

# Prayerful Obedience

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Acts chapter 1 and we can read from verse 12 to verse 14. Acts 1 from verse 12 to verse 14. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter and James and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Lotus, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren.

Do you remember that we are going through Acts just now, we've just begun. This will be the fifth or the sixth sermon on Acts. And last week we looked at the ascension, that is Jesus going up to heaven. And we noticed that it was our concluding event. Jesus had finished his ministry. It didn't interrupt his ministry in this world. It was concluded with the ascension. We noticed also it was our very visible event. Everybody saw Jesus going up to heaven. We saw also that it was a divine event. God himself received him into that cloud as he was rising up. God welcomed him into the cloud because God was pleased with him. And we saw also that it was a physical event. Jesus rose with his body. And today he has a body in glory. And that tells us that glory itself is a spatial place. It's a place where people can live and walk. And we'll ask, we noticed that it was a comforting event. How great it was that Jesus himself allowed the people to see this happening. He didn't go and ascend up to glory secretly. He did it in full view of the people and what comfort they must have received.

And then we noticed that it was a great event. And then we noticed that as soon as he reached glory, as soon as he reached heaven, his very first thought was not upon himself but upon the people that he had left behind in this world. And he sent two messengers to them, two angels from heaven itself. And these angels addressed a question to them, why stand ye here gazing? And then these same angels gave them a promise. The promise was that Jesus would return in the same way that they saw him go. It will be a visible return, a physical return.

It will be a return in the divine time and with the divine blessing. And in many ways it will be a concluding event and a comforting event. Well now Jesus is in glory. What now do the disciples do in response to that question and in response to that promise? That's what we have in verses 12 to 14. What they did. Now there's two things that I wanted to look at this morning briefly as we can. They obeyed and they prayed. The first thing they did was they obeyed. They obeyed by returning to Jerusalem. That's what they did. They returned unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet. Now remember that every act of obedience is an act of faith in the of the Lord. And they were in the Lord. And they were in the Lord. And they were in the Lord. And they were here obeying Jesus. Jesus had said to them, be in Jerusalem and don't go away from Jerusalem until you receive this Holy Spirit my Father promised.

You see they were at this time on the Mount of Olives or here called Olivet. That's where the ascension up to heaven took place on a particular mountain outside Jerusalem. We're calling it a mountain though it's not really a very high spot.

[ 4 : 5 4 ] But it was higher than Jerusalem itself. It was just outside Jerusalem, about three quarters of a mile outside it. That's about what a Sabbath day's journey was. That's where Jesus chose to ascend to glory from on top of his mount of Olives.

Why? Well he didn't do it in Jerusalem itself. He didn't do it in Jerusalem.

He came outside of Jerusalem to do it. In many ways there would be fewer eyes upon him. But he did it in a place where he could see Jerusalem. Remember the Mount of Olives? Jesus had already come onto that mountain lots of times.

And on one occasion when he was coming to Jerusalem from the east and he had to walk over this Mount of Olives. He stopped on the top of it and he looked at Jerusalem and he cried over Jerusalem.

And I'm sure every time he came to the top of that mountain and he had this great commanding youth of Jerusalem. He would cry as he saw it. And that's the very spot that he chose to ascend up to glory.

[ 6 : 23 ] He was in a place where he could see the people of Jerusalem. But it was also a place where he had committed himself to his death.

Gethsemane, the garden of Gethsemane, was on the slopes of the mountain of Olives. That's where the garden was. And you know what happened in that garden, don't you?

Just a matter of days and indeed hours before Jesus died, he comes in that garden to pray and he weeps.

And he's in horror because he knows that he's going to die a cursed death. He knows he's about to enter through hell before his death.

And he's in horror at the very prospect. And that's the very place, the very mountain that Jesus chooses to ascend to glory.

[ 7 : 30 ] It was also a place where he had taught the disciples, apparently on many occasions. Certainly he taught them there about the destruction of the temple.

And it might indeed be the place to which Christ will return at the end of the world. There is a passage in Zechariah 14 and verse 4, which would seem to indicate at any rate, that there is a close connection between the Mount of Olives and Jesus' return to make a way of escape for his people.

That's not what we are looking at in particular today. But it is very interesting. That they obeyed Jesus' command to leave that mountain, which in many ways was so precious, and to go into Jerusalem, which in many ways was not a safe place to go.

They were known to be Jesus' friends. And these people in Jerusalem had crucified Jesus. They had put him on the cross.

They wanted rid of him. Their voices with one accord were shouting, Crucify him! And now for his friends to go back to Jerusalem was no easy thing.

[ 8 : 57 ] But they did go back because Jesus said, You must be in Jerusalem. You see, it was from Jerusalem that the gospel had to go forth.

They would be in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit would come upon them. Then they would preach the gospel. And it had to begin at Jerusalem.

There could be no other spot in the whole world from which the gospel would begin to go forth under the power of God's Spirit than from Jerusalem.

It had to be from there. You read Isaiah 61. You will find there that there's a picture of the glory of God rising up on Jerusalem.

And when the glory shines upon Jerusalem, then she shines out to all the world. She is so attractive in her glory, that it's then that the people will flock into the people of God.

[ 10 : 12 ] They will flow into the people of God. But it had to be from Jerusalem. But it was not a safe place to be.

And it did take courage for these disciples to obey Christ and to return to Jerusalem. And you know, Christ is asking things of you today as well.

Christ is asking of you, Obedience. He asks you to obey implicitly all that He has commanded you. Some things you will find easy. Some things you will find very difficult. Some things you will find a torment to obey.

But Christ says from heaven, Obedience. And these disciples, they obeyed Christ first of all then by returning to Jerusalem.

[ 11 : 26 ] But then they obeyed Christ secondly by remaining in Jerusalem. They remained in Jerusalem.

They waited. That's what Jesus said, wasn't it, in verse 4. He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.

Now, these disciples, they obeyed Christ not only by going into Jerusalem, but by waiting there.

Now, you might think that was an easy thing to do. It was not an easy thing to do. Waiting can sometimes be the most difficult thing to do.

You see, these disciples, they had great news. They had seen the greatest events that the world had ever, ever witnessed.

[12:34] They had seen Christ going through the cross. They saw Christ raised in glory. They saw Christ going up to heaven, being welcomed into a divine cloud.

They saw Christ going up to glory. They heard the news that Christ will once again return in the same way that they had seen him go.

They had great news. They had things that were worth telling. And you can imagine how difficult it must have been to keep this to themselves.

As they went into Jerusalem, how easy it would have been for them to shout out, you were wrong. You Jews, you crucified him, but you were wrong. You thought he was dead and gone, but you're wrong.

You thought that he was an enemy of God, but we know different. And you can almost imagine them, humanly, wanting to go and tell the people how they knew things had worked out.

[13:52] But the time was not right. Jesus knew the time wasn't right. They didn't have a proper understanding yet of the Gospel.

They would have gone, as we saw already, to the wrong people. They wouldn't have gone to anybody but the Jews with this message.

Jesus says, wait for the Spirit. Now notice, there is a waiting. It's quite conceivable that Jesus could have ascended to glory, and in the next minute have poured out the Holy Spirit upon them.

He could quite conceivably have done that. But Jesus chose to have at least ten days' wait. So that these disciples would learn what it was to wait upon God.

Jesus deliberately had a ten-day wait between the ascension and the pouring of the Spirit upon Pentecost.

[15:09] Jesus said, And you know, every time of waiting is God appointed. If you are living in obedience to Christ, every time of waiting is Christ appointed.

Now these disciples, they obeyed Jesus, and they waited in the upper room. When they came into Jerusalem, they went up into an upper room, where abode the eleven disciples.

That upper room may have been the one where Jesus had the Last Supper with the people. It may have been the room where he appeared to these disciples after his resurrection, on one Lord's Day after another.

We're not sure about that, and we can certainly never prove it. But it would seem a very probable thing to say. And it was into that upper room that they went and waited, and they shared.

Notice how they waited together. Not just that they went into Jerusalem and waited, but they waited together in one room, so that they could share, so that they could remind each other, so that they could encourage each other.

[16:56] They waited together as one flock of sheep. And you look at the list that is given here. Peter.

Peter was in many ways the spokesman of these disciples. The one who at one time said, depart from me, Jesus, for I am a sinful man.

He was the one who let Jesus down at the cross. He was the one who denied him. But now he's the one who is waiting, waiting.

James, James it would seem, you see. James, James was the first one to die for his faith. He was certainly the first apostle that we are told of, who died as a Christian, because he loved the Lord Jesus.

He was beheaded by Herod. John that was a beloved disciple the one who in many ways was closest to Jesus the one who seemed to have an intimacy that the others didn't have and who would soon write a gospel Andrew and Philip they also were among those disciples along with the other three who joined Jesus from the circle of John the Baptist Thomas the one who doubted the one who said he wouldn't believe he is no one of those who has seen Jesus go to heaven and he's now in this room obeying Christ he can't see him now but he's obeying him now though he doesn't see him Bartholomew his other name it would seem was Nathaniel he was the one who was told that he would see the son of man with heavens opened and the angels ascending and descending on him now here's Bartholomew having witnessed the ascension of Christ to heaven and he's waiting for heaven to open for the pouring of the Spirit by Jesus James the son of

[ 19 : 17 ] Alpheus we don't know very much about him at all he's listed but we don't know much Simon the Lotus should be called Simon the cellar and the cellars were those people who thought that they would bring the kingdom of God by force they were going to battle against the Romans they were going to thrust them out with their own strength but now he is among those people who wait for God's Spirit to bring God's kingdom and Judas the brother of James some say that he is the one who wrote the epistle of Jude we do not know but he had to be distinguished from Judas Iscariot which became the most notorious notorious name in the world of that day and every time there was a Judas mentioned they almost want to rush in the qualification not to scarier not to scarier well these were the eleven disciples and you'll notice who's not there Judas Iscariot is not there with them but they all share together they remained together they reminded each other in this upper room well we've looked at their obedience their first act of obedience to the risen Christ they returned to Jerusalem and they remained in Jerusalem secondly their prayer the second thing that they did once Christ had returned to heaven was they prayed and waiting and waiting is never wasted if it is time spent in obedience and in prayer and these disciples prayed these all continued with one accord in prayer with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren the words and supplication I don't think really should be there the best the best of all of them but nothing is lost by that they all continued with one accord with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren let's look at this prayer first of all prayer was a new experience for them prayer was for these disciples a new experience first of all prayer ■

This is for them a new experience. In the Gospels again and again, the focus is on Jesus. Jesus is often spoken of as in prayer.

Going away to a lonely place to pray. Going up on a mountain to pray. Spending the night in prayer. Saying that such and such a disease cannot be cured except by prayer.

He is the one supremely who is praying. But the disciples, it would not seem that they had this prayer at all.

I'm not saying that they never prayed. But they never prayed together in the way that they're doing now. For them this was a new experience.

[ 23 : 31 ] Jesus prayed because he had a terrific mission to carry out. But the disciples didn't. While Jesus was in this world, the disciples were receiving.

And often when people are receiving, they're doing it without prayer. But now the disciples have a mission that what they received, they are now to give.

And now they are beginning to pray the way Jesus prayed. Prayer was for them a new experience. It was also a new experience for them. Because they had a new intimacy with God. They had never prayed before like they prayed now.

Because they prayed with one another. With a mission in view. But also they're praying to God. In a way that they've never prayed before.

[ 24 : 37 ] Because now Jesus is in heaven. And when they're stretching their hands out to heaven. They're stretching their hands to a heaven that holds Jesus on the throne.

Jesus is now in glory. And the disciples for the first time are worshipping him in heaven. Now they have a new intimacy with God.

Because now they can pray and they know more about what God is like than they ever did before. Because they saw God in Jesus.

And what Jesus was like was so beautiful. But now they can pray and they know more about what God is like. But they're also coming to God through Jesus.

They're approaching God through their Saviour who is on the throne. And it was also new.

[ 25 : 54 ] In the sense that they could approach God in prayer at any time. Before this there was very much the idea among the Jews.

That they could pray at set times. At evening worship or at morning worship. When the sacrifices were ascending in the temple.

That was the appropriate time to pray. But now they are praying. And they can pray at any time. Jesus the sacrifice has gone to heaven.

And prepared a way for them. So prayer was for them a new experience. Secondly we know that they all prayed.

They all continued with one accord in prayer. They all prayed. There was no one in that room who never felt the need to pray.

[ 26 : 58 ] They all felt the need to pray. The disciples we have mentioned them already. Some of them had backslid.

They had all deserted Jesus. But now they are all in prayer. To heaven. To God. Through Jesus. You also have the women mentioned.

These were the women we assume that came with them from Galilee. That gave to Jesus out of their material possessions. They sacrificed so much for him.

And they followed him to care for them. To feed them. To clothe them. And now these women are in prayer. To glory to heaven.

Through Jesus. But you also notice that Jesus' own mother was there in prayer. There was a time you know when she sent a message to Jesus.

[ 28 : 12 ] To try and get him out of the public eye. And she said he's mad. He's gone mad. He's beside himself. He's gone mad.

But now here she is. In prayer. To this Jesus. A humbled woman. Who has learned so much. And she is in prayer. Not at all in the Roman Catholic sense. Having a special place. So they prayed to Mary first.

And then through her to Jesus. Here is Mary herself. The one who brought Jesus into this world. The one whose son Jesus will always be.

She is now praying to him. In glory. And you also find in that room praying.

[ 29 : 19 ] His brethren. Jesus' own brothers. Are praying. They also had said. Jesus is mad. They also are among those people.

Who are going to take Jesus by force. Out of the public eye. They were the ones. In John 7. And we are told specifically. They did not believe Jesus.

In fact. They made fun of Jesus. And of his claims. They had shared a bed with him. They grew up with him. They ate at the same table with him.

And they did not believe his claims. They had a great intimacy with Jesus. But they did not believe him. Until the resurrection.

And at the resurrection. We are told that Jesus appeared. To one of these brothers. He appeared to James. James. Jesus.

[ 30 : 51 ] Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. The word that is used for prayer here. The word that is often used for worship.

Prayer then was a new experience for these people. They all prayed. They all prayed. Thirdly. They prayed continually. These all continued in prayer.

The word for continually comes from the word for strength. And then it comes to me. And then it comes to me. And then it comes to me. Endurance. So the word means something like.

They all prayed enduringly. Perseveringly. Perseveringly. Constantly. They prayed and they prayed. They felt opposition.

But they kept on praying. They felt strength and endurance. And they expressed it in prayer. They prayed and they prayed and they prayed.

[ 31 : 55 ] This was not a brief prayer of thanksgiving. Or a brief prayer of worship. Nor was it a long, long, endless prayer.

The idea is that they kept coming back in prayer. They kept coming in prayer. So the church was continually coming to God.

Through Jesus in prayer. In fact, you find this word used quite frequently in the book of Acts. They continued in the apostles' doctrine.

In the breaking of bread. They continued to speak boldly. They continued. They continued. You look yourselves when you go home.

The number of instances of that word. They continued. They endured. They persevered. The idea is that the church has such strength now.

[ 32 : 56 ] That it can pray and pray and witness and witness. The church is strong. And they express that strength and their perseverance in prayer.

They prayed. They prayed. They prayed continually. But they also prayed with one accord. They prayed unanimously.

Now let's be careful here. When you say that they prayed with one accord. We're not saying that they all felt the same way.

Because I'm sure they didn't all feel exactly the same way. There were some in that company who had more to regret than others.

There were some who had a greater degree of intimacy with Jesus than others. Mary knew more about him. The brothers knew more about him in his youth.

[ 33 : 59 ] But the disciples knew more of his teaching. Peter knew what it was like to be a backslider and coming back and so on. They weren't all feeling the same way.

That's not what it means to pray in one accord. Nor does it mean that they all know the same things. Obviously the disciples would know more.

Because they were the ones who heard his teaching. Some of the others, these people may not have known so much. And it's not that they would all have the same work to do either.

These women would not be preaching. Only the disciples, the male disciples would be preaching. So what does it mean then that they were praying with one accord?

It means that they were all addressing Christ. As God. As Lord. And as Saviour. These were all with their faces turned towards heaven.

[ 35 : 09 ] And they together prayed. To Christ as God. To Christ as their Lord. whom they obeyed. And to Christ as their Saviour.

Who forgave their sins. That's what it means to pray with one accord. It's your view of God. That is the same.

God as he has shown himself. In Christ Jesus. And they prayed in one accord. You know that this word is used ten times in the book of Acts.

In one accord. In one accord. You can look it up yourselves when you go home. The church was continually. The church was continually in one accord.

But it's also used in the same book. For the enemies of the church. They were also more united than they were ever before.

[ 36 : 14 ] The church was unanimous. In their address to God. But so were the enemies unanimous. In their rejection of Christ.

As God. And Lord. And Saviour. They were rejecting. And they were unanimous. You often find it. Used in that way in the book of Acts. The enemies are coming together. They are things in common. So prayer was a new experience.

They all prayed. They prayed continually. They prayed with one accord. And what now did they pray for?

What were they doing in prayer? They were praying. I'm sure first of all. Because they knew the great task.

[ 37 : 12 ] That lay ahead of them. They had a mission. That was new. A task for which they felt so inadequate. And they prayed.

To God about this. But secondly. They prayed for the gift. Of the spirit. They prayed.

For the gift. Of the spirit. Yes. Jesus has promised them. Remain in Jerusalem.

And you will receive the promise. Of my father. But do you think. For one moment. That they would just sit around. Waiting for this.

Holy spirit. To come upon them. No. They prayed. For this spirit. It's not because they doubted.

[ 38 : 11 ] It's not because they doubted. That if they didn't pray. He wouldn't come. And it wasn't because. They were saying. We're lazy. We need the spirit.

We won't do it ourselves. We are praying for the spirit. Because they are like Christ. You remember Christ yourselves.

When he was in the river Jordan. And the John the Baptist. Was baptizing him. What does Luke record him as doing? He was praying.

He was praying. He was praying. As the gift. Of the spirit. Came upon him. When the spirit.

Came upon him. Like a dove. He was praying. And in that passage. We read. In Luke 11. Jesus. Says.

[ 39 : 11 ] That if they ask. The father. For the spirit. They will receive. The Holy Spirit. And that's precisely. What they're doing.

They're praying. For the very thing. That God promised them. God promised them. Power. And ability. Through the passion.

Of the Holy Spirit. And now they are praying. For that. Very power. And for that. Very passion. You see. You see.

If you don't pray. You will not receive. If you do not pray.

For the gifts of the spirit. You will not receive. The gifts of the spirit. If you do not pray.

[ 40 : 11 ] For the strength. To tell others. About Christ. You will not receive. The strength. To tell others. About Christ. If you will not pray.

For the strength. To tell an important person. About Christ. Or your family. Or your friends. Or your workmates. Or your schoolmates. If you don't pray.

For these things. You won't receive. You won't receive. God intends you to pray. For the Holy Spirit. To equip you. For each day's needs. For each day's witness. You must pray.

Never must you be complacent. The disciples. Were not complacent. And they prayed. For the gift.

[ 41 : 10 ] That was to come. And you know. You might. Be saying yourself today. I'm not a Christian.

God wants to make me a Christian. He'll make me a Christian. It's not my place. That's not what you've learned.

From the Bible. Whatever you've learned. That's not from the Bible. If you want to be a Christian. Then you ask.

God. To give you. What he promises. To give you. God promises. That he who comes unto me.

I will in all wise. Cast out. God expects you. To pray. That you will come to him.

[ 42 : 12 ] That you will believe in him. That you will follow him. He promises. But he expects you. To pray.

Never. Never. To say complacently. If God saves me. He'll do it. You pray. And those of you who are Christians.

Don't spend your lives in complacency. You know we have a lot of work to do. We have a mammoth task. There are people dying without Christ daily around us.

You and I are the only ones who can tell these people about Jesus. And we can't tell them unless the Holy Spirit equips us.

And the Holy Spirit will only equip us. If we pray. For that gift. Please.

[ 43 : 15 ] Never be complacent. Wait. In prayer. Upon God. Let us pray. Lord God almighty.

We do acknowledge before thee this day. That we have a great task to do. And that we have failed to do it properly.

And we would ask thee oh Lord. As thy church here in Dingwall. That thou wouldst give us. Of thine own Holy Spirit.

The drenching that we need. To unfit us for the tasks. That we ought to do. Grant us oh Lord. The spirit of prayer.

To pray continually to thee. And in one accord. Grant oh Lord. That Satan would not be allowed. To rob us of prayer.

[ 44 : 16 ] May all the glory be thine. For we ask it in Jesus. His precious name. Amen. Amen.