

THE EARLY CHURCH, A MODEL: ACTS 2:41, 42

FRAGMENT FROM LAST WEEK: REVIEW:

- Jesus the Prince of Peace:
- Grace always precedes peace. Every one of Paul's Epistles + Peters.
- God did not just forgive sin, sweep it under the heavenly rug. He did not let your sin go unpunished. He laid it on Jesus.
- When God forgives our sin it is because He placed our sin on Jesus and carried out the just penalty of my sin on Him.

For the next couple of weeks I want us to look at the Church. Universal and local, (Bethel).

- Has God given us a model, or a pattern to go by?
- What is the New Testament Church community supposed to look like?
- How are we to function and interact as a community of God?
- What are the Divine branches God has given to live by in the Church?
- Our purpose/mission statement.
- How do we fulfill God's commission for us a Church?
- Are we fulfilling God's commission for us?

Let's see what scripture shows us as our pattern for Church.

Define Church: ek-laye-see'-äh, **ekklesia**..from **ek**, "out of," and **klesis**, "a calling or call" to call out. Was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens call out to "gather" to discuss the affairs of State, A called out people.

Called out of the world, called out of ourselves, unto God and His assembly.

- **Heb. 12:18-24.**
- God's promise to His church was that He would send to them His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Lk. 24:49, Acts 1:8
- And he told them in **JN. 14:17** that this Holy Spirit which had been with them, in that day would be IN them. JN. 7, out of their bellies...
- What a need we have for the Spirit, this first sermon brought 3000 souls into the kingdom, how many sermons will be preached today without any response at all?

Read **Acts 2:** The Church that Jesus would build is born. ("Feast of the First Fruits)

- **We will concentrate our attention to verses 41, 42;**
 - Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers

- The NASB says “continually devoted themselves,” the ESV only says “devoted themselves.”

VS. 41 those who gladly received His word were baptized.

- Not everyone responded:
- Only those who received the word became glad. Not everyone.
- **Gladly**: With delight, delightedly, “with joy!”
- This gladness answers to verse 37, they were “cut to the heart” (NASB pierced)
- and in response to the hearing of the gospel and the apostle’s directions, their hearts and consciences having been affected, cut and convicted, they cried, “WHAT MUST WE DO!”
 - Paul, 9:6, Philippian jailor, 16:29, John Baptist, rich young ruler...
- Hearing the direction of the apostles, that there was a remedy, an answer for their newly found pain, they received the word with gladness, hope and joy.
- And in obedient response to the conviction of the Spirit and the direction of the apostles they were moved to “repent and be baptized.”
- This is the work of the anointed word.
 - **Heb. 4:12; 13**; For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to ^[e]judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom ^[f]we must answer.
- The same gospel or word that had wounded them healed them.
- Indeed a double edged sword!

This then, and what is to follow is the introduction, the early mini biography of what the lives of these “called out” ones looked like and how it was expressed in Community.

Verse 42:

- Now what we see in verse 42 are the 4 Divine branches of Church worship.
- Here recorded for us by Luke, we have a view, a model, of the 4 different branches of Divine worship that was given by the Holy Spirit and practiced by the early Church.
- These 4 branches became the essentials and pattern for the church and remain in place by God for all true churches today.

THEY ARE:

Doctrine/Teaching.

Fellowship.

The Breaking of bread.

Prayers.

These practices were not occasional or sporadic, but everyday consistent.

The opening phrase: Continued Steadfastly in..

- This adjective covers all 4 of these branches/practices.
- Our attention is first drawn to the phrase, "Continued steadfastly."
- **Continued:** To persist abstinently. To adhere firmly or steady persistence.
- It is sometimes translated, "continue instant, Rom. 12:12, and attend continually, Rom. 13:6.
- It is used repeatedly in Acts: 1:14, 2:42, 2:46, 6:4
- Its meaning being "special persistence to a work or practice. To continue earnestly every day.
- **Steadfastly:** Made up of two words meaning, towards and strong. To be strong towards something, to give unremitting care, to endure in, to persevere in, to adhere to, to give constant attention to a thing.
- Notice the little word "in" used in front of the adjective of the church all 4 times. (in the Greek)

Doctrine/Teaching.

- Teaching or instructions. That which is taught. **Rom. 6:17**, Titus 1:9.
- See **Mt. 28:19, 20**

Fellowship.

- Koinonia. Koin oh-nee'-äh. Communion, to communicate, (more than words) having in common, having common experiences and interests of Christian people.
- A participation in sympathy, suffering labor and joy.
- Used of the intimate bond of fellowship which unites Christians.
 - Translated fellowship 12X communion 4X communication, distribution, contribution and communicate all once.
- It is a giving of themselves to others within the church.
 - Not counting their lives dear unto themselves. **1 Thess. 2:8**, Acts 20:24,
- This fellowship was more than just visiting, it meant also a sharing of spiritual life, sharing and caring for each other's spiritual, physical, and material life.
- A good example is given of this in Mal. 3:16,
 - Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened attentively and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and esteem His name.
 - The Lord listens to our fellowship.

- It was said of the early church, "behold how they love one another, how they are ready to die for one another. (Tertullian: 160 -225)

The Breaking of bread.

- Breaking bread is not necessarily limited to the Lords' supper though that seemed to be somewhat primary.
- This breaking of bread (see verse 46) was the celebrations among the brethren of the life and death of the Lord.
- Christ's life and death was so meaningful to them, so fresh, so appreciated, so revered, it was "worship."
- They did it often even from house to house: VS 46 It was part of their life.
 - I Cor. 11:24-26; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, ^[a]"Take, eat; this is My body which is ^[b]broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵ In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.
- They understood the meaning, the cost, and treasured the wonder, grace and love of breaking bread.
- In the early church they were sometimes known as 'Love Feasts.'" Often taking place after the evening meal.

Prayers.

- To address God, sometimes used as a place set apart or suited for offering prayers.
- Used in the book of Acts 9X. 25% of the total N. T. 3X more than any other book in the NT.
- 13 examples of the saints praying.
 - Acts 1:24 choosing leaders
 - Acts 4:31 (23-24a, 31-35) after persecution praying for boldness...
 - Acts 6:6 (6-7) praying before choosing Deacons.
 - Acts 9:40 (40-42) praying for miraculous validation.
 - Acts 12:12 praying for the release of Peter from prison.
 - Acts 13:1-3 praying before setting aside the first missions
 - Acts 16:25 praying in prison, resulting in conversion of jailer's household
 - Acts 20:36 praying when departing from a church he had planted,
 - Acts 21:5 praying when commending Paul to a dangerous situation and certain imprisonment for the sake of the gospel.
 - Acts 22:17 praying in worship receiving guidance as to future ministry plans.
 - They gathered for prayer consistently, it was who they were, and was breath from heaven for them.

CONCLUSIONS: