, the children. They all get down on their knees on the beach, okay? And around them, people are going in for a swim. And they're all there on the beach, kneeling and praying.

What do you think the people of Tyre thought about all that? They probably said, "Wow, we saw some weird things today. You know, we saw people..." Now, they actually knelt down on the beach, the children, and a whole bunch of them knelt down on the beach, and they were praying.

Is it possible that we should be more public in our prayers? They were public in their prayers. Frankly, they also had more power in their prayers. You remember that Peter said,

[Acts 3:6 NKJV]

Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

And some people have flipped that around, as I've probably told you before, and they've said, "We can't tell you in the name of Jesus of Nazareth to rise up and walk, but we can tell you that we've got lots of silver and gold." Sometimes we get it upside down. I just think this was

a marvelous occasion, and they were all praying, kneeling down, and the whole congregation with them.

The Surprising Answer to Prayer

Chapter 12 and verse 15. Chapter 12 and verse 15. And a delightful story. Here they are, verse 12.

[Acts 12:12 NKJV]

¹² So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

I believe this was not the only prayer meeting that night. The other apostles weren't there. Where were the other apostles? I believe they were in somebody else's house praying.

Verse 13:

[Acts 12:13 NKJV]

¹³ And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer.

So who was at the prayer meeting? Well, this damsel, Rhoda, probably a teenage girl. She was at the prayer meeting in the middle of the night. And when she knew Peter's voice,

[Acts 12:14 NKJV]

¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.

And they said to her, "That's exactly what we expected. We've been praying, and that's exactly what happened. Rhoda, praise the Lord." Is that what she said? They said? No. They said, "Rhoda, you're mad. You're crazy."

Have you ever been so surprised by the answers to your prayer that you have to say, "Lord, I prayed, but I never believed it was going to be this good"? What a wonderful thing to pray to the point where when the answer comes, you have to say, "Lord, I didn't believe the way I

should. This is far, far better than anything that I had planned." Hallelujah. And you remember the story, Peter came in, and all was well.

So some thoughts on prayer.

Devoted to Prayer and the Word

What are the conclusions? We've got to pray **more**. We've got to pray **more boldly**. We've got to pray **collectively**. Come to prayer meeting and let the Lord bless us. Our objective is that the Lord will bless. Is He going to bless because we're smart? No. Is He going to bless necessarily because we work hard?

It's interesting, we didn't read the verse, but in Acts chapter 6, the apostles say we need some other men to look after the widows.

[Acts 6:4 NKJV]

but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Is that what it says? No. It says to prayer and the ministry of the word, which is more important. Well, I guess you're pretty much going to have to say the prayer meeting is more important than the preach meeting, isn't it? Those men were devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word, almost as if the ministry of the Word was an afterthought.

Men are always to pray and not to faint.

[Luke 18:1 NKJV]

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank You for these men and these women and these youth and the children in the book of Acts who were our examples to pray. Lord, some of us are pretty slow learners and we don't pray enough. We thank You, Lord, that You're the God who answers prayer, not only private prayer—praise the Lord, He does—but Lord, we thank You that You have answered corporate prayer, public prayer, loud prayer, bold prayer, evidential prayer. We want to live that, Lord. We ask Your blessing in Jesus' name. Amen.