

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon May 8, 2022
Acts 2: 42 "The Thriving Church"

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

I. Introduction

- a. Calvin "Wherefore, Luke doth not in vain reckon up these four things, when as he will describe unto us the well-ordered state of the Church. And we must endeavour to keep and observe this order, if we will be truly judged to be the Church before God and the angels, and not only to make boast of the name thereof amongst men."¹
- b. The Thriving Church
 - i. They Continued Steadfastly
 - ii. In the Apostles' Doctrine
 - iii. In the Fellowship
 - iv. In the Breaking of Bread
 - v. In the Prayers
 - vi. Questions to know, love and obey God

II. They Continued Steadfastly

- a. "And they continued steadfastly in"
- b. Continued Steadfastly – προσκατερέω
 - i. to adhere to one, to be devoted or constant
 - ii. to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing
 - iii. to persevere and not to faint
 - iv. to be in constant readiness for one, wait on constantly
- c. Other translations
 - i. ESV – Devoted Themselves

¹ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, [Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 128.

- ii. NASB – Continually Devoting Themselves
- d. Other uses of this word in Acts
 - i. 1:14 “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”
 - ii. 2:46 “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”
 - iii. 6:4 “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word”
 - iv. 8:13 “Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done”
 - v. 10:7 “Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.”
- e. What marked the Church after the Pentecost harvest? Corporate steadfast, continual devotion to a few things.
 - i. Bock “The expression “devoting themselves” has the idea of persistence or persevering in something”²
- f. Note “they” all shared this steadfast devotion. When God saved this crowd, He brought them together into one Body. They didn’t isolate themselves. They pursued God together.
 - i. Calvin “Luke doth also afterward commend their constancy, who (as he said) did willingly embrace this word of the apostles, showing that they were joined unto the disciples, or that they were engrafted into the same body”³
- g. Also, they didn’t fade away after having an emotional experience. They pressed into the Life of God’s Church.
 - i. Poole “*They continued steadfastly*, speaks the reality of their conversion, and that they were not only for the present affected with what they had heard and seen”⁴
- h. Note, also, the balance, the new way of life. They continued steadfastly in all 4 of the practices we will examine. They were not more devoted to any one area at the expense of another. So, what is being described here is a new way of life. A life built around these 4 practices emerged, designed by God for the purpose of drawing near to Him together.
 - i. Henry “They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion, for Christianity, admitted in the power of it, will

² Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 149.

³ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, [Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 125.

⁴ Matthew Poole, [Annotations upon the Holy Bible](#), vol. 3 (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 391.

dispose the soul to *communion with God* in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him and promised to meet us.”⁵

- ii. When our own personal preferences drive our pursuit of God, we create unbalanced ways of life, off-kilter communities, and denominational pride. Maybe you’re a doctrine person and not so much into prayers, or maybe you love the fellowship but only endure doctrine, etc... Beware unbalanced Christianity.
 - 1. Bock “The acts are each highlighted with articles—“the” teaching, “the” fellowship, “the” breaking of bread, and “the” prayers”⁶
- i. If we could see a video of your life, what would we see as your continual, steadfast devotion? What would we say you are diligently pursuing day after day? How would someone describe your way of life? Do we have a way of life that is steadfast and balanced in pursuing Christ?
 - i. Calvin “..this example ought to make us not a little ashamed. For whereas there was a great multitude converted unto Christ with one sermon, an hundred sermons can scarce move a few of us; and whereas Luke saith that they continued, there is scarce one amongst ten that doth show even a mean desire to profit and go forward, yea, rather, the more part doth soon loathe our doctrine. Woe be, therefore, to the sluggishness and lightness of the world!”⁷

III. In the Apostles’ Doctrine

- a. “the apostles’ doctrine”
- b. They continued steadfastly in devotion to the apostles’ doctrine.
- c. Doctrine - διδαχή
 - i. that which is taught
 - ii. doctrine, teaching, concerning something
- d. Apostles’ – the Twelve men Christ chose (Christ chose Mathias by lots)
 - i. Luke 6:14,15 and Acts 1:26
 - 1. Simon, whom He also named Peter,
 - 2. and Andrew his brother;
 - 3. James
 - 4. and John;
 - 5. Philip
 - 6. and Bartholomew;
 - 7. Matthew
 - 8. and Thomas;
 - 9. James the [son] of Alphaeus,

⁵ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2071.

⁶ Darrell L. Bock, [*Acts*](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 150.

⁷ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, [*Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 126.

- 10. and Simon called the Zealot;
 - 11. Judas [the son] of James,
 - 12. Judas Iscariot replaced by Mathias (Acts 1:26)
 - ii. Note the power of God. Twelve men all agreeing on one message, one teaching, about the Messiah. How can this be? Because they are only teaching what Jesus did and taught.
 - 1. Acts 1:1 “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach”
 - e. Where do we now find the Apostles’ Doctrine? The New Testament.
 - i. And, we see as we study the New Testament that every doctrine in the New Testament was first taught in the Old Testament. Yes, in the OT, often taught with less clarity, more in shadow, but also taught there. It is a wondrous thing to realize that the Apostles’ doctrine is taught from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.
 - 1. The Bereans understood this. Acts 17:10,11 “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily [to find out] whether these things were so.”
 - f. Continuing steadfast in the Word of God. It appears this thriving Church gave much daily attention to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Do you think that the life of our church satisfies this? Do you think our church should have more teaching and preaching taking place as a part of the regularly scheduled life of our church?
 - i. Henry “They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the *preaching of the word*. They *continued in the apostles’ doctrine*, and never disowned nor deserted it; or, as it may be read, *they continued constant to the apostles’ teaching or instruction*; by *baptism* they were disciplined to be taught, and they were willing to be taught. Note, Those who have given up their names to Christ must make conscience of hearing his word; for thereby we give honour to him, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith.”⁸
 - g. We find our pursuit of Christ satisfied by steadfast devotion to His Word together.
- IV. In the Fellowship
- a. “and fellowship,”
 - b. They continued steadfastly in devotion to the fellowship.
 - c. Fellowship - κοινωνία
 - i. fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intimacy

⁸ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2071.

- ii. What is most directly in view is fellowship with one another, close and frequent togetherness as the Church.
- iii. Bock “Next comes the mention of fellowship, or, more precisely, sharing in common This is the only use of this term in Acts. It occurs nineteen times in the NT, fourteen of which are in Paul. The term speaks of communion or fellowship.... It was often used of the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage In this verse, the description appears in a context surrounded by terms of shared activity. The term can have overtones of mutual material support that looks to alms and generosity (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13), but this is only a part of the sense, not the whole, as verse 44 will indicate explicitly by using other terms... Still, the wordplay with *κοινά* (*koina*, in common) in verse 44 shows a material element also is involved in the term. Luke points to fellowship to underscore the personal interactive character of relationships in the early church at all levels (so Fitzmyer 1998: 270). There is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other.”⁹
- d. But, the fellowship of the fellowship is with God. We are brought into fellowship with God by our fellowship with one another.
 - i. 1 Jn 1:1-9 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life-- 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, *that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.* 4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* 7 *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*
 - 1. Note how being brought into “that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us” is to be brought into “fellowship with us”, but then the fellowship of the Church is not primarily with one another, but “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”
- e. Are we characterized by steadfast devotion to fellowship with one another?
- f. Does our fellowship with one another display the reality that “truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ”?

⁹ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 150.

- g. What steps do we need to take to be more devoted to the fellowship one with another?
 - h. How does it happen that our fellowship with one another goes on to display that our fellowship together is truly with God?
 - i. We find our pursuit of Christ satisfied by steadfast devotion to the fellowship together.
- V. In the Breaking of Bread
- a. "in the breaking of bread,"
 - b. They continued steadfastly in devotion to the breaking of bread.
 - c. This is most likely in reference to the New Covenant meal that Jesus Christ instituted while with His disciples on the night of His betrayal.
 - i. Henry "They frequently joined in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They continued *in the breaking of bread*, in celebrating that memorial of their Master's death, as those that were not ashamed to own their relation to, and their dependence upon, Christ and him crucified. They could not forget the death of Christ, yet they kept up this memorial of it, and made it their constant practice, because it was an institution of Christ, to be transmitted to the succeeding ages of the church."¹⁰
 - ii. Lk 22:19,20 "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."
 - d. This is why we enjoy the Lord's Supper every time we come together to worship God as His Church.
 - i. Acts 20:7 "Now on the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."
 - 1. The Sabbath meeting of the Church to worship God is referenced as "when the disciples came together to break bread".
 - a. Note also the extensive teaching of Paul.
 - e. We find our pursuit of Christ satisfied by steadfast devotion to the breaking of bread together.
- VI. In the Prayers
- a. "and in prayers."
 - b. Prayers - προσευχή
 - i. prayer addressed to God
 - c. They continued steadfastly in devotion to the prayers to God.
 - d. They heard the teaching of the apostles, they were in fellowship together with one another and with God, they partook of the New Covenant meal and they prayed to God. This is the way of life of the Church of God pursuing greater love

¹⁰ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2071.

and knowledge and enjoyment of God, pursuing Him to equip them to complete the mission He gave them.

- e. Note, these are not simply private prayers at home, but these are the prayers that attend with all elements of Christian worship. Prayers as we enter. Prayers as we confess our sin. Prayers of rejoicing. Prayers as we go to the Word. Prayers of gratitude. Prayers around the Lord's Supper. Prayers as we go out. Imprecatory prayers, adoration prayers, suffering prayers, every type of Biblical communication from us to God, all woven together around the Word, the fellowship and the Lord's Supper.
 - i. Calvin "It is certain that he speaketh of public prayer. And for this cause it is not sufficient for men to make their prayers at home by themselves, unless they meet altogether to pray"¹¹

VII. Questions to know, love and obey God

¹¹ John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, [*Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles*](#), vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 128.