

Acts 2: 42; “The Apostle’s Doctrine and Fellowship”, Sermon # 12
in the series – “Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on August 28th, 2011,
in the Morning Worship Service.

Let me say, in taking up this subject again, that it is very important that you and I understand why we are here this morning at church. We are here because God has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. And following our conversion we realized that we should be baptized and join the church. He has called us here today to come and worship Him and learn from Him the way that we can honor Him with our worship. God’s plan for a Christian is for them to be members of a local church. And He would have us to steadfastly continue in the truth of His Word in relation to our corporate worship of Him so that we might honor Him in that worship. And then; as we move outside of the building for the next 6 days; it is His expectation that we might be still thinking of ourselves as a part of this church. The church, after all is the people who join it. And our service to God is something which should flow out of our times of corporate worship together. We could all choose to stay home and only worship God in our homes, but God would not be as greatly honored if we did so. God is more greatly honored in the assembly of His saints, than He is anywhere else because it is Christ who is building the Church. And He is building it to the glory of God the Father’s plan; that we grow up together into Christ our Lord, as His spiritual body. He knows that His Father is more greatly honored here, when we gather together as a church, than He is when we keep to ourselves and only worship in our families. Our Lord knows that we are something far greater together, than we are individually, or even as an individual family. We are a building of individual living stones, being built together into a temple for God to dwell in, by His Spirit. Our Lord knows how great are the plans of the Father to have a people for His own possession. And so He has said, “I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” He also knows the truth of what it says in Psalm 87 – “God’s foundation is in the holy mountains.” “The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” “Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!” The Psalmist is speaking of the difference between the worship in families, and the corporate worship and teaching which takes place in the Church. God loves the corporate worship more than all the family worship conducted apart from it. It is not as though that He does not love family or individual worship. He certainly does, and there ought to be more of it. But when we gather together in the name of our Lord Jesus, God manifests His presence and His power in a greater sense; when we are all here together worshipping Him, than He does when we are at home or in private.

This is God's plan. God's plan is His Church which is made up of many churches; all continuing steadfastly in His Word; He speaking to them through that Word. God's plan is individuals being saved and added to the family of God; the Biblically ordered local church. "Glorious things are spoken of Zion, the city of God!" In verse 4 of Psalm 87 the Psalmist says, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: "This one was born there." He is saying that he will mention the triumphs of what God's preached word does in triumphing over pride and false religion signified by the name Babylon. He speaks of the triumph of the preached word over immorality and sensuality, signified by the name of Rahab. He speaks of the triumph of Christ's cross and the preaching of the Word over ignorance and racial prejudices, and the Church going on to establish missions of bringing the gospel to the nations; signified by Philistia, and Tyre, and Ethiopia. The Church of Christ, and this church in particular, is meant to continue steadfastly in the Word in such a way that all kinds of people may come and worship here, and be saved and built up in their faith, and become useful to God. This great work, of Christ's church being built here in this place, will only take place through our continuing steadfast in the Apostle's teaching; the Word of God, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. If we worship and serve Him aright, then He will allow us to be fruitful for Him. Last Sunday we looked at the first 2 of these acts of obedience which show our sincere obedience to Christ and our desire to be His servant. They were; that each one who has believed in Jesus would be baptized and added to the church. Now, today, we will consider the 3rd and the 4th acts of obedience of the young believer in Christ. **The 3rd act of obedience which shows forth your sincere obedience to follow Christ and to be His servant, is to continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine.**

Verse 42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine. The word for steadfastly in the Greek means that they continued earnestly, diligently; they continued perseveringly to attend upon those times of preaching and teaching when the Apostle's taught them all the doctrines of the Christian faith, which Christ and His Holy Spirit had revealed to them. In the Great Commission, Christ had told them to teach the disciples to observe all that He had commanded them; so we know that their "teaching" was both didactic and applicatory. The doctrines related to God as Triune; Christ being both God and Man; salvation being through His blood and righteousness; sanctification being by and through the Holy Spirit's working and the believer's cooperation with that work; the explanation of grace leading to holiness and good works rather than licentiousness, worldliness, or selfish complacency. They were taught that worshipping God was something which was to be done everyday, but they were also taught that the Church gathered on the first day of the week; that the Lord's Day was, and is now, the new day of corporate worship for the people of God. Christ had fulfilled the Law and this included the 4th commandment; to remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. But

He did not come to abolish the law, or the day of rest and worship. He rose from the dead on the 1st day of the week, and a new spiritual creation began among all of mankind. It was His body; the New Testament Church. Therefore a new day of worship came into being. The command to keep the Sabbath was not abrogated. But Christ's resurrection changed everything. This is why we do not meet for worship on Saturday as the Jews did. Rather we meet on Sunday; the first day of the week, as the Apostle's taught us by way of example. No need for a new command. Merely a new day of observance.

All of these things were taught; not just as doctrines to be held to, intellectually, but the Apostles had the wisdom from Christ's Spirit to make practical applications of everything that they taught; to the lives of the believers who would faithfully gather, week by week. And in this case of the early Church; the Apostle's continued teaching day by day. Verse 46 says, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple"; they listened to the Apostle's doctrine; their teaching. Ask yourself this morning if you are a Christian who is continuing steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine? It was, and it is; "the faith once delivered to the saints". The Apostles delivered their teaching in that day with the use of their revelatory gifts; of prophecy, the word of knowledge, and the gift of tongues. They had direct revelation coming to them from God and Christ, and they had not yet written it down to become the New Testament Scriptures. The Apostle's doctrine was eventually written down and canonized. It was declared to be complete by the Apostle John himself in regard to the last book written by an Apostle in the Apostolic age, which is the book of Revelation. In Revelation 22: 18, John says, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." The revelations of doctrine and teaching which were given to them; which God wanted to become the New Testament scriptures, are the perfect, infallible, complete word of God for all of this church age, since they were canonized.

The canonization of the New Testament Scripture was simply the gathering of these 27 books which were either written by the Apostles, or by someone commissioned by an Apostle, such as Luke or Mark. The Scriptures as we have them in our hands are perfect and complete; applying to every area of our faith and practice as Christians. Nothing is to be taken away from them, and nothing is to be added. This is perfect revelation. This is what is being spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13, if you will turn over there with me. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." Now look down at verse 8.

“Love never fails.” “But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.” “For we know in part and prophesy in part.” “But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” The “perfect” here in this passage is not the future state which will come when our Lord Jesus returns in His glory, although things will be perfect in the eternal state. In the context, here, of the use of the revelatory spiritual gifts; it is referring to the time when the New Testament Scriptures would be canonized and the revelation of God through His Apostles and prophets would be complete. They themselves, who used those gifts, only knew in part; with all the revelations given to them, what their full meaning in relation to the Church was. But when they wrote down the revelation of doctrine and truth and all their books were placed together; the perfect (or complete) revelation would have come. The Scriptures are “the more sure word of prophecy”, or “the prophetic word confirmed” which Peter spoke of, in 2 Peter 1: 19-21. In verse 20, he says, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of god spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Let me ask you; are you reading and abiding in the teaching of the Bible? Do you prayerfully try to receive the promises, keep the commandments, and live by the precepts of the Word of God day by day? This is what you are called to as a Christian. There are great practical implications involved in this truth, both for us as individuals and for us as a church. Do you wish to repent of all of your sins and to learn to overcome the remaining corruptions of your heart? Then you must hide the Word of God in your heart. Psalm 119, verse 9 says, “How can a young man cleanse his way?” “By taking heed according to Your word.” “With my whole heart I have sought You; oh let me not wander from Your commandments!” “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” Oh that you might take the time to read and to commit to memory the word of God; hiding it in your heart, so that you might have the sword of the Spirit at your disposal, and to wield it against your flesh and the temptations of the Devil. It is when your mind and heart are filled with the Word of God that you are strong spiritually. Think of the promise of Psalm 1. You ought to memorize and repeat its blessed words over and over again. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” Do you want your soul to prosper? Do you want to be filled with the Spirit and be able to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in every situation that you come into? Then you must meditate on the law of the Lord; the blessed Word of God, in order to do so. And indeed you shall be prospered spiritually.

Then, as a second application, ask yourself whether you are a teachable person? Do you see the great need that you have; to be taught by the pastor of your church the many truths of the word of God? The pastor is the gift of Christ to the local church. There are many truths that you would never think of, or connect together, to be able to better understand what God would be having you to be doing with your time and your strength, and your thoughts and your energy, unless you continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine. The pastor will help you to do this if you will steadfastly come and listen. This requires steadfastness of attendance. It requires perseverance. Those 3000 persons we read about in this passage, did this voluntarily because they saw that it was God's good plan for all believers. They had come to see the truth of the Bible as having the authority over their life. The Apostle's had authority over them in the church, but these people were not forced to believe anything except what the force of truth convinced their conscience to receive. The people were taught to search the Scriptures to see if what the Apostles had taught them was so. Their New Testament letters and books completed the canon of Scripture, and the Scripture thus became the authority over the Christian; to rule and guide His life by. The pastor has authority in the church, but His authority is the authority of the truth of the Bible and not ultimately his own authority. Your submission to your pastor will always be seen in this holy light if you become a member of this church. You should indeed be learning on your own; reading the Bible on your own. But God has ordained the ordinance of the preaching of His word by the pastor of your church, for your spiritual up-building. A pastor today is standing in the pulpit with the Apostle's teaching in his hand. A faithful pastor will stick close to the his teaching and preaching of the Word of God. Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4: 16 – "Take heed to yourself and the doctrine." "Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." The pastor must pay attention to the Word of God and prayer. The congregation must come and listen to message which comes forth from those labors for the good of their souls; in order to profit and grow.

This is the importance of regular attendance upon the preaching of the Word. It cannot be underestimated. God will speak to you, and to your heart, through the preaching of His word, if you are praying to receive it. We no longer have the revelatory gifts of prophecy, and knowledge, and speaking in tongues. We do not gather together expecting these gifts to be used among us. But we do have the complete revelation of what God wants us to know, because we have the completed Scriptures. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3: 16 – "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Therefore he was charged to, "Preach the Word." And those in the church who listen to the pastor preach, need to take the Word to heart. This the means by which each believer might be strong in the Lord. We

come and listen to the Word so that we might grow up to be strong together, and work together, in Christ's church in this place. "If you abide in My Word," Jesus says, "you are truly My disciples." (John 8: 31) It is out of this preaching that comes the vision of how we can work together spiritually and practically to accomplish good things for the maintenance and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. We see individually, and collectively, what our priorities are. More can be done for Christ together, than separately.

Now, the 4th act of obedience which shows your sincere intention to follow Christ and to be His servant, is to continue steadfastly in fellowship with other believers in this church.

The word for fellowship in the Greek is *κοινωνία* which means a sharing, or a partnership or a participation. It means that you continue steadfastly to interact with people in this local church, in thoughts and words and deeds. You are speaking with each other, and doing things with each other, which have their basis and their continuance, in the bond of Christ; and in His love in the Spirit, which you have for one another. That is what fellowship is. Philippians Chapter 2, verse 1. "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Fellowship is based upon the love of the brethren. It begins by your taking time to speak to, and do things with, other believers around you in this church, for their good. It means that you consider the fact that you are joined together with them spiritually; the Holy Spirit being in each member; in every Christian who comes into this assembly. There is a real Christian brotherhood to which we belong when we join a local church. Each believer has a gift and they minister it according to the grace that they have been given. We do not expect that this will work itself out in the same way in every person, but we do expect that each one will keep our united identity as a church in mind. We are a Reformed Baptist church. We have the distinctives of that kind of a church, and so we should promote them. We believe in interacting with each other over the doctrinal and practical truth of the Bible. That is a part of fellowship. In fellowship with each other, we should then desire to talk about the truth of the Bible with each other. We share the things which the Lord has been teaching us through the Word which has been preached to us publicly. We also share those things which we have learned in our reading and praying over the Word in private. Having fellowship is the interpersonal promotion of truth, and interaction over the many truths of the Word of God which have affected our hearts and we want to bring them to the attention of others. We promote them when we share our thoughts and our lives with one another. Malachi 3: 16 – "Then those who feared the Lord spoke (often) to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name."

As we come to the end of this sermon it ought to be evident that our fellowship should, by God's grace, continue after we leave this building and go to our respective homes. Fellowship is integrally linked to hospitality in this regard. Believers are commanded to be hospitable to one another. If you are not at least occasionally inviting other believers over to your home, and sharing a meal with them, or having them over for holy conversation, then I fear that you have not really understood what Christ has called you to do, in this regard. In Romans 12, verse 10 it says, "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality." How do you go about to do this? Verse 16 of Romans 12 tells us. "Be of the same mind toward one another." "Do not set you mind on high things, but associate with the humble." "Do not be wise in your own opinion." You see the real reason that some believers do not have much fellowship with other believers is because they have set their minds on high things. They are too wise in their own opinions to even show hospitality and to invite other believers over for a time of fellowship. But the example of the early church and the commandment of the Bible is to continue steadfastly in fellowship. So let us not isolate ourselves from one another. Even if we might not live close to one another, let us think of how we might still spend time with each other and do things together; things which will promote one another's spiritual and physical welfare.