

## Lifted Voices, Open Heavens

Dr. John Carmichael

**[Act 4:24-31 NASB95] 24 And when they heard [this,] they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, [through] the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE 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 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, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. 29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus." 31 And 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.**

- Acts shows us that before the early church preached, traveled, planted churches, or confronted persecution; they prayed. Prayer wasn't something they sprinkled into ministry; it was the ministry.
- When the apostles were threatened, they didn't form a strategy committee; they gathered for a prayer meeting. Their first response was prayer because their identity was prayer.
- Few modern Pentecostal leaders embodied this truth like Dr. David Yonggi Cho, who built the largest church in the world on the foundation of prayer. He said: "Much prayer, much power. Little prayer, little power. No prayer, no power." - Dr. David Yonggi Cho
- That one sentence summarizes Acts 4.
  - No believer receives much from God without prayer.
  - No church accomplishes God's purpose without prayer.
  - No ministry has lasting success without prayer.
- At North Church, prayer isn't one ministry among many, it is the engine of every ministry. Everything God wants to do in and through us must be birthed, sustained, and completed through prayer.

**What do we learn about prayer from this passage?**

**Here are four power truths for us today about prayer.**

### **I. Prayer Must Be Our First Response Not Our Last Resort**

- a. [Act 4:24a NASB95] 24 And when they heard [this,] they lifted their voices to God with one accord..."
- b. The moment trouble arrived, they didn't complain, they didn't retreat; they prayed. Prayer was not their backup plan but their first instinct.
- c. [Jas 5:13 NASB95] 13 Is anyone among you suffering? [Then] he must pray
- d. "Prayer is not preparation for the greater work; prayer is the greater work." - E.M. Bounds
- e. Personally: make prayer the first move of your day and the first move in a crisis.
- f. In ministry: pray before you plan, not after you've planned.
- g. At North: keep preservice prayer, Soaking Prayer, and online prayer as essential, not optional.
- h. When confusion or pressure hits, pray before you do anything else.

### **II. Prayer Lifts Our Eyes to a Big God, Making Big Problems Smaller**

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- a. [Act 4:24-28 NASB95] 24 And when they heard [this,] they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, [through] the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE 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 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, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.
- b. Their prayer began with God's greatness, not their fear. Before they asked God to act, they exalted who He is: Creator, Sovereign, Faithful, Eternal.
- c. [Exo 6:6 NASB95] 6 "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.
- d. [Deu 26:7-8 NASB95] 7 'Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; 8 and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders;
- e. "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His willingness." - Jack Hayford
- f. Begin prayer by magnifying God, not rehearsing your fears.
- g. Pray Scripture. Declare God's sovereignty out loud.
- h. A high view of God (He is able and willing) produces a powerful prayer life.

### III. Unified Prayer Amplifies Power and Breaks Resistance

- a. [Act 4:29-30 NASB95] 29 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."
- b. Their prayer wasn't scattered or individualistic. It was one voice, one request, one heart. This fulfills Jesus' promise: [Mat 18:19 NASB95] 19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.
  - i. The word "agree" (Greek: symphoneō) means "to sound together," like instruments tuned to the same pitch.
  - ii. Jesus ties agreement specifically to asking. When believers agree on what they ask for, they enter harmony with each other and with the Father's will.
- c. Unity doesn't add power; it multiplies it.
- d. [Lev 26:6-9 NASB95] 6 'I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making [you] tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. 7 'But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; 8 five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. 9 'So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you.
- e. "When God's people come together in unity and prayer, all of hell trembles." - David Wilkerson
- f. Pray near each other and pray for each other.

### IV. Prayer Releases Supernatural Shaking, Fresh Filling, and Boldness

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- a. [Act 4:31 NASB95] 31 And 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.
  - b. This shaking was not symbolic. It was God responding to prayer with power. Unified prayer produced tangible intervention, spiritual renewal, and bold witness.
  - c. [2Ch 7:1-4 NASB95] 1 Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. 2 The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD'S house. 3 All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, [saying,] "Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting." 4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD.
  - d. "The church that is not a praying church is a playing church." —A.W. Tozer
  - e. Expect movement when you pray: healing, breakthrough, clarity, boldness.
  - f. At North: pray with expectancy—God still shakes places and fills people.
  - g. Personally: pray until something shifts—inside you or around you.
  - h. Boldness is always the fruit of Spirit-filled prayer.
- Prayer is the engine of God's power: personally, corporately, and missionally.
  - Acts 4 is a blueprint for a powerful church:
    - When trouble comes - pray.
    - When fear rise - pray.
    - When mission is challenged - pray.
    - When boldness is needed - pray.
    - When revival is desired - pray.
  - Prayer is how heaven moves, how hell is resisted, how the church advances, and how believers receive from God.
  - North Church will fulfill the purposes of God only to the degree that we are a church of prayer.