

The Church in the New Testament

(Sunday AM — Church Campus)

Week 2: Unity and Devotion

Acts 4:23–35

The early church faced opposition almost immediately. Peter and John had been arrested, threatened, and commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Rather than retreat in fear, they returned to the congregation and reported everything that had happened. What followed was not a strategy meeting or a committee discussion. It was prayer.

The church lifted its voice together to God, acknowledging His sovereignty over all things—including the hostility of their enemies. They did not pray for comfort or escape. They prayed for boldness to continue speaking God’s word. And God answered: the place was shaken, and they were all filled with boldness.

This passage also reveals a congregation marked by extraordinary unity. They were “of one heart and soul.” No one claimed personal ownership of possessions; instead, they shared generously so that no one among them was in need. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection with great power, and great grace was upon them all. This was not a community built on human idealism. It was a church shaped by the gospel, sustained by prayer, and unified by a shared devotion to Christ.

Group Discussion: When the early church faced threats, their first response was prayer. What does this reveal about their priorities, and how does it challenge the way we typically respond to difficulty?

Personal Reflection: The early Christians were described as being “of one heart and soul.” How would you describe the unity of our own congregation? What contributes to unity, and what hinders it?

Read Acts 4:23–35

Study Questions

1. In verses 23–24, the believers respond to persecution by going to “their friends” and lifting their voices “together to God.” What does this reveal about the role of the Christian community in times of trial?
2. In their prayer (vv. 24–26), the believers begin by acknowledging God as the sovereign Creator. Why is affirming God’s sovereignty the right starting point when facing opposition?

3. In verses 27–28, the believers acknowledge that even Herod, Pilate, and the Gentiles acted within God’s predetermined plan. How does understanding God’s sovereignty over evil give believers confidence?
4. The prayer in verse 29 asks God to “grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.” Why did they pray for boldness rather than safety or deliverance?
5. In verse 31, God answers their prayer: the place is shaken and they are all “filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.” What does this response teach about God’s faithfulness to His people?
6. Verse 32 says the believers were “of one heart and soul.” What does this kind of unity look like in a local congregation, and how is it developed?
7. Verses 32–35 describe the early church sharing possessions so that “there was not a needy person among them.” Was this arrangement mandatory or voluntary? What principles does it teach about Christian generosity?
8. Verse 33 says the apostles gave their testimony “with great power, and great grace was upon them all.” What is the relationship between the church’s internal unity and its external witness?
9. How does this passage challenge a Christianity that is individualistic and disconnected from the life of the local congregation?
10. Looking at Acts 4:23–35 as a whole, what marks of a healthy, devoted church does this passage reveal?