

The Beautiful Society that Jesus Is Building

Acts 2:42-47

Halifax: 4 September 2011

Introduction

Oh Christian people—

- people of God—
 - you who are baptised into Jesus Christ and believe in Him—
 - Do you realise what a glorious society you are a part of??

It is the beautiful society that Jesus Christ is building!

- It is the kingdom of righteousness that He came to establish by His power and grace!
- It is the Church that He has purchased with His blood!
- It is the body of Christ that He is going raise up at the last day in all its beauty and glory to live before Him without sin or sorrow forever!
- It is the city that Abraham so earnestly sought—
 - the city whose builder and maker is God!

If you are in Jesus Christ, baptised into Him and trusting Him, then you are a part of this marvellous city and nobody can take you out of it.

- Remember what we have seen in the last several weeks in Acts 2...
 - Jesus ascended up into heaven and then He poured out His Holy Spirit, just as He had promised...
 - And He poured Him out in a most conspicuous way at Pentecost, when devout Jews from all over the world had come up to Jerusalem to worship God.
 - They heard the sound of rushing wind and they saw tongues of fire come down upon the disciples of Jesus...
 - And then they witnessed the miracle that these Galilean fishermen were able to speak of God's wonderful works in languages that they had never learned.
 - And then they heard Peter preach
 - and explain to them from their own scriptures that this was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by the Messiah...
 - And that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth whose miracles they had seen and whom that had crucified just a few weeks before at the Passover...
 - And that God had raised up Jesus, according to scripture,
 - And that He had gone to reign at God's right hand as Lord and Christ and had poured out His Spirit as promised.

- And some of them realised how wrong they had been to ignore Jesus and even to crucify Him...
 - And they cried out and said “What must we do?”
 - And Peter had told them to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...
 - Then three thousand of them received the word and came forward to be baptised!
 - They were baptised and added to the church just as you were when you were baptised!
 - Immediately they become part of the city whose builder and maker is God!
 - And what a glorious city it is!

Today in Acts 2:42-47, we get to see what the New Testament church was like when it began.

- It is a beautiful beginning!
 - Luke seems to describe it in a way that is almost idealistic, but he is not trying to deceive us.
 - He will not hesitate to show us the problems that arise in the church later on.
 - But this is what the church was really like at the beginning by God’s grace.
 - It serves as a pattern of what we ought to be!
 - It serves as a reminder of the hope that we have in Jesus that at the resurrection He will present us to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish!
 - Oh my brothers and sisters!
 - We are a part of this glorious society!
- No doubt some of you have been hurt by the church.
 - You have been disappointed by her hypocrisy and have not seen God’s grace at work in her.
 - It may well be that the church has done you wrong.
 - But you must not let that prevent you from seeing what the church is meant to be and what it will be through the grace of our dear Lord Jesus!
- For your encouragement, during our time together today, I want to look at three characteristics of the church at its inception...
 - First, I want you to see how diligent they were about the public ordinances of worship.
 - Second, I want you to see how they were transformed from the inside out.
 - Third, I want you to see how attractive they were to outsiders.

- And as we look at these things, I want you to ask yourself if there is not more—a lot more for you to attain in our Jesus.
 - I hope that you will be glad when you see something of the glory of what we might be and will be.
 - And I hope that it will make you yearn for the fullness of the glory that God has prepared for us.

TRANS> So first, then,

I. See how diligent the young church was about the public ordinances of worship.

- This is brought out in Acts 2:42 which says:
 - **Acts 2:42: And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**
 - These are the four main public ordinances of the church, and they continued steadfastly in them.

A. I wonder, do you continue steadfastly in each of these?

1. To continue steadfastly means that you are diligent about them... you occupy yourself in them... you pay persistent attention to them.
 - It means that you do not give yourself half-heartedly to them.
 - You are fully engaged and give your full attention to them.
 - It means that it is something important to you that you make time for.
 - It is something that you arrange your schedule around and will not miss!
 - You make sure that you are well rested and prepared.
 - You come early to make sure that you do not miss any part of it.
 - You look upon it as an appointment with the King of kings—not something to be lax about!
 - You make sure that you have removed all hindrances—that you have confessed your sins and reconciled with your brothers before you come.
 - You pray earnestly and prepare for worship before you come.
 - You pray all through week in preparation—for yourself, for the preacher, for your brothers and sisters!
2. In the history of the church, wherever there is spiritual life, there has been diligence about public worship.
 - a. Verse 41 says that those who believed—who obtained life through faith—were baptised and added to the church.

- The spiritual and the physical were brought together.
 - They believed in Christ who is in heaven, and they became a vibrant part of His body on earth.
 - There were no ethereal Christians who thought themselves to be above the church on earth or who saw only a spiritual body.
 - They came and joined themselves to the apostles and the other disciples as the body of Christ...
 - And they met with God in the public assembly of His people, not as islands who isolated themselves from His body.
- b. When God is working, there will be a diligence about public worship.
- 1) Ted Donnally told of speaking to believers in Singapore who consider a sermon of 1.5 hours to be short.
 - Their morning service is ordinarily 4.5 hours long.
 - 2) Right now there are Christians who are gathered for public worship even though their lives are at risk.
 - It is so important to them that they are willing to risk persecution rather than miss—
 - By contrast in North America, there are Christians who are feeling a little tired and decide it is too much trouble to gather...
 - There are those who cannot get out of bed because they stayed up late watching videos or surfing the internet.
 - What a contrast!
 - How can we go on such a low rate!
3. My brothers and sisters, the elders want to see a greater diligence in our congregation.
- They have even requested me to preach a special sermon about this because it has been a problem.
 - So many of you drag in late week after week.
 - And then you decide not to remain for prayer or the second service when you are well able to do so.
 - We desperately need God's grace and it is particularly in public worship that we make use of the means of grace...
 - those ordinances that God appointed for us and that He works through for the good of His people!
 - You need them if you are to grow!
 - You need to pray for them if they are to benefit you!

- Unless the Holy Spirit is at work when we meet, we might as well not meet.
- If we are not praying and preparing, it is unlikely that He will work among us in any great way.

TRANS> So answer for yourself—Can you say that you continue steadfastly in the public ordinances of God’s worship?

B. Let’s look at these ordinances in more detail...

1. First, we are told that they continued steadfastly in *the Apostles’ doctrine*.
 - a. Doctrine simply means teaching!
 - 1) Jesus commanded that the apostles would go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.
 - A disciple is simply a student—a learner.
 - Jesus told His apostles to teach them to observe all things that He had commanded.
 - 2) This teaching consisted in imparting truth to them about Jesus, about what He has done for us, about what He has promised to us, about how He wants us to live—
 - And it also involved exhortation—pressing and commanding the disciples to believe the word and to obey all that He has said.
 - We saw in verse 40 how Peter exhorted them with many words!
 - He did not just give them the facts, but he urged them to act on what he had said!
 - to do something with it!
 - That is what exhortation is.
 - This is preaching.

TRANS> And this preaching was not just for the beginning.

- b. Preaching is something that is to be kept up in the church!
 - 1) Jesus commanded that the making of disciples would continue to the end of the age.
 - When Paul was growing older, he commanded men like Timothy and Titus to go out and preach the Word—
 - In 2 Timothy 2:2, he told Timothy to train up faithful men in the word who would be able to teach others also.
 - This is to be the ongoing work of the church and we are to be diligent in receiving it!

- The apostles' doctrine is preserved for us in the scripture and this is what is to be preached...
 - not speculations, not rationalisations, not therapy, not self-help—but but the word of the apostles and prophets!
- 2) Throughout the history of the church, you can gage the church's health by whether or not there is diligence in the word...
- whether preaching is kept up!
 - When the church declined before the reformation, there were bishops and priests who never preached at all.
 - The people were ignorant and did not even know the way of salvation.
 - When God sent reformation, He did it by restoring preaching.
 - He reveals Himself through His Word.
 - The soul is nourished primarily by the Word of God.
 - That is why, just before He went to the cross,
 - Jesus prayed that we would be sanctified by the truth and then said, “your word is truth.”
 - That is why He commanded His church to keep on making disciples until He returns.
 - We are in need of reform all over again!
 - We constantly hear of churches replacing preaching with performing arts—
 - with music and drama and all sort of other things.
 - We hear of the preaching of the word being replaced by the doctrines and commandments of men that have no power.
 - Pray that God's word will have the place God appointed it to have among us!
 - If ever you want to see how important it is, just read through the New Testament or even through the book of Acts and take note of how often it is mentioned.
2. Next we are told that the young church continued steadfastly in *fellowship*—
- in *the fellowship* (the definite article is used in the original).
- a. Fellowship refers to sharing or holding things in common.
- The true essence of nature of fellowship is described by John in his first epistle...

- He explains that our fellowship is with the father and with His Son Jesus Christ!
 - This is beautiful!
 - We have our life in Jesus—
 - We have a common life together in Him as His people who have been baptised in His name and added to His church!
 - There is a sense in which we share Him with each other!
 - We receive His blessing and grace in unison!
- b. There are at least three ways that we participate in *the fellowship* when we assemble together.
- 1) First, in that we assemble together to encourage one another and to stir each other up to love and good works.
 - This is spoken of in Hebrews 10:25-26 where we are exhorted not to forsake the assembling our ourselves together!
 - There is something very beneficial about a congregation hearing the word together so that they can see how others apply it...
 - Sometimes what was preached does not impact you until you see how your brother or sister is applying it.
 - We encourage one another in this way and when we see anyone lagging behind, we try to stir that one up!
 - When you avoid your brothers and sisters, you deprive them of your example and encouragement and do not benefit from theirs.
 - You need to be diligent about fellowship!
 - 2) Secondly, we share in our praises together.
 - This is the fellowship of our praise.
 - In the assembly we hear of what Christ has done for us and of all that He is,
 - and then we lift up united songs of praise to Him and we confess together what He has done.
 - And as we spend time with each other through the week and before and after the assembly,
 - we speak of how God is working in our lives and then we are together singing our praises,
 - we think not only about what God has done for us, but also about what He has done for our brothers and sisters...
 - And about what they have said about Him and what He means to them.

- But if you neglect fellowship, you don't have this corporate blessing.

3) Thirdly, we share our offerings—

- This is the fellowship of our possessions...
 - Together we support the work of the church, we support missions, and we support those among us who are in need.
 - We dedicate our offerings and present them to the work that we are all united in seeing fulfilled.
 - 1 Cor 16:2 commands us to bring our offerings on the first day of the week and lay them aside for the work of the church.

TRANS> So don't pull yourself away—Continue steadfastly in the fellowship of the church.

3. Thirdly, we are told that they continued steadfastly in the breaking of the bread.

- I have translated this with the definite articles because that is the way it is in the original...
 - It is not that they simply broke bread or ate together—
 - it is that they joined in *the breaking of the bread*, a clear reference to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper!
 - In verse 46, the definite article is not used, so there it may refer to eating common meals together...
 - but here in verse 42, it is something that they continued steadfastly in, and it is the ordinance that Christ gave to His church.
 - The Lord's Supper is referred to as the breaking of bread in 1 Cor 10:16 where it says,
 - “the bread which we break, is it not the body of Christ,”
 - And in Acts 20:7 which speaks of the custom of the disciples gathering on the first day of the week to break bread.
 - The Didache, a document written about 100 AD instructs,
 - “on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, confessing your transgressions that your sacrifice may be pure.”
 - In 1 Cor 11:17-20, Paul rebukes the Corinthians for coming together as a church for a different purpose than to eat the Lord's Supper—they were getting drunk and being gluttons!
 - The Lord's Supper was clearly to be a regular part of their weekly worship.

- b. And here in Acts 2:42, we are told that the early church continued steadfastly in the breaking of the bread!
- 1) This is so important because it in this sacrament that we remember what Christ has done for us on the cross!
 - We remember how He shed His own blood to atone for our sins!
 - We remember how He gave His life as a sacrifice for us and how the Father accepted His sacrifice.
 - And we remember that we have life only through His death.
 - Too often the church has forgotten this!
 - They have begun to trust in their own works rather than in Christ.
 - 2) There is always the danger that we will hear a sermon and take it as mere moral instruction—
 - That we will go away with, hoping to do better!
 - But when we come to the Lord's Supper, when it is given with the instruction that properly belongs to it,
 - we are reminded that our life is in Jesus through His death for us and that we must look to Him as crucified and raised for our justification for life and salvation.
 - 3) How delighted these young believers were to keep before them what Christ had done to take away their sins!
 - They had seen their desperate need as those who had rejected their own Messiah...
 - But now they were trusting in His offering on the cross for them!
 - Do you share in this delight?
 - Do you continue steadfastly in the breaking of the bread,
 - or is it just a routine for you?
 - Do you prepare yourself?
 - Do you rejoice in Christ?
 - Do you look to Him for grace?
 - Do you go away with renewed strength?
4. And finally, we are told that they continued steadfastly in *the prayers*.
- a. Once again, the definite article is used in the original because this refers to the public prayers of the assembled church.
 - Certainly, they were devoted to private prayers, but they were also devoted to the prayers of the church.
 - We are commanded to pray in the assembly in 1 Timothy 2:1-7 and here we see that the disciples did this.

- b. We live in a time and place where Christians don't put much value on prayer.
 - We are very self-sufficient and think that we can work it out without the Lord.
 - Many churches don't even have a prayer meeting—or if they do, few people attend it.
 - And even if they do, their minds are filled with other things than the prayers that are being offered up to God.
 - Yet, we learn that many of our Korean brothers who live in North America, gather each morning before work to pray.

- c. Brothers and sisters, prayer is essential for spiritual life!
 - God does not wish to remain anonymous in His work, but this, in effect, what happens if He works apart from our earnest prayers!
 - By calling upon Him, we set ourselves to look to Him in humble dependence for everything we need,
 - both as individuals and as a church.
 - If you trust in God, you will pray,
 - but if you are relying on yourself,
 - prayer is a waste of time in your view of things.

- d. What a splendid thing it is that we can come to God in prayer in Jesus name!
 - This was a new thing in the New Covenant!
 - Christ our mediator has entered heaven for us, having made us acceptable to God through His sacrifice and now He intercedes for us.
 - We have a nearer more bold and familiar access to God because we see what Christ has done to open the way for us!
 - We have free access to the One who holds our future in His hands—to the one to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given!
 - How thankful you should be to come together with your brothers and sisters to pray!
 - Just think how many of our prayers He has answered!
 - Just last week, we remembered all the people He provided jobs for that we had been praying for! It was a long list!
 - Prayer is something to continue steadfastly in!

TRANS> The disciples delighted to come together for all four of these ordinances—the word, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer!

- In these ordinances they connected with Jesus Christ and with their heavenly Father!
 - Have you been missing out?

- Have you neglected to pursue this treasure?
- Are you fervent and regular in these ordinances of worship, or cold and indifferent?
- Now let's look at a second thing that characterised the young church...

II. See how church's members were transformed from the inside out.

- When you come to Christ, you enter into a whole new life...
 - You die with Him and are raised to new life in Him—a whole new life—
 - You are never the same again.
 - There is an inward transformation that brings about an outward transformation.
- A. The inward change is described in v. 43:
- **Acts 2:43: Then fear came upon every soul...**
1. Fear or awe came upon these disciples!
 - a. They realised that they were part of Christ's kingdom.
 - They realised that is was a kingdom was going to attain a worldwide significance!
 - Is was the kingdom spoken about by the prophets:
 - Daniel had said:
 - **Dan 2:44: And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.**
 - And Isaiah had said:
 - **Isa 2:1-4: Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *That* the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.**
 - b. There was a sense of awe or fear that prevailed among them.
 - Sometimes I think we take our privileges as the people of God too lightly.
 - We are not impacted with a sense of our destiny and calling.
 - We are not overwhelmed with a sense of the glory and majesty of the king before whom we stand and with what He is doing among us!

- These first disciples realised these things!
 - They were inwardly affected by them!
 - Their hearts were impacted so that they could not be the persons they used to be.
 - They had a privilege and a destiny that overwhelmed them.
2. We see also that many signs were done by the apostles among them.
- The whole of verse 43 says:
 - **Acts 2:43: Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.**
 - a. These signs were done through the apostles because they were the signs of the apostles.
 - In Hebrews 2:4 we are told what the purpose of these signs were:
 - **Heb 2:1-4: Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?**
 - You see from this that the purpose of these signs was to confirm the word which the apostles spoke and which is now recorded for us in scripture.
 - b. Some people want these signs to continue for us today, but God has never operated in this way.
 - He gave these signs to confirm the apostles, and now their word has been confirmed for the church in all ages and recorded for us in scripture.
 - Their word, recorded in the Bible, can be fully trusted.
 - God spoke through them so that their words are truly the very word of God, infallible and without error.
 - We who live today are organically connected with the church of the first century so that the signs done by the apostles and by Jesus are just as much for us as for them.
 - c. To be a true disciple of Christ, you need to believe the word of the apostles.
 - You need to be assured that their writings are from God.
 - You need to receive them as the only rule of faith and practice.
 - If you do not, you have no foundation on which to stand...

- The church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone.
 - Without the word, you have nothing to test the things you believe.
 - Without the word, you have nothing certain to believe in.
 - Without the word, you have an emptiness that will be filled with all the wrong things.
 - You will follow contemporary prophets and be lead astray by their lies.
- The message of Christ is self-authenticating.
 - God always gives His true disciples a certainty that His word is true.
 - He has authenticated it to His church past ages...
 - And now He gives us divine assurance and confidence in it.

TRANS> There will always be this inward change of awe and of a certainty that the message we have heard from scripture is from God when we have life in Christ.

- B. And with this inward change, there will always be a corresponding outward change.
- It is impossible to be transformed within by the LORD and not, at the same time, be transformed without.
1. When are truly caught up in the reality that you are actually a part of Christ's glorious kingdom—when you are in awe about that...
 - You will always give yourself for others and for the sake of His church.
 - a. That is what we are told these believers did...
 - **Acts 2:44-45: Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.**
- 1) They made great sacrifices for each other!
 - There were a lot of needs among them.
 - The Jews had decided that anyone who followed Christ was to be put out of the synagogue.
 - The result was that those who followed Christ often lost their jobs.
 - If they worked for someone, they were released.
 - If they ran a business, nobody would patronise them.
 - If they were tradesmen, nobody would hire them.
 - 2) These young believers were so earnest in their love for each other that as needs arose,

- they sold their possessions (that is, houses and lands) and their goods (more portable things they owned).
- It was not that they renounced the ownership of property in principle.
 - It was that there were needs and they went as far as to sell off what they had to support those who were in need!

TRANS> They made great sacrifices for each other because they knew and considered what a great sacrifice Christ had made for them.

- b. As a Christian, you need to be willing to go out of your way for your brothers and sisters when needs arise.
 - We need to have this love for each other that causes us to truly give to each other!
 - Jesus said that people would recognise His disciples by the love that they have for each other.
 - It is not a love that remains deep in the heart where no one can see it.
 - It is a love that expresses itself in sacrificing for others!
 - It is a love that stops pretending you do not see your brother's need and instead looks for needs to meet.
2. The inward change in a true disciple will also be manifested by a joyful fellowship with other believers in day to day living...
- **Acts 2:46 says: 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,**
 - a. Here is that word "one accord" *homo-thumadon* again.
 - We ran into this word in chapter 1 when the 120 disciples of Christ were gathered in one accord at Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Spirit.
 - We saw that this word speaks of being one in passion and purpose!
 - This is not the unity that comes when we agree not to talk about our differences...
 - This the unity that came because they were united in their passion for Jesus and for His kingdom!
 - He and His purposes was what united them!
 - They all had His glory and kingdom as their main agenda!
 - All because they had been gripped with the reality that they were part of His glorious kingdom that was being established in the world!
 - b. And because they were united in purpose with this one holy passion, they spent time together!

- They went up the temple together to worship.
 - They ate in each others homes—breaking bread from house to house...
 - They wanted to help each other to learn to walk and live as Christ's disciples.

- I have been encouraged to see many of you getting together with each other and having each other over to your homes...
 - And to see you wanting to spend time with each other after church.
 - Some of you have been very good about this, but some of us have been negligent...
 - We need to be sharing our lives with each other as believers!
 - Not just our money, but also our lives!
 - We don't need church programmes to do this...
 - we just need to be ready to open our homes to each other and to get involved in each other's lives.
 - comforting one another (1 Thess 4:18)
 - exhorting one another (Heb 3:13)
 - serving one another (Gal 5:13)
 - counselling one another (Rom 15:14)
 - showing hospitality to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
 - confessing faults to one another (James 5:16)
 - praying for one another (James 5:16)
 - being kind to one another (Eph 4:32)
 - edifying one another (Rom 14:19)

- c. There was a beauty that characterised these early disciples in the doing of all these things...in the way they did them...
 - Verse 46 adds that they did them **in gladness and simplicity of heart**.
 - They were not putting on a show.
 - They were just living together as people who truly loved each other.
 - They wanted to do these things—they were not duplicitous.
 - This is the kind of stuff that makes up the life of Church!
 - Let me encourage you to follow their example!
 - It all comes from being so full of Christ and of gratitude for what He has done that you cannot help by serve others!
 - If you think that you have gratitude but you don't have service to others, you need to check again.
 - You don't have gratitude!

 - Verse 47 adds that they did all of this with praise to God.

- If what I have said is true—that it was their sense of awe in Christ and what He had done that caused them to live together in unity and love—
 - then it is no wonder that their lives together were filled with praise of God!
 - He was their focus!
 - They weren't just trying to be good people to prove something!
 - They were filled with praise to God and to His Son,
 - and that is what stirred them up to love and good works!
 - If they were pouring out their lives for each other because the love of Christ constrained them,
 - it was only to be expected that as they served each other, their mouths were full of praise for their Lord.
 - This was the engine that drove them!

TRANS> Oh brothers and sisters...

- Oh that we might see what a wonderful thing it is to be a part of Christ's church!
 - That we might truly see this so that the love of Christ will bring forth true love for each other!
 - This is the church of Jesus Christ and we are a part of it!
 - Oh that we would enter into the fullness of the blessing that is ours!
 - What beauty there is in the church when it is like this!

III. See how attractive the church is to outsiders when it is flourishing like this.

A. Verse 47 tells us that these early disciples had the admiration and favour of those who were outside the church!

1. No one who saw them could deny the love that these believers had for each other!
 - Even though people hate us for believing in Jesus,
 - They ought to see a love in our lives that they cannot help but admire!
 - We ought to be as described in Deuteronomy 6—a people who have love for God written all over everything we come in contact with!
 - on our hands, on our foreheads, on our gates, on our doorposts!
 - They will see unity in our marriages—with our children—with each other.
 - We will be like Daniel whose enemies could find no fault in him except that he worshipped God!
 - All this we will be when the love of Christ and awe of what it is to be in His kingdom has gripped us!

- B. Now look at what this favour and admiration of the people led to!
- It led to their salvation by the gracious working of the Lord!
 - **Acts 2:47: And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**
1. When the church is truly alive, outsiders see that God is with us—
 - and they want what we have!
 - We are the light of the world and we shine among them so that they see our good works and glory our Father in heaven.
 - We need to be contagious.
 - Our lives need to be such that they cause people to ask us for the reason of the hope that we have!
 - The effect of such a witness is described in Zechariah 8:23 with these words:
 - **Zech 8:23: Thus says the LORD of hosts: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”**
 - A transformed life is the best apologetic we can have!
 - You talk all you want, but the world is watching to see how you live.
 - They will listen to what you have to say when they see that you have something to say.
 - If you are all riddled with guilt for full of pride and not of Christ, your religion will stink and people avoid stinky things.
 - But if you have the love of Christ and of His work, it will be a sweet savour,
 - and although you will be persecuted, it will be because they hate Him and not because you are obnoxious.
 - But there will be those who will come to ask of the hope that they see in you.
2. But I want you to notice the emphasis in verse 47 as well...
 - It is not on us, but on the LORD.
 - He is the reason the church increases!
 - He is the one who adds to the church!
 - But understand the way that He works!
 - When He wants to add to the church, He ordinarily transforms the church first!
 - He changes us so that the world takes notice of us and is drawn to us because of the love we have.
 - They see our love for His ordinances!
 - They see our love for one another!
 - And they want what we have.

- This is what Psalm 67 talks about...
 - We ask God to bless us and to show mercy to us so that we will be a blessing to the nations!
- All the glory goes to Him!
 - He is the one who changes us!
 - He is the one who opens their heart to notice and to desire to be part of the kingdom and then to believe.

Conclusion: Oh my brothers and my sisters!

- May the LORD truly awaken us to see the glory of Christ and of His kingdom!
 - May He grant to us a true yearning for His ordinances...to feed on His grace!
 - May He give us a true sense of awe that causes to live out the life He calls us to...
 - And may our transformed lives cause many to admire us and to come to join us!
- We have so much in Jesus Christ!
 - What a beautiful society Jesus came to establish!
 - Oh that we would be that society! that we would be the church!
 - So many are missing out!
 - See that you are not among them.