

The Primitive Church Acts 2:41-47
GRBC 2012-01-08

Scripture Reading: Psalm 122

Confession of Sin: Psalm 79:8-9

Sermon: The Primitive Church Acts 2:41-47

Benediction: Numbers 6:24-26

Numbers 6:24-26 `YHWY bless thee and keep thee; (25) `YHWY cause His face to shine upon thee, and favour thee; (26) `YHWY lift up His countenance upon thee, and appoint for thee--peace.

Acts 2:41-47 then those, indeed, who did gladly receive his word were baptized, and there were added on that day, as it were, three thousand souls, (42) and they were continuing stedfastly in the teaching of the apostles, and the fellowship, and the breaking of the bread, and the prayers. (43) And fear came on every soul, many wonders also and signs were being done through the apostles, (44) and all those believing were at the same place, and had all things common, (45) and the possessions and the goods they were selling, and were parting them to all, according as any one had need. (46) Daily also continuing with one accord in the temple, breaking also at every house bread, they were partaking of food in gladness and simplicity of heart, (47) praising God, and having favour with all the people, and the Lord was adding those being saved every day to the assembly.

Today we begin to consider the very brief account of the church of Jesus Christ in its primitive state. This will be briefly expressed again in chapter four. Let us see what the primitive church was like, getting an idea of what is the essence of Christ's church, that we may practice church life in as pure a way as possible, to the glory of Jesus Christ.

I. See how the primitive church received members

A. sinners heard the preaching about Jesus Christ

1. that all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved
2. that they were sinners, guilty before God even of murder
3. that there is repentance and remission of sins in His name

B. they heard the command to repent and be baptized, and so be saved from their perverse generation

C. they gladly received this word

D. they were baptized

E. the Lord added them (verses 41, 47)

F. APPLICATION:

1. this is the essence of what we do today
2. because there was only one church at the time, this was relatively simple
 - a. there was only a church in one place---Jerusalem
 - b. there were no denominations of churches
 - c. there were not multiple churches in one city
 - d. there were no churches that were so corrupt as to make it difficult for believers to participate there
3. now that there are many churches, receiving members is a bit more complex
 - a. there are churches in many places now; believers who have been

received at a church in Dallas then move to Bonham, and must be received into another church

b. there are many denominations; believers who have been received in one denomination, when they change to another denomination, have to be received into a church of that denomination

c. there are multiple churches of the same denomination within any area, and so believers must be received into one church or another of those

d. there are many churches so corrupt that believers have a difficult time participating, and must go be received into some other church

4. but despite the process being a bit more complex, we must strive to have it be essentially the same

II. See how the primitive church worshiped (42)

A. They devoted themselves to worship, continuing steadfastly in worship (42a)

B. They worshiped in one accord (46)

C. They observed primarily these four things elements of worship (42b):

1. the teaching of the apostles

a. in that day, the apostles were there personally

b. in our day, we have their doctrine in writing, in the bible

c. it is all centered on Jesus Christ

2. the fellowship

a. observing that there is a communion among believers in Christ

b. making contributions, then, of money to those in need

-Romans 15:26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

-2 Corinthians 8:4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

-Hebrews 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

3. the breaking of bread

a. here used to mean "taking the Lord's supper"

b. probably also including sharing meals

4. the prayers

a. it seems they were observing the Jewish hours of prayer in the temple

b. we see in later chapters they also were praying on special occasions for certain needs

C. APPLICATION: Could this be said of you? If someone wrote a description of your life regarding worship, would it be said that you devoted yourself, that you continued steadfastly, in the apostles' teaching, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? Let us pray and strive to be devoted to these things, unto the Lord.

III. See how the primitive church fellowshiped

A. they were together (44a)

1. the whole number gathered in the temple

2. it seems smaller groups went home together (46), although this might simply reference families being together

B. the wealthy gave to the poor through the church (44b-45; 4:32-35)

1. every person considered his possessions not to be exclusively his own
 2. believers sold possessions, and laid the money at the apostles' feet
 3. the apostles distributed the money to those in need
 4. later the apostles saw that this particular work was not their mission, and so they led the church to appoint other men to handle this money (Acts 6)
- C. they did these things with a wholesome attitude
1. they were glad
 2. they were sincere, or single, or simple, in heart
 3. they were praising God (47)
- IV. See how the primitive church grew
- A. they were protected by the fear that came on everyone (43)
 - B. they had favor with all the people (47a)
 - C. the Lord added those being saved (47b)
 - D. APPLICATION:
 1. there is much pressure on churches to see growth in numbers
 - a. from crusade movement
 - b. from modern church growth movement
 - c. from desire for social acceptance
 - d. from need for money to support pastors
 2. let us be devoted to worship, living lives of fellowship and obedience
 3. let God add to us those who are being saved

Savastio:

Christ said to Saul, "Why are you persecuting Me?"

Were you smashing my van, you might say, "Why are you doing this to me?"

Those truly added to Christ manifest that union through continuing devotion to:

JRY: To what were they added? To the church (see v. 47). How should we say this the best way(s)?

They were added to those who considered each other disciples of Jesus Christ.

verse 43

RWP:

"the more wonder, the more fear"

JFB:

“A deep awe rested upon the whole community.”

Poole:

not just the believers

Clarke:

the preaching and miracles made the whole city fear God

Gill:

“Upon every inhabitant of Jerusalem, at least upon a great many of them”

Barnes:

“upon the people generally”

Calvin:

Those who would have stamped out the church were held at bay in fear largely because of the miracles the apostles were doing.