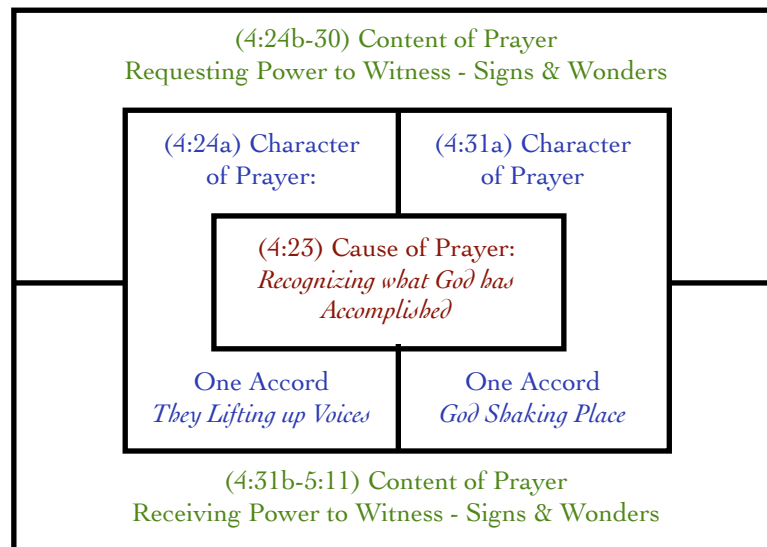


**Introduction:** There are five main divisions encompassing three basic ideas. The first idea explains the *cause* of prayer. The second idea describes the *character* of prayer. The third idea unfolds the *content* of prayer.

**I. The Cause of Prayer (4:23).** The apostles were confronted with the threatening council of the priests and Sadducees who prohibited them from preaching the Gospel (3:1-4:22; 5:12-42) The apostles shared this problem with the church. The church in turn took council on the matter. First, it was this difficult circumstance which caused the church to seek the mind of the Lord. Second, it was the communication between the members of the church related to these circumstances which brought the fellowship together in prayer. Notice the order, the church clarifies the problem among themselves, then seeks a solution from the Lord in prayer. The members communicated with one another, before communicating with God. Furthermore, it should be observed that not only is it God Who ultimately brought about their difficult circumstance, but it is God Who the church turns to for answers. God is the supreme cause for this church praying.

**II. The Character of Prayer (4:24a; 31a).** The church was of "one accord" and "assembled together". They not only enjoyed fellowship with God, but they were also in close fellowship with one another. The object of a prayer meeting is God, but the condition is unity among the brethren. Their unity existed not in a cultural, racial, gender or economic commonality, but rather in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus



Christ. They had been converted to Christ; they had publicly committed themselves to the authority of Christ through baptism; they were now wholeheartedly observing all things that Christ had commanded them. (Matt. 28:18-20) Not only is their submission to Christ demonstrated when they "lifted up their voice to God", but Christ manifested His sovereignty over them by shaking the place where they had assembled. A prayer meeting is therefore characterized by the sovereignty of Christ uniting His people together wherein they share the same mind and heart in the Lord.

**III. The Content of Prayer (4:24b-30; 4:31b-5:11).** There are two parts to this prayer (4:24b-30): First, an acknowledgement of God's absolute sovereignty. He is the Maker, Owner and Governor of heaven, earth, the sea and all that is in them. God exists within Himself having inherent meaning in His own eternal and immutable Being. All things made by God have their existence and meaning in

Him as well. Consequently, God governs all things according to His eternal purpose independent of time and space. On this truth rests the whole nature of prayer itself: first, knowing God in the fulness of His Being (adoration and thanksgiving); second, knowing God in the fulness of His will (petition and intercession). Prayer does not determine God's will, but simply discovers it. However, although prayer does not change God, it does change His people. This praying church was seeking to be conformed to the will of God, whatever that might be. Jesus Himself gave the perfect example, "nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." (Lk. 22:42) Second, an argument from God's inspired Word. Psalm 2:1,2 is quoted and then applied. The church is not asking God to deliver them from the priests and Sadducees, but rather to give them power to witness the Gospel despite the threats levied against them. If it is our purpose to know the will of the Lord in prayer, then it should be our procedure to established our arguments in prayer on His Word.

The Lord answers this prayer (4:31b-5:11). "They spake the Word of God with boldness." However, in order to affirm His absolute sovereignty, God also administered a severe form of discipline towards those members who infringed on His authority. A married couple lied to God regarding a financial commitment, and in consequence, God caused both to suffer immediate death. Although this was an unusual form of discipline, there is evidence that God does sometimes bring sickness to His people as a disciplinary measure. (1 Cor. 5; Js. 5) "And great fear came upon all the church." (5:11) May we therefore also learn to honour our sovereign God through our corporate prayer meetings.