

## Acts Part 5 – They Continued

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, September 23, 2015

† Acts 2:42-47

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

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 favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

We left off last week with Peter preaching and we talked about his “model sermon.” He covered every necessary ingredient to be able to effectively preach to lost sinners in order to bring them to the realization that they were in trouble and needed to repent. We saw in the very last verse we covered, there were about 3,000 souls that were saved that day.

We pick back up tonight with what happened after all of these folks were saved. I've titled the theme of this lesson, “They Continued.”

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

I like the way that Thayers Greek Dictionary defines the word, “continued.”

Continued comes from the Greek word; **Proskartereo**, which means:

**1) to adhere to one, be his adherent, to be devoted or constant to one**

**2) to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to a thing**

And that is exactly what these 1<sup>st</sup> Century Believers did; they were constantly devoted and attentive to the Gospel and all it entails.

You must remember that these early believers were not as privileged as we are today by having available to them the New Testament, Lexicons, Study Bibles, Commentaries, Internet resources, etc... They had to rely upon three things to understand how to continue with this new way of life:

1. Old Testament Scripture – Books of Moses, Prophets, Psalms
2. Guidance of the Holy Spirit – which indwelt in every believer
3. The Apostle's Doctrine – Doctrine taught exclusively by the Apostles from their first-hand experience and knowledge and what the Holy Spirit has revealed to them since Jesus' ascension.

Just as the Scripture says; “*they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*”

In other words, they didn't just meet on Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. They met continuously. And as we see in verse 46 they did this “daily.” I think it is pretty sad that people complain about showing up for Church 3 hours a week, when the early believers did it every day. And we wonder why the modern Church of our day is crumbling down around us. It is because people have no desire to “continue stedfastly.”

So, they spent their time learning about the doctrine of Christ, having fellowship with one another, breaking of bread together, and praying for each other. In other words they had Church every day! Some people may not like that idea but personally I would love it! I couldn't think of a better way to spend the rest of our lives here on earth than doing exactly what the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church did.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

The word “**fear**” as used here is not the kind of fear you feel when you are frightened, like someone has come up behind you and startled you, or like when you hear something in the middle of the night and you think someone may have broken into your house. No, this fear the Bible is speaking of has more of the meaning of “**being in awe or in reverence of.**”

All of the wonders and signs that were being performed by the Apostle through the Holy Ghost has caused them to be amazed and in awe of God's awesome power. He was using these normal everyday men to do things that were not possible outside of God's power. You may be wondering just exactly what were these wonders and signs these Apostles were able to do? Well, we only need to look at Scripture to see what they were:

**Mark 16:15-18:** 15 And he said unto them, **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.** 17 **And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;** 18 **They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**

We are also going to see many other wonders, signs, and miracles that the Apostles performed as we go through the Book of Acts. Such as Peter healing a lame man in **Acts 3:6-7:** **Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.** 7 **And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.**

Also further on in **Acts 5:12-16:** **And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.**

Also in **Acts 9:32-34:** **And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.**

Wouldn't you be in fear and awe of such a demonstration of power that is being wrought by these Apostles through the power of the Holy Ghost?

**44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;**

I love that phrase; “and had all things common.” Wouldn’t it be great if today’s Church could say that? It is very obvious that we can’t. If we could there wouldn’t be a Church every ½ mile from each other. Would you believe there are 38 different Churches within a 5-mile radius of ours? And there is even another one being built right down the road close enough to another Church that you could literally stand in the parking lot and throw a rock and hit the other one. It is crazy!

Bro. Frank made a very wise statement this past Sunday night on his way out the door. He said, “*We just need to fall in love with Jesus and everything else would take care of itself.*” Boy, that’s the truth isn’t it? But no, instead we divide Churches over silly things such as the color of carpet, or which hymn book is used. Friends, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church had all things common.

**45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.**

I see nowhere in the Scriptures that it was required for anyone to sell their possessions and goods and give to others. There didn’t need to be such a commandment because it came naturally to these early believers as one of the fruits of the Spirit. Just as we see in **Galatians 5:22-23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

Every believer should exhibit these fruits due to the fact that the Holy Spirit is living inside of each believer. We should naturally want to provide the needs for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church gave out of the abundance of their hearts and love for their fellow man.

As a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church, we should be doing the same thing. It is my firm belief that if there is a member of our Church in need, no matter what that need is, we should be compelled to try to meet that need or at least strive to help them with it. If I ever thought there was one person in our Church that was hungry or homeless or in such a need that it was a burden upon them, it would break my heart. You know I like to eat but if I thought for one minute that someone in this Church was going to have to miss a meal or go to bed hungry, I would clean out my cabinets and refrigerator and give them everything I had or give them my last dollar to see that they were fed. Without a doubt, I believe every member of this Church feels the same way since I’ve witnessed your giving first hand.

**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,**

We see from this verse that these early believers continued meeting in the temple. The Temple was of course their customary place to gather for prayer. They would go there at 9:00 in the morning and 3:00 in the afternoon. These were their standard times of Temple worship. But, they not only continued to go to the Temple, they also met with each other in houses. Each believer opened his home for others to come and eat, fellowship, and worship together. Just like one big happy family.

There is nothing sweeter than a brother or sister in Christ inviting you to a meal and fellowshiping with them. Just this past Sunday, a member of this Church treated me and my family out for lunch after the service. It was such a blessing to us.

**47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

Because of the love and joy that these early believers had, it caused them to be in favor with everyone. This is of course a trait of the Lord Jesus Christ as well, as we see from the Gospel of **Luke 2:52: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

There was no arguing and bickering back and forth. Folks got along and were happy to be in each other’s company. It seems to me it was like Christmas all year long for them. There isn’t any reason why today’s Church couldn’t be the same exact way. It’s the way we will be in Heaven, why not start practicing now?

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

Don’t let that last part of verse 47 slip past you (and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.) It is a very significant statement that we find in the Word of God. Something that a lot of so-called “Church growth experts,” or “gurus,” seem to overlook, and that is the fact that it is the LORD who builds the Church, not man.

That is why Jesus told Peter in **Matthew 16:18b: ... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

Jesus is the Church builder. As I have said many times, we could use man’s ways and the world’s ways to grow this Church. We could pack people in here by using manipulative and worldly methods. But what good is that doing? If God isn’t in it then it is for nothing. If all we want to achieve is filling up seats and hitting high numbers of people then we might as well get out of the Church business and get into the entertainment business.

No, my friend, this is not a house of entertainment, it is a house of prayer. It is not a house of merchandise; it is a house of worship. As long as we are following Biblical principles and remaining true to the Apostles doctrine, which is the doctrine of Christ, then the Lord will add to the Church.

This pattern is repeated throughout the Book of Acts, such as in **Acts 4:4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.** Notice the Bible says “them which heard the word believed,” it did NOT say, “them that played Upwards Volleyball, or them that sat through a rock-n-roll light show.” No, it was the power of God through the preached Word that brought these folks to Christ.

And in **Acts 5:14: And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)**

So, the example the Bible gives us for Church growth is that He is the One that adds to the Church.

And, we will stop there for tonight and pick back up next Wednesday, Lord willing, in Chapter 3 where Peter heals a lame man through the power of the Holy Ghost and then he preaches another convicting sermon.

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† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version