

The Church – Part 5 The Book of Acts

Today we want to continue our study about God's church... the subject, God's church. Last time, we looked at some things in the book of Acts and other sections of Scripture, and I want to recall to your attention some of the things that we studied back then.

First, we see that God's church was a visible church, according to Acts chapter 2. Then we see some actions that took place in that local church at Jerusalem. They were steadfast. These are the people. They were steadfast in the apostles' teaching. That means doctrine, teaching of the Word of God. They were faithful. Then, they had fellowship one with another, a group of likeminded people sharing common interests, goals, experiences, and views. And the people also remembered. They remembered the Lord. They remembered His death.

They went from house to house breaking of bread, and this is something we Baptists like to do. We like to break bread. We like to eat a lot. But it went deeper than this back in this early church. They not only ate together but they remembered the Lord and they had the Lord's Supper as they went from house to house. It says, *And they continued daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house.* They not only ate a meal together; I believe they observed the Lord's Supper.

Let me read to you once again now I Corinthians 11:25-26. ²⁵*After the same manner also he took the cup... this is Jesus... when he had supped saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*** ²⁶*For as*

often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

We also saw that the people there in the Jerusalem church, the visible church, they prayed. It says, *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,* Acts 2:42.

We notice that not only were they steadfast, not only did they have fellowship, not only did they remember the Lord, they prayed. They continued steadfastly. They did what God wanted them to do as a local church, and we also mentioned last time about attitudes. The first attitude that I mentioned there was they agreed. They continued daily. This means they were consistent. They were with one accord. They were in agreement. There was no arguing, backbiting, or disagreement as to who was in charge of His church. And we need to take note of that today in churches that it's God's church. There should be no backbiting, arguing, or disagreement if we follow the example given here of this early church of Jerusalem.

We see that there is a progression that takes place there, how that they listened to the Lord, how that the church was set up according to His plan, not man's plan, but it was set up according to God's plan. God was in charge. It was and is His church today. And the temple in these verses, this was their meeting place.

Verse 46 says, *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house,* Acts 2:46. Not only were the people in agreement, but the people were thankful, and I believe this is very important. They were thankful for what they shared

together. They no doubt ate meals together as the Lord did with His disciples just before He was crucified.

In Matthew 26:26-27, it says, ²⁶*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.* ²⁷*And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.* Once again, it says, "as they were eating." They had a meal together, and then they observed the Lord's Supper with Him. He was there, and that's what we're to do today as a local church. We're to gather our hearts together. We're to be in agreement, no backbiting, nothing going on there that should interfere with our relationship with the Lord or each other.

But notice Acts 2:46. It says "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." These people had one goal and that was to exalt Jesus Christ. Well, the people agreed and the people were thankful, and also, the people had praise, not praise for each other. I'm sure they appreciated each other, but this was something that we need to understand today that they had praise to God. Acts 2:47 says "praising God." *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

I believe when we follow these basic guidelines in local churches today, understanding that we need to be steadfast in the apostles' doctrine... that's God's teaching... in fellowship, being likeminded people together serving God, remembering our Lord, His death, burial, and resurrection, and praying continually in prayer. And our attitude needs to be one of agreement, no backbiting, no arguing, no disagreements whatsoever. And the people were thankful. We need to be thankful today that Jesus first loved us and gave His life for us. And then the people had praise. We need

to be praising God constantly, not only individually, but as a church.

Now, notice something else with me if you would. Notice some results that took place in this early church. I see the first thing that took place was fear. Why? Why was their fear? Well, the Holy Spirit was present and signs and wonders were done by the apostles, according to Acts 2:43. It says, *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.* Please keep this in mind. A few weeks before what we are reading about, Jesus was crucified. Just before the crucifixion of Christ, the Bible says in Matthew 26:56, *But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*

Remember, even Peter had denied the Lord just before the crucifixion, and now, after Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, and we read about that in our previous studies... after he preached on the Day of Pentecost, possibly some of those same people who had cried, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him," had received Jesus Christ as Savior. People who had received Christ as Savior were now proclaiming Him as Lord instead of denying Him.

Those who were watching the happenings in Jerusalem knew that something supernatural was taking place. They had never seen anything like it. They were filled with wonder and awe and had a great reverential fear of what they were seeing with their own eyes. So, therefore, the Bible says, *And fear came upon every soul.* They knew something supernatural had taken place and was happening in their midst.

Notice not only was there fear, but there was unity. It says in Acts 2:44, *And all that believed were together.* Now, they were joined together

for the same cause. They were united. One of the best means for strengthening the faith of young converts is for them often to meet together for prayer, conversation, and praise. Hebrews 10:25 says, *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is but exhorting one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.*

Not only was there fear and unity, but the church had all things common. You read about that in Acts 2:44, as well, and it says they had all things common. In Acts 10:34 it says, *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.* Well, I believe that the Christians shared with each other what they had, but I also believe it goes deeper than that. I believe what they shared was more important than anything else they had, and that was the common salvation, meaning the Gospel is for everyone. Not only did they share what they had with each other; they shared what they had with people who were not with them, who were not members of that local church, who had never trusted Jesus as Savior.

In Jude 1:3, it says, *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* We as Christians, we should not hold onto what we have, as such, and not give it out.

What we have is eternal life, and we need to share that with the people who are around and about us as we come into contact with them daily. And this is what the early church did. They spoke the Word of God. They continued in the apostles' doctrine, that is, the teachings of God, and they shared that, not only with each other, not only encouraging each other,

but they went out and told others about the saving grace of God, of Jesus Christ.

Notice something else here that took place that was happening. They had all things common, and as we think about this, we also notice that they sold possessions. Acts 2:45 says, *And sold their possessions and goods.* Now, we do read in Acts 5 how that Ananias and Sapphira held back part of the selling price of some land. They died because they lied about how much they had given to the church. They died not because they didn't sell everything but because, as Peter said in Acts 5:3-4, they lied to the Holy Ghost, to God, about how much they sold the property for and as to how much they were giving to the church for the Lord's work. They said that they had given all the selling price, when in actuality they kept back part of it. They lied to God.

I do not believe everyone sold everything as we read in the book of Acts. We read in some places in the Scriptures where people retained property after they were saved. Acts chapter 12 talks about that. I do not believe people were instructed that they had to sell everything after they got saved. If that had been the case, then some might conclude that selling everything a person had was a prerequisite to be saved, and we know that works of any kind or money cannot save.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says it's not by works of righteousness, and Titus 3:5 talks about this. It says in Ephesians 2:8-9, *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

In Acts 12:12, it says, *And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.*

In Acts 16:15, it says, *And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.* This was a woman who had kept her goods; she kept her property; and she used that for the glory of God by allowing people to come in who were saved, and she took care of them.

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for this time we've had together. I pray for that person who needs salvation today. May they receive You as Savior right now by saying, "Jesus, come into my heart. I receive You right now." Help that person who is saved to serve you more today than yesterday, and help us to go forth proclaiming Jesus saves, for it's in His name we pray. Amen.

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