

Praying for One Another

Key Verse: “*When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*”
—Acts 4:31

Selected Scripture:
Acts 4:23-31

THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS

rejoiced to know that the long awaited Messiah had arrived according to the promises spoken by the prophets. However, that joy was replaced with perplexity with his unexpected death. The Gospel accounts tell of their disappointment as they contemplated a return to their former pursuits of life. The Scriptures also describe Jesus' resurrection and appearances to his disciples. He reminded them that it was necessary that he

die, then rise again, and that they would be witnesses of these things and preach his name among all nations.

In his final appearance before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his followers, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.” (Acts 1:5) On the day of Pentecost, the record states that the disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit.” (chap. 2:1-4) This was outwardly manifest when they began to speak in other languages “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The masses marveled, but some mocked. Peter responded with a forceful speech proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus by the power of God in accordance with the words

of God's prophets.—vss. 14-36

In the fourth chapter of Acts is another example of the Holy Spirit poured out with a physical manifestation. After Peter and John were threatened by the Jewish council, verse 29 says the brethren prayed, "Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Their prayer was answered as stated in our Key Verse. In this lesson we find the importance and effectiveness of praying for our brethren.

Paul says, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another." (Heb. 10:24-25) The work of "provoking" and "exhorting" one another is best accomplished through assembling together and by prayer.

John claims that love of the brethren is the ultimate test of our love of God, stating, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. . . . Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he [Jesus] laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:14,16) Sincere prayer for the brethren is an important aspect of laying down our lives for them.

James provides a similar message to us, saying, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16) A "righteous man" described here is one begotten by the Holy Spirit—a member of the class described as "the sons of God."—Rom. 8:14

Finally, Jesus prayed for all his followers, including those living at the present time: "I pray . . . for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. . . . Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." (John 17:9,11) Let us faithfully follow these exhortations to pray fervently for one another. ■