

## Translations

Acts 4:21-31

- 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.
- 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.
- 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.

(NKJ)

Acts 4:21-31

- 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people; for all men praised God for what had happened.
- 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.
- 23 When they were released they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them.
- 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,
- 25 who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things?
- 26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'--
- 27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,
- 28 to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predestined to take place.
- 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness,
- 30 while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus."
- 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

(RSV)

Acts 4:21-31

21 The Council then threatened them further and finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God for this wonderful miracle--

22 the healing of a man who had been lame for forty years.

23 As soon as they were freed, Peter and John found the other disciples and told them what the Council had said.

24 Then all the believers united in this prayer: "O Lord, Creator of heaven and earth and of the sea and everything in them--

25 you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor King David, your servant, saying, 'Why do the heathen rage against the Lord, and the foolish nations plan their little plots against Almighty God? The kings of the earth unite to fight against him and against the anointed Son of God!'

27 "That is what is happening here in this city today! For Herod the king, and Pontius Pilate the governor, and all the Romans-- as well as the people of Israel-- are united against Jesus, your anointed Son, your holy servant.

28 They won't stop at anything that you in your wise power will let them do.

29 And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and grant to your servants great boldness in their preaching,

30 and send your healing power, and may miracles and wonders be done by the name of your holy servant Jesus."

31 After this prayer, the building where they were meeting shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly preached God's message.

(TLB)

Acts 4:21-31

21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.

23 And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them.

24 And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 who by the Holy Spirit, (by) the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord, and against his Anointed:

27 for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together,

28 to do whatsoever thy hand and thy council foreordained to come to pass.

29 And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness,

30 while thy stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

(ASV)

Acts 4:21-31

- 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.
- 22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.
- 23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.
- 24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:
- 25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?
- 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.
- 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,
- 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.
- 29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,
- 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.
- 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

(KJV)

Acts 4:21-31

- 21 And when they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which they might punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.
- 22 And when they had been released, they went to their own {companions,} and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.
- 24 And when they heard {this,} they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is Thou who didst make 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 Thy servant, didst say, '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 Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.
- 28 "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence,
- 30 while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy 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.

(NAS)

Acts 4:21-31

- 21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.
- 22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.
- 23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and 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 heaven 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 take their stand and the rulers gather 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 miraculous 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.

(NIV)

## International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database

### 12. Intercessory Prayers of the Church:

Acts introduces us to the working of the fresh elements which Christ gave to life. Hence, the prayers of the church become Christian prayers, involving the wider outlook on others and on the world at large which Christianity has bestowed on men. The prayer of the assembled believers upon the liberation of the apostles breathes this spirit <Acts 4:24-30>. The consecrating prayer for the seven was probably intercessory (<Acts 6:6>; compare <Acts 1:24>). How pathetic is the plea of Stephen for his murderers <Acts 7:60>! How natural is intercession <Acts 8:24>! Peter at Joppa <Acts 9:40>; the church making prayer without ceasing for Peter <Acts 12:5,12>; the prayer for Barnabas and Saul at Antioch <Acts 13:3>; Paul and Barnabas praying for the churches <Acts 14:23>; the church at Antioch commending Paul and Silas to the grace of God <Acts 15:40>; Paul and the elders of Ephesus <Acts 20:36>, are all examples, more or less defined, of intercessory prayer.

### II. Intercession Perfected in Christ's Office and in the Church.—

This review of the intercession of the Scriptures prepares us for the development of a specific office of intercession, perfectly realized in Christ. We have seen Moses complying with the people's request to represent them before God. In a large and generous spirit the leader of Israel intercedes with God for his nation. It was natural that this striking example of intercessory prayer should be followed by other leaders, and that the gradually developed system of religious worship should furnish the conception of the priest, and especially the high priest, as the intercessor for those who came to the sacrifice. This was particularly the significance of the great Day of Atonement, when after offering for himself, the high priest offered the sacrifice for the whole people. This official act, however, does not do away with the intercessory character of prayer as offered by men. We have seen how it runs through the whole history of Israel. But it is found much more distinctly in the Christian life and apparently in the practice of the Christian assembly itself. Paul continually refers to his own intercessory prayers, and seeks for a similar service on his own behalf from those to whom he writes. Intercession is thus based upon the natural tendency of the heart filled by love and a deep sympathetic sense of relation to others. Christ's intercessory prayer is the highest example and pattern of this form of prayer. His intercessions for His disciples, for His crucifiers, are recorded, and the sacred record rises to the supreme height in the prayer of <Jn 17>.

In this prayer the following characteristics are to be found:

- (1) It is based upon the intimate relation of Jesus to the Father. This gives to such prayer its justification; may it be said, its right.
- (2) It follows the completest fulfilment of duty. It is not the mere expression of desire, even for others. It is the crown of effort on their behalf. He has revealed God to His disciples. He has given to them God's words; therefore He prays for them <Jn 17:6-7-9>.
- (3) It recognizes the Divine, unbroken relation to the object of the prayer: "I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep," etc. (verse 11).
- (4) The supreme end of the prayer is salvation from the evil of the world (verse 15).
- (5) The wide sweep of the prayer and its chief objects-- unity with God, and the presence with Christ, and the indwelling of the Divine love. The prayer is a model for all intercessory prayer. See, further, INTERCESSION OF CHRIST; PRAYERS OF CHRIST; OFFICES OF CHRIST.

### III. Intercession of the Holy Spirit.—

In connection with the subject of intercession, there arises a most interesting question as to whether the Holy Spirit is not presented in Scriptures as an intercessor. The text in which the doctrine seems to be taught is that of <Rom 8:26> f: "In like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." By far the larger number of expositors have understood by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The older commentators, in general, refer to the Holy Spirit. Tholuck, Ewald, Philippi, Meyer, most of the American theologians and English commentators, as Shedd, Alford, Jowett, Wordsworth, interpret it in the same way.

Lange and Olshausen refer it to the human spirit. Undoubtedly, the "groanings" have led to the denial of the reference to the Holy Spirit. But the very form of the word translated "helpeth" indicates cooperation, and this must be of something other than the spirit of man himself. The undoubted difficulties of the passage, which are strongly urged by Lange (see Lange's Comm. on <Rom 8:26>), must be acknowledged. At the same time the statement seems to be very clear and definite. An explanation has been given that the Holy Spirit is here referred to as dwelling in us, and thus making intercession. The Divine Spirit is said to be a Spirit of supplication <Zec 12:10>. The distinction which is made between the intercession of Christ in heaven in His priestly office and that of the Holy Spirit interceding within the souls of believers, referred to by Shedd (see Commentary on Romans), must be carefully used, for if pressed to its extreme it would lead to the materialization and localization of the Divine nature. Moreover, may not the intercession of Our Lord be regarded as being partially exemplified in that of the Spirit whom He has declared to be His agent and representative? If Christ dwells in believers by His Spirit, His intercession, especially if subjective in and with their spirits, may properly be described as the intercession of the Holy Ghost.

## Theme Studies

- Ps 8:3-4      When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?
- Ps 24:1      The earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.
- Ps 89:11      The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them.
- Ps 102:25-28      Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You."
- Acts 3:16      And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.
- Rom 5:1-2      Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- II Th 1:3      We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other
- 1Thes 3:12-13      And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.
- James 5:17-18      Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.
- Ps 116:1-2      I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.

## Matthew Henry's Commentary

**3. That they might now join with them in prayers and praises;** and by such a concert as this God would be the more glorified, and the church the more edified. We should therefore communicate to our brethren the providences of God that relate to us, and our experience of his presence with us, that they may assist us in our acknowledgment of God therein.

### **III. Their address to God upon this occasion:**

When they heard of the impotent malice of the priests, and the potent courage of the sufferers, they called their company together and went to prayer: They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, v. 24. Not that it can be supposed that they all said the same words at the same time (though it was possible they might, being all inspired by one and the same Spirit), but one in the name of the rest lifted up his voice to God and the rest joined with him, *hymothymadon*-- with one mind (so the word signifies); their hearts went along with him, and so, though but one spoke, they all prayed; one lifted up his voice, and, in concurrence with him, they all lifted up their hearts, which was, in effect, lifting up their voice to God; for thoughts are as words to God. Moses cried unto God, when we find not a word said. Now in this solemn address to God we have,

**1. Their adoration of God as the Creator of the world (v. 24):** With one mind, and so, in effect, with one mouth, they glorified God, <Rom. 15:6>. They said, "O Lord, thou art God, God alone; Despota, thou art our Master and sovereign Ruler" (so the word signifies), "thou art God; God, and not man; God, and not the work of men's hands; the Creator of all, and not the creature of men's fancies. Thou art the God who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, the upper and lower world, and all the creatures that are in both." Thus we Christians distinguish ourselves from the heathen, that, while they worship gods which they have made, we are worshipping the God that made us and all the world. And it is very proper to begin our prayers, as well as our creed, with the acknowledgement of this, that God is the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. Though the apostles were at this time full of the mystery of the world's redemption, yet they did not forget nor overlook the history of the world's creation; for the Christian religion was intended to confirm and improve, not to eclipse nor jostle out, the truths and dictates of natural religion. It is a great encouragement to God's servants, both in doing work and suffering work, that they serve the God that made all things, and therefore has the disposal of their times, and all events concerning them, and is able to strengthen them under all their difficulties. And, if we give him the glory of this, we may take the comfort of it.

**2. Their reconciling themselves to the present dispensations of Providence,** by reflecting upon those scriptures in the Old Testament which foretold that the kingdom of the Messiah would meet with such opposition as this at the first setting of it up in the world, v. 25, 26. God, who made heaven and earth, cannot meet with any [effectual] opposition to his designs, since none dare [at least, can prevailingly] dispute or contest with him. Yea, thus it was written, thus he spoke by the mouth, thus he wrote by the pen, of his servant David, who, as appears by this, was the penman of the second psalm, and therefore, most probably, of the first, and other psalms that are not ascribed to any other, though they have not his name in the title. Let it not therefore be a surprise to them, nor any discouragement to any in embracing their doctrine, for the scripture must be fulfilled. It was foretold, <Ps. 2:1-2,

(1>.) That the heathen would rage at Christ and his kingdom, and be angry at the attempts to set it up, because that would be the pulling down of the gods of the heathen, and giving a check to the wickedness of the heathen.

(2.) that the people would imagine all the things that could be against it, to silence the teachers of it, to discountenance the subjects of it, and to crush all the interests of it. If they prove vain things in the issue, no thanks to those who imagined them.

(3.) that the kings of the earth, particularly, would stand up in opposition to the kingdom of Christ, as if they were jealous (though there is no occasion for their being so) that it would interfere with their powers, and intrench upon their prerogatives. The kings of the earth that are most favoured and honoured by divine Providence, and should do most for God, are strangers and enemies to divine grace, and do most against God.

(4.) that the rulers would gather together against God and Christ; not only monarchs, that have the power in their single persons, but where the power is in many rulers, councils, and senates, they gather together, to consult and decree against the Lord and against his Christ-- against both natural and revealed religion. What is done against Christ, God takes as done against himself. Christianity was not only destitute of the advantage of the countenance and support of kings and rulers (it had neither their power nor their purses), but it was opposed and fought against by them, and they combined to run it down and yet it made its way.

**3. Their representation of the present accomplishment of those predictions in the enmity and malice of the rulers against Christ.** What was foretold we see fulfilled, v. 27, 28. It is of a truth-- it is certainly so, it is too plain to be denied, and in it appears the truth of the prediction that Herod and Pilate, the two Roman governors, with the Gentiles (the Roman soldiers under their command), and with the people of Israel (the rulers of the Jews and the mob that is under their influence), were gathered together in a confederacy against thy holy child Jesus whom thou has anointed. Some copies add another circumstance, *en te polei sou taute*-- in this thy holy city, where, above any place, he should have been welcomed. But herein they do that which thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. See here

(1.) The wise and holy designs God had concerning Christ. He is here called the child Jesus, as he was called <Lu. 2:27,43> in his infancy, to intimate that even in his exalted state he is not ashamed of his condescensions for us, and that he continues meek and lowly in heart. In the height of his glory he is the Lamb of God, and the child Jesus. But he is the holy child Jesus (so he was called, <Lu. 1:35>, that holy thing), and thy holy child; the word signifies both a son and a servant, *paida sou*. He was the Son of God; and yet in the work of redemption he acted as his Father's servant <Isa. 42:1>, My servant whom I uphold. It was he whom God anointed, both qualified for the undertaking and called to it; and thence he was called the Lord's Christ, v. 26. And this comes in as a reason why they set themselves with so much rage and violence against him, because God had anointed him, and they were resolved not to resign, much less to submit to him.

David was envied by Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed. And the Philistines came up to seek David when they heard he was anointed, <2 Sam. 5:17>. Now the God that anointed Christ determined what should be done to him, pursuant to that anointing. He was anointed to be a Saviour, and therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice to make atonement for sin. He must die-- therefore he must be slain; yet not by his own hands-- therefore God wisely determined before by what hands it should be done. It must be by the hands of those who will treat him as a criminal and malefactor, and therefore it cannot be done by the hands either of angels or of good men; he must therefore be delivered into the hands of sinners as Job was, <Acts 16:11>. And as David was delivered to Shimei to be made a curse <2 Sam. 16:11>: The Lord has bidden him. God's hand and his counsel determined it-- his will, and his wisdom. God's hand, which properly denotes his executive power, is here put for his purpose and decree, because with him saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us. His hand and his counsel always agree; for whatsoever the Lord pleased that did he. Dr. Hammon makes this phrase of God's hand determining it to be an allusion to the high priest's casting lots upon the two goats on the day of atonement <Lev. 16:8>, in which he lifted up the hand that he happened to have the lot for the Lord in, and that goat on which it fell was immediately sacrificed; and the disposal of this lot was from the Lord, <Prov. 16:33>. Thus God's hand determined what should be done, that Christ should be the sacrifice slain. Or, if I may offer a conjecture, when God's hand is here said to determine, it may be meant, not of God's acting hand, but his writing hand, as <Job 13:26>, Thou writest bitter things against us; and God's decree is said to be that which is written in the scriptures of truth <Dan. 10:21>, and in the volume of the book it was written of Christ, <Ps. 40:7>. It was God's hand that wrote it, his hand according to his counsel. The commission was given under his hand.

(2.) the wicked and unholy instruments that were employed in the executing of this design, though they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so. Herod and Pilate, Gentiles and Jews, who had been at variance with each other, united against Christ. And God's serving his own purposes by what they did was no excuse at all for their malice and wickedness in the doing of it, any more than God's making the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church extenuated the guilt of their bloody persecutors. Sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it, but he is by this the more glorified, and will appear to be so when the mystery of God shall be finished.

**4. Their petition with reference to the case at this time.** The enemies were gathered together against Christ, and then no wonder that they were so against his ministers: the disciple is not better than his Master, nor must expect better treatment; but, being thus insulted, they pray,

(1.) That God would take cognizance of the malice of their enemies: Now, Lord, behold their threatenings, v. 29. Behold them, as thou art said to behold them in the psalm before quoted <Ps. 2:4>, when they thought to break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from them; he that sits in heaven laughs at them, and has them in derision; and then the virgin, the daughter of Zion, may despise the impotent menaces even of the great king, the king of Assyria, <Isa. 37:22>. And now, Lord; ta nyn there is an emphasis upon the now, to intimate that then is God's time to appear for his people, when the power of their enemies is most daring and threatening. They do not dictate to God what he shall do, but refer themselves to and him, like Hezekiah <Isa. 37:17>: "Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; thou knowest what they say, thou beholdest mischief and spite <Ps. 10:14>; to thee we appeal, behold their threatenings, and either tie their hands or turn their hearts; make their wrath, as far as it is let loose, to praise thee, and the remainder thereof do thou restrain," <Ps. 76:10>. It is a comfort to us that if we be unjustly threatened, and bear it patiently, we may make ourselves easy by spreading the case before the Lord, and leaving it with him.

(2.) that God, by his grace, would keep up their spirits, and animate them to go on cheerfully with their work: Grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word, though the priests and rulers have enjoined them silence. Note, In threatening times, our care should not be so much that troubles may be prevented as that we may be enabled to go on with cheerfulness and resolution in our work and duty, whatever troubles we may meet with. Their prayer is not, "Lord, behold their threatenings, and frighten them, and stop their mouths, and fill their faces with shame;" but, "Behold their threatenings, and animate us, open our mouths and fill our hearts with courage." They do not pray, "Lord, give us a fair opportunity to retire from our work, now that it is become dangerous;" but, "Lord, give us grace to go on in our work and not to be afraid of the face of man." Observe,

[1.] Those that are sent on God's errands ought to deliver their message with boldness, with all boldness, with all liberty of speech, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, whoever is offended; not doubting of what they say, nor of being borne out in saying it.

[2.] God is to be sought unto for an ability to speak his word with boldness, and those that desire divine aids and encouragements may depend upon them, and ought to go forth and go on in the strength of the Lord God.

[3.] the threatenings of our enemies, that are designed to weaken our hands and drive us off from our work, should rather stir us up to so much the more courage and resolution in our work. Are they daring that fight against Christ? For shame, let not us be sneaking that are for him.

(3.) that God would still give them power to work miracles for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached, which, by the cure of the lame man, they found to contribute very much to their success, and would contribute abundantly to their further progress: Lord, grant us boldness, by stretching forth thy hand to heal. Note, Nothing emboldens faithful ministers more in their work than the tokens of God's presence with them, and a divine power going along with them. They pray,

[1.] That God would stretch forth his hand to heal both the bodies and souls of men; else in vain do they stretch forth their hands, either in preaching <Isa. 65:2>, or in curing, <Acts 9:17>.

[2.] that signs and wonders might be done by the name of the holy child Jesus, which would be convincing to the people, and confounding to the enemies. Christ had promised them a power to work miracles, for the proof of their commission <Mk. 16:17-18>; yet they must pray for it; and, though they had it, must pray for the continuance of it. Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him. Observe, It is the honour of Christ that they aim at in this request, that the wonders might be done by the name of Jesus, the holy child Jesus, and his name shall have all the glory.

**IV. The gracious answer God gave to this address, not in word, but in power.**

**1. God gave them a sign of the acceptance of their prayers** (v. 31): When they had prayed (perhaps many of them prayed successively), one by one, according to the rule <1 Cor. 14:31>, and when they had concluded the work of the day, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; there was a strong mighty wind, such as that when the Spirit was poured out upon them <Acts 2:1-2>, which shook the house, which was now their house of prayer. This shaking of the place was designed to strike an awe upon them, to awaken and raise their expectations, and to give them a sensible token that God was with them of a truth: and perhaps it was to put them in mind of that prophecy <Hag. 2:7>, I will shake all nations, and will fill this house with glory. This was to show them what reason they had to fear God more, and then they would fear man less. He that shook this place could make the hearts of those who threatened his servants thus to tremble, for he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. The place was shaken, that their faith might be established and unshaken.

**2. God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit, which was what they prayed for.** Their prayer, without doubt, was accepted, for it was answered: They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness, and not to be afraid of the proud and haughty looks of men. The Holy Ghost taught them not only what to speak, but how to speak. Those that were endued habitually with the powers of the Holy Ghost had yet occasion for fresh supplies of the Spirit, according as the various occurrences of their service were. They were filled with the Holy Ghost at the bar (v. 8), and now filled with the Holy Ghost in the pulpit, which teaches us to live in an actual dependence upon the grace of God, according as the duty of every day requires; we need to be anointed with fresh oil upon every fresh occasion. As in the providence of God, so in the grace of God, we not only in general live, and have our being, but move in every particular action, <Acts 17:28>. We have here an instance of the performance of that promise, that God will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him <Lu. 11:13>, for it was in answer to prayer that they were filled with the Holy Ghost: and we have also an example of the improvement of that gift, which is required of all on whom it is bestowed; have it and use it, use it and have more of it. When they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke the word with all boldness; for the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal. Talents must be traded with, not buried. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, <Isa. 50:7>.

## Adam Clarke Commentary

### Acts 4:24

**And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:**

[Lord, thou art God]

Despota (grk 1203) su (grk 4771) ho (grk 3588) Theos (grk 2316), Thou God art the sovereign Lord. Thy rule is universal, and thy power unlimited; for thou hast the heaven and its glories, the earth and the sea, and their endlessly varied and numerous inhabitants, under thy direction and control.

### Acts 4:25

**Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?**

[By the mouth of thy servant David hast said]

Several add, but impertinently, dia (grk 1223) pneumatos (grk 4151) hagiou (grk 40); by the Holy Spirit; but it is sufficient that GOD has said it; and thus we find that David spoke by the inspiration of God; and that <Psa. 2> relates to Jesus Christ, and predicts the vain attempts made by Jewish and pagan powers to suppress Christianity.

### Acts 4:26

**The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.**

[Against the Lord and against his Christ.]

Kata (grk 2596) tou (grk 3588) Christou (grk 5547) autou (grk 846) should be translated, against his ANOINTED, because it particularly agrees with hon (grk 3739) echrisas (grk 5548), whom thou hast ANOINTED, in the succeeding verse.

### Acts 4:27

**For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,**

There is a parenthesis in this verse that is not sufficiently noticed: it should be read in connection with <Acts 4:28>, thus. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed (for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done), both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together.

It is evident that what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done was not that which Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles (Romans), and the people of Israel had done and were doing; for, then, their rage and vain counsel would be such as God himself had determined should take place, which is both impious and absurd; but these gathered together to hinder what God had before determined that his Christ or Anointed should perform; and thus the passage is undoubtedly to be understood.

[Were gathered together]

En (grk 1722) tee (grk 3588) polei (grk 4172) tautee (grk 5026), In this very city, are added by ABDE, and several others; all the Syriac, the Coptic, AEthiopic, Armenian, Slavonian, Vulgate, Itala, and several of the primitive fathers. This reading Griesbach has received into the text. This makes the words much more emphatic; in this thy own city, these different and in all other cases dissentient powers are leagued together against thine Anointed, and are determined to prevent the accomplishment of thy purpose.

**Acts 4:29**

**And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,**

[And now, Lord, behold their threatenings]

It is not against us, but against thee, that they conspire: it is not to prevent the success of our preaching, but to bring to nought thy counsel: the whole of their enmity is against thee. Now, Lord, look upon it; consider this.

[And grant unto thy servants]

While we are endeavouring to fulfil thy counsels, and can do nothing without thee, sustain our courage, that we may proclaim thy truth with boldness and irresistible power.

**Acts 4:30**

**By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.**

[By stretching forth thine hand to heal]

Show that it is thy truth which we proclaim, and confirm it with miracles, and show how highly thou hast magnified thy Son Jesus, whom they have despised and crucified, by causing signs and wonders to be done in his name.

[Thy holy child Jesus.]

Tou (grk 3588) hagiou (grk 40) paidos (grk 3816) sou (grk 4675) should be translated, thy holy SERVANT, as in <Acts 4:24>. Daid (grk 1138) paidos (grk 3816) sou (grk 4675), thy servant David, not thy CHILD David: the word is the same in both places.

**Acts 4:31**

**And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.**

[The place was shaken]

This earthquake was an evidence of the presence of God, and a most direct answer to their prayer, as far as that prayer concerned themselves. The earthquake proclaimed the stretched-out arm of God, and showed them that resistance against his counsels and determinations must come to nought.

[And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit]

And, in consequence of this, they spake the word of God with boldness; a pointed answer to a second part of their request, <Acts 4:29>. A right prayer will always have a right and ready answer. Though these disciples had received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, yet they were capable of larger communications; and what they had then received did not preclude the necessity of frequent supplies, on emergent occasions. Indeed, one communication of this Spirit always makes way and disposes for another. Neither apostle nor private Christian can subsist in the divine life without frequent influences from on high. Had these disciples depended on their Pentecostal grace, they might have sunk now under the terror and menaces of their combined and powerful foes. God gives grace for the time being, but no stock for futurity, because he will keep all his followers continually dependent on himself.

[With boldness.]

Panti (grk 3956) too (grk 3588) thelonti (grk 2309) pisteuein (grk 4100), To all who were willing to believe, is added by DE, two others, Augustine, Irenaeus, and Bede.

**Acts 4:32**

**And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.**

[The multitude of them that believed]

The whole 5000, mentioned <Acts 4:4>, and probably many others, who had been converted by the ministry of the other apostles since that time.

[Were of one heart and of one soul]

Were in a state of the most perfect friendship and affection. In all the 5000 there appeared to be but one heart and one soul; so perfectly did they agree in all their views, religious opinions, and holy affections. Some MSS. add, kai (grk 2532) ouk (grk 3756) een (grk 2258) diakrisis (grk 1253) en (grk 1722) autois (grk 846) oudemia (grk 3762), and there was no kind of difference or dissension among them. This remarkable reading is found in the Codex Bezae, another of great authority, E, two others, Ambrose, Bede, Cyprian, and Zeno. Diogenes Laertius relates of Aristotle, erooteetheis, ti esti philos; being asked, What is a FRIEND? ephee, mia psuchee duo soomasin enoikousa, answered, ONE soul dwelling in TWO bodies. This saying has been justly celebrated: but what would this wonderful philosopher have thought and said, had he seen these disciples of Jesus, and friends of mankind; one soul dwelling in 5000 bodies!

[They had all things common.]

See the notes at <Acts 2:44>, where this subject is examined. See below, <Acts 4:34>

## Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary

### Acts 4:24

**And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:**

[And when they heard that, they (that is, the assembled disciples), lifted up their voice to God with one accord], [homothumadon (grk 3661)]

-- one voice leading, but the breasts of all heaving sympathetically and echoing every word of this brief, comprehensive, mighty prayer.

[And said, Lord], [Despota (grk 1203)].

This word, rarely used in the New Testament, and never but with intentional emphasis, signifies the 'absolute master' of another, whether really or in the speaker's feeling. Here it is used to express that in God which this small and feeble company feel themselves thrown back upon, and which it was their privilege to invoke (see the note at <Luke 2:29>).

[Thou art [God].]

The bracketed word [ho (grk 3588) Theos (grk 2316)] is of doubtful authority [it is missing in 'Aleph (') A B, the Vulgate and Memphitic versions, and some principal fathers; and it is struck out of the text by Lachmann and Tischendorf]. But though the external authority for it is weaker, the internal evidence in its favour is considerable. [It seems easier to account for its omission, though genuine, than for its insertion if spurious, since as ho (grk 3588) occurs twice with only Theos (grk 2316) intervening, a transcriber might easily pass from the first one to poieesas (grk 4160), omitting the two intervening words.] Accordingly, DeWette, Meyer, and Alford decide in favour of these bracketed words. But if left out, the sense will be, 'Thou art He which' etc.

[Which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:]

-- 'against Whom, therefore, all creatures are powerless.'

### Acts 4:25

**Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?**

[Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said]

-- in <Ps. 2:1-2>; a Psalm which, though anonymous, was ascribed to David by the Jews themselves, and internal evidence is in favour of this: "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?"

### Acts 4:26

**The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.**

[The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ], [m<sup>a</sup>shiychow (heb 4899)]

-- 'His Anointed One, ' or 'His Messiah. ' David in spirit sees with astonishment "the pagan," 'the peoples, ' "the kings of the earth," and "the rulers," in deadly combination against the sway of Yahweh and His Anointed One, and asks "why" this is. This godless, Christless confederacy our praying disciples behold, at that moment, in full and fierce operation.

### Acts 4:27

**For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,**

[For of a truth [in this city].]

The words here inserted in brackets [en (grk 1722) tee (grk 3588) polei (grk 4172) tautee (grk 5026)] are most evidently part of the original text (being in 'Aleph (') A B D E, many cursives, and nearly all versions), and were probably intended to answer to the words "upon my holy hill of Zion," in the Psalm.

[Against thy holy child Jesus]

-- rather `Servant Jesus; ' see the note at <Acts 3:13>

[Whom thou hast anointed]

-- not as David was, by a human prophet pouring oil on his head, but by the Father Himself with the immeasurable anointing of the Holy Spirit.

[Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel]

-- not only the supreme Roman and Jewish authorities, but the people of both, all combined, "were gathered together,"

#### **Acts 4:28**

**For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.**

[For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done]

-- meaning, `to do what His counsel determined to be done by His hand, ' a well-understood colloquialism, like that of <Acts 14:17>. On the mysterious concurrence, here so distinctly expressed, of a voluntary combination of human parties against the Lord Jesus, and the purpose of God from eternity in that death, see the note at <Acts 2:23>, and Remark 2, at the close of that Section.

#### **Acts 4:29**

**And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,**

[And now, Lord, behold their threatenings.]

Looking upon the threatenings of the Sanhedrim as a declaration of war by the combined powers of the world against their infant cause, they seek not, in a spirit of heated enthusiasm, to hide from themselves its critical position, but calmly ask the Lord of heaven and earth to `look upon their threatenings. '

#### **Acts 4:30**

**By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.**

[By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child]-- rather, as before, `Servant' Jesus. Rising above self, they ask only fearless courage to testify for their Master, and divine attestation of their testimony by miracles of healing, etc. being done by their instrumentality through the name of Jesus, as the Father's Anointed Servant.

The answer and its Results <Acts 4:31-37>

#### **Acts 4:31**

**And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.**

[And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together.]

Manifestly this was no ordinary earthquake, extending to the city generally, or any portion of it beyond the "place" where they were assembled. The concussion was evidently quite local, filling all present doubtless, with awe, and giving glorious token of the commotion which the Gospel, sounding forth from their lips, was speedily to create (see <Acts 17:6>, and compare <Acts 16:26>), and of the overthrow of all opposing powers in which this was to issue!