

## **Bible Study 9 – Acts 2:42-47 – A recipe for a harmonious, happy, holy, healthy, hopeful and helpful church!**

Welcome to our Bible Study. This is number 9 in our survey of the Acts of the Apostles. Our focus today will be upon Acts 2, verses 42 through 47. And I would suggest to you that this is an especially important passage of scripture. It is certainly one that we would do well to familiarize ourselves with and apply and adhere to always. For herein God provides us with a recipe (of sorts) for a harmonious, happy, holy, healthy, hopeful, and helpful church. Here we discover the essential internal and external activities that we are to devote ourselves to for our individual and collective good and growth.

And so, let us hear the word of God: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Consider:

1. The church is devoted to four vital internal activities: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Those who become Christians commit themselves to these four essential internal church activities.

a) Christians are devoted to the faith. That objective body of teaching or doctrine contained now in the Bible. The word in scripture reveals the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, as the way, the truth, and the life. Through this word we become disciples and are equipped to hear and heed Christ's commands. And that is the purpose of the Great Commission! Hereby our relationship with God and others develops, grows, and prospers. Hereby, we grow in knowledge and grace. Hereby we learn how-to live-in harmony with the true and living God and one another.

And so, the church places a premium of importance upon the preaching and teaching, and the studying of God's word. Christians devote themselves to it. And can say in unison the words of the creed 'we believe'.

b) Christians are devoted to the fellowship. We are to believe AND belong. The church is God's family through the Spirit of adoption. There is a togetherness. They are members together in the one body. And cultivate camaraderie and community. They share in one another's gifts and graces. They recognise their need of one another. They value one another. They love one another as called. Jesus had said: 'all people will know that you are my disciples by the love you have for one another.'

c) Christians are devoted to the Father's love gift in the person of Jesus Christ. And hence they regularly and collectively focus and feast on him by faith in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The Lord Jesus instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to keep his people Christ-centred and Christ-focussed. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is the only way to the Father. He reveals the Father and unites us to himself by the Spirit. And hence in the sacrament we look back in Holy Communion on his life, death, and resurrection. We look up mindful that he ever lives to make intercession for us. And we look forward to that day when we will fellowship with him face to face in glory.

d) Christians are devoted and dependent on the Father through the Son by the Spirit in prayer. Thereby they recognise and give expression to their relationship with God and show their dependency upon his grace by prayer. What is prayer but impotency crying out to the Omnipotent! Moreover, it is evidence of our love for God.

How appropriate that we are studying the Book of Acts. For we can take the word ACTS as an acronym to spell out the chief component parts of prayer.

The A stands for 'adoration' or 'acclamation'. For in prayer, we acclaim the glory and goodness of God. We express our adoration for who he is and what he has done and continues to do and will do for us and others.

The C stands for 'confession'. For in prayer, we ask God to forgive our sin – our follies and failures to keep his law of love. We ask him to forgive both sins of commission and omission.

The T stands for 'thanksgiving'. So, in prayer we thank God for his abounding gifts and graces to ourselves and others.

The S stands for 'supplication'. For in prayer, we ask God to bless and be gracious to ourselves and others. We seek his rich provision, protection, and pathways for one another.

So, in conclusion these four activities are for our blessing. The first makes for a harmonious church which knows God through his revelation and is striving to do his will for love's sake. The second produces a happy church which cultivates a true sense of being and belonging. The third helps cultivate a holy church that lives in close communion with God in Christ. The fourth, helps develop a healthy church that is living connected to the source and spring of every blessing.

2. The church is duly amazed by God's grace and goodness: And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

a) The church lives in wonderment at God's amazing grace. They are aware of God's goodness and see evidence of his grace and glory all around. But particularly through his people...

b) The church lives as witnesses to God's presence and power... Herein the source of our hopefulness...

3. The church is dedicated to the faith and fellowship: And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

a) They believed on God's revelation... and thereby believed in God.

b) They belonged together and shared in one another's gifts and graces. They pulled their resources. They recognised that they did not all have the same time, talents, and treasures but they all served one another in the same kingdom and cause of Christ Jesus.

4. The church distributed provision to those in need: And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

a) They voluntarily gave of themselves and their belongings for the glory of God and the good of others. Freely they received and freely they gave of their time, talents, and treasures. And we are to do likewise.

b) They valued the spiritual, and physical or material needs of others. And hence the church was always helpful... Seeking the good and betterment of one another. This is love in action.

5. The church daily worshipped and witnessed to God's grace in Jesus Christ: And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

a) The church daily expressed their gratitude to God for his grace...

b) The church daily evinced God's goodness in generosity and growth...

## Questions

1. What is the church?
2. What activities should the church devote itself to?
3. What are the benefits of belonging to the church?
4. How does God in Christ build his church?