

Acts 2:42-43

<sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

<sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

***“The Prayers”***  
***The Local Church -Part 4***  
**Acts 2:42d**

INTRO:

The last three weeks we invested in studying the four-fold activity of the local church. This activity shows us the priorities of God's church. We read how the folks of the infant church were dedicated to and busy about the Apostles' teaching, the fellowship, and the breaking of bread. Today with the help of our living Lord, we will take on the last of the four activities that became the focus of the infant church, *“in the prayers.”* As we explore this activity of the infant church together, our study will fall into two parts.

- I. The Prayers to Which They Were Devoted*
- II. The Significance for Us*

*I. The Prayers to Which They Were Devoted*

*“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)*

A. When the new believers came together, which they did on almost a daily basis in the beginning, four activities occupied their attention. First, they were eager to learn what their Lord had to say to them through the teaching and lives of the Apostles. Second, they were busy in sharing together in common in a relationship with the living God and in a commitment to do His will. Third, they kept the memorial supper of the Lord's Table, recognizing its significance and testimony. Finally, they gave themselves to prayer.

B. One cannot think about God's desire for the prayer life of His New Testament church without remembering His desire for the worship in the Old Testament economy.

1. In **Matthew 21:12-13**, we read about our Lord Jesus coming to His Temple and cleansing it.

***“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the***

*seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

2. The reference is taken from **Isaiah 56:6-7** where the LORD was talking about the Gentiles coming into the ranks of the covenant people of God.

*"Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants; Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant; Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar, For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

3. When we think of the Temple, we generally think of the sacrifices or the Levitical singers and the praise offered at the various feast times. God, in the Old Testament, and through the Lord Jesus in the New, underlined a reality that we often forget. God wants His house to be a house of prayer. Now the Temple of God is no longer in a building, it is in the hearts and lives of God's people. We who are his church are to be characterized as a people who pray.

C. Has it ever struck you how important prayer is to God?

1. The Lord commands us to pray.

**1 Thessalonians 5:17** *"Pray without ceasing."*

2. He exhorts us to pray.

**Luke 18:1** *"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart."*

3. He taught us how to pray in **Matthew 6** by giving us the pattern prayer commonly called the Lord's prayer.

4. He even promises to answer us when we pray.

**John 14:13,14** *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."*

5. God does not need us to pray so He can work, yet He wants us to pray. Why? I think the answer is found in the prayer life of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a means of fellowship and communication with us!

D. The infant church was committed to prayer. We know that they prayed individually. This is the aspect of prayer which is most discussed in the New Testament. For example, **Matthew 6:5-6**.

*"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father*

*who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly”.*

1. There are several lessons about how we should pray in these verses. First, the Lord taught us that we need to have a proper motivation in prayer. If we pray to be simply heard of men, then when men hear us, we have what we have sought. The strong implication is that this kind of prayer is not heard in the throne room of the Living God.

2. Second, we need to be aware that our prayer is to our Heavenly Father. Prayer is NOT a magic ritual or a way to rub Aladdin's lamp. Prayer is communication with the infinitely holy, infinitely wise, God of the Universe Who is also our loving Heavenly Father!

E. The people in the early church also prayed corporately. They came together to pray. Let me just give you two examples.

1. In **Acts 4:23-31**, they came together to pray when the Apostles reported the persecution that they endured.

2. Again, when James the brother of John was killed and then Peter was arrested we read how they came together to pray in **Acts 12:5; 12-17**.

## ***II. The Significance for Us***

A. The infant church was a church devoted to and busy about the business of prayer. Are we, God's church here in Lansing, a people characterized by prayer? I am reminded of a church I used to pass quite often on the main drag through St. Johns, Michigan, that had a sign out front which read: *“This is a prayer conditioned church.”* This reality should show, not on the sign out in front of the building, but in the hearts of the people who are God's church!

B. The Apostle Paul certainly expected us to be a people given to prayer.

1. Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 2:8**

***“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”***

We so often are captured by the discussion of the posture of prayer here (*“lifting holy hands”*) that we miss the issue. The posture is probably one of expectation. The word *“holy”* implies we have cleansed our hands from the sin that pollutes our lives. The issue is that whenever we get together, one thing we should do is pray.

2. If we are to pray corporately, we will only do so, if we pray individually. I am always convicted by Paul's command in **1 Thessalonians 5:17**. Are you? ***“Pray without ceasing.”***

C. The thing which intrigues me the most about **Acts 2:42** is something that is said in **verse 43**.

***“Then fear came upon every soul.”***

Nothing will cause the presence of God to be seen in His church more than having a body committed to prayer! God help us to be a people of prayer.

**Hymn #430 *I Must Tell Jesus***