

WHEN A CHURCH PRAYS

Acts 4:23-31

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Prayer is no doubt one of the most essential things in a Christian's life and it should be in the Church as well. It isn't very often that a Church calls for its members to come together to pray. There was a time when Wednesday nights were called "prayer meetings" at the Church and there was actually prayer, but sadly now Wednesday nights have so many other things going on that Church-wide prayer time has been practically eliminated. Peter and John had been arrested and were instructed to not speak about Jesus anymore and then released with that warning. Meanwhile the Church had gathered together to pray for Peter and John.

I. MUCH COMFORT AND JOY CAN BE FOUND IN A PRAYING CHURCH FAMILY (v23)

1. Peter and John did not file an unlawful arrest lawsuit against the officials as would have been done today.
 - They went directly to where their Church family had gathered.
 - The Church family had gathered together to pray for Peter and John.
 - There is no comfort like Christians gathering together to sing, pray and hear the Word of God read and preached under the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. There is nothing more important or helpful in a Christian's life than gathering with other Christians in public worship.
 - Jesus has promised to meet with any who gather in His name.
 - When Christians gather together for worship, God is most likely to be heard from.
 - In public worship Christians sing songs of praise, observe the ordinances, pray, preach, teach and worship God.
 - The assembly of Christians is the meeting of God's Family.
 - Everyone loves a family get-together.
3. Christians are told to not forsake the assembling of themselves before God.
 - One of the first steps in drifting/falling away from the Lord is to stop attending public worship.
 - Christians need the things God provides for His Children in His House in public worship more than than they need anything else.
 - The ministry of God's Word, spending time in God's House, with the Family of God.

II. MATTERS OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE CHURCH ARE EXPRESSED IN PRAYER (24-30)

1. Upon hearing what Peter and John told them, the Church did not go to the streets in demonstration nor cry out about their "religious freedoms being violated" nor did they contact the government officials about learning to work together and such.
 - The Church did not ask Peter and John to leave because of shame brought into their fellowship nor did they take a vote to form a committee to investigate what impact upon their Church the actions of Peter and John might have.
 - The Church PRAYED!
2. The Church prayed, one at a time but not all at once aloud.
 - In the house of God all things are to be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40)
 - When one is praying, the others in silence lift up their hearts with the one praying, seeking the power and help of the Holy Spirit.
3. Nothing encourages a Church to do God's work or even suffer for the Lord than to realize the greatness of the Lord God who made all things, rules all things and has all things at His disposal.

4. The Church acknowledged and bowed to the power and purpose of God, confident and believing that God would work out all things.
 - They believed God's Word, submitted themselves to God's plans and purposes.
 - They believed that nothing would stop God from doing what He wants.
5. The Church asked God to give Peter and John the grace and strength to continue to preach the Word.
 - They asked God to watch over Peter and John.
 - They asked God to grant Peter and John boldness to preach the Gospel.
 - They asked God to stretch forth His hand, to reveal His power, His grace and His glory in their midst.
 - In their prayer for Peter and John, they asked in the name of Christ and for His glory.

III. GOD GRACIOUSLY ANSWERS THE CHURCH'S PRAYERS (v31)

1. In answer to the prayers of the Church, God make Himself know in their midst.
 - The Church was filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - Peter and John and others preached the Word of God with boldness.
 - God was honored.

CONCLUSION:

1. The early Church started out right but today's Church is far from what the early Church was like.
2. The Church of today can learn from this example of gathering together to pray for two of their very own.
3. Every congregation needs to imitate this early Church's congregation and in doing so, God will be honored and He will in turn bless and empower.
4. How does "our" (this) Church compare to the Church in the text?