

The Biblical Church

Acts 2:41-47

Over the last couple of weeks, as we have looked at chapter 2 of the book of Acts, we have spoken about the birthing process of the Church. There was a time of expectation; an actual day of delivery; and then this new baby – this newly born creation from the heart and plan of God taking her place in the midst of the culture which surrounded her.

Look here in Acts 2:41

⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Suddenly, the birth has taken place... a new creation has been formed... but just like all newborns, **she didn't necessarily come with instructions!!** And there are three thousand in her ranks!! Bam... as I shared before, **that's a big Baby!**

How do you raise up such a new born?

Will she survive all the mistakes which will be made along the way?

Will she grow to be a strong, healthy, pure and beautiful Bride to her coming Groom, the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let's take a moment right now to consider the culture surrounding this new born:

- **She was born in Jerusalem of Judea** – a crazy, busy city consumed by Jewish, religious fervor and a harsh, Roman occupied government. On the one hand a religion with supposed devotion to the One, True God and on the other an embracing of a multiplicity of pagan gods. The Church will soon find that neither the religious Jews nor the secular/pagan filled mindset of the Romans would be friends, nor support her in any positive way.
- **She was born on a major Jewish Holy Day** – and many of these new converts won't be staying in Jerusalem for long. They won't have the opportunity to be raised up and nurtured; they won't have time to be disciplined in their faith – yet they'll take this new found faith back to their home countries. How this new faith is directed, corrected, and instructed becomes the work of missionaries like

Peter, Paul and a host of others through the years. But even at that, the growth of this faith is absolutely miraculous.

- **The Church was born in a time and a culture with no mass media** – the primary form of communication was by word of mouth or written letters – there were no means of mass information coverage (no printing press, newspapers or video media), no worldwide satellite television coverage; and no Internet, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter.

Yet the Word of God traveled quickly throughout the land. And we see a steady, powerful growth of the Gospel throughout the known world in only a matter of a few short years.

So, how did this new born baby get nourishment and strength?

I believe the next few verses in Acts 2 tells us very clearly. This isn't just how the Church of the First Century was nourished and grew and impacted their culture, I believe it is a lasting model even for the Church today. I believe that if we are to impact our culture with the hope of the Gospel, we need to pay attention to how it was first done and see where we need to be doing the same things.

Look at the next few verses here in Acts 2:42-47

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

*⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.***

What we see here isn't a **Church Growth Plan**, what we see is men and women living out their devotion to the Lord by **practicing the presence of Jesus on a daily basis**. Their lives were dramatically changed... their routines changed... the important things

of life have changed... their entire lifestyles changed. And what we see is the fleshing out of the biblical model of what Church ought to be.

- Not some formal setting of dryness and ritualistic activity
- Not a list of do this and don't do that
- But a real life change that is lived out... corporately... together.
- And they lived it in sincere devotion, with an earnest passion

When Luke uses the Greek word we see translated in the KJV and the NKJV as *continued steadfastly*, Strong's Concordance explains it as *being earnest towards, to persevere, be constantly diligent, to adhere closely to.*¹ Kittle brings out the idea of "being devoted to," "to focus on," "to hold fast to," and "to be in continually."²

Let me ask you, does that sound like the average relationship most Christians have with the local Body of Believers they connect with as their home Church?

What Luke is sharing with us is the true biblical model of the Church. And as we look at it, it becomes very clearly marked out by four major, yet very basic areas of activity.

1. As New believers, they *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: the Apostles' Doctrine*
2. As New believers, they *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: Fellowship,*
3. As New believers, they *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: the Breaking of Bread,*
4. And as New believers, they *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: Prayers.*

The end result of this **consistency and devotion** is seen in the next verse (43) "*Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the*

¹ James Strong, [A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 61.

² Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [Theological Dictionary of the New Testament](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 417.

Apostles.” And in verse 47, “*And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*”

Let’s look at each one of these four areas in the time we have left.

First of all, we see that the biblical Church was marked by the **teaching of the Word**: a devotion to *the Apostles’ Doctrine*. This was the teaching of the Word of God from the Old Testament, as well as the teachings of Jesus they had received as they walked with Him for three and a half years. It is the Greek word: *didache*. the teachings or doctrines of the Apostles.

And as the Apostles taught these things, they would have explained the connection of the Old Testament text: with its promises and prophecies, its covenants and blessings; how all of it would have been connected to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This is what the theologians call “*Messianic Christology*”. This would have been the very foundation of their doctrine and instructions.

It is amazing how you can look at the Old Testament and see how clearly it points us to the life and ministry of Jesus.

- Even from the very beginning of the covering offered by God to Adam and Eve after they had sinned;
- The way that God protected and kept Noah and his family while His wrath was poured out upon a non-believing, wicked world;
- The fact that even shortly after the time of the flood man tried to reach the heaven’s by his own spiritual efforts, but God brought confusion and division – in essence telling them that they cannot make it on their own;
- How God called a man like Abraham out of a completely pagan culture and revealed Himself to him;
- From Abraham we fast forward through his son Isaac the son of promise, the son of the miraculous, the son that was to be offered as a sacrifice, but God stopped Him and supplied the sacrifice:

- To Isaac's son Jacob (later to be called Israel), whom God blessed with 12 sons who would become the Twelve tribes of Israel;
- Yet we see how his one son, Joseph became a literal sacrifice which brought about the deliverance of his family, even though they had been the ones who had betrayed him;
- For over 400 years the children of Israel remained in bondage under Pharaoh until God spoke to a man named Moses. Moses tried to deliver the people **on his own strength**, so God had to humble him to make him realize it's not by the efforts of man that salvation can come;
- Then God redeemed the Children of Israel by breaking the bondage of Pharaoh and setting the people free;
- While in the wilderness travels God revealed Himself and gave to Moses the Law... the Law that no man could keep;
- So God also gave them the sacrificial system, but it was only temporary. The sacrifices had to be made over and over again;
- And on and on the history of Israel was truly "His story" of redemption for all of mankind...
- Until finally God sent His own Son to be the complete sacrifice for the sin of all mankind;

1 John 2

² *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

The *didache*, would have led these Jewish converts into understanding the completeness of the story of Jesus Christ as the Promised One, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. And the people *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: the Apostles' Doctrine*

Next we see that they *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to:*

Fellowship. This is the Greek word *koinonia*. The word is translated basically in four

different ways, all having a similar undergirding of meaning. *Koinonia* has the idea of *sharing, fellowship, communion, and contribution* (connecting both the one who contributes and the one who receives). It deals with *partnership* and *participation* but with the deepest of commitments. For the Greek culture a committed friendship of devoted care and lasting concern was the supreme expression of *koinonia*.

True *koinonia* is the ***living of life together***, not just an occasional meeting, but a full on involvement of life with each other. The word fully speaks of the establishment and commitment of the “*family fellowship... expressed in the life of a Church*”.³ We have a building we call the *koinonia* building designated as such to be a place of gathering, communion and celebration together as a Church family – it’s where we eat and have fellowship together.

But the four walls of the building called the church shouldn’t be the only place where *koinonia* happens. We as the Church should be *continually steadfast* and *constantly devoted to koinonia*: Fellowship with one another and the living of life with one another. This can only happen when there is a growing reality of humility within ourselves, “to not think more highly of our selves than we ought” (Romans 12:3), in order that we can have a true love for each other (1 John 4:7, 11).

How it must grieve the Lord’s heart when people come into our fellowship here at Calvary and feel alone in the midst of the crowd. It’s far too easy to blame someone else for their not joining in, when the responsibility is upon each of us to have koinonia with one another. That one area where our Lord said the world would know we are His disciples is that we would have love, one for another (John 13:35).

This action or commitment to *koinonia* logically lead to times of sharing meals together. This brings us to the **Third of the major marks of the true biblical model of the Church**: the Believers *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: **the Breaking of Bread.***

³ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 450.

Now don't misunderstand the point here, *the Breaking of Bread* didn't just mean sharing a meal together. Historically we find that often, as the church gathered together they would share in what is called an *Agape Meal or an Agape Fest*. It was a time of sharing their love for each other through the sharing of a meal together. *Agape* is the Greek word for **love** – love at its highest understanding, a *self-sacrificial* love, the kind of love God works through us. These *Love Fests or Agape Meals* would quite often end with a time of sharing in the Lord's Supper together. There would be a particular time of *the Breaking of Bread* and receiving from the cup in remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ.

This time of sharing in the Lord's Table led to the **Fourth mark** of the biblical Church as they *continued steadfastly* or were *constantly devoted to: Prayers*.

The opportunity God offers to us to touch heaven and have **audience with the King of Glory**.

The prayers of the saints have always been THE power of the Church.

It was following a time of focused prayer as the 120 were in one accord, seeking the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that the church was born and the fullness of the Holy Spirit became a part of the movement and growth of the Church. It was through the **consistent and persistent prayers** of the saints that they saw and experienced the power of God within their own lives and saw the hand of God move through a variety of situations.

These prayers were both public and private – corporate and personal.

- Through prayers the Holy Spirit set men apart for ministry;
- Through prayers God delivered some from prison;
- Through prayers they saw physical healings taking place;
- Through prayers they were given the boldness to stand against the continual and growing persecution.

The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy in 1 Timothy 2 to make prayer an integral part of his life and ministry, as well as that of the Church –

¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³ For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

After times of persecution they would join together as the church and pray for boldness to continue proclaiming the message of salvation (Acts 4:23-31) –

²⁹ "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

As the Church was faithful in all of these areas: *continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers,*

God moved among them in power. I feel that it was an absolute and positive result of the Church's *steadfastness* and *devotion* that we read the following words in the passage here in Acts 2, beginning in verse 43

⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

*⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.***

Their *continued steadfastness* and *constant devotion* led them to come together *daily with one accord... and breaking bread from house to house, praising God and having favor with all the people.*

And because of this, ***the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.***

Once again, this isn't a **Church Growth Plan**, this is men and women living out their devotion to the Lord by ***practicing the presence of Jesus on a daily basis***. Their lives dramatically changed... their routines changed... the important things of life have changed... their entire lifestyles changed. And what we see is the fleshing out of the biblical model of what Church ought to be.

This is the Church in action... this is the biblical Church.