

Scripture: Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37; 6:1-7

LD 21.54-55

Singing: 290:1-5 -- 368:1-5 – 113:1-2 – 369:1-3

- A. What does reading about the early Christian church do to us?
- B. The early church is a living commentary on Lord's Day 21:54-55
1. Nothing is dearer to the Son of God than His Church
 - a. though yet imperfect, He loves her (Eph. 5:25-28)
 - b. though multi-cultural, they are one in faith (Phil. 3:3; Conf 27)

| |
|--|
| <p>THE FEATURES OF A FLOURISHING CHURCH I. Devoted to Scripture II. Devoted to Fellowship III. Devoted to prayer IV. Devoted to God</p> |
|--|

I. Devoted to Scripture

- A. Definition of "continued steadfastly" (vs. 42, 46)
1. Not just *committed* but *devotion of heart* to each other
 2. This carried over in all four features of the early church
- B. The first feature: *devoted to the apostle's doctrine*
1. They were eager to *learn and practice* teaching of apostles
 - a. Are we eager to know the Lord Jesus better?
 - b. Are we eager to hear again and again what He did for us?
 - c. Are we eager to know what are belongs to being His?
- C. Are we a church devoted to apostle's doctrine?

II Devoted to fellowship

- A. Definition of Biblical 'fellowship'
1. Fellowship is *communion of saints with Christ and each other*
 - a. 1 Cor 1:9; Phil 1:5
 2. Fellowship is *sharing – partaking* as the early Christians did
- B. Fellowship included *breaking of bread* (vs. 42 and vs. 46)
1. Eating & drinking is a sign of friendship (Luke 15:1-2)
 2. Is the 'breaking of bread' the Lord's Supper or common meal?
- C. How do we measure up in this aspect?

III. DEVOTED TO PRAYER

A. They also '*continued steadfastly ... in prayers* (vs. 42) & *thanks* (vs. 47)

1. Not just 'general prayers' but 'specific prayers'

2. Their meals were not only 'talking to each other' but to God also

B. The remarkable power of the early church was their prayer-life

C. So how do we measure up in this aspect to early church?

IV. DEVOTED TO GOD

A. What was the driving force – energy that propelled them?

1. vs. 43: *and fear came upon every soul*

2. The effect of God's gracious presence among a group of believers

a. blessed the saints

b. effects the sinners

B. How do we measure up to this?

To ponder & pray

The living church has many critics but no rivals.

The church upon its knees will bring heaven upon earth. (Bounds)

A holy church is a mighty weapon in the hand of God. (Spurgeon)

The church should be a community of encouragement.

The church is not a democracy in which we have chosen God,
but a theocracy in which He has chosen us.

The living Church is the only society in the world that never loses any of its
members, even by death.

Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, there a
church of God exists, even if it swarms with many faults. (Calvin)