

Great God

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We have a great God! Do we see Him coming through? There are three experiences of Christians who see their great God coming through: great prayer, great power, and great grace.

Introduction

Please join me in the book of Acts chapter 4.

This passage records the response of Peter and John to their experience before the Sanhedrin. Following the night in prison and the brief trial, they returned to their brothers and sisters in Christ with the report of what had happened.

The response and subsequent events give us great insight into the workings of the early church. If we can get a hold of this truth, it will revolutionize our lives and our church.

Illustration

Personal Experience (8/2/2019)

On Friday afternoon, we took some time as a family and went to a local park. Our children are at ages that they enjoy just being outside, swinging on swings, climbing up on the playground, and

sliding down slides. Brookelyn and Evelyn were both very engaged this trip in those activities.

At this particular playground, there is a set of stairs, a type of ladder, and a rock climb to reach the top. Brookelyn was constantly challenging herself by using the rock climb to ascend the playground. On one of her trips up the climb, she called out to me with a question.

“Daddy, can you see my muscles coming through?”

Yes, that is exactly what my four year old asked me.

Introduction

I want to speak to you today about our great God.

We know, that is, we give mental assent to the statement that we have a great God. However, I want to ask you very pointedly today, “Do we see Him coming through?”

Are you experiencing the work of our great God in your daily life?

I don't want to just know that we have a great God. I want to see Him coming through!

Let's read about the experience of our early brothers and sisters in Christ in Acts 4.

Bible

(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. (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. (33) And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. (34) Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, (35) And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. (36) And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, (37) Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Introduction

As we consider this passage today, there are three experiences of Christians who see their great God coming through: great prayer, great power, and great grace.

1...Great Prayer (vv. 23-31)

Explanation

Peter and John returned to the company of believers with the report of what they had done, what the Sanhedrin had done, what they had said, and what the Sanhedrin had said.

What was the response?

“...they lifted up their voice to God...”

Friends, that’s what we call prayer.

What made this prayer great?

A...The Accord (v. 24a)

Explanation

The record tells us that the believers lifted their voice to God with one accord. Literally, they were of one mind. There was no dissent or hint of contention or conflict about them. They

prayed with a unity befitting the bride of Christ.

Application

We cannot underestimate the effectiveness of unified prayer.

Listen to what Jesus said about it.

Bible

(18) Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (19) Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. (20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:18-20 - KJV

Application

Jesus gave His word that His Father responds to the unified prayer of His children.

"Division in the church always hinders prayer and robs the church of spiritual power" (Wiersbe).

B...The Acknowledgement

i...of God's Person (v. 24b)

Application

To whom do you pray?

Lord in this text is not the usual New Testament word. The word used here speaks of one whose power could not be questioned.

We pray to the One Who spoke the worlds and all that is in them into existence. When you approach Him, do you acknowledge Who He is?

ii...of God's Promises (vv. 25-27)

Application

The early church practiced praying the word of God.

Application

True prayer is not me telling God what to do, but seeking God to show me what He wants me to do. It's about asking God to do His will on earth, not about me getting my will done in heaven.

We can and should literally practice praying the word of God.

iii...of God's Providence (v. 28)

Explanation

The believers recognized God's providential hand working, even in the current situation that

they faced.

See this illustrated by their application of Psalm 2 to the life and death of Jesus, and the extended application of it to them as His followers.

Even so, they knew that God was working to fulfill His purposes.

Application

There is no need for fear when we acknowledge this truth.

When you are in the middle of a situation, it is natural to be distraught and overcome. See God

Who providentially rules over all, Who sees the end as well as the beginning, and do not fear!

C...The Asking (vv. 29-30)

Application

If you were the early church, what would you ask for if you were in the same situation?

Deliverance? Death on the Sanhedrin? Move?

What did the believers ask God for?

i...Courage to Endure

ii...Boldness to Speak

iii...Power to Serve

Application

They did not ask God to deliver them, nor did they ask God to somehow change the Sanhedrin.

They didn't ask God to change their circumstances. Instead, they asked God to strengthen them.

"Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks" (Phillips Brooks; as cited in Wiersbe).

D...The Answer (v. 31)

2...Great Power (v. 33)

Explanation

The early church saw our great God coming through through the experience of great power.

They were threatened, but God supplied them with exactly what they needed to go and proclaim the resurrection.

Application

Have you ever felt like you were not up to the task? Perhaps something was placed before you to undertake, and you felt like you did not have the skill or ability to do it. Perhaps the reason for feeling like that is due to the opposition that you face.

Is this ever true spiritually?

God will not ask anything of us that He will not also provide for us to do what He asks of us.

Even as the opposition grows, God will provide all that we need. He knows who and what we are. Still, He has provided us with what we need.

He provided great power to the early church in answer to...

A...Their Prayer

Explanation

They prayed for courage to endure, boldness to speak, and power to serve. God answered their prayer.

B...Their Peace

Explanation

We see again, that the unity of the early church was critical to God's blessing.

C...Their Priorities

Explanation

The believers clearly had the right priorities as demonstrated by their commitment and community.

D...Their Perspective

Explanation

Gave is an interesting word. It literally means to give back. It denotes that they were duty-bound.

They considered themselves under obligation because of all that God had done.

3...Great Grace (v. 33)

A...The Experience of Grace

Explanation

Grace is linked here with the witness of the resurrection. This should not surprise us because the Gospel is all about grace.

B...The Expression of Grace

Explanation

Grace was the link between the Gospel and the interaction of the believers in community.

"The sharing described in verses 34-37 is a particular sign of this grace at work among them.

But the remarkable point...is the implication that it was the powerful preaching of the Gospel that motivated the earliest Christians to such generosity...The Gospel message about God's grace in Christ inspired a culture of self-giving in love" (Unknown).

Application

- It's by His grace that we are saved (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9).
- It's by His grace that we serve as He enables, equips, and empowers us (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:10; Hebrews 12:29).
- We should ask for (Hebrews 4:16), accept (faith), and appropriate (walk in) His grace.

Conclusion