

January 9, 2005
Shepherd's Community Church
Pastor Paul S. Brown
Acts 2:41-47

“Growing in Your Relationship with Other Believers: *The Church*”

The Church – 2:41-47

A. **Who?** Acts 2:41 – *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.*

B. **What?** Acts 2:42-47

1. Identity – v. 42 - “they”

- Who are “they?”
- **Church** = ekklesia = called out ones! (1 Timothy 5:1-2)

Application:

- Do we at SCC have a **DISTINCT IDENTITY** from the world around us?
- Are we clearly identified with the Lord Jesus and with His people?
- Have we obeyed the command to be **BAPTIZED** and become an identified **MEMBER** of a local fellowship?
- Do we treat each other like family?

2. Commitment – v. 42 - “continually devoting themselves”

- Not a “once a week” Christianity or church life (v. 46). They met daily (Acts 2:46), cared daily (Acts 6:1), won souls daily (Acts 2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11), and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5).
 - o Cf. Mt. 6:33; Luke 14:26; Acts 1:14

Application:

- Are we a “committed fellowship”? No excuses! Beyond Sundays and other official gatherings?
- Does SCC exist beyond our services?
- Can we count on you to minister your spiritual gifts; support the work of the ministry; and participate in the life of the Body?
- Are we that radically saved?

3. Doctrine – v. 42 - “the Apostles’ teaching”

- Eph. 2:20; John 14:26; 2 Peter 3:14-16; 1 Tim. 5:18 cf. Deut. 25:4; Luke 10:7
- Their teaching was to be faithfully passed on – 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1ff
- Elders were to guard the flock and protect it from false doctrine! (Acts 20:28ff; 2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Peter 2:1ff; 1 John 2:4-5; Jude 3-4)

Application:

- Are we committed to in-depth teaching of God's Holy Word?
- Do we see it in every ministry?
- Do we give evidence as individuals that we KNOW what we believe?
- Are we taking advantage of classes that are being offered?
- Are we daily reading, studying, memorizing and meditating upon the Scriptures ourselves?
- Do we consider it a wasted day if we don't learn something from God's Word?

4. Fellowship – v. 42 - “the fellowship”

- koinwnia = that which is common, mutual, public; PARTNERSHIP; SHARING; close union and brotherly bond between men
- **SHARING** – sharing with someone (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13) or sharing in what someone else is experiencing (Phil. 3:10 – “fellowship of His sufferings”; 1 John 1:3 – “fellowship with us ... with the Father and His Son”)
- Because Christians become partners with Jesus Christ and all other believers (1 John 1:3), it is their spiritual duty to stimulate one another to righteousness and obedience (cf. Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 15:5; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25; 5:21; Col. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:9, 10).
- It was achieved within the early church to a great measure (2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 2:9; John 15:12, 17; 17:21)
- It is supernatural: fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor. 13:13); fellowship of “His Son” (1 Cor. 1:9); fellowship in the gospel (Phil. 1:5); fellowship of faith (Philemon 6)

Application:

- Are we gathering together as often as possible with something to share? Do we come to GIVE?
- Are we aware of all the things we have in common because we are followers of Jesus?

5. Communion – v. 42 - “the breaking of bread”

- The early church celebrated this very frequently at first
- Perhaps the breaking of bread included both the Lord's Table and a common meal (cf. Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-25; Jude 12) – AGAPE FEAST

6. Prayer – v. 42 - lit., “the prayers”

- Acts 1:14, 24; 4:24–31; cf. John 14:13, 14; Luke 18:1; Eph. 6:18; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2

Application:

- Are we devoted to CORPORATE prayer? Sunday morning; Weekly small groups; Special Concerts of Prayer...
- Do we demonstrate our absolute DEPENDENCE upon Jesus for everything?

7. Awe of God – v. 43 -

- The word “awe” is actually the Greek word – “**fear**” (Acts 5:5, 11; Acts 19:17; Luke 7:16)
- A biblical church will be a “FEAR” filled church!
 - The fear of experiencing God’s wrath (2 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10-15; 1 John 4:17-19)
 - The fear that knowing God brings (Prov. 1:7; Ps. 130:4)

Application:

- Do we have a healthy “fear” of God?
- Do we fear Him more than we fear man?
- Does that fear produce genuine humility and praise?

8. Confirming Power – v. 43

- **Wonders** = miracles evoking awe
- **Signs** = miracles pointing to a divine truth
 - These AUTHENTICATED the message of the Apostles (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4)
- God still performs miracles in answer to prayer!
 - Miracles of Providence –
 - Miraculous power of the Gospel – Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18, 21
 - Miraculous (gracious) power to endure suffering – 2 Cor. 12:7-9
 - Miracle of the New Birth! – John 3

Application:

- Do we have absolute confidence in the Word of God?
- Do we praise God for the miracles He continually does today? (i.e., saving lost sinners; providentially leading and providing; answering prayers)

9. Sacrificial sharing – v. 44-45

- This is NOT a form of Communism! It is an outgrowth of fellowship!
- INCREDIBLE SACRIFICE! Property = Security!
 - Cf. Acts 4:32-35; Luke 3:10-11; 8:1-3; 12:15, 33; 14:33; 18:18-30
 - Other NT passages on giving / sharing (Rom. 12:13; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Gal. 6:10; Heb. 10:34; 13:16; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-17)

Application:

- Is there anything in our lives that we are unwilling to share for the benefit of the body? Why?
- Do we own our possessions or do they own us?
- Does the way we handle material wealth demonstrate that we believe Jesus is coming back?

10. One-mindedness – v. 46

- **One mind** = one accord; by common consent; unanimously
 - Directed by the Apostles Teaching (**Word of God**)

Application:

- Do we fight for our own agendas or do we seek only to do the will of God?
- Do we seek God's Word as our absolute & final authority in all things?
- Do we have biblical support for the things that we believe and hold dear?

11. Worship – v. 46 - “continuing in the Temple praising God...house to house”

- FORMALLY in the Temple
- INFORMALLY in the setting of houses

Application:

- Do we celebrate the glory & grace of God as much at home as we do at the weekly worship services?

12. Joy, “gladness” – v. 46

- Acts is filled with JOY! (5:41; 8:8, 39; 11:23; 12:14; 13:48, 52; 14:17; 15:3, 31; 16:34; 21:17)
- Acts 2:46 uses a special word for joy (a word for “great joy” or “gladness” or “extreme joy”)
 - Cf. Mt. 5:12; Heb. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:6, 8; 4:13; Jude 24; Rev. 19:7
- Joy not only is supposed to characterize the Church, but God makes it MANDATORY that we find joy in serving Him (Ps. 100:2; Phil. 4:4; 2 Chron. 2:1-2, 5-10; Deut. 28:47-48)

Application:

- Is our life characterized by joy? (cf. Gal. 5:22-23)
- Is our serving characterized by joy?
- Do we ever complain? Why?

13. “Sincerity of heart” – v. 46

- Sincerity = simplicity; lit. “rock-free” as a field cleared of stones; nothing that causes others to stumble
- The simplicity of the faith led to a simplicity of relationship among the people. No stones of selfishness in their hearts!
 - Transparent! Open! Honest!
 - No hypocrisy!

Application:

- Is there anything in our lives right now that would cause others to stumble if they knew about it?
- Do we find it difficult to open up and let others know that we have struggles? Why or why not?

14. Testimony – v. 47

- **Favor** = grace, charity, credit
 - **with** = toward, face to face with
- **Favor** does not mean that everyone who saw them became a believer
 - Favor opens the door to EVANGELISM

Some of the reasons the early church found favor with the common people can be discerned from the apology written by the philosopher **Aristides** early in the second century:

Now the Christians, O King, by going about and seeking, have found the truth. For they know and trust in God, the Maker of heaven and earth, who has no fellow. From him they received those commandments which they have engraved on their minds, and which they observe in the hope and expectation of the world to come.

For this reason they do not commit adultery or immorality; they do not bear false witness, or embezzle, nor do they covet what is not theirs. They honor father and mother, and do good to those who are their neighbors. Whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols made in the image of man. Whatever they do not wish that others should do to them, they in turn do not do; and they do not eat the food sacrificed to idols.

Those who oppress them they exhort and make them their friends. They do good to their enemies. Their wives, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest. Their men abstain from all unlawful sexual contact and from impurity, in the hope of recompense that is to come in another world.

As for their bondmen and bondwomen, and their children, if there are any, they persuade them to become Christians; and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction.

They refuse to worship strange gods; and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them. They love one another; the widow's needs are not ignored, and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence. He who has gives to him who has not, ungrudgingly and without boasting. When the Christians find a stranger, they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as a true brother. They do not call brothers those who are bound by blood ties alone, but those who are brethren after the Spirit and in God.

When one of their poor passes away from the world, each provides for his burial according to his ability. If they hear of any of their number who are imprisoned or oppressed for the name of the Messiah, they all provide for his needs, and if it is possible to redeem him, they set him free.

If they find poverty in their midst, and they do not have spare food, they fast two or three days in order that the needy might be supplied with the necessities. They observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah, living honestly and soberly as the Lord their God ordered them. Every morning and every hour they praise and thank God for his goodness to them; and for their food and drink they offer thanksgiving.

If any righteous person of their number passes away from the world, they rejoice and thank God, and escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another nearby. When a child is born to one of them, they praise God. If it dies in infancy, they thank God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. But if one of them dies in his iniquity or in his sins, they grieve bitterly and sorrow as over one who is about to meet his doom.

Such, O King, is the commandment given to the Christians, and such is their conduct. (*The Apology of Aristides*, translated by Rendel Harris [London: Cambridge, 1893])

Application:

- Do we have a good testimony with our family, friends, neighbors, business associates...?
- Is there anything in our lives that would be a stumbling block for an unbeliever? Anything that would make them speak negatively about Jesus Christ?
- Is our life so filled with God's joy & hope that people are asking what makes us different (1 Peter 3:15)?

15. Evangelism – v. 47

- **The Lord was adding** (cf. Eph. 1)
- **The Lord was adding TO THEIR NUMBER**
 - o The new people immediately became VITALLY INVOLVED in the local church
 - o Heb. 3:13; 10:24-26; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4; 1 John 2:19
- **Day by day**
- **Those who were being saved**

Application:

- Is evangelism a natural outgrowth of our relationship to the Lord Jesus and His Church? Why or why not?
- Are we prepared to clearly share our personal testimony at any time?
- Are we prepared to clearly share the gospel of Jesus with others?
- Are we doing these things regularly? Why or why not?

CONCLUSION: What would a group of saved people look like if (when) they gathered together?

When Pliny was governor of Bithynia, he wrote a most interesting letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan, asking why Christians were being exterminated, and added: “I have been trying to get all the information I could regarding them. I have even hired spies to profess to be Christians and become baptized in order that they might get into the Christian services without suspicion.

Contrary to what I had supposed, I find that the Christians meet at dead of night or at early morn, that they sing a hymn to Christ as God, that they read from their own sacred writings and partake of a very simple meal consisting of bread and wine and water (the water added to the wine to dilute it in order that there might be enough for all).

This is all that I can find out, except that they exhort each other to be subject to the government and to pray for all men.” (Harry A. Ironside – taken from Paul L. Tan, “Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations”)