

Signs of Life: Oneness

Acts 4:23-32

5/2/2026

Custom

Pray for missionaries Final gift pledges National Day of Prayer - 6:30 St Joseph Christian

Scripture

Acts 4:23-37 (NKJV) [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 together [28] 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." [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. [32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. [33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. [34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, [35] and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. [36] And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, [37] having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Big Idea

A Spirit-filled church does not become one because life is easy. It becomes one because Christ is supreme, prayer is central, mission is shared, and love becomes practical.

Introduction:

Illustration

A story about a man found on a deserted island.

Unity is one of those words everyone likes until it starts making demands on us. People love the idea of unity as long as it means everyone agrees with them, supports their preferences, and stays out of their way. But biblical unity is much deeper than shared opinions or similar personalities. Biblical unity is not a room full of people who all think exactly alike about everything. Biblical unity is a Spirit-formed oneness around the lordship of Jesus Christ, the mission of the gospel, and the life of the body.

In Acts 4, the church is under pressure. Peter and John have been threatened by the same authorities who condemned Jesus. Fear could have scattered them. Self-preservation could have silenced them. Conflict could have divided them. But instead, the pressure reveals the life of the Spirit in them. Instead of scattering, they come together. They pray together. They trust God together. They ask for boldness together. And then they care for one another in a way that made the grace of God visible.

This is one of the clearest signs of life in a church: oneness.

Main Point

Point 1

Oneness in Fellowship and Prayer

Acts 4:23–24

Scripture

Acts 4:23-24 (NKJV) [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,

That phrase is powerful. When Peter and John were released, they did not isolate. They did not go home and privately spiral in anxiety and depression. They went to "their own companions." They had a people.

Trials reveal whether we are merely attending church or truly joined to the body. The first instinct of Peter and John was not self-protection, outrage, strategy, or retaliation. They went to the church, and the church went to God.

The early church did not treat prayer as a last resort after human effort had failed. Prayer was their first response because God was their first confidence.

Application

The New Testament simply does not have a category for an isolated, self-sufficient Christian life. The church is a body, a household, a flock, a temple, a family. God never designed believers to carry spiritual burdens alone.

Consider some of these imperatives in scripture regarding the nature of the body:

Hebrews 3:13 — “exhort one another daily” Hebrews 10:24–25 — “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” Galatians 6:2 — “Bear one another’s burdens” Colossians 3:13 — “forgiving one another” James 5:16 — “pray for one another” Romans 12:15 — “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”

One of the enemy’s oldest strategies is to make suffering believers feel like isolated believers. But the Spirit does not scatter the church in fear. He gathers the church in prayer.

Application

When difficulty comes, where do we go first? Do we go to frustration? Do we go to social media? Do we go to private bitterness? Do we go to strategy before supplication? Or do we go to the Lord with the people of God?

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Sin unties the body. Pride unties the body. Fear unties the body. But prayer unites the body because prayer brings us under the same throne.

Main Point

Point 2

Oneness in Faith

Scripture

Acts 4:24-28 (NKJV) [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 together [28] to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

I love this prayer! It's short, biblical, faith-filled, and focused. It reminds them of who God is, who they are, who their enemies are really fighting against, and what they are called to remember.

Their prayer begins with the sovereignty of God:

"Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them..."

They do not begin with the size of the Sanhedrin. or the size of the crowds. They begin with the size of God.

They are facing real threats from real authorities, but their theology is not being shaped by their fear. Their fear is being brought under their theology.

They quote Psalm 2, which is brilliant because Psalm 2 is about the nations raging, rulers plotting, and God's Anointed reigning. In other words, the church interprets present opposition through Scripture.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

The church did not understand their suffering by staring at their enemies. They understood their suffering by opening the Scripture.

This is God! Creator and sustainer of everything seen and unseen. Every atom, every molecule, bows at His Word and hangs on His every command. This is the one who created and calms seas, who "made the starts also," and has created things we as humans have yet to see and yet to discover, just because that's how powerful He is... and some little ruler of some little nation, on a little spec in the universe thinks he is going to outsmart, outthink, and detour or derail God's sovereign plan? Think again!

Scripture

Isaiah 46:9-10 (NKJV) [9] Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, [10] Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'

Hey, the nations can rage, but God reigns!

[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 together [28] to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

They recognize that Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and Israel gathered against Jesus, but even their rebellion could not overthrow God's purpose. In fact, verse 28 says they did whatever God's hand and purpose determined before to be done.

God is not the author of evil in the sense that He sins or delights in sin. Yet He is so sovereign that even the evil intentions of men cannot escape His redemptive purpose. The cross is the ultimate proof. Men meant it for evil. God meant it for salvation.

Cross-references:

Acts 2:23 — Jesus delivered by God's determined purpose and foreknowledge

The rulers thought they were eliminating Jesus. In reality, they were accomplishing the very plan of God they were trying to stop. The cross teaches us that God is not intimidated by human rebellion. He is sovereign enough to make even the wrath of man serve the worship of His name.

Application

Can we trust God's character when we cannot trace His hand? Can we praise Him while the pressure is still pressing? Can we believe that the threats of men are never greater than the throne of God?

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Faith does not wait until the pressure lifts before it praises. Faith praises in the pressing because it knows the throne has not moved. Threats of men are real, but they are not greater than the throne of God.

Quote

— *Edwin Cole*

Prayer in private results in boldness in public.

Main Point

Point 3

Oneness in Resolve

Scripture

Acts 4:29-31 (NKJV) [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. [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.

Notice the tenor and the aim of their prayer: They do not pray, "Lord, remove every threat." They pray, "Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word." That is stunning. They are not asking God to make obedience cost less. They are asking God to make them faithful, whatever it costs.

Illustration

This posture was not unique to that upper room in Jerusalem. It echoed across the centuries wherever the church faced genuine pressure. In the second century, Polycarp of Smyrna, a disciple of the Apostle John himself, was brought before the Roman proconsul and given a simple choice: curse Christ and live, or remain faithful and burn. The proconsul, perhaps genuinely troubled by the old man before him, urged him, "Swear by the genius of Caesar. Repent. Say, 'Away with the atheists!'" Polycarp looked out over the crowd gathered in the stadium, gestured toward them, and said, "Away with the atheists" — meaning the pagans, not the Christians. Then he spoke those immortal words: "Eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

He did not pray for the threat to be removed. He asked only to remain faithful within it.

As the modern-day church, we are forced to look in a mirror.

Much of modern Christianity is trained to ask, "How can I avoid discomfort?" But the early church asked, "How can we remain faithful?" They were not careless with suffering, but they were not controlled by self-preservation either.

Scripture

Acts 20:24 (NKJV) [24] But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

They did not ask God for a safer environment. They asked God for a bolder church.

In Acts 2, the Spirit fills the church, and they speak. In Acts 4, the Spirit fills the church again, and they speak. The evidence of the filling of the Spirit here is not merely emotion, experience, or personal renewal. The evidence is a bold gospel witness.

Scripture

2 Timothy 1:7-8 (NKJV) [7] For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. [8] Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,

[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.

The room shook, but the miracle was not merely that the building moved. The miracle was that the people moved. They opened their mouths and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Application

Are we more concerned with comfort than with witness? Do we want God to move in our community, or do we simply want God to make our lives easier? Have we spent more time studying the threats than seeking the Lord? Are we asking for boldness, or only for relief?

A church that only prays for comfort may survive for a while, but a church that prays for boldness becomes dangerous to the darkness.

Main Point

Point 4

Oneness in Love and Resources

Scripture

Acts 4:32-37 (NKJV) [32] Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. [33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. [34] Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, [35] and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. [36] And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, [37] having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 4 is not early communism. It is not the state seizing property. It is not forced redistribution. It is not the abolition of personal stewardship. The text says, "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked," because believers voluntarily responded to needs within the body.

The key phrase is verse 32:

"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul..."

This is the clearest "oneness" statement in the text. Their oneness was not theoretical. It reached their possessions.

Application

That is convicting. Their view of property was transformed by their view of Christ. They did not stop stewarding resources. They stopped worshipping resources. They saw what they had as belonging ultimately to God and available for the good of His people.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Grace loosens our earthly grip. When Christ owns the heart, possessions become tools instead of treasures.

If we look back at verses 33 to 34. This is important:

"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked..."

The generosity is not disconnected from the gospel witness. Great power, great grace, and great generosity flow together.

Cross references:

Jesus modeled - 2 Corinthians 8:9 — Christ became poor for our sake¹ John 3:16–18 — love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth

Application

Does the generosity of Christ move us to generosity with one another? Do we see our homes, money, time, skills, and resources as ours to protect or God's to steward? Are we moved by need, or only by convenience?

When the body is moved by grace-filled generosity, needs are no longer carried alone. Lack becomes less, burdens are noticed needs are carried, and resources becomes conduits of love.

Conclusion

Acts 4 shows us a church that had every earthly reason to become afraid, divided, cautious, and quiet. Their leaders had been threatened. Their message had been opposed. The same city that crucified Jesus was now turning its attention toward His followers. But the church did not scatter. They gathered. They did not panic. They prayed. They did not shrink back. They asked for boldness. They did not cling tightly to their own lives and possessions. They opened their hands in love.

That is what the Spirit does. He does not merely put us in the same building. He makes us one body. He gives us one faith, one mission, one courage, one love, one hope, and one Lord.

So the question is not merely, "Do we attend the same church?" The question is, "Are we being formed into one people by the Spirit of God?" Are our burdens shared? Are our prayers united? Is our faith anchored in the sovereignty of God? Is our resolve fixed on the gospel? Is our love visible in practical generosity? Because a living church is not known merely by its activity. A living church is known by its oneness around Jesus Christ.

We carry burdens together. We seek God together. We trust His sovereignty together. We speak His word together. We care for needs together.

When the Spirit gives life to the church, He makes us one: one in prayer, one in faith, one in resolve, and one in love.

And at Grace, I believe this is the prayer God is asking of us today! Grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus...This world is bold against Christ. They are bold in their unrighteousness. They are bold in their perversions. And we must respond with the confidence, courage, and boldness that comes from KNOWING that the Holy Spirit is with us! Church, we are not here to simply appease a pressuring world. Winston Churchill once said, "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last."

This world doesn't need appeasement, they need transformation. This will come, one person at a time, when we get the boldness that comes from the Holy Spirit. If you want to be filled with a new boldness, just lift your hands to heaven as we make our prayer to him this morning!