

Beautiful beginnings.

Acts 2:41-47.

Sunday morning, August 16, 2009.

- I. Those who gladly received the word. Vs. 41.
 - A. There had been a cutting to the heart in vs. 37.
An alarm had been raised in the souls of many.
 - B. They had taken their only hope of blessing and a future, and with wicked hands they had crucified and slain Him.
To make matters worse, God had vindicated Him and raised Him from the dead, and now they stood like Joseph's brothers of old before Him.
What were they to do?
 - C. And then a gracious door had been opened to them; embrace this Jesus as your living Lord in baptism and own Him as your Lord and Christ, and as a sign of your acceptance you will receive the Holy Spirit as the guarantee and down payment of your future inheritance Ephesians 1:14.
 - D. No wonder there was a gladness and a great relief on the part of these people.
No wonder great fear came upon all (Vs. 43); it was the fear of urgency, and of what might happen if they didn't make things right.
 - E. Consider the greatness of the grace of God here as well. That He should begin with offering the gospel, indeed His own Son, to these who so wickedly had disposed of Him by having Him crucified.
This no doubt was done so that all repenting wicked men coming after them in history might have hope.
 - F. Consider also the obstinacy of heart of those who continued to reject the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ as He confronted them on the day of Pentecost and following as He continued to do many signs through His apostles. Vs. 43.

Application:

Do you know something of this wickedness of your own heart? This being cut or pricked in your heart as you consider your heart in terms of its desires; the immorality of your heart, the greed, and the pride and selfishness of your heart. How can you ever stand before a holy God; how can you ever be given a place in His eternal kingdom? Any promise of doing better from now on is only so much hypocrisy, and you know it, for you have no power to bring it about; and yet without such a change you have no hope. Then in the midst of the impossibility of it all there is the voice of the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ, who says to you "Come to Me; Look to Me and live." And he washes the guilt of your whole past away and will remember it no more. More than that, He brings healing and restoration. He begins to rewire you from the inside. Priorities change, desires change, your outlook changes. Nothing in the outside world has changed, but everything is different, for you are looking at it as a new creature in Christ.

II. The means of their keeping. Vs. 42, 46.

The Lord who called them also provided the means to keep them.

- A. They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, or teaching. Their hearts and minds were being formed by the word of God in the context of the church.

- B. They continued in the fellowship of the Lord's people. They gave of themselves;
 - they gave themselves to the body of God's people.
- C. In the breaking of bread; including the Lord's supper, but likely the Lord's supper as part of common meals.
- D. And they continued in the prayers. Stated times of prayer such as the temple had morning and evening. See vs. 46. The New Covenant temple is a house of prayer for all nations. Isaiah 56:7.
- E. They did so with gladness and simplicity of heart. Simplicity is a reference to singleness of purpose; a heartfelt devotion. See Eph 6:5 and Col 3:22 where the word is translated as "sincerity," and speaks of servants serving masters.

III. They had all things in common... Vs.44-47

- A. Radical thoughts and actions have arisen among certain factions of the Christian Church over the course of history. Christian communes; signing over all your worldly possessions to the group or cult; even a defense of Communism as a political system has been advanced from this text.

What are we to make of this practice of these early Christians?

1. We are to bear in mind that these actions were entirely voluntary on the part of these folks. Never was this made a condition for joining the church. See as an example of this Peter's words to Ananias and Sapphira: "While it (the land) remained was it not your own? And after it was sold was it not in your own control?" Acts 5:4.
2. Secondly we observe in the scriptures that this practice seems to have taken place only in Jerusalem. Nothing resembling this practice is observed among the other churches.

There is a reason for that; the anticipation of the promised judgment on Jerusalem for her continued unbelief and stubborn rebellion against the Lord and His Christ. Such a judgment would make all real estate worthless and as such the Christians in and around Jerusalem started to unload their possessions.

- B. However this practice may not be applicable to our times and places, it does challenge our concept of fellowship or commonality; being members one of another.
 1. How willing are we to part with our possessions, even just in part, to aid other members in the body who are in great need?
 2. These folks were freely willing.

The Macedonian Christians of 2 Cor 8:1-5 were freely willing; even desirous.
 3. The cultivation of this grace must ultimately come, not from some legal concept, but from our identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

He made Himself poor and freely gave Himself, even to those who were His enemies. There was no law that made Him do so. Walking with Him we are being re-made in His image. As such there is no law to this effect for us either; only an inward willingness and desire worked by Spirit-worked love for Christ and His people.