

Acts 2:42-47 - "The Believers Meet Together"

September 27, 2020 - Outline and Scripture

Scripture

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. **43** And awe[a] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. **44** And all who believed were together and had all things in common. **45** And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46** And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Footnotes

Acts 2:43 Or fear

Outline

1. Greet one another, begin with prayer, and read Acts 2:42-47

2. Review Acts 2:1-41 very briefly.

3. Discuss the development of the new Christians in Acts 2:42.

—Significant commitment exists, nurtured by a devotion to four ongoing practices:

- 1) learning the apostles' teachings,
- 2) experiencing fellowship with one another,
- 3) sharing the Lord's Supper with each other, and
- 4) praying together

—*They Devoted Themselves*

A complaint common to times of religious revival is that its effects are not long-lasting, for the fervor quickly dies off and things return as they were before. Acts 2:42 quickly emphasizes that such is not the fate of the first Christian evangelistic effort. Why? Because "they devoted themselves," as the verse begins. Ajith Fernando writes, "'Devoting' (proskartereo) is the same word as is used in connection with the persistent devotion of the disciples to prayer in [Acts] 1:14 (translated 'constantly' there). . . The word is used often with the idea of 'persisting obstinately in' [C. K. Barrett, Acts, p. 164] something—a meaning that is appropriate here" (NIV Application Commentary, pp. 119-120). The new followers of Jesus Christ exhibit a measure of devotion to four practices that quickly develop and mature them in Christian faith: 1) the teaching of the apostles, 2) fellowship

together, 3) the breaking of bread, considered by many (including this writer) as a Lord's Supper reference, and 4) prayer. Where many mountain top experiences of faith fail is in follow up with new disciples of Christ. No such failing here.

—Religious fervor and commitment often fade quickly. How much of this lessening is to be expected, and how much can and should be prevented? Why?

—What four practices did the early church lead its participants to do? What might these four look like in our day? How might we benefit from each of these?

4. Discuss the winsomeness of the first Christians in Acts 2:43-47a.

—Christians are helping out one another in extraordinary and self-giving ways

—A depth of relationship among the members of the faith community continues to grow through worship and fellowship

—The above combines into a sense of societal favor and appreciation

—All Who Believed Were Together

Also present in the new Christian community is a depth of connectedness far outstripping anything its participants had previously known. Awe and wonder from a sense of God's abiding presence co-exists with a caring for each other well beyond the norm, with Christian brothers and sisters willing to share their resources to help out those in need. (No doubt there were many in great need for two reasons: 1) many were in Jerusalem for the festival and were staying longer than they had planned, and 2) the Christian church from its beginnings appealed to the poor both in heart and in finances.) This selfless serving of one another is not to be understood as some type of compulsory mandate, but rather as "an unassuming, self-giving meeting of physical needs across all socioeconomic boundaries (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, p. 398)." Relationships develop and deepen as the new believers worship at the Temple and share meals in homes together, marking the new community as something radically different than what has been witnessed before in Jerusalem.

—Why is caring for one another such a powerful witness to Jesus Christ?

—The winsomeness of the first Christians stands in stark contrast to the often unfavorable ways Christians are described and portrayed in today's culture. Why is this the case? What are some ways to combat these impressions?

5. Discuss the continuing response to the faith community's growth and fellowship in Acts 2:47b.

- God adds to the growing number of new Christians with even more Christians
- Clearly understood as God's work, not the result of human initiative; yet there is a synergy between a vibrant faith community and a vibrant evangelism

—*The Lord Added to Their Number*

The combination of continuing development in Christian discipleship and continuing relational depth with one another leads to a winsomeness of witness. The inevitable result? God continues to add people to the community as more and more trust Christ and follow Him as Lord. It's hard to overemphasize the importance of this winsomeness the first Christians exhibit, especially when compared to the cultural stereotypes of Christians today as narrow-minded, bigoted, legalistic, and sharp-tongued. Even as we acknowledge the stereotypes are generally inaccurate and unfair, as stereotypes usually are, we also must admit that sometimes they are on target. Many claim that they are enamored of Jesus Christ, yet not so fond of His professed followers. Sometimes such a claim is an excuse. Other times it's the truth.

- Why is community so important to the vital practice of Christianity? How does this emphasis upon community in Acts 2 compare to the individualism and consumerism prevalent today?
- What can we learn from the first Christians? How might we take their example and translate it into something helpful and significant in our time?

6. Close in prayer.