

In **Acts 4:24** it reads,

“...they lifted up their voice to God WITH ONE ACCORD...”

As we continue our study on prayer, we see another important kind of prayer that the Bible teaches is “united prayer.” In this lesson we will look at some examples in the bible of the results of united prayer. We are convinced that believers have not realized the potential power there is in united prayer.

UNITED, VOCAL PRAYER IS BIBLICAL

There is so much in the realm of prayer that every one of us could learn if we would keep an open heart to the word and the Spirit of God. Often in ignorance we can hold beliefs about prayer that are not in line with the Word at all but are really just traditions of men.

For example, many that come into the Full Gospel (Pentecostal) circles hear everyone praying out loud together and it bothers them. Many aren’t used to hearing any noise when praying so it can be too much for some. Some may try to pray with other Full Gospel folks, but it may be hard to concentrate on what one was saying to the Lord.

Those raised outside of the Full Gospel churches or Pentecostal churches may never have encountered the way Christians prayed in the **Book of Acts**. Usually in mainline denominations someone would lead in prayer, but they didn’t lift their voices. It was quiet.

Old time Methodist camp meetings would have an altar call and everyone came forward to pray and they prayed together out loud. The believers would kneel down to pray in hay and they used benches for altars.

One young Baptist minister was invited by his grandmother years ago to attend one such meeting. He asked her why he should attend. She told him that the preacher preached like he believed. So, one night he stood outside the tent meeting and enjoyed the message. He went again a week later and decided to attend the entire week of services.

The preacher would walk through the crowd after preaching, shake hands with people and ask them if they were Christians. Then practically everyone gathered around the altar to

pray. The preacher asked him if he was a Christian and he told him that he was a minister. He went on to tell him that it wouldn't hurt him to go to the altar and pray with the others.

They didn't do things that way in his church, and for a moment he felt a little bit insulted. But he thought about it and the more he thought about it the more he felt that the preacher was right. So, he went down to the altar and prayed. It bothered him because the people were praying out loud and he wasn't used to that. His church prayed quietly.

Later those that had attended this camp meeting built a church. The young Baptist minister attended their services because they always blessed him. The services seemed to stimulate his faith. He would go to the altar with the others and pray after the services, but he would get far away from the other folks because their praying out loud annoyed him.

One time he ventured to say something to them. He said, "God is not hard of hearing."

They responded with, "He's not nervous either!"

Praise the Lord, he isn't!

At that time, the young minister didn't know anything different. He was sure they were wrong about this kind of united praying. As he began to think about it, he remembered that these folks also knew about divine healing when his church didn't. They were right about divine healing. He thought that possibly they might know some other things that he didn't know. He thought that they could be right about praying out loud together and that he could be wrong.

He decided that he was going to read through the **Book of Acts** and underline with a red pencil everywhere the believers prayed in a group with two or more praying together. He was going to see how they prayed corporately back in the early church. After all, he claimed to be preaching the same new birth they preached in the **book of Acts**, so he thought he might as well be following the early church in prayer too.

He began to really study the Word about it. One by one the Lord answered all the arguments he had against praying out loud. As he went through the **Book of Acts** and underlined those passages that talked about prayer, he could not find one single place where they would call on only one person in a group to lead them in prayer. They never called on just one person to do that.

He found several places where it said they lifted THEIR VOICES IN ONE ACCORD. [**Acts 1:14; 2:1; 4:24; 16:25**]. They ALL prayed at once and they ALL prayed out loud. This is what is known as united or corporate prayer.

After he read this, the next time he went to the Full Gospel service, he got right in the middle of them as they were praying around the altar. He finally realized that he was not praying just to hear himself anyhow; he was praying to God.

Someone might ask, and I have thought the same thing, “How can God hear all those people praying at once?” But think about this: How many people all over the world are praying at once? Of course, there would be many praying at one time. Yet, God hears them all, doesn’t he?

After the young minister had his mind renewed with the word, he got blessed in a way that he had not been blessed with when he had been praying quietly alone. Certainly, there are times in our own private devotions when we should pray alone, but there are also times when we need to pray together.

He was already convinced that praying out loud was right, but the account of Paul and Silas in **Acts chapter 16** clinched it for him.

We have already looked at this account in relation to the prayer of praise and worship. But this passage of scripture also illustrates that united, vocal prayer – or believers praying out loud TOGETHER is biblical.

Acts 16:20-25

20 and brought them [Paul and Silas] to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 and at midnight Paul and Silas PRAYED, and SANG PRAISES UNTO GOD: and the PRISONERS HEARD THEM.

Here Paul and Silas were in jail at midnight. They had been whipped, and their backs were bleeding. Their feet were in stocks. They were in the innermost prison [**vs. 24**]. But it says that at midnight Paul and Silas prayed.

That is a good time to pray! It was actually midnight when this happened, but as we discussed in our last lesson, the midnight hour can be the hours that we go through testing. This is a good time to pray when you are faced with tests and trials.

Before the young preacher read that passage of scripture, he would sometimes say to himself, "I believe in praying and praising God, all right, but I believe in being quiet about it! I have praises in my heart."

When he read that the prisoners HEARD Paul and Silas praying and praising God, he realized that Paul and Silas were not quiet in their prayers.

You cannot hear praise in someone's heart! It would have to have been on their lips for you to hear it. In this case, the prisoners heard Paul and Silas praising God and also heard them praying. I am sure it had some effect on those prisoners.

We do not see enough of this kind of praying and praising God out loud in the church today. But it definitely is something that we should be doing.

Once a person told a preacher that the reason he and his friend went to a Full Gospel revival was to make fun of the people in their vocal praise of God. But after attending, God entered into the men's hearts, and they got saved.

During that same revival some of the folks would meet at the church in the daytime and pray for the evening revival services. These people had a heart to pray and did not mind WHO heard them.

One couple that attended that church had a grown son that was married and was visiting his parents. He drove past the church where the revival was being held and heard these folks praying.

Later he told his father, "We ought to go to the revival tonight because they are going to have a BIG ONE!"

His father asked, "Why do you say that?"

The son answered with "Because they are already at the church practicing up. They have already started to practice in the middle of the afternoon!"

You could say that sometimes the reason WE don't have a "big one" is because we haven't practiced for it through prayer and praise!

The Power in United Prayer: Paul and Silas

The account of Paul and Silas in **Acts chapter 16** which we have been looking at is an illustration of the power in united prayer.

Remember, Paul and Silas had been beaten and thrust into the inner prison with their feet put in stocks all for preaching the gospel. Instead of griping and complaining about their difficult circumstances, Paul and Silas lifted their voices TOGETHER in united prayer and praise to God.

Would you be praying and praising God out loud if you had been beaten and you were in jail with your feet in stocks and it looked like your life might be over? Paul and Silas did. Notice as Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God in ONE ACCORD, something happened. As both Paul and Silas lifted their voices to God in united prayer and praise, God wrought a mighty deliverance.

Acts 16:26

“26 And SUDDENLY there was a great earthquake, so that THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRISON WERE SHAKEN: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed.”

Isn't it interesting that the bible does not record that the earthquake shook anything else but that prison? That is, there is no report in the bible about any house or building in that town being shaken. I would not be surprised if that earthquake only shook THAT jail where two prisoners were praying and praising God in ONE ACCORD.

But bless God, that jail was shaken and every door in that jail were opened! The bible says the very foundations of the prison were shaken. The stocks came off Paul and Silas' feet and they were loosed from their bonds. This is what united prayer will do!

When the jailer saw that the prisoners were loosed, he was going to kill himself because he was responsible for guarding them. He thought they had escaped. But Paul said **in Acts 16:28**, ***“...cried with a LOUD VOICES, SAYING, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.”***

The jailer knew he had witnessed the supernatural that night and that Paul and Silas were no ordinary men, serving an ordinary God. The Bible says in **Acts 16:29-33** that the jailer came to Paul and Silas trembling, falling down before them and asked what he could do to be saved. As a result of the power of God that was wrought by the united prayer of Paul and Silas that night, the jailer, and his entire family were saved and baptized.

A lot of folks today are just sitting around doing nothing, waiting for God to do something for them. They often say, “If God sees fit, He will move on my behalf.”

If that is true, then why didn’t Paul and Silas just suffer in silence and not pray and sing praises to God? Why didn’t they just wait and see if God would see fit to do something in their lives?

If that is true, why didn’t Paul and Silas say, “let’s just leave everything to the Lord.”?

NO! They prayed in one accord and sang praises to God! Notice that their situation did not change UNTIL they prayed and praised in one accord. As a result, God heard them, and they were delivered.

We need that kind of praying today! How desperately we need that kind of praying! When things begin to be shaken, and they are already being shaken, some people are going to be shaken too.

You see, the shaking will cause some people to come into the church and others who are not sincere to leave the church. Folks who do not want to change will not stay around long while things are being shaken because some things believers should get rid of, such as sin, will be shaken too!

And in some churches, there are even some PEOPLE who NEED TO BE SHAKEN, because they will never commit themselves to a local body and walk uprightly. Those people will leave when the shaking begins, but others will come into the church and stay.

The Power in United Prayer in the Early Church

In **Acts chapter 4** we read an account of a company of believers in the early Church who lifted their voices to God in united prayer.

Acts 4:23-31

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 thy 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.

This incident occurred **after** God had used Peter and John in the healing of the crippled man at the Gate called Beautiful. In **Acts 3:1-3**, as Peter and John entered into the temple through the Gate called Beautiful, they met a man sitting at the gate who sat there daily to beg alms. Peter said to the man in **verse 4**, **"...Look on us"** the man looked at them, expecting to receive something from them.

Acts 3:6-8

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.
7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.
8 and he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

When the crippled man was healed, the bible says that Peter and John were taken in to be questioned by the authorities. They were threatened by the priests and the Sadducees and were commanded not to preach and teach any more in the Name of Jesus (**Acts 4:18**). Then we read in **verse 23** how Peter and John went to their own company to report what had happened.

It is good to be with your own company when you are in trouble. It is good to be with those of like precious faith who KNOW HOW TO PRAY!

The thought has occurred that if this company of believers had been like some folks in church nowadays, they would have suggested that they nominate a committee to go and talk to these leaders and make some kind of deal whereby everyone could get along together.

These leaders were religious people – they did not accept Jesus as being the Messiah. They believed in the same God, and they believed in prayer. They believed in going to the temple to meet. But if this group of believers who were of Peter and John’s company were like some folks today, they would have wanted to work out some kind of a deal to compromise with the religious leaders who opposed them.

BUT IT DOESN’T SAY THOSE early church believers did that. In **Acts 4:29** it says that this company of believers prayed for boldness!

Acts 4:29

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

These believers did not ask the Lord to remove the persecution or to strike down their enemies. They did not pray, “Lord make our way easy.” Instead, they PRAYED ONE SPECIFIC PRAYER. “In the midst of this persecution, give us boldness to speak thy Word.”

In **verse 31** the Lord answered those believer’s prayers. As a result of their united prayer, a building was shaken by the power of God.

Acts 4:31.

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.

This passage of scripture gives us an instance of how the power of God is made available when believers pray together corporately. The bible says when this company of believers prayed, “***the place was shaken.***” Do you know of many groups of people that pray today to see shaking happen for God’s glory?

There is something about the power of united prayer that brings the power of God on the scene to meet every need. These Christians in the **Book of Acts** were not praying just to hear themselves pray. They were praying about the problem they were facing at the moment, and all of them were praying out loud all at once.

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The bible says that when these believers lifted their voices and joined together in united prayer, **“...THE PLACE WAS SHAKEN where they were assembled together...”** The same thing happened in **Acts 4:31** as it did to Paul and Silas in **Acts 16** when they prayed and praised God together in jail.

In **Acts 4:31** it says the place was shaken where the believers were all assembled together. And in **Acts 16** it says that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and every door was opened in that old jail. It was a strange thing though, that the buildings were not shaken UNTIL the believers prayed.

We believe that Christians ought to be shaking things today for God too! If believers today would get together and pray “with one accord,” they would shake the world for Jesus. There is supernatural POWER in united prayer.

Ushering in the Glory of God Through United Prayer

Believers can usher in the glory of God as they **join together** in united prayer and praise. In the Old Testament times it says that the glory of the Lord filled the temple where people were gathered to pray.

2 Chronicles 5:6, 7, 11-14

6 Also king Solomon, and ALL THE CONGREGATION OF ISRAEL that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

7 and the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims...

11 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course:

12 Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)

13 It came even to pass AS THE TRUMPETERS AND SINGERS WERE AS ONE, TO MAKE ONE SOUND TO BE HEARD IN PRAISING AND THANKING THE LORD; and WHEN THEY LIFTED UP THEIR VOICE with the trumpets and cymbals and

instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord:

14 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: FOR THE GLORY OF THE LORD HAD FILLED THE HOUSE OF GOD.”

2 Chronicles 7:1-3

1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE HOUSE.

2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because THE GLORY OF THE LORD HAD FILLED THE LORD’S HOUSE.

3 And when ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, THEY BOWED THEMSELVES with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and WORSHIPPED AND PRAISED THE LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Did you ever stop to think about WHEN the glory of the Lord filled the temple? It was when all the people were PRAYING and SINGING PRAISES to God out loud in one accord. The glory cloud of the Lord filled the temple so that the priests were not even able to stand and minister. A white cloud came in and filled the temple. That is what united prayer can do!

There have been instances where people have prayed until it looked like the whole building was going to shake. Some of the most amazing things happen in the realm of the Spirit when people lift their voices to God in prayer in one accord – in united prayer.

Often it seems that the power of God would come in waves. When this happens many unsaved and backslidden people in the building respond to it and receive salvation. One doesn't have to beg or plead. They come to the altar and pray and receive salvation.

Often when the glory fills a church people are healed. Other times many receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We need more united praying. We need vocal praying, or praying out loud in one accord today in the church.

Let us avail ourselves of the power that comes with united prayer so that we do not miss out on any good thing that the Lord has made available for us today. Let's pray the kind of prayer that will shake things for the kingdom of God!