

BASICS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Acts 2:40-47

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. It is a great joy for me and Mrs. Aris... to be here today.
- b. We cannot begin to tell you how much we love this church family... and I can assure you that we pray for this church often.
- c. I appreciate Bro. Ricky and his ministry here... and I encourage you to continue to support him and pray for him... as I know you have been doing.
- d. There are so many good memories from our time in ministry here... that I could talk about right now... but Bro. Ricky says that I need to limit my message to an hour.
- e. So, I will tell you what we will do... after the service... we will take our time and reminisce and share around the Homecoming table.
- f. Right now... I want to share with you what the Lord has laid on my heart.
- g. The Bible is a book of patterns... the first marriage is the pattern for all marriages... the Lord's Prayer is the pattern for prayer.
- h. And the ministry and work of the first church in Jerusalem... is the pattern... for the ministry and work of every true church.
- i. These verses reveal central elements... that should be present in the program of any church.

II. THE PRIORITY OF THE CHURCH-

- a. These verses and the New Testament teaches... that the preaching and teaching the Word of God... is the priority of the church.

- b. The first church was born as a result of a sermon... the sermon that Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost.
- c. After he preached his sermon... Peter gave this invitation ... “Be saved from this perverse generation.”
- d. In response to Peter’s sermon... 3,000 people were saved... and the New Testament church was born.
- e. According to the Bible... the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ ... and the preaching and teaching of the Word of God... is to be the priority of the church.
- f. Luke records that after the church was born on the Day of Pentecost ... the church “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.”
- g. The apostles who had been with Jesus... organized the church and began to teach the church the doctrine they had learned from the Lord.
- h. They taught those first Christians... how Jesus had fulfilled the Old Testament.
- i. They taught them ... the Sermon on the Mount...the parables... the teachings of Jesus... the things that Jesus said and did... the meaning of the cross... the truth of His resurrection ... and His second coming.
- j. Proclaiming the gospel...and the preaching and teaching God’s truth ...to the saved and the lost...is to be the priority New Testament church.

PROCLAMATION

III. THE PROFESSION OF THE CHURCH-

- a. How does a person... become a member of a church?
- b. Those who were saved on the Day of Pentecost became members of the first church... by publically professing their faith in Jesus Christ... and then they were baptized by the church.

- c. One of the first things a new Christian should do... is publically profess their faith in Jesus Christ... by joining a church... and being baptized.
- d. Joining a church does not save anyone... being baptized does not save anyone... but joining a church and being baptized... are an important part of the obedient Christian life.
- e. In Acts 10... when Cornelius and his household were saved... they confessed their faith in Christ... and were baptized immediately.
- f. In Acts 8... when the Ethiopian official was saved through Philip's ministry... he confessed his faith in Christ... and was immediately baptized.
- g. In Acts 16... when the jailer at Philippi was saved... he and his family confessed their faith in Christ... and were immediately baptized.
- h. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ... it is God's will for you to publically confess Christ... join a local church ... and be baptized.
- i. And you know what?... today would be a good day to do just that.

PROCLAMATION... PROFESSION

IV. THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CHURCH-

- a. These verses... describe the church life of these early Christians.
- b. #1, They joined together as a church family... these believers did not scatter after they were saved... they joined together... they became a church family.
- c. Not only is it God's will for a Christian to join a church... it is God's will for every Christian to become active and involved...in the life... ministry... and mission of a local church.
- d. God does not save us to just sit in a pew... God saves us to serve Him in this world... and the center of our service is to be and through the local church.

- e. #2, They meet together... for worship... for fellowship ... to study... and to pray... in the courtyard of the Temple.
- f. And the beautiful thing is... they wanted to be together... they wanted to worship... they wanted to learn... they wanted to serve... they wanted to give... they had great joy... they had a great passion and love for Jesus ... and for each other.
- g. Another beautiful thing... was the unity in the first church... they truly loved each other... they truly cared for each other ... there was no plotting and pulling against each other.
- h. And, this was a congregation of more than 3,000... today there are churches with a membership of 30... whose members are ready to pull each other's hair out.
- i. #3, They organized... under the leadership of the Apostles ... this church organized.
- j. They formed committees... they elected Deacons ... their first lead Pastor was James, the brother of Jesus... they carried out ministries ... they ministered to each other... they shared the gospel with others... they did what churches do today.
- k. A New Testament church organizes... and utilizes the spiritual gifts of its members to carry out its mission and ministry.

PROCLAMATION... PROFESSION... PARTICIPATION

V. THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH-

- a. *Acts 2:42 (NKJV) "And they continued steadfastly... in prayers."*
- b. Note the plural form of "prayers"... this was a praying church... they believed in prayer... they prayed separately... they prayed together... they prayed often... they prayed for each other... they prayed about many different things.
- c. Pastor Wayne Lawson... is a wonderful and godly African-American pastor... listen to what he said about a praying church.

- d. “A church that does not pray... forfeits the blessings and power of Almighty God... and a powerless Church does nothing to please or to Glorify God.... Therefore, God is not pleased when his saints fail to pray... If we endeavor to see our Church soar to higher heights... we must become a praying Church... If we want to see lives changed and souls save - we must become a Praying Church ... If we want to have an impact on the world - we must become a Praying Church... If we want to see the Church become what God designed it to be – we must become a Praying Church... If we want to become Holy Ghost Headquarters – we must become a Praying Church... If we want to see Continued Growth – we must become Praying Church.”

- e. Pastor Lawson continued... “My brothers and sisters, I want you to know that there is great power and great deliverance through prayer. You can check the record on that for yourself. The pages of the good book are laced and lined with accounts of prayer... MOSES prayed and God spared Israel from judgment... JOSHUA prayed and God caused the sun to stand still... HANNAH prayed and God gave her a baby boy... SOLOMON prayed and God gave him wisdom... ELIJAH prayed and God sent fire down from Heaven... JONAH prayed and God brought him out of the belly of the whale... PAUL and SILAS prayed and God opened the Jail Cell... The thief on the cross prayed and God gave him eternal life... somebody prayed and I was saved... I tell you, the real saints know how to get in touch with God!”

- f. Prayer is the lifeline of the church... there is a devil that is always trying to tear this and any church apart ... we must be a praying church.

PROCLAMATION... PROFESSION... PARTICIPATION... PRAYERS

VI. THE PRAISE OF THE CHURCH-

- a. Not only was this a praying church... it was a praising church.

- b. Acts 2:47 said that when they came together... they praised God... they exalted the Lord... they gave God glory for His goodness... His mercy... and His saving grace...through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. The focus of this church... was on the Lord Jesus Christ... they worshiped Jesus... and their worship and praise was honest... real... open ... and sincere.

PROCLAMATION... PROFESSION... PARTICIPATION... PRAYERS... PRAISE

VII. THE PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH-

- a. Next... these verses show us the practice of this church.
- b. This church had true fellowship... they had true and sweet koinonia with each other.
- c. #1, They opened their hearts to one another... they loved one another ... they cared for one another... they shared with one another.
- d. #2, They opened their hands to one another... they took care of each other... they pooled their resources... they set up a benevolence fund ... to meet the needs of the sick... the suffering... the poor... the needy... and the destitute in their church family.
- e. #3, They opened their homes to one another... not only did the first church meet together as a whole in the Temple... they meet together in smaller numbers in the homes of one another.
- f. That is where they had their Sunday School... their prayer meetings.
- g. The Christian faith of the first church was not a once-a-week routine ... it was a day-to-day reality.

PROCLAMATION... PROFESSION... PARTICIPATION... PRAYERS... PRAISE... PRACTICE

VIII. THE POWERFUL IMPACT OF THE CHURCH-

- a. Acts 2:47 says this church found favor with all the people... and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.
- b. This church had a profound impact... on the city of Jerusalem.

- c. When the people in Jerusalem saw their faith... their love... their sincerity... and the passion of this first Christian church.
- d. When they saw the changed and different lives of these believers... when they saw the power of God flowing through this church... they stood in awe of this church and these Christians.
- e. And as a result of the witness of this church... many lost people in Jerusalem came to faith Christ... and joined the church.
- f. That is exactly the impact... a church is supposed to have on its community.

IX. CONCLUSION-

- a. I love the church... I love the outward dimension of the church ... I love the church's worship ... our praise... our service and ministries ... our outreach to the lost.
- b. I love the inward dimension of the church... the meals we as a church family share together... when we pray together... when we fellowship together... when we help, minister and share with one another.
- c. I love the church... may we be a church ... like the first church.
- d. The first church in Jerusalem... is a measuring stick that every church is to use to measure its own makeup and ministry by.
- e. Today are you ready... to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord? ... are you ready to publically profess Christ... are you ready to be baptized?... are you ready to join this church and be a part of work and kingdom of God in this world?