

**"Passionately Pursuing God by Waiting in Prayer"** 2/3-4/07  
6 p.m.; 9 & 10:45 a.m.

Acts 1:12-14

(Fourth message in the series, "When God Has More in Mind")

**OPEN** to Acts 1:12-14 (**PAGE** 1691)

### **INTRODUCTION**

"Just as Pentecost came after constant prayer by the disciples, the history of the church demonstrates that revival also comes only after persistent prayer. Revival is something that God sends sovereignly, and therefore we cannot predict when it will come. But, as revival historian J. Edwin Orr observes, 'no great spiritual awakening has begun anywhere in the world apart from united prayer - Christians persistently praying for revival. I have heard a statement, attributed to Matthew Henry, that when God wants to do something special in the world, he first gets his people to start praying.'" (NICNT, p. 80)

**READ** Acts 1:12-14

What does it take to motivate you to pray consistently and with a whole heart?

Some of us can answer that question.

Others would honestly say, "I really don't know what it would take. I've never experienced that kind of prayer life."

Wherever you are, I think what we're going to see today can be helpful and inspiring.

Here's why: What we just read in v. 14 is the first time we see the apostles fervently engaged in prayer.

During their three to 3 ½ years with Jesus, they saw Him pray many times and even asked Him to teach them how to pray.

But, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus

pleaded with Peter, James and John to pray with Him, in fact, He said, **"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me."** (Matthew 26:38)

*... they fell asleep.*

*But, now we see them pray ... and ... pray fervently ... and with determination.*

*What has made the difference? And what can help each of us to experience a fervent, determined prayer life?*

In this passage, we find three reasons for their transformation:

*To experience a fervent prayer life...*

**I. Obey God** (Acts 1:12)

**"...they returned to Jerusalem..."**

*What was obedient about this?*

Acts 1:4-5: **"... while Jesus was eating with them, He gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about.**

**5 ... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"**

And, so, they returned to Jerusalem to wait.

It seems pretty simple.

It is simple. But it's also powerful.

A life of obedience results in a unique connection with God that will impact our desire to pray:

John 14:21 **"Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him."**

("reveal" revelation, transparency)

When we obey Jesus, we demonstrate that we love Him. And

to the person who loves Him, Jesus will reveal Himself in a personal, unique way.

This is why I say that obedience results in a unique connection with God that will impact our desire to pray ... when Jesus becomes more and more transparent with us, we desire to know Him better and spend time with Him, talk with Him.

*And Jesus said it again, two verses later:*

John 14:23 **"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."**

When we live lives of obedience, we are telling Jesus that He is welcome in our lives. And so, He makes Himself at home, and He reveals Himself to us in unique ways.

God longs to have this kind of relationship with all His children ... one where He is able to be at home in our lives, comfortable, close, because of our welcoming attitude of obedience. In this kind of life, talking with God becomes increasingly close, intimate, open.

If you have allowed a pattern of disobedience to enter your life ... confess it, turn from it, and begin to obey. Jesus will come and reveal Himself to you.

To experience a fervent prayer life ... **Obey God**

To experience a fervent prayer life ...

## **II. Pray With Others** (v. 14a)

**"They all joined together constantly in prayer ..."**

### A. Who is "all"?

The believers ... 11 apostles, the women who had followed Jesus and helped support His ministry, Jesus' mother, Mary, and the other sons of Mary ... Jesus' brothers.

v. 15 says there were about 120 believers in Jerusalem at that time.

B. They prayed with one passionate purpose

**"They all joined together ..."**

The translation, "**together**" is accurate in translation, but lacks the passion or intensity of the original word.

*lit.* "**with one passion.**" It infers the same passionate mind or spirit.

Here are a few other examples of this word in Acts:

Acts 2:46 "**Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts...**"

(gathering to hear the apostles' teaching, "Give us the word of God!")

Acts 4:24 "**When they heard this** (the threats of the religious leaders), **they raised their voices together in prayer to God...**"

(united, passionate prayer)

Acts 8:6 "**When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.**"

(intense, focused listening)

And, so, these believers, of one passionate heart and mind, gather together to call upon the Lord.

You see, they have **one purpose** for being together,

**one passion,**

**one intense focus:** they were waiting to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5)

In Luke 11:13 Jesus had told them that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who asked.

And they are asking.

They wanted what Jesus promised... they wanted to be

baptized with the Holy Spirit so that they could take the message about Jesus to the ends of the Earth.

### **ILLUSTRATION**

Throughout the Bible we see God's people united in prayer, sometimes combined with fasting, **because they needed God to act in power on their behalf:**

1. Ezra 8: the people needed the power of God to protect them as they crossed the bandit-infested desert to return to Jerusalem. They fasted and prayed and God saw them safely all the way to Jerusalem.

2. 2 Chronicles 20: King Jehoshaphat heard that three nations had united their armies to come against Jerusalem and annihilate it. He called the people to fasting and prayer. And God delivered them.

3. And, sometimes, when it seems there's no one else to pray with, people will pray alone: Nehemiah 1: Jerusalem was in ruins and the people of God were passionless and anemic. They needed God's power for revival and to rebuild His city. Nehemiah fasted and prayed and God worked. He restored His people and restored Jerusalem.

*"Often great prayer movements start with one or more individuals with a burden to pray, who share this burden with others, and then keep on praying with them until the blessing comes."* (NICNT, Acts, p. 78)

### **ILLUSTRATION/CHALLENGE**

For the last two years we have been seriously exploring expanding the church campus. If you were a part of the church about 1½ years ago, you'll remember we put forth an idea, then called everyone to prayer for God's guidance, and then we surveyed the entire congregation.

The overwhelming response was, *"We must build!"* The response clearly reflected one heart and mind!

And so, the deacons, Paul Andrew and I went to work to carefully explore what all this would mean.

In a few weeks you'll be hearing more about what lies ahead.

But, here's the point for today: There will be a meeting, today, for a group of people in the congregation who have agreed to lead the prayer focus throughout the coming building program.

At this meeting, they will be seeking the Lord as to how to lead the church in prayer throughout this time.

At this point, we want to begin this focus by having one day when we call the church together to launch the prayer focus. It will likely be towards the end of February or early March.

Please hear me carefully on this ... it really is critical to grasp:

Our prayer focus is for something much, much greater than a multipurpose building.

Our focus is for souls, precious people for whom Jesus died and rose again. The facilities are tools, and we are in need of additional tools.

Now, we are going to be praying for the completion of the building, but we are praying for something far, far greater ...

We are praying that literally thousands of additional people will come to Christ through the outreach efforts these new tools will provide. Your friends and mine, our families, others we care for and love...

And we are praying that God will help us to see and even carry within our hearts, His desire that not one should perish, but that every-one will turn to Jesus.

So, please pray that God will lead the brothers and sisters who are gathering in a few hours ... that they will hear His voice and lead us well!

And that we will all join together, with one passionate heart and mind, to accomplish the work God has given us to do!

To experience a fervent prayer life ... **Obey God**

To experience a fervent prayer life ... **Pray With Others**

To experience a fervent prayer life ...

### **III. Plan for Consistency** (v. 14b)

**"They all joined together constantly in prayer ..."**

**"Constantly:"** They prayed and prayed and prayed until God gave what He had promised.

This is Devoted Determination

***For about seven consecutive days they continued in prayer, unswervingly focused upon seeking the face of their Lord.*** (seven days: Pentecost was 50 days after Passover, Jesus rose three days later and was on Earth for 40 days after His resurrection)

... this season of passionate prayer was not for one hour, or one morning, or one evening, or even one day ... they determined to be devoted to pray until the promise of the Spirit's power came upon them.

They are together because they had all received the **same command** from Jesus and the **same promise**. They are of the **same mind**. They are doing the **same thing**: praying continually.

They prayed.

Someone has said, "*the spiritual history of ... a church is written in its prayer life.*" (R. Arthur Matthews, Born for Battle, p. 72)

Brothers and sisters, let us write a glorious history for the Lord!

"Dear Father in Heaven, please show me any sin patterns in my life so that I can confess them and turn from them. Please, too, show me who I can pray with, that together we can draw close to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen."