

Sermon on 26 March, 2017**Theme: Early believers' prayer**

Bible: Acts 4:23-31

Preached by Je Cheol Cook

Let us pray. Almighty God! You are so great, awesome, marvelous. Thank you for your grace and your mercy. Help us to understand your message and apply it into our lives. Almighty God. Please teach us how early believers of Christ prayed to God and how God answered their prayers. As your servant, please use me as your mediator. Allow me to speak your word with power and confidence. Thank you, Lord, I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Let me ask you something. What is one of the big differences between Christianity and other religions? Last Sunday evening, I had talked with a man who was not a believer of Christ, but he was open to Christianity. I asked him about this question. He was thinking for a long time, but he didn't answer. I said, "Other religions teach that human beings need to work very hard to get salvation. It is very important for them to make their own efforts to be saved. For them, suffering is still important for their salvation. What is Christianity? What do we teach about salvation? Human beings sinned against God, and they could not come to God. God sent his Son Jesus to save his people from their sins. One of the big differences is that we can be saved through Jesus, but other religions teach that we can save ourselves.

For believers of Christ, we believe that in Luke 1:37 "For nothing is impossible with God." This means that it is impossible by ourselves, but it is possible with God. Look at King Hezekiah. What happened to him. He had to fight against the country of Assyria, which was known as one of the biggest countries. It was impossible for him to defeat the country, but he believed that God could help him. He defeated 185,000 Assyrian soldiers at one night. How was this possible? He came to God and prayed. God answered his prayers by sending an angel to fight against the country of Assyria.

There was a woman who was bleeding for 12 years. The bible says that she met with many medical doctors, but she was getting worse. She was not cured. Finally, she came to Jesus and asked for her healing. She was completely healed.

It was impossible with us, but nothing is impossible with God. Our Lord has done mighty works. He is still working for his people. When I my father passed away and my mother was not very well, I lost my courage and didn't know what to do. At that time, I realized that God was with me. He helped me to overcome. He sent his people to encourage me. If you are having troubles and do not know what to do, don't be afraid. Come to God and ask for his guidance. He will help you out. He will send his people to give you more confidence in God.

In the bible, we see that many people were having troubles and hard times and came to our Lord Jesus. What happened to them? All of them were healed. They were changed after they met with Jesus. Our Lord is still working here today for us.

Last Wednesday, I was leading the New migrant class. We had 15 students. Among those, 7 are believers and 8 non-believers. During the class, we were learning English and studying about Jesus in Matthew 8. There was a man with leprosy. He suffered from his disease. It was impossible for the man

with leprosy to be healed in those days. But nothing is impossible with God. He came to Jesus and he was completely healed. It was a powerful message. After the class, one of the students came to me and said, "Thank you. It is very good message. And it was very clear for me to understand who Jesus was. I never heard about the gospel in my life. But the message of Jesus helped me to know about God." It is great. I pray that those non-believers would come to know more about God and believe Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

The message of God is powerful. Hebrews 4:12 says, "for the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow." I was preaching the message of God and God touched their hearts. And they opened their hearts. At the same chapter, we read that Jesus met with an army official. His servant was not very well and he wanted Jesus to heal his servant. He said to Jesus, "Just say a word." What does this mean? It means, "Just say a word of God. Then God will do it. God will touch people's hearts." Our Lord Jesus was touched by the man's great faith. And Jesus said that he had a great faith. We still need to have faith in Jesus.

Let us look at the beginning part of chapter 4. Here we will see what Jesus was doing. We also see here what Peter and John were doing. They were known as great disciples of Jesus. Disciples were followers of Jesus. They did what Jesus did.

What was happening? They were put in jail. Well, they must have been preaching about the gospel of Jesus. And they were caught and put in there. They were troubled. But, they continued to live and work for God. Their beliefs toward God never changed. God cared for them. He was with them. They made sure that this happened by God. Everything is possible with God. Verse 12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." All of believers of Christ are saved through the faith in Jesus.

All the chief priests and elders saw the miracles done by disciples of Christ (Acts 4:16). Many people came to Jesus after they heard about the message of God. 5,000 people accepted Jesus and followed him as Lord and Saviour. It was the miracle of God. But Satan attacked their works. Later, the priests told the followers of Christ not to talk about Jesus. However, they didn't stop working for God. They continued to pray to God (Acts 4:24). Let us read verse 24-25, "Sovereign Lord they said, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our Father David."

Believers of Christ recognized that God made the heaven and the earth. God is the ruler and the master in this world. What can we do for God. We need to come to our Lord. We need to glorify our Lord. We need to live and work for our Lord. And, we need to preach about the message of Jesus, his death and resurrection.

In the early church, many believers of Christ were having hard times on preaching the gospel of Christ. Many were persecuted and died. But, they never lost their faith in God. They came to God. Let us read, verses 27-29; "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. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.."

What were they doing? They were threatened, but they spoke the message of God with boldness. They prayed to God. Let us read verse 30, "Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

What happened next? Read 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." After they prayed, they started speaking the message of God with much confidence and boldness. How were they transformed? Read verse 32-33.

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all." They started preaching the message of Jesus and sharing their possessions with others. In those days, it was very difficult to preach about Jesus. Because, they might have died and lost everything, but they were not afraid. And they gave their possessions to those who were in need. This is the beginning of the early Christianity.

What have you learned from this? First of all, we saw that early believers taught and trained their church members, so that they were able to preach the message of God to those who did not know about God. Then we need to share our possessions with others. We also need to share our gifts and talents with those who are in need. I believe that our Lord wants us to follow God and these early believers of Christ. Let us work for God and his people.

Let us pray. Almighty God. We are so grateful to you for what you have done for us. We understand how early believers of Christ prayed to God and his people. They were threatened and stressed in their lives, but they came to God. They prayed to God. They made their own efforts to God. They preached the message of God and they shared all of their possessions with God's people. Almighty God. Help us to follow our Lord Jesus and his followers. Bless us and our lives in mighty ways. Thank you Lord. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.