

TITLE: EVERYONE WAS FILLED WITH AWE

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. [43] Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. [44] All the believers were together and had everything in common. [45] Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. [46] Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, [47] praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Did you know that the United States is the third largest unchurched nation in the world?

That North America is the only continent where Christianity is not growing.

That more than 80 percent of all churches in the United States are plateaued or declining?

Why?

I believe that the reason from this decline is that somewhere along the Line Man's ways took the place of God's WAYS in the building of the church

Acts 2:47

praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. **AND THE LORD ADDED** to their number daily those who were being saved.

The Lord himself is the one builds the church

JUST AS HE SAID IN MATTHEW 16:18

I will build my church, and the gates of HELL SHALL not prevail against it.

Psalms 127:1

Unless the Lord builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.

We can have programs

Potlucks
Parties
And prayer meetings

We can do everything we assume a church should be doing

But unless we are doing what the Lord himself is doing to bring about the building of the church then we labor in vain....

But there is Hope

God has given us a clear demonstration in Luke's writing

A glimpse **OF THE LIFE** and **THE SPIRIT** of the earliest church

A vision we must grasp hold of

A vision that says **GOD IS REAL**

A vision that demonstrates their awe, respect, and wonderment of the Father

As we continue to become the **THRIVING** community God wants us to be we need to keep this **VISION, THIS HEART, THIS ATTITUDE** ever before us...and God is going to build his church.

PRAYER

MY text is Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Verse 42 Is A topic Sentence for verses 43-47 IT says that the believers were devoted to four things:

1. THE APOSTLES' TEACHING
2. FELLOWSHIP,
3. THE BREAKING OF BREAD
4. PRAYER.

FIRST, THE APOSTLES' TEACHING"? "

Acts 2:42

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. . ."

The Apostles teaching is revealed to us today - THE Bible.

Out text indicates that the earliest disciples were devoted to that teaching

But what is revealed here Is not just that they were faithful to do their devotions

Verse 43 says, "And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles."

Now In a casual reading of this text one might assume the believers were awe struck by the miracles done by the apostles

But that's not what it says

It says they were awe struck

BUT the experience connects to **THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES**

Not the Miracles

Isn't that something

They were moved by the preaching and teaching of the WORD

The miracles were their also
Because When they spoke,
God worked.

What we have displayed here is similar to Acts 2:37

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

It is amazing to see a miracle

The Jews demanded miracles

People today are demanding miracles

But we need is the truth

John 8:32

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Even when we see a miracle

We are skeptical

But YOU cannot deny the reality of His power when His word Cuts to the center of my Very Being

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

This is what caused the whole community to stand in awe of God's power.

THEY devoted themselves to the apostles teaching

On the Mission of Christ

And the power of Christ

And the Kingdom of God

And the power of His Blood

And the authority of His name

And upon hearing the believed

God honored their faith with signs following

TODAY, WE HEAR...

But do we believe

How many times have you forced the twinging pain of the conviction of the Holy Spirit to yield to your will.

And you refused to confess, repent, change, be filled, or give God a chance

The reason we have OPEN Alters at Grace is so you can deal with issues before the Lord

Listen -- every time you refuse the Spirit you go in the opposite direction of those earliest Christians

They headed for the alter

And so must we

So, the first attitude of the early church was that

THAY ALLOWED GOD'S WORD TO WORK UNINHIBITED IN THEIR MIDST

SECOND, FELLOWSHIP?

Verse 42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship. . ."

We have a lot of images that come to our minds when we think of fellowship.

Most of them are pretty tame.

We think of togetherness, friendship, care, bible study

And that is certainly part of it.

But Luke seems to focus on another more radical meaning of fellowship.

The word "fellowship" (koinonia) is built on the root meaning: **COMMON**, having in common, sharing.

verses 44-45 define the meaning of "fellowship" in verse 42.

What was their fellowship like in the early church?

Acts 2:44-45

All the believers were together and had everything in common. [45]
Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Koinonia (fellowship) means, having things *koina* (in common).

Luke does talk about times of eating and praying together

-- what we usually call fellowship.

BUT THAT IS NOT HIS FIRST ILLUSTRATION OF FELLOWSHIP.

His first illustration is that the believers were so bonded that if one was in need, the others did not feel they had the right to live on in prosperity without giving up something to meet the need.

So they would sell possessions and use the money to meet the needs of the poor in the church.

Admit it - This text is kind of threatening to people **who own a lot of things**

When we read this story, (we usually look at it in light

Acts 5:4

Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

We are very quick to defend ourselves and point out that there is no coercion here.

The selling of property is all voluntary.

And we like to point out that **there is no command here that we should do it this way just because the early church did it.**

And we might even claim that this was just an early experiment in communal life that in fact proved not so successful, since there were so many poor saints in Jerusalem

BUT WE NEED TO BE VERY CAREFUL

O, how easy it is to justify our attachment to things by writing off threatening texts.

- There is no doubt in my mind that Luke recorded this fellowship because it was **PRAISEWORTHY.**

Luke admired this sacrificial love for the sake of the needy.

He was giving the well-to-do Theophilus (and well-to-do Americans) a lesson in the way Christians who stand in awe of God handle their possessions.

I believe This was one of Luke's great passions –

That Christians use their possessions for the needs of others **AND NOT JUST FOR THEIR OWN COMFORTS.**

- Luke alone tells the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).
- Luke alone tells the parable of the rich fool who built bigger and bigger barns (12:16-21),
- Luke alone tells the story of God's great banquet that people wouldn't come to because they had fields and cattle to tend to (Luke 14:16-24);
- Luke alone tells the story of the dishonest manager (Luke 16:1-8)
- Luke alone tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

More than any other New Testament writer Luke stresses the danger of letting our life consist in the things we possess.

The radical fellowship of Acts 2:44-45 is antidote for the suicide of materialism committed by the man who built bigger and bigger barns and lost his soul.

And this Koinonia is the attitude that pervaded the hearts of the earliest believers as God built his church

SO,

1. They allowed God's word to work uninhibited in the hearts
2. they did not allow materialism to stand in the way of their fellowship

THIRD, "THE BREAKING OF BREAD"?

Verse 42: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread. . ."

This is unpacked in verse 46:

Acts 2:46

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

A collector of rare books ran into a friend one day who had just thrown away an old Bible that had been in his family for generations. He just happened to mention that someone named "Guten..." something had printed it. "Not Gutenberg?" gasped the book collector.

"Yes, I believe that was his name," said the man. "You idiot! You've just thrown away one of the first books ever printed. A copy like that one recently sold at an auction for around \$400,000."

"Mine wouldn't have been worth much," replied the man.

"SOME CLOWN BY THE NAME OF MARTIN LUTHER HAD SCRIBBLED ALL OVER IT."

we often overlook the value of certain things in life.

"partaking of food with glad and generous hearts"

was a precious thing to the believers in the early church.

Something we overlook in our **fast food life styles**

The early Christians loved to be together at meals.

It allows for an intimacy and a fellowship like no other

It seems like they were together with each other in this way almost every day.

That was the kind of love the early Christians had for each other

They did not overlook the value of intimate fellowship...

FINALLY, "PRAYERS"?

Verse 42 again: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

I see this in Acts 2:47

praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

When they gathered in the big group in the temple and when they ate together in their homes **Luke says**

they focused on God –

they praised God.

When they got in touch with each other, they got in touch with God.

In other words

Everything they did was done in prayer

So let's sum up some the elements of this early church life.

1. they allowed god's word to work uninhibited in their midst
2. they did not allow materialism to lead them they had Koinonia
3. they did not overlook the value of intimate fellowship
4. everything was done and decided upon in prayer

Acts 2:47

. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

IN CLOSING LET ME ASK, WHAT MAKES ALL THIS HANG TOGETHER?

What's the driving force that made those believers free from their possessions, and eager to meet needs, and full of gladness and generosity and praise and prayer when they ate together day after day?

I think the key is found in verse 43 in the phrase,

" EVERYONE WAS FILLED WITH AWE " -- a joyful, trembling sense of awe

that says **you don't trifle with the God of the apostles.**

That says, GOD Is real, and we better listen

HAS THAT BEEN YOUR experience?

Today for most people, **including most professing Christians,**

God is an idea to talk about,
 or an inference from an argument,
 or a family tradition to be preserved.
 But for very few people is God a stark,
 ▪ fearsome,
 ▪ stunning,
 ▪ awesome,
 ▪ shocking
 present REALITY.

He is tame.
 He is distant.
 He is silent.

COULD LUKE SAY OF OUR CHURCH, "Fear -- awe, wonder, trembling -
 - is upon every soul"?

The absence of this fear has a direct effect on the way we accumulate
 possessions for ourselves,

The way we ignore the needy,
 The way we trivialize fellowship,
 And the way we play more than we pray.

If the awesome teaching of the apostles would stand forth IN OUR
 HEARTS TODAY the way it did in Peter's preaching on Pentecost,

and if the Lord confirmed his truth with wonders and signs,

This holy,
 Happy fear would come upon the church,
 and material possessions would become as nothing, except to serve others;

people, not things, would become precious beyond words;

and when we met each other we would meet God.

And prayer would be everywhere.

As believers some hear a message like this and conclude

I'm OK

I'm in

If God wants me to live at that higher level of spirituality

Which by the way is the basement level

He will lay it on me

I HAVE NEWS FOR YOU

GOD IS LAYING IT ON YOU

RIGHT NOW

He wants to build his church

He wants you to be ready

And there is only one way to be ready for what the Lord is doing

Repent

Turn to God

Offer your bodies a living sacrifice

Allow His word

This word to become a miracle in us

TO CHANGE US

TO CHANGE OUR FELLOWSHIP

AND TO GIVE US FREEDOM