

THE EARLY CHURCH, A PATTERN: ACTS 2:41, 42 PART 2

FRAGMENT FROM LAST WEEK: REVIEW:

- Church is work!
- 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?
- How do we fulfill God's commission for us a Church?
- Are we willing to be a True New Testament Church?
- Let's see what scripture shows us as our pattern for Church.

Define Church: ek-laye-see'-äh. A called out people.

- Called out of the world, called out of ourselves, unto God and His assembly. 2Cor. 6:17, "come out from among them." (Israel called out from Egypt.)
- God's promise to His church was that He would send to them His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Lk. 24:49, Acts 1:4, 8, JN. 14:17 with them, now IN them.

Acts 2:41, 42 The Church that Jesus would build is born.

- (Jesus had laid the foundation.)

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

- Not everyone responded: Only those who gladly received the word.
- This gladness answers to verse 37, they were "cut to the heart" (NASB pierced)
- And in obedient response to the conviction of the Spirit and the direction of the apostles they were moved to "repent and be baptized."
- Who was the "Church" then? It was those who were called out and who gladly responded to and accepted the words of repentance, baptism and life.
- This is the work of the Holy Spirit through His anointed word.
- The same gospel or word that had wounded them healed them.
- Indeed a double edged sword!
- These God added to the Church VS 41 & 47
- These men and women continued steadfast

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: The Pattern.

- Now what we see in verse 42 are the 4 Divine branches of Church worship.
- A pattern and practice the early church held to, continued steadfast in, and continually devoting themselves to.
- These 4 branches became the essentials and pattern or mold 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..

- Our attention is first drawn to the phrase, "Continued steadfastly."
- These verb/adjective covers all 4 of these branches/practices.
- **Continued:** To persist abstinently. To adhere firmly or steady persistence.
- **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.
- It's meaning being "special persistence to a work or practice." To continue earnestly every day. Not just on a Sunday.
- This is in the "continuous tense."
- 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, But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.
 - Titus 1:9, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.
 - Mt. 28:19, 20; go, make disciples, teaching to observe all commanded.
- This list of directives starts with Doctrine/Teaching and ends with Prayer.
 - Acts 6: 4; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."
 - **2 Tim. 3: 15-17;** For all scripture...
 - 2 Tim. 4:2 Preach the word,...
 - Rom. 10:17 Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
 - 2 Tim. 2:2, 3; You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- This, along with prayer, are the two "book ends" of the Church, holding all other things in their proper place and balance.

Fellowship.

- **Koinonia.** Koin oh-nee'-äh. Communion, to communicate, (more than words) having in common, A participation in sympathy, suffering, labor and joy.
- **It began by having a common experience then having common interests and caring.**
- **Used of the intimate bond of fellowship which unites Christians?**
 - **Translated fellowship 12X out of 20X**
- **An example of spoken fellowship is given of 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 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 sharing in one's true needs.**
- **These relationships reach beyond their family circles to include all.**
- **(Tertullian: 160 -225) It was said of the early church, "behold how they love one another, how they are ready to die for one another."**

The Breaking of bread.

- **Breaking bread is not necessarily limited to the Lords' supper though that seemed to be primary.**
- **This breaking of bread was a reverent celebration 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, "Take, eat; this is My body which is 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 symbolism, the cost, and treasured the wonder, grace and love of breaking bread. So their lives reflected the same!**
- **In the early church they were sometimes known as 'Love Feasts.'" Often taking place after the evening meal.**

Prayers.

- **To Pray: supplicate. Supplication comes from the Latin verb supplicare, which means "to plead humbly."**
- **To address God, sometimes used as a place set apart or suited for offering prayers.**
- **Can also mean worship with prayer.**
- **25% of the times prayer mentioned in the Acts – Rev. is in the book of acts.**
- **Some examples of the saints praying in Acts.**
 - **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 9:11, 17 Paul and Ananias.**
 - **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 A breath from heaven for the church and them.**
- **Jesus said, " Men ought always to pray and not loose heart." And pray that you do not enter into temptation.**

CONCLUSION/APPLICATION:

- **Now how do we begin to apply these things.**
- **We must be intentional: We must take inventory and commit to change.**
- **Doctrine/Teaching: Study the week's sermon... Go over it..**
- **Fellowship, & Breaking Bread: Enlarge you circle of friends to include the whole church.**
 - **Get beyond your comfort zone, your family**
 - **Visit and invite.**
 - **Community must be more than a word.**
- **Prayer: Get involved in prayer corporately, community wise, but also in your homes..**

COMMUNION.

1 Cor. 11: 24-26