

Ekklesia

Acts 2:42-47



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FOCAL Read Responsively Acts 2:42-47 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
(44) And all that believed were together, and had all things common; (45) And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all [men], as every man had need. (46) And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (47) Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

I was “on-line” last night checking my mail when I decided to visit a so called Christian “chat room” so I could study the Bible with other believers. What I heard in that room was not Bible study. The “room” was dedicated to what my momma would have called “running down other people”, not to the Word of God.

It is a frightening trend in the world today that the greatest thing many *religious* people can do is run one another down. I remember a few years ago a gentleman announced that he had just completed writing the Gospel of John on a grain of rice. Some people may consider that to be a great achievement – it is not. This is perhaps the greatest waste of time imaginable. Imagine a person spending months, perhaps years with a tiny hair and very little ink carefully scribing the Words of Life on something that cannot be read without a microscope. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to this earth to serve, suffer, and rise from the grave just so His Gospel could be hidden on a grain of rice. **If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this**

world has blinded the minds of those which believe not (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Let the devil be the hider of the Gospel, not the one who professes to know Christ as Savior. Let the evil one come out with the lies that blind to that precious Gospel of salvation. Let the devil and his henchmen – be they fallen angels or sons of Adam - publish throughout the land that there is no God, that Jesus' bones were found in a tomb, that the resurrection never really occurred. Let the foolish spin their lies on television and radio and in print. The Bible tells us that

John 3:19-20 ... men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

It is no surprise that the unbeliever will waste his time spinning fables about the Savior. Let the spider spin – you do not need to crawl into the web with it. Continue to love the Lord, dear believer, and continue to lovingly tell all who will listen that **Jesus Christ is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life (John 14:6)**. A child will blow bubbles in his glass of milk so as to have more to drink, but the adult knows that the milk has not increased nor has its quality been made better. Let the foolish blow bubbles in the Living Water of the Gospel – His Word has withstood greater challenges than this. The early Christian saw the Risen Savior and put his hand in the nail prints of His hands. The early Christian stood watching Jesus teach in the Temple while the religious pretender hid. The early Christian proved his faith by

laying down his life for the Savior. The early Christian went into the Coliseum and willingly stared into the eyes of death because he had previously stared into the eyes of the Resurrected Savior and watched Him ascend into Heaven. The early Christian was willing to sell all that he had in order to promote the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The early Christian was willing to be shunned, mocked, tortured, or exiled – just as long as he could tell others about the salvation that is available through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When ancient Israel was released from captivity so they could return and rebuild the Temple of God we read:

Nehemiah 4:10 ... [there is] much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

The rubbish and rubble of destroyed Jerusalem had to be cleared away before the work could be done. The Temple could not be built on rubbish, nor can the Church of our Risen Lord be built on rubbish. That which cannot be built on the foundation of Christ must be torn down and cast away. Worry, strife, division, hatred, backbiting, covetousness, greed, sexual sin, idolatry, drunkenness, and heretical lies – these pieces of broken rubbish are unfit clothing for the Church, the Beloved of Christ. Let the world invent lies over dead men's bones – You who are Christ's know Him to be alive, for He lives within your hearts. You have seen the Resurrected Savior. You have been wed to Him by faith. As the early Church did, clothe yourselves in the Apostle's doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, in prayers. Clothe yourself in the love of God in Christ Jesus. Adorn yourself, Bride of

Heaven, for the Bridegroom comes.

May God touch your hearts with His Holy Word.

A Scriptural Definition Of “The Church”

FOCAL Acts 2:47 ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

People have many ideas – many of them wrong – as to what the “Church” is. Some people believe that the Church is a *place* where one goes occasionally so that one day he or she can get into Heaven. This place, this building is often called “**Rock Hill Church**” by those who have not carefully studied their Bibles. This building *cannot* be **Rock Hill Church**, for Jesus Christ said of the Church:

Matthew 16:18 ... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The **Church** properly is something that **Jesus Christ builds and adds to**. We even see this in our text above when we read, “**the Lord added to the Church daily**”. The Church cannot be the boards and nails, the carpets and paint, the floor tiles and the roofing. Though good men and women built this building Jesus made it clear that **He would build His Church** – and there is none among us who would say that Jesus drove the nails that hold this structure together. In fact, Jesus promised that **the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church**. You are all aware that not so long ago evil people were

guilty of starting fires and destroying Church buildings. You know that *Hurricane Katrina* destroyed many Church buildings in New Orleans, some of which house Baptist congregations. No, dear ones, our Lord never lies. If the Church were a building of wood and mortar then no power on earth could move it. **The early Church had no building** and yet in one day the Lord added *three thousand souls* to this Body. We read:

FOCAL Acts 2:46-47 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (47) Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

The early Church *met in the Temple in Jerusalem*, in the part of the Temple called *Solomon's Portico (Porch)*. The early Church **broke bread from house to house**. No dear friends, if the Church were a building then our Scripture for today would make absolutely no sense.

So what is “The Church”?

The word “**Church**”¹ is a Greek word which means a **called out assembly of people, a community or congregation of people who have something in**

1 G1577, ἐκκλησία, ekklēsia, *ek-klay-see'-ah*, From a compound of G1537 and a derivative of G2564; a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church.

common. In short ...

The Church is a group of people who have been called out of this world and into a relationship with God and with one another through faith in Christ Jesus.

FOCAL Acts 2:47 ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved².

1 Those Who Are Of The Church Are “Being Saved”. The King James text improperly translates our focal verse. The word **should be saved** is a Present Passive Participle of the Greek **sozo**, which is properly translated:

Acts 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them **those who were being saved.**^{HCSB}

Acts 2:47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily **those who were being saved.**^{NIV}

The Church is a living Body of believers who **are being**

2 Present Passive Participle of G4982, σωζω, sōzō, *sode'-zo*, From a primary word σως sōs (contraction for the obsolete σάος saos, “safe”); to *save*, that is, *deliver* or *protect* (literally or figuratively): - heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole.

HCSB Holman Christian Standard Version of the Holy Bible

NIV New International Version of the Holy Bible

saved. It is not that they **have been saved** as the King James translates, but they are **in the process of being saved**. Let me explain.

Every unbeliever apart from Jesus Christ is dead in their trespasses and sins.

The unbeliever follows the leading of their sinful natures. The unbelieving world sees nothing wrong with the *works of the flesh*:

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; **adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings**, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

The unbeliever sees these terrible things as *fun* or *pleasurable*, whereas the Lord warns us **they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God**. Dead things cannot inherit a living Kingdom. Dead things cannot enter God's Heaven. Just as water seeks its own level, dead things seek their own level. Unless you have been *born again by faith in Christ* you follow after death. Your Master is the Prince of Death, Satan. The

Bible says of those who have not believed on Jesus ... **were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1)**. This was the state of every person prior to faith in Christ.

What is “the quickening”?

Once a person accepts Christ as Savior he or she *becomes alive by the power of God*. The Scripture calls this **the quickening**. You have been **made alive by the touch of Christ**. He is now a part of your life in a very real way. Just as He rose from the grave on the third day, He raised you up from death and gave you new Life. The Bible makes this distinction very clear:

Romans 6:4-7 ... like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Jesus died, was buried, then rose again on the third day. Just as surely as He is resurrected, we who believe *are also raised from the dead*. We are no longer spiritually dead, but are spiritually alive unto God. The Scripture

states:

Romans 6:13 ... yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

The Church is the assembly of **called out ones, saved by faith in Christ, and who are being saved each and every day**. The Church is filled with *works in progress*. No Christian is completely saved until he or she stands before Jesus Christ in glory in a *perfect and sinless state*. Yet each and every day the Christian **is being saved**. He or she grows farther and farther away from sin and closer and closer to the Jesus Who loves us. **C.H. Spurgeon** said:

“The proper persons to be added to the visible Church of Christ are those who believe to the salvation of their souls, who are from day to day experiencing the saving power of the Name of Jesus by being delivered from sin, by being saved from the custom of the world, by being saved in the sense of being sanctified from the various corruptions and lusts which rule among the sons of men. ... Am I saved? Have I believed in Jesus? If I have the process of salvation within me is going on. I am being delivered from the reigning, ruling power of sin each day. I am being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and I shall be kept and presented at last spotless before the presence of God with

exceeding joy.”³

2 Those Who Are Of Christ's Church Love One Another. We read:

FOCAL Acts 2:44-47 **And all that believed were together, and had all things common; (45) And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all [men], as every man had need. (46) And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (47) Praising God, and having favor with all the people.**

What distinguishes the Church of Christ from the synagogue of Satan?

One thing and one thing only – LOVE. These people **were together, not apart.** They were not fighting amongst themselves, criticizing one another, looking for fault. They **had all things in common.** Where the Blood of Christ flows we **have all things in common.**

Illustrate Look at the prostitute, the woman who spent time misusing her body. Having confessed her sin **she**

now is Christ's Beloved. Look at that thief – oh, how he used to steal. Christ came to him and quickened him. Now he is gainfully employed, and gives of himself and of his income to the Church. **He is Christ's Beloved.** Look at the liar, the drunkard, and the sluggard. **They love Christ for He first loved them.** They heard of salvation by faith in Jesus and surrendered to the King of Glory. Under His Blood **they are Christ's Beloved, part of His Body the Church.** They have all things in common because of Jesus. The Lord added them to His Church, blessed be His Holy Name!

... **And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

Illustrate Sometimes some are **added to the assembly,** but they are **not a part of the Church.** The Church of Christ is a living thing, the Body of Christ, His Precious Bride. If you want to add to a tree or a vine you cannot take a dead branch and tie it on. That isn't adding to the tree, but it is *weighing it down.* In time that which is dead will kill that which it hangs on, just as surely as kudzu will kill the sturdiest of trees. **The Lord must add to the Church, He must make alive and graft new members into the Body.** The preacher has no power to add to the Church, neither does the evangelist have a special talent to increase the Body of Christ. **The God Who is Love must graft new members into His Body the Church.** Those whom God grafts are **distinguished by love.** The Scripture says:

1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is

3 *Additions To The Church* delivered April 5, 1874 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

born of God, and knoweth God. (8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

He that loveth not knoweth not God. We are told in even stronger language elsewhere:

1 John 4:20-21 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (21) **And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.**

There are some who profess to know Jesus but who **persist in backbiting, in hatred, in racism, in every loveless work.** Sometimes a **Demas** will creep into the assembly (**2 Timothy 4:10**) **forsaking the Church for the riches of this world** while causing the pastor great heartache. Sometimes a **Simon Magus** will creep in (**Acts 8:18**) and seek to fill the pulpit so that he can fill his ego or his pockets. The devil has his **Ananias and Sapphira standing in the wings**, ready to blaspheme the work of God in the eyes of the world. The **wolf in sheep's clothing** that creeps in among us to spread dissension is surely of Satan, not of God. Those who love themselves while hating the Church are, according to the Apostle, **liars and not part of us.** If they bring trouble and unbelief with them they are not of us. **He who loveth God must love his (or her) brother also.** Do not be worried about **Judas Iscariot or his kin** –

they may hinder the Church of Christ for a while, they may even cause a Peter or John to stumble for a time, but in the end the only death they bring is the death they bring upon themselves. **Christ has promised that hell hath no place in us who are His Church.** Trust Him **Who will never leave you nor forsake you.** Finally,

3 **Those Who Are Of Christ's Church Follow Christ's Agenda.** We read:

FOCAL Acts 2:42, 44 **And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (44) And all that believed were together, and had all things common;**

What are the characteristics of Christ's Church? Jesus told us that

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: (28) And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

How do we know Christ's Church and Christ's people? **They continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine.** They know the Voice of the Shepherd, they know the Word of God. They love their Master's Voice and **hear His Voice and follow Him.** How else? **They break bread together.** They lovingly fellowship with one

another. Show me a man or a woman who hates Christians or who speaks evilly of one for whom Christ died and I will show you an unbelieving and a pretender to salvation. **Do you love Jesus? Then love those Whom Jesus loves.** Be hospitable to one another, be gracious to one another. This is the mark of the Church of Christ, not that it is friendly, but *that it loves!* There is a unity in Christ's Church.

And all that believed were together

A person says “I believe that I can be saved and worship Jesus at home”. Really? Certainly the Christian should worship Jesus at home *and* in the Church, at work and at play. Yet Christ expects His Church to assemble. **We are His called out ones, His Body, His Bride.** One person is not the Church and never can be. Just as the Old Testament Temple required many priests to serve together, the Church of Jesus Christ requires many believer-priests working together for the glory of God. **And all that believed were together. He is the Shepherd, we are His flock.** The lamb apart from the flock and the Shepherd is in a dangerous place indeed. Don't just “go to Church”, go and *be a part of the Church.* Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Follow Christ's agenda. Study the Word of God, Pray, worship together, love one another, and

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with

meekness and fear:

May God bless you all!