

The Holy Spirit had been poured out on the 120 in the upper room. Last week we heard the sermon the Holy Spirit gave through Peter and read of the first fruits of the church, when 3000 were convicted and trusted Jesus for their salvation and were baptized. What a glorious beginning of the church! And yet, what tension there must have been in Jerusalem. Just fifty days before Jesus had been crucified at the insistence of the rulers of the Jews and agreement of the crowd. Now there is this large group who have accepted Jesus as their Messiah and Savior, consisting mostly of those who had journeyed from outside the boundaries of Israel to the feast of Pentecost. They are a long way from home, but their world has been turned upside down. These new believers were devoted Jews who had come to accept the fact that the Messiah had come, had died for their sins, rose from death, and ascended into heaven. But remember, there were about a million people at the feast, and the other 997,000 didn't believe this. For the vast majority, nothing has changed. In their minds, another messianic pretender had been executed by Rome and the Jewish system was still intact. What very few realized was that this tiny new faction called the church represented the beginning of the end of the temple worship system.

For the 3000 converts, everything had changed. The Law was fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 5:17). Suddenly, they are no longer trying to please God by obedience to the letter of the Law, but instead have the spirit of the Law written on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). They want to learn everything they could of the Messiah's life and teaching. <sup>42</sup> *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* Acts 2:42 Remember that before Pentecost the disciples had devoted themselves to prayer while waiting for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). Now, the new believers were continually devoting themselves to learning the apostle's teaching and prayer. The teaching is summed up in the Gospels, and expounded on in the entire New Testament which was yet to be written. **Where the Spirit is at work there is a hunger to know God's Word.** The basics of the apostles' doctrine are belief in God, repentance, accepting the Lordship of Jesus, baptism, yielding to the Holy Spirit, and to grow into the likeness of Christ (Galatians 4:19).

The apostles taught this group in the temple. It was the only place large enough to gather such a crowd. The Jewish leaders must have been dismayed to see that after the feast of Pentecost and most pilgrims returned home, this huge crowd continued coming every day to the temple to hear from the disciples of Jesus. I can imagine the eagerness with which these new believers clung to every account of what Jesus said and did. Bible scholars point to the same stories repeated in the gospels and suggest the authors copied one another. That may be, but that is because they had not only experienced the same things but had heard one another teach these same accounts numerous times to the new disciples (Acts 1:21-22).

We should ask ourselves if we are as devoted to the Gospels. If I had to live with just one book in the New Testament, I would choose John. We should be memorizing and meditating on the Gospels. Of course we need the application and doctrine that Paul

**Commented [PW1]: Matthew 5:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

**Commented [PW2]: Jeremiah 31:33 (ESV)**

<sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**Commented [PW3]: Acts 1:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

**Commented [PW4]: Galatians 4:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

**Commented [PW5]: Acts 1:21-22 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,  
<sup>22</sup> beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

provides in his letters, but the basis of it all is Jesus' three years of ministry that we read about in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The 3000 already had a knowledge of the Old Testament; now they needed to see how it was fulfilled in the life of Jesus. The apostles had to relay to them what Jesus had taught them after the resurrection, how the Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus' life (Acts 1:3). They needed to learn the parables and sayings of Jesus. But most of all they needed to understand how His death had atoned for their sins so that they could be vessels of the Holy Spirit and live their lives to the glory of God (John 7:39; 1Thessalonians 2:12).

That is what we need to learn as well. While we have a head knowledge of what Jesus did for us, we often fall short in allowing the life of Christ to be manifest in our mortal bodies (2 Corinthians 4:10). "You begin to learn to interpret your life in terms of what God says about you because you are united to Christ instead of interpreting the gospel in terms of where you are in your struggle."<sup>11</sup> Paul was so absorbed with this reality that he could say, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)

The apostle's teaching also included the Second Coming. They taught that Jesus was coming again and that we should live in expectation of His return (Matthew 24:30). They also taught the Great Command, to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). And they taught The Great Commission, to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey what Jesus commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20).

The 3000 were also devoted to fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. In our Bible study groups we keep coming back to the basics in this verse. "If we are to go forward in our spiritual life and persevere, we need to be in the Word, fellowship, and prayer." Neglect any of these and our spiritual growth will suffer. Neglect of the basics causes us to be ineffective (2 Peter 1:8). Fellowship is the Greek word "*koinonea*." The word "*koinonea*" is sometimes translated as "giving" or "offering." It means more than just being together and shooting the breeze. There is nothing wrong with small talk that is meaningful to you, however, we are spiritually strengthened when we share what God is teaching us, Scripture that has inspired us, or lessons we are learning, and even trials that we are enduring. The world's influence tends toward meaningless talk, perhaps to avoid any discomfort from differences. People who have the Spirit of God residing in them long for deeper fellowship, to learn from one another, to share the work of Christ in our lives, and to testify to what He is doing. It's giving of ourselves to one another.

That is why we take time after church and provide snacks on the patio weather permitting. Make it an opportunity to share with one another. I love it when people take a long time to leave the sanctuary after the service because they are engrossed in conversation. That is why we have Ida's Dinner Six. That is the breaking of bread together. I should note that many believe this is referring to communion. After meals together in fellowship, the early church would often conclude with communion. As a family, you don't need a pastor or elder to take a piece of bread and juice and remember what God has done for you in Jesus. Have you ever had family communion? I'd like to start this tradition with my family when we are all together.

**Commented [PW6]: Acts 1:3 (ESV)**  
<sup>3</sup> He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

**Commented [PW7]: John 7:39 (ESV)**  
<sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

**Commented [PW8]: 1 Thessalonians 2:12 (ESV)**  
<sup>12</sup> we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

**Commented [PW9]: 2 Corinthians 4:10 (ESV)**  
<sup>10</sup> always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

**Commented [PW10]: Sinclair Ferguson, 2008 Desiring God National Conference**

**Commented [PW11]: Galatians 2:20 (ESV)**  
<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Commented [PW12]: Matthew 24:30 (ESV)**  
<sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**Commented [PW13]: Mark 12:30-31 (ESV)**  
<sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.  
<sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

**Commented [PW14]: Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**Commented [PW15]: 2 Peter 1:8 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We get enough political conversation and small talk with those not in the body. Let us intentionally go deeper in our conversations with fellow believers to have real fellowship. One way we can go deeper is to ask what God is doing in the person's life or if there is some way you can pray for them. As a reference to communion, consider that our partaking of communion together gets down to the real reason for our oneness. It also addresses our need to be open to give to one another as Jesus so graciously gave to us.

They also dedicated themselves to prayer (Colossians 4:2). Of these main ingredients of spiritual life, prayer may be the most difficult for us to practice. The disciples asked for Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). They saw His prayer life and knew they needed to be taught to be more like Him. You can ask the Lord to teach you to pray, but then you need to set aside time to let Him teach you. Pray the Scriptures that speak to you. Pray the ACTS pattern, Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. But however you pray, take time to be still and listen so that the Lord can speak to your heart (Psalm 37:7).

Devoted to these essentials of Christian living, they experienced the following verse. <sup>43</sup> *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.* Acts 2:43 Awe came upon every soul. The Greek word for awe can also be translated as fear or reverence (*phobos*). How do you describe awe? We should not be led by feelings. The Word should take priority over our feelings, but God does give us feelings. The Scriptures describe God as having feelings, feelings of anger, love, disappointment, and compassion. Thank God He has compassion on us. The word compassion means to feel with us. Awe is a sense of wonder and reverence. It is inspiring and encouraging but it also has a sense of costly responsibility. When we see God at work doing what is beyond the natural realm, such as these signs and wonders God was doing through the apostles, a sense of awe came over them. We should have a sense of awe when we know the supernatural is at work whether through inspiration or divine circumstances. Don't hesitate to give glory to God when you are in awe.

The signs and wonders were done *through* the apostles for a similar reason to those done by Jesus. The signs attested to the truth of the message (Acts 2:22). The wonders and signs got the attention of the public and the leaders and made them aware that God was at work. God still uses signs, especially in cultures that are steeped in another faith. Missionaries in Muslim West Africa told me that those on short term mission trips come to assist them believing that miracles ceased after the Apostolic age; but if they spend any time there, they quickly realize that is not true. I've witnessed the miraculous and have missionary friends that can tell of account after account how God used miraculous healings to break through to tribal people groups. Brother Carl at Solid Rock can go on for hours about the miraculous healings he has witnessed in Peru. That said, we should not overemphasize awe inspiring miracles. Focusing on them can be a distraction. Some folks get so excited with the miraculous that they emphasize it to the neglect of the God given Word. The power of the Word to transform lives is one of the

**Commented [PW16]: Colossians 4:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

**Commented [PW17]: Luke 11:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

**Commented [PW18]: Psalm 37:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!

**Commented [PW19]: Acts 2:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

greatest miracles of all. Jesus told a crowd that asked to see a sign that it was an evil and adulterous generation that *seeks* signs (Matthew 16:4).

*44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* Acts 2:44-45 Remember that most of those making up the 3000 are from other nations. They are a long way from home. They did not intend on staying beyond the Pentecost feast so they were not prepared financially to stay longer. The solution was sacrificial giving. Everyone shared so that all needs could be met. If some had more resources, they shared with those who did not. Some who were from the surrounding areas even sold their property. Others had possessions that could be sold. There was such a unity in the Holy Spirit that no one considered their possessions to be their own. They sold them or shared what they had. They fully accepted the truth that it is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20:35). They saw that God had provided for them so that they could meet the needs of others (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

This was not the rule throughout the first century, but just of this initial group in Jerusalem. We don't know how long it continued, but certainly it did not go on much beyond the murder of James, John's brother (Acts 12:2), for then persecution scattered most of the Jerusalem church. Nor was this communism as some claim. It was simply the meeting of needs at the direction of the Holy Spirit to these initial disciples so that they could return to their lands taking the apostles' teaching with them. However, the moving of the Spirit causing us to act unselfishly and provide for others in the family of God is something that has happened throughout church history.

Recently I received an email from a brother in Africa who was troubled about tithing and wondering if he did not have the things he prayed for because he did not give enough. That kind of thinking is a distortion of the promises of God to the Jews of the Old Testament. We don't give to get. We give because God leads us to. We don't give because man insists that we do. We should give when the Spirit prompts us and as we have determined in our own hearts (Acts 11:29; 2 Corinthians 9:7). What you give is between you and God. Paul does encourage us to give by telling us, *whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.* 2 Corinthians 9:6 The reaping may be physical, but the most rewarding is to reap spiritually (Luke 6:38).

I haven't preached a message on giving for twelve years. That is because it has never been necessary. If your leaders are careful to keep us in line with God's Word and teach the uncorrupted Word of God, we know God will supply all our needs. Where He guides, He provides. Year after year we see God enable us to invest in missions in spite of our small numbers and still meet all our needs. That is the result of God speaking to your hearts and to people I have never met who respond at His leading, not my pleading. Then God gets all the glory as He should.

*46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,* Acts 2:46 The apostles' school

**Commented [PW20]: Matthew 16:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." So he left them and departed.

**Commented [PW21]: Acts 20:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**Commented [PW22]: 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness  
<sup>14</sup> your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness.

**Commented [PW23]: Acts 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> He killed James the brother of John with the sword,

**Commented [PW24]: Acts 11:29 (ESV)**

<sup>29</sup> So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

**Commented [PW25]: 2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

**Commented [PW26]: Luke 6:38 (ESV)**

<sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

was in session every day in the temple. I imagine the priests were getting increasingly irritated with what they thought was a new sect of Jesus' followers called the Way (Acts 19:9). It appears that this was the new believers' fulltime occupation. The generosity of those who were wealthier funded this extended time of learning with provision and shelter. They didn't take it for granted but received their food with glad and generous hearts. Unlike many who expect to be provided for, they realized there were sacrifices being made so that they could be taught the apostles' teaching. They were grateful and joyful. Remember, joy is a fruit of the Spirit, a mark of true believers.

*47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* Acts 2:47 There is a lesson for us here. Though they had a completely different perspective than their fellow Jews regarding the Word and life's priorities, they had favor with all the people. Why is that? They were filled with the Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:20). While faith in Jesus does cause division (John 7:43), and the world will certainly be upset with our views, who is not favorable to love, joy, peace, etc.? Someone has said that **we need to be winsome to win some.** That is the same as saying that if you are overflowing with the fruits of the Spirit, you are more likely to win people to Christ. You can condemn them and tell them the truth out of duty, but sharing what Jesus has done for you with His love for them in your heart is much more likely to attract them to Jesus. If we don't have favor with the people, we might ask ourselves whether it is our message or our manner of presenting it. People are bound to reject the message because they want to be the Lord over their own lives, but we should not give them cause to reject the message because we are a poor example of it (1 Corinthians 10:32).

Our passage closes with an encouraging message. The Lord added to their numbers every day. I used to attend church growth conferences, but I quit going about fifteen years ago. This is the simple truth about church growth. If we will devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship and the breaking of bread, and to prayer, and if we are filled with the Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit is evident in our lives by the favor we have with people, then the Lord will add to this church as well. That's God's church growth program. He will bring the new believers and those who are from unbiblical churches because this is a place they can grow in Christ. So how about it church? Will you devote yourselves to the gospels, to fellowship, to getting to know one another over a meal, and to prayer? Will you develop an intimacy with God so that the fruits of the Spirit flow from your lives? Will you let the Holy Spirit lead you? Then we'll see our outreach blossom even more than it has, and you will be blessed beyond measure.

#### Questions

- 1 What just preceded our passage? 2 To what did they continually devote themselves?
- 3 Discuss how we can do the same. 4 What was the apostles' teaching?
- 5 What is "awe." 6 Why did the believers share everything?
- 7 When and why should we sacrificially give?
- 8 Why would they have favor with all the people?
- 9 What causes the church to grow? 10 Will you devote yourself to the same basics?

#### Commented [PW27]: Acts 19:9 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

#### Commented [PW28]: Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

#### Commented [PW29]: John 7:43 (ESV)

<sup>43</sup> So there was a division among the people over him.

#### Commented [PW30]: 1 Corinthians 10:32 (ESV)

<sup>32</sup> Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,