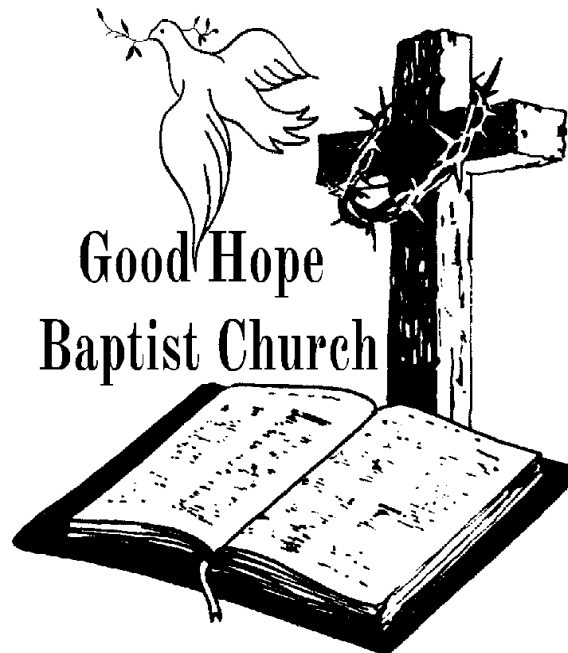


They That Believed

Acts 2:44-47



Good Hope
Baptist Church

Living Together In The Love Of God

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

ILLUSTRATE A little boy was standing outside, waiting for his momma to finish her grocery shopping. As he stood there a man came up and asked, “Son, I’m new in town. Do you know the way to the Post Office?” The little boy replied, “Sure! Just go down to the end of the block, turn right, and go about halfway down that block. It will be on your right.” The man thanked the boy, and then said “I’m the new Baptist Pastor. Why don’t you and your folks come to Church this Sunday, and I’ll tell you how to get to Heaven”. The little boy chuckled. “Awww, come on. You don’t even know the way to the Post Office”.

A Christian is a person who knows the way to Heaven, and knows that that way is only found through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said:

John 14:6 .. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Salvation comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But what happens after you are saved? Is that it? Your ticket

is punched for Heaven, so now nothing else matters? Absolutely not! Once you are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, the Lord gives you a direct order to *tell others how to be saved*. Jesus said:

Mark 16:15-16 Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

If you don't tell them to be saved by believing in the Lord Jesus, then you are not giving them a chance to miss hell. Jesus said **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”**.

A person must *hear* the Gospel, and then receive what they have heard to be saved. A person is convinced that the Gospel is real by how it effects the lives of those who have experienced it's saving power. **The world needs to see the Gospel in action.** This is where the Church comes in.

Once a Christian is saved, that Christian is supposed to join with a group of other Christians into a unified body called “The Church”. Listen Beloved: The Church is *not a building of brick and mortar*. An unbeliever can lay brick and mortar. A group of unbelievers attempted to build the **Tower of Babel** in the Old Testament, a stairway to Heaven. God was not pleased with this unbeliever built building, and, hear my heart, **God is not impressed with this building we are meeting in**. The God that created the Heavens and the Earth and the

billion billions of galaxies that we see in space is as impressed with our man-made buildings as we are with the ant hills in our yards. God's answer to Babel, and every man-made building was to scatter them abroad.

Genesis 11:9 from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

A Church is a group of born again, Spirit filled believers all working together to glorify the Lord Who saved them!

ILLUSTRATE Listen Beloved. The early Church didn't possess a building. It didn't own a graveyard. It didn't enjoy religious freedom, but worshiped in catacombs and under trees, ever threatened by persecution from both Pharisees as well as Romans. In fact, the early Church did not possess a set of Bylaws, *nor a complete Bible*. The New Testament was still being written by the Apostles. What did the early Church have?

It had love. It loved the Lord Jesus, and loved one another. It didn't just love by word, but loved by DEED. Because the early Church loved it *thrived* under persecution, and *grew* though society sought to still it's voice.

The world doesn't read the Bible. The world watches and reads the Church. The driving force of the Church is to be LOVE, and the world watches the Church to see if it has love for others, whether member or non-member. In fact, the Lord Jesus said:

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The Church is not a building of brick and mortar, but it is a building of flesh and blood. It is a people that the Lord knits together for His glory. It is a called out body of believers. It is a people in love!

The Church is a people *in love!*

The Church Is A Group Of *Believers* Who Belong To The Lord Jesus

ILLUSTRATE I remember a few years ago about a Christian who spent years 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 years of their lives 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. The Lord Jesus Christ wants His Gospel of salvation clearly broadcast to everyone who will listen. After all, Jesus gave His life so that **whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).**

FOCAL Acts 2:44 And all that believed were together

Word Study The word translated “believed” is the

Greek *Present Active Participle* of PISTEUO πιστευω (pronounced pist-yoo'-o). The Present Participle denotes continuous action, noting that the quality of their belief was not weak or passing, but continuous. “**They kept on believing**”. This is the same construction that we see in probably the most famous Bible verse ever, **John 3:16**. In that verse PISTEUO is again a *Present Active Participle* showing the quality of belief.

Those who form the local Church are those who have more than a *passing faith* in the Lord Jesus. They **believe – and keep on believing** in Him. The quality of true Christian faith *surrenders ownership of self to the Lord Jesus!*

A Christian is someone who has **placed faith, confidence, and trust in the Lord Jesus**. Jesus is more than a “good teacher” or a “nice man”. Jesus is, as Peter preached:

CONTEXT Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Jesus Christ is **both Lord and Christ**, not just to God but *to His people*. Peter preached:

CONTEXT Acts 2:23-24 {Jesus}, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (24) Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

that Jesus Christ was **delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.**

Jesus was crucified by **wicked hands**, but it was God Who sent Jesus Christ to be the payment for our sins. Jesus Christ is our **propitiation, our satisfactory payment to God for our sins.**

Romans 3:23-26 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Men crucified Jesus, but God set Jesus forth to be our **propitiation** or covering for sin. Wicked hands crucified Jesus, but Jesus was not forced to the Cross. He willingly came and died for our sins, for He said:

John 10:17-18 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

The Father offered His Son to be the payment for our

sins. The Son offered His own life to be the payment for our sins. The only thing that man contributed to the Cross was our sins, His suffering, and the nails!

Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. Perfect Love reached down from Heaven to earth, willing to save us while we yet howled for His Blood. Jesus Christ is both Lord and Christ! He is the only Way to peace with God. Those who heard Peter preaching Christ were **pricked in their hearts**, and cried out "**Men and brethren, what shall we do?**" (Acts 2:37). Peter said:

CONTEXT Acts 2:38 **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

Word Study Here is the Gospel! "**Repent**".

METANOEO (μετανοεω pronounced met-an-o-eh'-o), **change your minds, turn in your way of thinking.**

Turn from your old way of life, and turn fully to Christ. Repent and Believe are two sides to the same coin. When you "believe" you focus your faith on one thing. When you "repent" you turn from focusing your faith on the wrong thing. The believer is someone who has *repented* and *believed*.

If you have *repented*, turning from the world, and have *believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation*, you cease being your own property. You - at that point - belong to Jesus. You get baptized, you witness, you love, you DO because you belong to Jesus!

Peter said **"repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins"**. Water Baptism is one of the outward evidences that you have inwardly surrendered to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

The Christian is someone who has **repented**, changing his mind, and has **turned to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation**. The Christian is someone who knows that he or she *belongs to God*, not to themselves.

ILLUSTRATE Alexander the Great was one of the most successful military commanders of all time and is presumed undefeated in battle. By the time of his death, he had conquered most of the world known to the ancient Greeks. One day a cowardly soldier caught running from battle was brought into the tent of Alexander the Great: "Soldier, what's your name?" demanded Alexander the Great. "Alexander, sir." Alexander the Great repeated the question: "What is your name?" "My name is Alexander, sir," the soldier repeated. A third time and more loudly Alexander the Great asked, "What is your name?" A third time the soldier meekly said, "My name is Alexander, sir." Alexander the Great then looked the young soldier straight in the eye. "Soldier," he said with intensity, "either change your name or change your conduct."

A Christian is someone who belongs to the Lord. He purchased us with a great price.

CONTEXT Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Word Study Look at that phrase **"in the Name of Jesus Christ"**. When someone spoke **"of the name"** of someone they were referring to their authority. The policeman used to say **"stop, in the name of the Law"**. Soldiers would order people **"step aside, in the name of the King"**. That phrase **"in the name of"** refers to AUTHORITY. The Bible says:

John 20:31 But these {things} are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

When the first Christians were baptized **"in the name of Jesus Christ"** they were submitting to His authority. They were saying by their actions "I put myself under Jesus' ownership and power; I surrender myself to Him my Savior and Lord". This would cost these believers everything. Unlike America where there is no great persecution if you say "I am a Christian", these first Christians stood in opposition to the religion of the Jews as well as the religion of the Romans. What was the quality of their faith? In Foxes Book of Martyrs we read of early Christian prosecution.

ILLUSTRATE The first persecution of the Church took place in the year 67, under Nero, the sixth emperor of Rome. ... the barbarities exercised on the Christians were such as even excited the commiseration of the Romans themselves. Nero even refined upon cruelty, and contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most infernal imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then worried by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed to axletrees, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them. This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire; but it rather increased than diminished the spirit of Christianity. In the course of it, St. Paul and St. Peter were martyred.

Each believer in the Church knew that they stood with Jesus against the world. So they stood with Jesus, and stood with one another, knowing that what the Lord said was true. **This was His Church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).**

The Church Is A Group Of *Unified Believers*

FOCAL Acts 2:44-46 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.

Please note how love flowed through the early Church. They loved one another because **they were together and had all things common.**

The believers gave *themselves* to the Lord, so now it was easier to give *what they owned* to other believers. **When the question of ownership is resolved, the Christian will be pliant to God and loving toward other believers.**

The first Christians **continued daily in one accord in the Temple.** They didn't have a Church building to go to, but worshiped on Solomon's Porch, one of the open air courts of the Temple. The Bible tells us that they not only maintained unity while in the worship services of the Church, but they also were **breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.** These believers – these Christians – were from all different stations in life, and from many different places. But they worked together **in one accord** worshiping the Lord Who saved them, and loving one another.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,** (2) **With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;** (3) **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Each member in the Church is exhorted to **endeavor** –

struggle – work at – keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I do not belong to me, and the Church does not belong to me. We all belong to Jesus, so we must do everything in a way that pleases our Heavenly Owner!

The local Church must *never* war among its members. Jesus said:

Mark 3:25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

We His Church are Christ's House (Hebrews 3:6). The Lord Jesus commands His believers to **love one another, as I have loved you**. Unity and peace are of the utmost primacy in a healthy local Church. Paul went on to say:

Seven times ONE Ephesians 4:4-6 There is **one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

The Apostle uses the word ONE *seven times* in this short set of verses. Unity is imperative in the local Church. Jesus Christ prayed for us to be unified, and continues to pray that we will be as “one”.

ILLUSTRATE Do Love How in the world can a local Church, filled with fallible Christians, maintain its unity? Each Christian must *do love*. You *do love* by *doing acts of kindness* for one another. You *do love* by asking

yourselves, “What can I do for my fellow believers to bless them and please my Lord?” You *do love* by *turning the other cheek* when offended. You *do love* when you give others the second chance that you yourselves want. You *do love* when you refuse to carry a grudge for Christ's sake.

Illustrate One Sunday at the end of services everyone filed out, but a few stood around talking outside. One woman said “The Pastor's sermon was really bad today”, and another piped up “And it was boring, too”. Another said “The choir was particularly awful. It seemed as if they were all having an off day!” Others nodded their heads in agreement. But one little boy piped up. He said “I thought it was pretty good, dad, especially since we didn't put but a dollar in the plate”.

The Church that is blessed is the Church that has the maximum number of believers doing drive by acts of love!

Unity Is Maintained In The Church By Spirit Filled Leadership

ILLUSTRATE Two young college graduates decided that, after graduation, they wanted to go on Safari in Africa. So they bought their plane tickets, packed their bags, and soon found themselves in the deepest part of Africa following a local guide. Three days into their Safari one of the biggest lions they did see jumped out of the bushes, roared, and face them. The guide was terrified, and took off running. One graduate said, "Stay

calm. Remember when we were reading about Safaris one book said that if we were confronted by a lion to stand still, look him in the eyes, and that he would run away". His companion said, "You read the book, and I read the book, but *has the lion read the book?*"

Troubles come to local Churches just like lions come to people on Safari. Sometimes troubles are *external* to the Church, like the persecution the early Church endured. Sometimes troubles are *internal* to the Church.

What do we do when the "lion of trouble" pounces out at our Church? *We read the Book* and do what it says.

CONTEXT Acts 6:1 **And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.**

There was a **murmuring** within the local Church. When God's people grumble and fight among themselves the Lord will not use them. A murmuring Israel wandered 40 years in the desert then died. The early Church Pastors understood this, so took measures against the murmuring as soon as it came to their attention. Look at their solution.

Acts 6:2-4 Then the twelve {the Pastors} called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. (3) Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the

Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

How was the murmuring addressed? The early Pastor asked the local Church to **"look ye out among you seven men of honest report"**. These men were *among the Church members*, and examples to the flock. They were **of honest report**. They were men who were *in Church and among the Church on a regular basis*. Furthermore, these men were **"full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom"**. They were empowered by God, possessed by God, sold out on God. They were men who went to God for wisdom:

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

"Full of the Holy Ghost" means these men were *God empowered and God anointed*. As **"God is love"** and they were **"full of the Holy Ghost (God)"** they were *filled with love*. These men were not selected based on *popularity* but on *God Polarity*.

Furthermore, these men were **set over this business by the Pastors, so the Pastors could devote themselves to prayer and ministry of the Word.**

The leaders that the local Church called out were *Godly men who loved the Church*. Their job was to *restore peace in the Body* so the Lord could continue to grow His Church.

CONTEXT Acts 6:5-6 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: (6) Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

I don't have time to mention these early leaders in the Church, but I do want to mention **Stephen** and **Phillip**. The Bible says:

CONTEXT Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Stephen was murdered by the Pharisees for preaching the Gospel of salvation, but out of his murder God brought forth **the Apostle Paul (Acts 7:54-8:1)** to repentance on the Damascus Road. **Philip** was a **great Evangelist** in the early Church, and was used of the Lord to witness to a high ranking delegate from Ethiopia (**see Acts 8:26-40**). These two men - along with the other five chosen from among the early Church - were God driven and God controlled. And because they did as God directed them to do, peace reigned in the early Church.

CONTEXT Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly...

May God touch your hearts with His Word!



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

John 14:6; Mark 16:15-16; Genesis 11:9; John 13:35

The Church Is A Group Of *Believers* Who Belong To The Lord Jesus

Acts 2:44; Acts 2:36; Acts 2:23-24; Romans 3:23-26; John 10:17-18; Acts 2:37; Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Acts 2:38; John 20:31; Matthew 16:18

Word Study The word translated “believed” is the Greek *Present Active Participle* of PISTEUO _____

Word Study Here is the Gospel! "Repent". METANOEO _____

Word Study When someone spoke “of the name” of someone they were referring to _____

The Church Is A Group Of *Unified Believers*

Acts 2:44-46; Ephesians 4:1-3; Mark 3:25; Ephesians 4:4-6 _____

Unity Is Maintained In The Church By Spirit Filled Leadership

Acts 6:1; Acts 6:2-4; James 1:5; Acts 6:5-6; Acts 6:8; Acts 6:7

"Full of the Holy Ghost" means these men were *God empowered* and *God anointed*. As "**God is love**" and they were "**full of the Holy Ghost (God)**" they were *filled with love*. These men were not selected based on *popularity* but on *God Polarity*.