

ACTS 4:23-31 FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT TO PRAY WITH PASSION MB/Mon. 22.9.19

We've looked at passionate mission for two weeks, both overseas and local, and we're not going to stop now. Mission never ends. It begins where we are, and goes to the ends of the earth. But we must look at what drives mission... what is the power behind mission... what gives passion for mission. Acts 1.8 is the key verse. **You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.** Today we will look at the power and the passion of the **Holy Spirit** which drives mission, and **Prayer** which is the engine room of mission.

These are topics which too often scare people. I once preached on mission and evangelism and a retired pastor confronted me after the service: "Don't preach so much on Evangelism" he said. "You make me feel guilty." Preaching on the Holy Spirit is not much different. People feel afraid; the Holy Spirit is unpredictable; Speaking in tongues; prophesying; healing; getting excited in worship – all these things put the wind up people – wind and Spirit are the same word, so bring it on; let's put the wind up people, as on Pentecost Day. Prayer can also be frightening. One of the most frightening questions to be asked is: "How's your prayer life going?" The Good News is that when the Holy Spirit fills us he drives out all these human fears and fills us with a divine power and passion to pray and to preach and to witness so that **all are found, and none are lost.**

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. Acts 2.4, **They were all filled with the HS.** 4.8, **Peter was filled with the HS.** 4.31 **They were all filled with the HS.** When God poured out the HS on the early church their fears were driven out and the HS gave them boldness and passion and power to preach and witness. They were forbidden to preach, but they kept on preaching. **They never stopped proclaiming the Good News.** They were persecuted but they kept on preaching. **They rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer disgrace for the Jesus. We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard,** said Peter, and again: **we must obey God rather than men.** These are the same people who not many weeks before had run away from Jesus in fear. Now their fear was gone, and they were filled with power and passion to preach Christ, even if it meant persecution. WHY? Because they were filled with the Spirit of the risen Jesus. There is no other explanation. **You will receive power when the HS comes upon you... when you are filled with the Spirit.**

Don't you think this is what is lacking in our church? Don't you think this is what we need? We are thankful that the Holy Spirit came to us in Baptism. But that is so long ago, and the HS seeks to come to us daily. The Apostles were filled with the Spirit over and over. Paul calls us all to **be continually being filled with the HS.** Eph.5.18. **We are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit,** but Luther goes on to say that our *sinful self should be drowned through daily repentance and that day after day a new self should arise.* So we pray daily: *Come Holy Spirit renew your church; begin with me!*

PRAYER – THE ENGINE ROOM OF MISSION. When Peter and John were released from prison for preaching and healing they gathered with the church and **raised their voices together in prayer to God.** Acts 4.24. This was a great prayer meeting. They praised God that he is all powerful, and that nothing happens outside his plan. Prayer begins with praise: hymns of praise and words of praise. **Glory to God in the highest... hallowed be your name... Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.** God is in control. Nothing is too hard for God. We begin our prayers by entering into the throne room of heaven, where God is seated on the throne with all worshipping before God. We join in this worship of praise and Glory. Then we ask for **God's kingdom to come, and God's will to be done, on earth as in heaven. Now Lord, enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch forth your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your Holy servant, Jesus.** v29-30. This was some prayer. It asked God to continue doing through the church what he did through Jesus on earth. God really liked that prayer. **After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the HS and spoke the word of God boldly.** This is a fair dinkum prayer meeting. God is asked to continue the work of Jesus on earth through his body, the church, and God comes with a great shake. He answers their prayer immediately, once again fills them with the Holy Spirit, and gives them boldness to go on preaching and healing.

In our reading from 1 Tim 2. Paul instructs Timothy how to pray. **I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone.** No quick give me prayers. Prayers of every kind for everyone. This sounds like 24/7 prayer. He goes on to name a few people to pray for. **For kings and all in authority...** for Scott Morrison and Stephen Marshall; for parents and police; for teachers and community leaders... Paul even says why to pray for these people: **that we may live peaceful... Godly... holy lives.** Not so that we become rich and live leisurely lives, but that we live **Godly and holy lives.** This is what honours **God our Saviour who wants all people to be saved.** That's what we are to pray for; a godly & holy church which does not drive people from Christ their saviour, but draws them to him, so **all may be saved.** Read on in 1 Tim 2 to see how men and women should pray.

Finally, how does your church pray? Not you the individual, but you as a church? It is good that we have a general pray in church where we pray for the many needs of many people. But how can we go beyond that? We could conduct a weekly prayer group. If *Prayer is the Engine Room of Mission* a prayer group is as indispensable as worship. Recently I learned of Prayer Evangelism. It calls us to set up a prayer group in every street of our town, made up of members of all churches in that street. The focus of the prayers is to intercede for all the people of that street, to get to know them all, to ask them for their prayer needs, to actually pray for them with them, and finally to share the Good News with them. I believe: *Prayer is not preparation for the battle. Prayer is the battle...* Somebody has said: *If we stop praying heaven shuts down.* When the Holy Spirit fills us he gives us power and passion for prayer and for mission. Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, renew your church; begin with me. Amen.*