

Acts for today

The Growing Church in the Acts of the Apostles: The Church at Prayer

When you consider your own church, what are the important things you do together? Prayer was a clearly a priority for the early church, and we shouldn't be surprised that it grew significantly!! Also when prayer becomes a priority for our churches, it will become more important in the lives of Christians.

We read about the Jerusalem church praying together in Acts 4:24ff. Following their release from prison, Peter and John went straight back to the fellowship and they prayed. But what can we learn from their prayer?

- * it arose naturally from their circumstances (23)
- * they were united in prayer (24)
- * they didn't come to God with a list of needs, but focussed on him and his sovereignty (24)
- * it was informed by Scripture, as they sought to pray according to God's will (25-28)
- * in coming before God, they were not looking for a way out of their situation, but asked for 2 specific things:
 - o 'Lord, look' - on the threats they faced from the authorities.
 - o 'Lord, grant' - boldness to face their circumstances without fear (29-30).

We go on to read 'they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God boldly' (31). Prayer is the gateway to spiritual power for witness and healing. A survey several years ago revealed that the average Christian prayed for one minute a day, while the average minister for two minutes! Therefore, turning the tide of apathy and scepticism in our generation will not happen without fervent prayer. When they prayed, 'the place where they were meeting was shaken' (31); to what extent do we need to be shaken out of our complacency today?

*The Rev Paul Hardingham
continues his series on the early Church.*

The Ten Commandments

This rhyming version of the Ten Commandments, was published, it is thought,
by Isaac Watts in 1709

**Thou shalt have no gods but Me.
Before no idol bow thy knee.
Take not the name of God in vain,
Nor dare the Sabbath Day profane.
Give both thy parents honour due,
Take heed that thou no murder do.
Abstain from words and deeds unclean,
Nor steal, though thou art poor and mean.
Nor make a wilful lie, nor love it,
What is thy neighbour's, do not covet.**