

Acts 2:37-47

The church is born

(Our response to the Gospel should be like that of the early church .)

Introduction

1. Last week we began a look at the response to Peter's sermon. We paid special attention to initiation into the Body of Christ. This week we will look at the community that resulted. Last week it was the birth of the individual. This week it is the birth of the church.
2. What are the signs of true faith? Must a person have victory over all sin in their lives to be sure of their right standing with God? There are two ways Christians have understood the meaning of repentance.

1. The issue is our sins. (No!)

- We must turn away from sin in our lives.
- We must obey the Law of God.

	<i>The Purist's view</i>	<i>The Pragmatist's view</i>	<i>The Popularist's view</i>
How many sins must we turn from?	<i>All of them</i>	<i>All known sin</i>	<i>Just the big ones</i>
How fully must we forsake sin?	<i>Completely</i>	<i>As much as possible</i>	<i>Partially</i>

2. The issue is Christ. (Yes!)

- Christ has taken care of our sins.
- Now the only thing standing between God and us is Christ.
- The issue is the sin of trust in self.

3. What is the relationship between faith and faithfulness?

Repentance (trust in Christ) brings

- **justification before God**
- **new life in Christ** resulting in

Hope **Love** **Faith**
producing *producing* *producing*
freedom **faithfulness** **fruitfulness**

4. Jesus' prophetic words.

- John 13:35 "by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

- John 15:26-27 “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness to Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

1. **Devotion:** Continued commitment is the first thing mentioned. Christianity is not off and on again experience with God and His church. The Greek word translated “continually devoting” contains the ideas of intensity, endurance, and strength toward.

a. **Believers were drawn to the teaching of God’s Word.**

- We have the Apostles teaching in the letters of the New Testament.
- The role of teaching in a church is vital. It is perhaps the key catalyst to long-term growth and spiritual health.
- Preaching is often connected with a ministry to non-believers, teaching is associated with believers.

b. **Believers were drawn to fellowship with God’s people.**

- The term is KOINONIA and has the force of shared values, activity, and lives.
- Fellowship was intentional and required commitment.
- The way believers relate to each other is a major theme in Apostolic teaching.

c. **Believers were drawn to communion with God.**

- This could refer to an ordinary meal or the Lord’s Supper. The two were probably shared together in the early days of the church.
- The tradition of food and fellowship is very old and Biblical.
- There is no indication that the Lord’s Table had the Roman Catholic meaning attached to it in the New Testament.
- Prayer, like other areas of religious discipline required commitment.
- There is no clear explanation of the content of these prayers. They most likely were centered on praise and intimate communion rather than petitions.

43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

2. **Reverence:**

a. **Worship involved a sense of awe.**

- The Greek word PHOBOS translated “awe” is the word often translated “fear.” It is the term from which we get the English word phobia.
- The kinds of feelings that are to be most often expected in worship are described here. Joy is most appropriate in our relationship with each other.

b. **The gifts of the Spirit were evident.**

- This is the first display of charisma in the church. We know from I Cor.12-14 that different gifts were given to each member of the church.
- It is significant that the miracles were restricted to the Apostles this is in keeping with the purpose of signs in identifying spiritual authority.
- It is not surprising that “wonders and signs” were not as common after the Apostles died.

44 And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; 45 and they {began} selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. 46 And day-by-day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people.

3. **Community:**

a. **It was defined by a common faith.**

- The community had boundaries defined by faith and the Spirit of Christ.
- Baptism and the Lord’s Supper define our boundaries.

b. **It expressed love in practical ways.**

- The sharing of material resources was voluntary, based on need, and with joy.
- The focus of attention was on God resulting in community.

c. **Participation was voluntary and joyful.**

- The unity was not superficial (externally structured) but internally experienced.
- This unity was not a denial of individuality (as latter writings would indicate).

d. **It had a unity of purpose and identity.**

- The unity was not superficial (externally structured) but internally experienced.
- This unity was not a denial of individuality (as latter writings would indicate).
- The unity was of focus, purpose, and identity.

And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

4. **Growth:**

a. **Believers populated the community.**

- The boundaries of the Christian community were clear. Baptized believers confessing faith in Christ made up the church.
- The church was not a social mix (seekers and believers) out of which faith was to emerge.

b. The Lord was doing the adding.

- Evangelism took place naturally as a result of the power of the experience of community. There does not seem to have been an evangelistic focus or plan.
- The sovereign call of God was recognized as the force behind the evangelism.

c. Salvation involved a personal relationship with Christ.

- While salvation has a corporate element, it is clear that it starts with a personal commitment.
- The salvation of the body started with the salvation of the soul.

d. The most natural and powerful evangelistic tool is a dynamic, healthy, local church.

- Our services should be focused on believers with the awareness that nonbelievers may be present.
- It is not necessary to have an alter call to have an evangelistic impact.

5. Lessons

a. We should assume that the basic impulse of the Spirit in Born again Christian's lives is to:

1. Hunger to know the Word of God.
2. Long for connected, caring, relationships with other believers.
3. Passion for worship and communion with God.
4. Excitement with respect to the use of a broad variety of gifts.

b. The posture of leaders can frustrate or facilitate these impulses.

1. Leaders should model a hunger for God's Word.
2. Leaders should model community for the congregation.
3. Leaders should lead in worship.
4. Leaders should show respect for a broad and diverse display of ministry gifts.

c. The programs and priorities in the local church can frustrate or facilitate these impulses.

1. The church meetings should focus on the believer's lives and needs for growth and ministry.
2. Opportunities for "body life" should be featured.

