

Breakthrough

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

1. Pray that Brookwood equips people to experience a breakthrough with God.
2. Pray for people to become open to interruption.
3. Pray for people to persevere in their faith.

A. Introduction

(Acts 2:47; 3-4)

Interrupted, Perseverance

THE RHYTHM OF THE CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN MARKED BY INTERRUPTION AND PERSEVERANCE.

Acts 3:1 -10 (NIV)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Explain Acts

The church was just beginning.

These two chapters almost read like chapters written by St Mark, they have that sort of urgency and immediacy we see in the book of Mark.

The church is young and growing; 3000 people got saved on the day of Pentecost, and there are new people joining every day.

The church is also popular.

Acts 2:47 ... enjoying the favor of all the people.

Acts 3–4 gives us some insight into the way the early church and early Christians lived and outworked their faith.

Luke is also said to have chosen this specific miracle and story to write about because it is the first story of the church being persecuted.

B. INTERRUPTION AND PERSEVERANCE

(Acts 3:1-10)

Acts 3:1-10 (NIV)

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1. REGULAR RHYTHM.

(Psalm 55:16-17; Daniel 6:10; Acts 3:1)

Acts 3:1(NIV)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.

The church had a regular Rhythm.

At the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour— 3 P.M., the hour of the evening sacrifice (Jos. Ant. xiv. 4, § 3). (The Minchah, or the lesser Minchah)

The traditions of later Judaism had fixed the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours of each day as times for private prayer.

There was a long tradition of regular prayer 3 times a day.

Psalm 55:16-17 (NIV)

*As for me, I call to God, and the LORD saves me. **Evening, morning and noon** I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice.*

Daniel 6:10 (NIV)

*Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. **Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.***

Whether they were near the temple or away from the temple, they had a culture of regular prayer; once the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, they didn't lose this rhythm.

Both practices passed into the usage of the Christian Church certainly as early as the second century and probably, therefore, in the first. The three hours were observed by many at Alexandria in the time of Clement (Circa A.D. 200). The seven became the “canonical hours” of Western Christendom, the term first appearing in the Rule of St. Benedict (ob. A.D. 542) and being used by Bede (A.D. 701).

There was an early tradition of regular daily set aside prayer that propelled the church through the first 200-300 years of growth, and one which many are trying to recapture today.

The story of a growing church is the story of a church that practiced regular, daily rhythms of prayer.

I love the Aramaic word for prayer.

Slotha It literally means “to set a trap.”

Slotha:

To set your mind like a trap and wait patiently to catch the thoughts of God; that is, to trap inner guidance and impulses. Attentiveness, adjustment or tuning in.

Regular set aside prayer, a rhythm of prayer enables us to tune in.

When we are tuned in, the interruptions happen.

2. INTERRUPTED.

(Genesis 12:1-4; Exodus 3:3; 1 Samuel 3:3; Acts 4:4)

Acts 3:4-8a (NIV) *Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.*

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk.

It was almost like Peter and John had walked past the man, like Peter turns, something prompts him, he’s tuned in.

It is almost like a little ‘Ahem,’ a little ‘excuse me,’ a nudge from the Holy Spirit.

A spontaneous moment in the middle of a regular rhythm.

How interruptible are we?

Neither apostle nor private Christian can subsist in the Divine life without frequent influences from on high... God gives grace for the time being, but no stock for futurity, because he will keep all his followers continually dependent on himself.

Adam Clarke (Commentating on Acts 4)

We can move along without being interrupted.

Maybe we can become a bit like Mary and Joseph of whom it says:

Luke 2:43 (NIV)

After the festival was over, while His parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.

Or Samson, 3 times he has defeated the Philistines, then in Judges 16:20

... He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

Judges 16:20b (NIV)

Or after victory at Jericho and Ai

Joshua 9:14 (NIV)

The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD.

Find space for encounter in breakthrough when things are going well.

I would be concerned if a rule of life or rhythm of prayer was not interruptible, if we became so fixed on the regular, we never responded to the spontaneous.

God interrupts

MOSES Exodus 3:3 Burning bush

SAMUEL 1 Samuel 3:3 (God is not frightened of repetition)

Abraham

Genesis 12:1-4 (NIV)

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...

Go from your country: Geographical relocation.

Your people: Tribal dislocation

Your father's house: Historical reorientation

New ways of thinking, Peter Acts 10

We need a prayer life that is open to INTERRUPTIONS. We need a life that is open to the spontaneous promptings of the Holy Spirit.

And sometimes God just wants to wake us up to adventure.

Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.

J.R. Tolkien

We should love the interruptions.

And this interruption leads to a great story, just like when it happens to Peter again in Acts 10

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

The church grows, the Gospel is preached,

Acts 4:4 (NIV)

But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

Breakthrough IS ALWAYS CONTESTED

3. **PERSEVERANCE.**

(Acts 4:18, 23-31; Romans 1:8-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:3)

They are thrown into custody for the night, and then the Sanhedrin tell them they must not do this anymore.

The church is contested.

The Sanhedrin, possibly the great Sanhedrin (because Gamaliel shows up in chapter 5, they think it was the great Sanhedrin), legislating all aspects of Jewish religious and political life within parameters laid down by Biblical and Rabbinic tradition.

Acts 4:8 (NIV)

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

These guys are like the local vicar or some sort of parish council; they are a very powerful group. When they stop, people normally stop. They could have you imprisoned, beaten or executed.

The church grows in a contested environment. Iran

Acts 4:23 -31 (NIV)

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "You made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David:

'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against His anointed one.'

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed. They did what Your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your Word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of Your Holy Servant Jesus."

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

They contended the decision.

Not in an outraged way

They raised their voices.

Together in prayer

They quoted the Bible verse 25 (Psalm 2)

They asked something simple: *Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.*

Basically, they are saying help us to persevere.

Consider this!

Consider their threats. So look upon them as to grant us deliverance. They did not purpose to abandon their undertaking; they resolved to persevere; and they expected that this purpose would involve them in danger.

Another commentator adds

And enable, etc. This is an instance of heroic boldness and a determination to persevere in doing their duty to God. When we are assailed by those ill power, when we are persecuted and in danger, we should commit our way unto God, and seek his aid, that we may not be deterred from the path of duty.

This was the way of prayer for the church and should still be the way of prayer for the church.

Secret History

As I said last year, we need to learn the art of perseverance in a culture of immediacy.

Romans 12:1-2 NIV

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. ...

Romans 12:2a (NIV)

Romans 1:8–10

... my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; ...

Romans 9b-10a (NIV)

2 Thessalonians 1:11a (NIV)

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you,

2 Timothy 1:3b (NIV)

... as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

C. Conclusion

(Acts 4:31)

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 4:31 (NIV)

1. What would it look like to have a regular rhythm?
2. How would life look if we became open to interruption?
3. How do I persevere?