Praying for One Another
Acts 4:23-31
SS Lesson for 09/06/2015

Devotional Scripture: Eph 1:15-20

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson admonishes us to always keep **Praying for One Another**. The **study’s aim** is to recognize that praying for one another is an essential part of living together as a Christian community. The **study’s application** is to show our concern by praying for one another and to understand the role of prayer for believers.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

Key Verse: Acts 4:31

*And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

When Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin, and were asked the basis of their authority, Peter, the spokesman, was filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:4). This is Peter’s fourth speech already in the Book of Acts. Speaking with irony, he said, in effect, “Are we on trial for doing a good deed to a cripple?” The miracle was done not in their power, but by the name of Jesus Christ (cf. 3:16; 4:7, 12, 17-18). Though they had crucified Jesus, God had raised Him from the dead (cf. 2:23-24; 3:15). The One who healed the cripple was the Stone which the builders rejected. Here Peter quoted Psalm 118:22. The background of this verse is disputed. The rejected stone (Ps. 118) may be (a) an actual building stone, (b) the nation of Israel, or (c) David. Or it may also be a proverb with no specific application. Most probably, to David the rejected stone in Psalm 118:22 meant Israel, a nation spurned by other nations. At any rate, the verse finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ Jesus who is the “ideal” Israel (cf. Isa. 5:1-7; Matt. 2:15; 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; 1 Peter 2:7). The rejected Stone (Christ rejected by the nation in their crucifying Him) is the Capstone, the resurrected Lord. The word salvation goes back to Psalm 118 which Peter had just quoted, for it is a prominent theme there. Verses 22-29 in that psalm anticipate millennial deliverance. In Acts 4:12 Peter was speaking not only of individual justification, but also of national salvation, predicted in Psalm 118. The rulers were thus put on the defense! They had rejected the only Savior of Israel and they were preventing the completion of God’s building. Thus no other way of salvation is available to people (cf. John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). The authorities were astonished (cf. 3:10) that Peter and John... unschooled (agrammatoi, “illiterate”) and ordinary (idiōtai) men, spoke with such courage. Courage (parrēsia, “boldness” or “courage to speak openly and frankly”) is another theme prominent in Acts (2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 28:31; cf. the verb “to speak boldly” in 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26). The Sanhedrin, realizing that Peter and John had been with Jesus (cf. John 7:15), were silenced. The apostles were thus experiencing what Christ had promised (Matt. 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-15). Significantly the authorities could not and did not deny the reality of the miracle. They deliberately refused to mention the word “Jesus”; they referred to Him as this name (cf. the high priest’s same refusal in 5:28). Perhaps Luke obtained this information about what went on behind the closed doors from someone such as Nicodemus or Paul. Even though Paul was not a Sadducee, he probably would have had access to such information.

The Sanhedrin, the supreme court and administrative body of the Jews, consisted of 71 members, including the high priest. Most of them were Sadducees. In Acts this was the first of four times some of Jesus’ followers were brought before the Sanhedrin (cf. Peter and the apostles, 5:27; Stephen, 6:12; and Paul, 22:30). When Peter and John were commanded... not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, they rejoined that they must obey God rather than human authorities (cf. 5:29). They were simply being witnesses as Christ had commanded them (1:8). The authorities threatened them (apparently with punishment if they continued to preach Jesus) and released them. They were afraid to punish them then because all the people were praising God (cf. 3:9; 5:26).
Praying for One Another

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A sarcastic axiom of warfare is, “There are old soldiers, and there are bold soldiers, but there are no old, bold soldiers.” Even as we recognize that that is simply false in an absolute sense, we acknowledge more than a kernel of truth to be present, since the majority of bestowals of the Medal of Honor—the highest award for valor in America’s armed forces—are posthumous. But does even that kernel of truth help us in our Christian walk? Not at all. The axiom suggests a way for one not to have his or her life ended prematurely, but a long earthly life is not the ultimate goal of the Christian. The ultimate goal, rather, is eternal life for ourselves and for as many others as we can influence for Christ as possible. To influence others in this way requires boldness, the subject of today’s lesson.

Three movements may be discerned in this prayer of the early church: (1) God is sovereign (v. 24). (2) God’s plan includes believers’ facing opposition against the Messiah (vv. 25-28). (3) Because of these things they petitioned God to grant them boldness to preach (vv. 29-30). Interestingly the believers (Peter and John’s own people), faced with persecution, acknowledged God’s sovereign creative power. The words by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of... David point up, as do many passages, the divine inspiration of Scripture through human agents (cf. 28:25). Acts 4:25-26 contains a quotation from Psalm 2:1-2, which is prophetic of the Tribulation. In a preliminary sense Peter saw the opposition to the Messiah, God’s Anointed One (tou Christou; cf. “anointed,” Acts 4:27)—predicted by David in Psalm 2—as fulfilled in the early church. The parallels are obvious. Nations (etnhē Acts 4:25) compare with Gentiles (ethnesin, v. 27); peoples (laoi, v. 25) compare with people of Israel (laois Israēl, v. 27); kings (v. 26) compare with Herod (v. 27); and rulers (v. 26) compare with Pontius Pilate (v. 27). Just as God’s sovereign power and will had decided beforehand that Christ should be opposed, so now Peter and John prayed for God’s power to be manifested in great boldness for the apostolic church. They also petitioned the Lord for supernatural ability to heal and to perform miraculous signs (sēmeia; cf. 2:43) and wonders (terata; cf. 2:43) through the name of... Jesus. The Lord’s answer to the believers’ prayer for boldness was preceded by a shaking of their meeting place. The answer also included a supernatural filling with the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 8). When Luke, as here, used a verb form to refer to believers being filled with the Spirit, he usually said the filling was bestowed sovereignly by God. This is in distinction to the imperative in Ephesians 5:18 which states that Christians are responsible for being Spirit-filled.
4:18). Peter and John, however, already had received orders that superseded those of the council, and they fearlessly said so (4:19, 20). The end of the council proceedings brings us to today's text.

**Major Theme Analysis**
*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

**Elements of Corporate Prayers (Acts 4:23-25)**

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.
24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,
25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?"

**Sharing one another's burdens (23)**

*God wants us to help carry other's burdens (Gal 6:2)*
2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

*By undoing bonds and burdens of the oppressed (Isa 58:6-7)*
6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

*By sharing in suffering (1 Cor 12:26)*
26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

*By forgiving one another (Col 3:13)*
13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

*By helping one another (1 Thess 5:14)*
14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

**Being on one accord (24)**

*One accord through the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3-6)*
3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

*One accord in the Church (Eph 4:11-13)*
11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
One accord through love (Col 3:14)
14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

One accord in Christ (Phil 2:1-4)
2 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

One accord though baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:12-13)
12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Praising God for His protection (24-25)

Protection through God being our refuge (Ps 9:9)
9 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Protection through God being our rock, fortress and deliverer (Ps 18:2)
2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Protection through God being an ever-present help in trouble (Ps 46:1)
1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Protection through God’s faithfulness (2 Thess 3:3)
3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Protection through God’s knowledge of how to rescue godly men (2 Peter 2:9)
9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Protection because we love God (Ps 91:14)
14 "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

Protection through wisdom (Prov 4:6)
6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.

Elements of Prayers of Petition (Acts 4:26-30)

26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ,' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,
30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.

**Aware of opposition (26-27)**

**Opposition that is never too large for God (Judg 7:4-7)**

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, 'This one shall go with you,' he shall go; but if I say, 'This one shall not go with you,' he shall not go." 5 So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, "Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink." 6 Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. 7 The Lord said to Gideon, "With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the other men go, each to his own place."

**Opposition of the mighty (2 Chron 14:9-12)**

9 Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. 11 Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you." 12 The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled.

**Opposition that cannot be overcome by strength and size (Ps 33:16-19)**

16 No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. 17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. 18 But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, 19 to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

**Opposition that may seem to be overbearing (2 Cor 1:8-10)**

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

**Opposition by people who have been captivated by Satan (2 Tim 2:24-26)**

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

**Opposition sometimes seem overwhelming, but the answer is to consult and rely on God (Josh 9:1-2)**

9 Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things — those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)— 2 they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.

**Opposition because of doing God's work (2 Tim. 3:12)**

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,
In agreement with God's purposes (28)

**Because God's plans stand firm forever (Ps 33:10-11)**
10 The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. 11 But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

**Because God determines the outcome (Prov 16:9)**
9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.

**Because God's purposes will prevail (Prov 19:21)**
21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.

**Because God has sworn to do what He has planned (Isa 14:24)**
24 The Lord Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.

**Because God's purposes will stand (Isa 46:10)**
10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

**Because of God's great power (Jer 32:17)**
17 "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

**Because nothing is impossible for God (Matt 19:26)**
26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Depending on the power of God (29-30)

**God's power that performs miracles (Ps 77:14)**
14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

**God's power that is our life's stronghold (Ps 27:1)**
1 The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?

**God's power that gives us strength (Phil 4:13)**
13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

**God's power through His grace (2 Cor 12:9-10)**
9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

**God's power that provides endurance and patience (Col 1:11)**
11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully
**Power of Answered Prayer (Acts 4:31)**

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

**Power over the physical (31)**

*Power over physical death (Mark 5:38-42)*

38 When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” 40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.

*Power over physical placement of resources (Matt 21:1-6)*

21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" 6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

*Power over the use of all resources (Mark 14:13-16)*

13 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. 14 Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 15 He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." 16 The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

*Power over Divine intervention (Jonah 4:5-8)*

5 Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. 6 Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. 7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

*Power over provision of resources (Gen 22:9-13)*

9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.
Power over the spiritual (31)

Spiritual power for eternal life (John 4:14)
14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Spiritual power that leads us into the likeness of Jesus (1 Cor 15:46-49)
46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

Spiritual power that leads to perfection (Heb 12:22-24)
22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Spiritual power through the full armor of God (Eph 6:12-13)
12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Spiritual power in the inner being (Eph 3:16-19)
16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Power through the Holy Spirit (31)

Power of the Holy Spirit to preach (1 Cor 2:3-5)
3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Power of the Holy Spirit to demolish strongholds (2 Cor 10:3-4)
3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Power of the Holy Spirit working in us (Eph 3:20)
20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Power of the Holy Spirit that works in our weaknesses (2 Cor 12:9)
9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

You can imagine that there was great concern in the church over the fate of Peter and John, and likely over the implications of their fate for the church. Peter and John were arrested, jailed, and then put on trial (of some sort) before the highest religious court in the land, the same court that condemned Jesus to death. What a joy to see Peter and John emerge from their "trial" without a scratch. It must have been amusing for them to hear the apostles' report of what took place in that meeting. What fascinates me is the word "they" in verse 24: "When they heard this they raised their voices to God with one mind. . . . " "They" refers to the saints, not to the apostles. Peter does not give them a sermon on facing persecution (though he will teach on this subject in his first epistle, First Peter). These folks praise God with one heart and mind, and they petition God for the right things. Let's first consider their praise. Notice that the praise offered up by the church is grounded in Scripture. They cite from two of the Psalms. The church first praises God as the Creator (Acts 4:23-24). This most likely is a reference to Psalm 146:6, but there are many texts which speak of God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The question is, "What does God being the Creator have to do with the persecution of the saints in Jerusalem?" There are many ways that the creation theme is employed in the Bible, but for the church in Jerusalem, the primary biblical truth that sustains them is a realization that God is sovereign, even in their suffering. Look at the entire psalm from which this citation seems to be drawn (Psalm 146:1-10). The psalmist exhorts us to put our trust in God, rather than in men. It is God who can and who will protect us. Mortal men come and they go, but God is eternal. God made the heavens and the earth. There is nothing outside of His control. There is nothing beyond His power. The Lord particularly looks after the needy and the oppressed. Why, then, should the saints in Jerusalem fear mere men who rage against the gospel, when their all-powerful God is with them? The second text they cite is also from the Psalms, this time from Psalm 2 (Psalm 2:1-12). What is interesting about the use of this psalm in our text is that it originally spoke of the folly of Gentile kings plotting against the Lord and His Christ. The church understands that the psalm likewise applies to the Jewish leaders who conspired together against Jesus Christ. In effect, they are no better than Gentiles when they reject Jesus as the Messiah. As the psalm goes on to say, God laughs at the futile efforts of men to resist Christ because He has installed Him as His king. The best thing those who have foolishly resisted Him can do is to repent and seek His favor, lest He return and destroy them. How appropriate this is to the situation at hand. The saints spoke of Jesus as God’s “servant” (Acts 4:27). Surely this is a reference to Him as the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah. Once again the opposition of wicked men to Jesus is seen as part of God’s sovereign plan, accomplishing what He had foreordained long beforehand (Acts 4:27-28). The saints did not ask for God’s vengeance upon their opponents. Neither did they ask to be delivered from all suffering and adversity. Instead, they prayed for boldness to proclaim the gospel, and for His attesting signs and wonders which would manifest the presence and power of Jesus in their midst (Acts 4:29-30). Then, after they prayed, the place where they were staying shook, and all were filled with the Holy Spirit. The manifestation of the Spirit was courageous proclamation of the gospel (Acts 4:31).

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/8-first-opposition-acts-41-31)

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

The phrase "the Christian community" has special meaning for believers. It describes the relationship of love and concern we experience in our local churches and even among believers worldwide. This sense of community began in the first century as the believers lived and shared together. We use the word "community" in different ways. Sometimes we refer to the city or to the part of the city in which we live. Other times we use the word to refer to a social group bound together by some common characteristics or interests. When we speak of the Christian community, we usually use the latter meaning. Our faith in Christ and our concern for each other bind us together into a close-knit community. One way we demonstrate our concern is by praying for one another. What can we do to increase our practice of praying for each other as the early church did? We
can attend our midweek prayer meeting and pray earnestly and diligently for each other. Among other requests, we should remember to pray that all of us will speak boldly for the Lord. We can ask our Christian friends to share their prayer needs and then remember those needs in our prayers. We may even want to keep a record of these prayer requests. If we are talking to a Christian friend about a concern, we can pray with him at that time. One of our responsibilities as a part of the Christian community is to pray for each other.

**Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator**

1. The apostles and the believers turned to God in the face of opposition (Acts 4:23-24)
2. People have always rebelled against God even though He is sovereign (vss. 25-27)
3. Even though people rage against God, He is using them to accomplish His plans (vs. 28)
4. The believers prayed for the ability to continue to preach in the face of opposition (vs. 29)
5. The signs God did through His people point back to God and exalt Jesus (vs. 30)
6. When believers pray together and for one another, the Holy Spirit works in powerful ways (vs. 31)