

Sunday, October 5, 2025
Sierra Vista Community Church, Las Cruces, NM
Acts Sermon Series: Pray Send Go
Pray in the Spirit, Acts 4:23-31

Introduction—Prayer should be the first line of action for the believer. When it is time to call on God, we don't need a committee meeting. If more Christians would call on God in prayer, God would respond more frequently. We need to pray! We must Pray!

Pray is not something that should be listed as the last item. You have said, I have said, we have heard this statement: "***Well all we can do is pray now.***" We should never say that. What we should say is let's pray and actually pray. There is no better time to pray than the when the opportunity presents itself. Good things happen when we pray!

Stand & Read—Acts 4:23-31

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?

26

The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the Lord
and against his anointed one.

27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Pray

1. When God Moves, Thank Him!—Verses 23-26

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

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- A. **Verse 23**—Upon their release from jail, Peter and John go tell their people what happened.
- B. We like to hear reports when there are things going on in people's lives. It gives us a first-person advantage to the story.
- C. **Verse 24**—When we hear good news of what God has done, the first thing we ought to do is be thankful!
- D. Praying a prayer of thanksgiving for all He has done.
- E. We should raise our voices together for all He has done!
- F. Look what they say: Lord you are the Sovereign One!
- G. When you attribute Sovereignty to God, what you are saying is you are it! You know everything. You are in charge. You can do whatever you want!
- H. Aren't you thankful for the Sovereignty of God? I know I am.
- I. **Verse 25**—You spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- J. This verse reminds us to rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the words to pray and the words to speak.
- K. Through King David, the Holy Spirit spoke. So, what did the Holy Spirit say? Verse 25-26 are quotes from Psalm 2:1-2
- L. **Psalm 2:1-2**—Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed?
- M. This psalm was a prayer used by the Jewish people to remind them of the coming Messiah. The new Christians, here in this text, realized that it had to be the Holy Spirit speaking through David about Jesus!
- N. Why do nations conspire? Why do the Kings of the earth rise up?
- O. This Psalm is pointing to the Roman Empire, King Herod, Pontius Pilate, and all the rulers who didn't believe that Jesus was the Christ, way before it came to pass!
- P. That is why the author Luke (who wrote Acts) makes sure this text is here. It is so important to know how to pray in the Spirit, and not in your own strength.
- Q. Not only are the rulers and nations against Jesus, but they are against anyone who says they follow Him!

Illustration—In his book **FOLK PSALMS OF FAITH**, Ray Stedman tells of an experience about a friend had in a crowded restaurant. Just as his friend was about to begin his meal, a man approached and asked if he could join him. The friend invited him to have a seat. Then, as was his custom, he bowed his head in prayer. When he opened his eyes, the other man asked, "Do you have a headache?" The friend replied, "No, I don't." The other man asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" He replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat."

The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money by the sweat of my brow, and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!"

Stedman's friend said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!"

Application—Are you thankful for all God has given you? Are you thankful for all God has done for you? When God moves in your life, thank Him!

2. When God Moves, Expect Spiritual Warfare—verses 27-28

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

- A. Whenever there is a movement of God, there is bound to be spiritual warfare.
- B. Now, you may not believe that or understand it, but I am here to say, all great movements of God have always had an opposition with heavy push back against God.
- C. That is spiritual warfare. There are unseen battles going on even as we are gathered here today. Some of you in this very room have a lot on your plate.
- D. You have decisions that need to be made, and they are difficult.
- E. As you seek God, expect Satan to interfere with your heart and mind because he will.
- F. As the people are celebrating the release of John and Peter from prison, the opposers are plotting their defense.
- G. **Verse 27**—Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and even the Israelites, make up a tough team, but our team led by Jesus is the toughest of all.
- H. The conspire, the scheme, they are against God.
- I. They are no match for our anointed King! King Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- J. No one can fathom the power by which we can operate under!
- K. **Ephesians 6:12**—For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
- L. Nobody can take your soul away from you once you give it to Jesus.
- M. ***Don't be afraid of what can happen to your earthly body but fear Him who can determine the eternal destiny of your soul.***
- N. **Matthew 10:28**—Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Application—Is your prayer life not what it should be? Maybe you aren't sure how to pray or what to pray for, so you don't pray. Today all that can change by becoming vulnerable to God. Let Him determine your prayers and their outcome.

3. When God Moves, Pray in The Spirit—Verses 29-31

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

- A. It is the will of God to show Himself to the world. He isn't hiding or cowering down because there is this huge movement of “noneness.”
- B. NONENESS means: believing in nothing. I call it believing in something because you believe that you are here by chance and happenstance. Some call it nothing, I call it something.
- C. ***Even nothing is something.***
- D. **Genesis 1:1-2**—In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. **2** Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
- E. **Verse 29**—A spirit led prayer says “God, I know these threats are nothing to you. Since that's the case give us great boldness.”
- F. Isn't that an interesting request. Give us great boldness.
- G. **Verse 30**—Here is the prayer that was asked—“Stretch out your hand and heal this land and give us signs and miracles.”
- H. They didn't want the signs for their own sake but as it says in this verse for the sake of Jesus' name.
- I. They want to make sure whatever God did, the naysayers would be able to say that it came God since it was so remarkable.
- J. We must be willing to let God do His will in our life in order for others to see the wonder of Jesus and His transformation of our lives before their very eyes.
- K. Our legacy doesn't matter. It is the legacy of Jesus that matters. The only way that happens is for us to be praying in the Spirit.
- L. **Verse 31**— After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
- M. When the Spirit is included in our prayers, a holy movement of God begins to take place.
- N. There is a movement of God that is shaking Del Rio right now. There is a seismic shift about to take place.
- O. If we are to see this happen here at SVCC, we must pray in the Spirit.

Illustration—***Praying in the Spirit is mentioned three times in Scripture.***

1 Corinthians 14:15—says, “So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.”

Ephesians 6:18—says, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

Jude 20—says, “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.”

So, what exactly does it mean to pray in the Spirit?

The Greek word translated “pray in” can have several different meanings. It can mean “by means of,” “with the help of,” “in the sphere of,” and “in connection to.”

Praying in the Spirit does not refer to the words we are saying. Rather, it refers to how we are praying. Praying in the Spirit is praying according to the Spirit's leading. It is praying for things the Spirit leads us to pray for.

Romans 8:26—tells us, “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”

Some, based on **1 Corinthians 14:15**, equate praying in the Spirit with praying in tongues. Discussing the gift of tongues, Paul mentions “pray with my spirit.”

1 Corinthians 14:14—states that when a person prays in tongues, he does not know what he is saying, since it is spoken in a language he does not know. Further, no one else can understand what is being said, unless there is an interpreter (**1 Corinthians 14:27-28**).

In **Ephesians 6:18**, Paul instructs us to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

How are we to pray with all kinds of prayers and requests and pray for the saints, if no one, including the person praying, understands what is being said?

Therefore, praying in the Spirit should be understood as *praying in the power of the Spirit*, by the *leading of the Spirit*, and according to His will, *not as praying in tongues*.

Application—Are you praying in the Spirit? Now that you know how, why not start today. Seek God and His Holy Spirit for all of our prayers!

Conclusion—When God's people humble themselves and invoke the power of the One and Only Holy Spirit to enter into the prayers of His people, amazing shaking happens. God shakes His people as a sign of His power.

2 Chronicles 2:11-16— When Solomon had finished the temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and had succeeded in carrying out all he had in mind to do in the temple of the Lord and in his own palace, **12** the Lord appeared to him at night and said:

“I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices.

13 “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, **14** if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. **15** Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. **16** I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.”

Pray