

Good morning! My name is Matt Chesney and it is my pleasure to be worshipping with you this morning. If you are visiting this morning, I want to welcome you Eagle Ridge and invite you to consider making this your home. Normally, you might think that with the new year, and Christmas being over, that we would be starting something new. But, we started something pretty awesome in the Fall that we want to see through - and that is our study of the Book of Acts. In the months leading up to Advent we read, studied and discussed chapters 1-4 of the book. We spent 7 weeks working through just 4 chapters - and to be honest, we didn't even make it all the way through chapter 4. Our title for that series was "Movement gains Traction" and that's exactly what we were doing - we were developing traction to launch ourselves forward while we were looking at how the Apostles were doing the same thing! Now, we are moving into the next section and we will be picking up the pace a bit. Because, of course, traction gains momentum. I don't want to get all Newtonian on you here, but from a physics standpoint momentum is simple: it's just mass times velocity - or how much of something you have combined with a speed and direction. And this is where we are at in the book of Acts. Thousands of people have come to follow the Way Jesus taught and follow Him and they have been given a mission, a commandment, to go to the ends of the earth.

If you missed out on the first 4 chapters I would strongly encourage you to go to our [website](#) and watch the videos for those sermons. We've been using these [journals](#) to help us walk through the text and if you don't have one, just let us know - and we'll get you one to use as we continue. But, before we get into today's message, we thought it

would be appropriate to sum up the first few chapters and give you a preview of the next few with a short **video**.

Ok, so here are the major takeaways that I want you to have from that: First, **We are the living temple of God**. When Jesus ascended into heaven and sent his Holy Spirit to Earth, He filled us with himself and empowered us to complete His mission. As a result, you may remember if you were here, that **All Christian Ministry** depends on the activity of the Holy Spirit. Second, There was **resistance** to this change from both within and outside the church. At the start of chapter 4, Peter and John were thrown in jail just for preaching about Jesus - which is where we are going to pick up the story today. But third, that **persecution contains seeds of hope**, because God uses all things for his Good.

So, let's pick up the story and allow the momentum to carry us forward. Read with me in Chapter 4 verses 23-24: "When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God..."

See, this is the moment - the KEY moment of the movement. This is where we find out if Jesus' teachings stuck, if these people are really faithful and determined - or if they were just jumping on a bandwagon of something new and exciting. See, for the first time in this movement, things got tough. This isn't all peace, love, and happiness. Their

leaders were thrown in jail for committing NO crime. Then they were threatened multiple times to stop, “or else.” And yet, they didn’t run stop. They didn’t give up. Instead, they did exactly what Jesus taught them to do - they prayed.

While I read this prayer, I want you to look at how they prayed. What do they communicate to God, what do they ask for, what do they want? **Let’s read:**

“Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,

who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“Why did the Gentiles rage,

and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves,

and the rulers were gathered together,

against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

Acts 4:24-30

Wow! What a prayer! I hope you were thinking about it as you read, but let's look at what they said in this **prayer**:

1. They proclaimed who God is - EXPLAIN
2. They acknowledged that they're not the first - EXPLAIN
3. They provide details of their situation - EXPLAIN
4. They ask for boldness - EXPLAIN - Discuss ACTS

And immediately God answers their **prayer** -

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:31

They prayed for boldness to continue speaking and God sent an earthquake and filled them with the Holy Spirit to grant them boldness to continue speaking! Wow!

Do you pray like that? I will admit that I don't. But I want to. I want to be so confident in the Lord I serve that I cry out in faith and know that he will answer. That when I am persecuted by the enemy and face things in my life that are impossible for me to deal with I can recognize who God is, acknowledge that he has done it before, tell him and trust him with the details of my problems, and ask him for the boldness to keep on speaking in the name of Jesus.

I am excited for us to dig deeper into this book - but I am more excited for what God is doing in our lives here and now. These words are written for us to know the truth. And the truth is that God hasn't stopped moving. He is inside of us and is using us to do his will.

Pray with me please.

Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who rescued our forefathers when they faced persecution by granting them your spirit to continue speaking in boldness, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. Lord, now look upon your people. We are scattered and persecuted by the enemy. We constantly turn away from you to pursue the things we desire for ourselves. We shy away from the commandment you gave to us to make disciples of all nations. We struggle to love others as you love us. And we grieve over

the hardships of this world. Grant us boldness to continue to speak your word, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. Because it is in his name that we will accomplish your mission and it is through the power of your Holy Spirit that we will be victorious with you in heaven. Amen.