

The Life of the Church (Part 1)
Acts 2:42-47
April 22, 2007

I. The Life of the Apostolic Church (Acts 2:42-47)

- A. **April 22** – Teaching and Fellowship (v. 42a)
- B. **April 29** – Breaking Bread and Prayers (v. 42b)
- C. **May 6** – Sharing and Growing (v. 44-47)

II. Devoted to the Apostles' Teaching (v. 42, 46)

A. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20)

1. The necessity of teaching – what is a foundation?

“If the foundation of the church is the teaching of the prophets and apostles, which bids believers entrust their salvation to Christ alone – then take away that teaching, and how will the building continue to stand?”¹

“The only church that will survive in post-Christian times is a church with a passion for God’s Word.”²

2. Protestant Reformation – primary mark of a true church

3. The content of the teaching: Christ

I Cor. 1:22-24 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I Cor. 2:1-2 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

B. The Pillar and Ground of the Truth (I Tim. 3:14-15)

Psalm 78:5-8 He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

C. The Proclaiming of Salvation (Rom. 10:14-17)

1. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?

2. How shall they believe him they have not heard?

3. How shall they hear without someone preaching?

4. How shall they preach unless they are sent?

“That stupendous task the exalted Christ has committed to His church. And on its performance hangs the salvation of the world.”³

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. Mitchell, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1041-2.

² Philip Graham Ryken, *City on a Hill* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 25.

³ R. B. Kuiper, *The Glorious Body of Christ* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), 108.

III. Devoted to Fellowship

A. The Root of our Fellowship (Eph. 2:11-22)

1. **The natural enmity (vv. 12-14)**
2. **The solution: Christ's blood (v. 13)**
3. **The necessity of teaching and the gospel (v. 17, 20)**

“He does not therefore mean, that Christ is merely the corner, or a part of the foundation; for then he would contradict himself. What then? He means that Jews and Gentiles were two separate walls, but are formed into one spiritual building. Christ is placed in the middle of the corner for the purpose of uniting both, and this is the force of the metaphor.”⁴

B. The Household of God (Eph. 2:19)

1. Intimate and particular

“The unity that exists in the Christian church between the members is not a loose attachment, it is an intense, close, intimate attachment.”⁵

2. A crying need of our culture

“What an ideal opportunity the church has to provide an example of the extended family to a society bewailing its demise.”⁶

3. A crying need of fallen men and women

“We only discover our true identity when we join the body of Christ and begin to carry out the specific function God has assigned for us.”⁷

4. God's grand design

Eph. 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

C. Fellowship: A Responsibility and a Blessing

1. Responsibility

Heb. 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today”, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

2. Blessing

Acts 2:44-47 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 favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Calvin's Institutes 4.1.10

⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 244.

⁵ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God's Way of Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1972), 325.

⁶ Karen Burton Mains, *Open Heart – Open Home* (Elgin: David C. Cook, 1976), 102.

⁷ Philip Graham Ryken, *City on a Hill*, 92.

“By these words [pillar and ground of truth] Paul means that the church is the faithful keeper of God’s truth in order that it may not perish in the world. For by its ministry and labor God willed to have the preaching of his Word kept pure and to show himself the Father of a family, while he feeds us with spiritual food and provides everything that makes for our salvation.” 1024

4.2.1

“as soon as falsehood breaks into the citadel of religion and the sum of necessary doctrine is overturned and the use of the sacraments is destroyed, surely the death of the church follows – just as a man’s life is ended when his throat is pierced or his heart mortally wounded” 1041

4.8.12

“Truth, therefore, is not extinguished in the world, but remains safe, because it has the church as its faithful custodian, by whose work and ministry it is sustained. And if this custody rests in the prophetic and apostolic ministry, it follows that this safekeeping of the truth wholly depends on whether the Word of the Lord is faithfully kept and preserved in its purity.”

Calvin, Commentary on Ephesians

“We are thus enabled to distinguish between a true and a false church. This is of the greatest importance; for the tendency to error is always strong, and the consequences of mistake are dangerous in the extreme.” 242

Calvin, Commentary on I Timothy: “the Church maintains the truth, because by preaching the Church proclaims it, because she keeps it pure and entire, because she transmits it to posterity. And if the instruction of the gospel be not proclaimed, if there are no godly ministers who, by their preaching, rescue truth from darkness and forgetfulness, instantly falsehoods, errors, impostures, superstitions, and every kind of corruption, will reign. In short, silence in the Church is the banishment and crushing of the truth.” 91

Kuiper

Product of the truth (Rom. 4:11), conveyor of the truth (II Pet. 1:21), custodian of the truth (I Tim. 3:16; Jn. 14:16); Interpreter of the truth (creeds and confession (Acts 13:1-3; 20:27; Rom. 10:14-17)

Kuiper 158: “In like manner, when the question arises whether the task of the church is to build up its members in the faith or to bring the gospel to those who are outside the church, some choose for one of these to the practical exclusion of the other. But that betrays a serious lack of balance. The church must do both.”