The Fellowship of the King: One King to Rule Them All

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The Acts of the Apostles / Acts 2:42–47

Introduction

The end of Acts chapter 2 is given to us in the form of a summary. We are going to witness the effects of the Enthroned King working in the lives of those that are the body of believers that was forming in Jerusalem. We are given a sort of portrait of the first Christian Church and the Sanctification occuring in their community.

The Gifts of God, that was promised by Christ and preached by Peter, is bringing about a community of Christians. What we will see is that this community showed a great desire for the human soul and fellowship. This desire is unity, peace, joy, and to praise God. These are the unquenchable desires of mankind. How often does man seek to resolve this thirst with worldly, idolatrous, or evil things. However, these desire are only ever filled through belief and worship of the Enthroned King, Jesus Christ, and our fellowship in him. Ask yourselves, Do I feel empty in any of these things? Are they filled with Christ?

Man will journey long and far in search of these things. We will find all kinds of substitutes that will only every leave us feeling more empty and thirstier than when we started. It is the fallen, sinful condition of man that keep them from the truth. It is only under the rule of the King, the rule of Christ that these things can be found freely. These blessings are the good gifts that the Good King promises to those that trust in and submit themselves to him, Jesus Christ.

The Narrative of Acts 2 shifts from specific details, a more general description of the life of this infant Church. It is imperative to be reminded that this section is a description, not a prescription. These were real events to a certain people, in a certain time, in a certain culture, under certain persecution.

We also should not see this as the point where this community in Jerusalem is

being severed from Judaism. Instead we should see and realize that this is what true Israel was meant to be. This true Israel is the place where the Spirit is at work and where God's promises are being fulfilled.

Text Breakdown

1. Fellowship in the Means of Grace vs. 42
    a. The Church commits itself to the Common Means of Grace
2. Fellowship in Heart vs. 43-44
    a. The Church is uplifted and the Apostles are authenticated by the Spirits Power.
3. Fellowship in Need vs. 45
    a. The Church meets the needs of others through gracious giving.
4. Fellowship in Praise vs. 46-47
    a. The Church offers praise with generous, glad hearts and the Lord increases their numbers.

Primary Text

Acts 2:42–47 ESV

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to
the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and
many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 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. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in
their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 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.

Call: The grass withers and the flowers fade

Response: But the Word of the Lord endures forever

~~Pray~~

Fellowship in the Means of Grace

The Church commits itself to the Common Means of Grace.

Acts 2:42 ESV
42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Before we break down this verse we need to be aware that Luke is not recording what their Lord's day morning looks like. When I use the phrase "the Church," it is to be separated from the participle "going to Church." The term Church is used to identify the group of believers.

As we enter this verse we are met with a the conjunction "and." In the English language this would link us to the previous statement or paragraph. What is going on here is not so say specifically "immediately after," but instead from the point of Pentecost and Peter's sermon, we are given a summary or a result of these two magnificent events. I mention this because sometimes biblical writers use this style of writing. We saw it in 1 & 2 Samuel, we saw it in the Gospel of John, where there would be included a soft summary after and intense moment.

In our summary, one of the first things we are confronted with is the Church committing itself to the Common Means of Grace, which is their ongoing worship. What are the common or ordinary means of grace? Foundationally we have the Word of God, both read and preached. We have the sacraments, both Baptism and the Lord Supper. Both the 1689 LBCF and the Westminster Catechisms help us to understand that these are the ways that God increases and strengthens our faith. They practiced these things i the context of a deep Christian fellowship.

Luke pens an interesting verb-participle combination, "And they were devoting."

The combination reveals to us that this was not just a simple past action. It is not as though they did this once. This was a past action with ongoing effects. They did not simply devote themselves once, but that they were continuously devoting themselves. This was not a fad diet that happens and then we quit, Instead this devotion was a lifestyle change. They were in a perpetual devotion to the teaching of God's word, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

The scope of the passage does not suggest anything individualistic. This is not referring to solo devotions, but instead this is a inclusive and together as a body of believers.

Hebrews 10:24–25 ESV
[24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This act of devotion was not a one time or one season act. Devoting one's self means to Hold fast to, To Continue in, To Persevere in. The Gospel is not a one stop shop. Its not like carnival that brings you marvels and then packs up and leaves your life. The Gospel is not a quick fix for when you are feeling anxious and in need of help. This is not a hot fad diet to have an emergency weight loss period to then gain it all back shortly after you quite your suffering. As soon as you no longer have this need you go back to how you began.

Its not easy, its not always convenient. Paul washer said this: "and firsthand I can tell you that it seems it would be much easier to die for Jesus Christ than to get up and live every day for him." And this, "Many young men want to die a martyr's death in the jungle, but they cannot get out of bed at 6AM to read their Bibles and pray."

This is a lifestyle. This is a continual process. This extends beyond even our lives. God did not save a people in order for it to end with their generation. The Kingdom of God moves forward with multiple generations, multiple nations, and

multiple ethnicities. This is not a give that we keep to ourselves, we are commanded to god and share it. God and tell someone the truth about Christ. God commanded his people to remember, and teach the next generation what God has done.

So what where they devoted to:

In Apostolic Teaching

They were devoting themselves to sound doctrine about Christ. They were devoted to the Word of God. They devoted themselves to instruction and rebuke according to the Scriptures. They would be sitting under Christ's instructions that he gave to his apostles concerning himself. They would have taught them the Gospel message about how their Messiah had to suffer and die and be risen on the third day. They would be teaching them about all the Jesus began to do. The Apostles were given the authority to declare the truth of God with the stamp of God's authority with them. These men did not create their teaching from nothing, these me were led by the Spirit, with Spirit-breathed words, not of their own authority but by God's authority.

In Fellowship

This fellowship appears to be paired with Apostolic teaching. Fellowship can be defined as "sharing with someone in something that is above and beyond the relationship itself." This again is not cannot be a individual thing. We are not self-aware teachers that will figure it out. God has established and ordained that this be done communally. If unity isa strong theme throughout the Bible then it is just as strong in the framework of the Church.

Fellowship is not to be understood as only or perhaps simply as a party or social gathering. There is an aspect in a fellowship that is strongly tied with partnership. Paul used this term often. Partnership is a joining together for a common goal, to complete a common task. The Fellowship of the Ring was not formed in Frodo's house to sip tea and eat crumpets. It was formed in Rivendell to take on a great quest together amongst different people and races. It was formed in diversity to

unite them to complete a great task. Fellowship is not simply a lounging. Our fellowship also includes partnering to spread the Gospel of Christ.

I will draw back and say that enjoying one another's company is not a sin. Having dinner and hanging out is not wrong. I fear though, that if we limit our fellowship to only that, we are missing out on the mission. To preach and tell others the Good News! How often do we leave this kind of mission to individuals! At the same time that Modernity and technology connect those that are persistent and disciplined, it also separates and divide those that are lazy and idle.

In Breaking of Bread

Some take this text as the breaking of bread of the Lord's Supper. While this would be something they would do often, the context does not lead us to this conclusion. Instead, this would most likely refer to the common meals they shared with each other in their homes. According to some theologians, the term "breaking bread" used to describe the Lord's Supper was not actually used until late first and early second century by Ignatius as well as the author of the Didache. Early Christian fellowship was expressed with eating together. This would be a time when they would be able to spend time with each other after their days labors or for some offer a meal to those with out means. Remember though, that Luke is not giving us a prescription but a description of how the Church in Jerusalem found and expressed their unity in Christ. A their tables they could discuss and encourage one another in the works of Christ.

In Prayer

This is probably one of the most difficult things for Christians to do persistently. This infant Church would unite in prayer. The translation "to the prayers" would suggest specific prayers, likely the set time of prayer at the temple. Christians had yet to cause such a ruckus that they were hunted down by the Jews. Perhaps in the Jews eyes, they had just killed their leader and did not see them at this moment much of a threat. Their prayers however would not be limited to specific temple times. They would have prayed during their fellowships, during meals, and apostolic teachings. Prayer would be a regular part of the Church's life.

Fellowship in Heart

The Church is uplifted and the Apostles are authenticated by the Spirit's power.

Acts 2:43–44 ESV
43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done
through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in
common.

Their commitment to the Common Means of Grace would be used by the Holy Spirit in their lives through the preaching and living of God's Word. Luke gives us a snap-shot of the result of this reality. We see a unification and strong Fear of God from those who listened. The Greek is translated literally, "And there became on every soul Fear."

The ESV still gives us a accurate translation in Awe. I taught on a Wednesday night concerning the Fear of God. There are two kinds of Fear.

Servile Fear- Cowering, slave like dread of punishment or damnation

Filial Fear- Reverent, childlike awe.

Servile fear causes dread, uncertainty, panic, and anxiety. Filial fear hold a profound desire to honor and please. It is in our reverent and awe filled fear of God that we seek to honor him, praise him, and glorify him.

Awe inducing fear and trembling

· Ends self-confidence because we know we are empty of any independent good.

· In our fear and trembling we rest on grace, which is opposite to panic and anxiety, because we rest entirely on God.

· In our Awe and Fear we know God to be of supreme importance; we care deeply about pleasing our God.

· It cures casual faith; it causes us to put away our flippant approach to the Christian life. We gather to meet the Lord we gather before the King of Kings, the great I AM, the God who is Holy, Holy, Holy.

· It adds gravity to our lives, We as a culture to are always seeking humor and are careless, must feel the gravity of corporate worship and the need for God in our lives daily.

· This Fear and Trembling is not a destroyer of joy, but what it does is anchors the Christian in the Joy of God, so that their joy is not shallow but deep.

These people were in united in their hearts, They were in awe because they sensed that King Jesus was active and at work in their lives.

To anchor and authenticate the preaching of God's word, the Apostles were blessed with performing wonders and signs. These always pointed to the validity of God's word being spoken. These are never to elevate the person performing the wonder, but to elevate the King that is being preached. These wonders confirmed the teaching and the special status that the Apostles were placed in, to forward God's plan and purposes.

Acts 2:44 ESV
44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

Translated "All the believing ones," meaning all that had belief in Christ. We get two specific descriptions of their unity here.

1. They were together.
2. They had everything in common.

They would be together regularly. These people had become a part of each others' lives. They shared meals and prayers.

They had everything in common . This phrase is not to be used just to describe a material commonality. This verse is certainly not prescribing some form of socialism or communism in Christianity. What we are being told here was their there was a knitting of their souls in Christ. They no longer saw themselves as individuals but as true Israel. They were seeing real changes the Gospel was making in their lives. This community was being expressed in generosity because of their love of Christ, giving them a sense of "having everything in common." Their closeness and identity in Christ caused them to hold on to their possession

with an open hand instead of a closed one.

Acts 4:32 ESV
32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

Under the unity of Christ charity should fill our hearts. They would be knitted together not only spiritually, but also in their day to day lives as they cared for one another. This of course brings us to our next point.

Fellowship in Need

The Church meets the needs of others through gracious giving.

This is obviously linked to having all things in common. This infant Church of believers met the needs of others. The portrait we are given is that in order to meet the needs of others they were selling their excess. This for them included possessions and property as Luke writes.

We have in Luke's previous book the words of Christ:

Luke 12:32–34 ESV
32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

What an incredible truth. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. And what precedes this command?

Luke 12:32 "32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Christ and his kingdom should be what our heart treasures. This means also taking care of his kingdom, that is the Church. This is why we give financially to support these purposes. This church was seeing past individuals and even past families. They viewed each family as covenantal community. They were no longer

giving to strangers, but they were feeding the family of God. Can you see the sanctification for the Spirit at work here?

There is a good and reasonable use of accumulating wealth and being a great steward of it, but it comes with a temptation and a warning. Consider the end Rich ruler who clung tightly to his wealth.

What is important for us to note here in Acts 2, is that this sharing of possessions and meeting the needs of others was voluntary. These needs were based on circumstances and related to the physical and social environments that these people were in. As these people found themselves being further and further apart from the unbelieving Israel, the common faith of the city, it put a strained on their means of survival.

We are not given a prescription for communism. This was not a push for an ascetic community of socialistic mandates. This is not an exhortation to give up all you own and distribute it to the Church. What we are witnessing here in Acts 2 is a generous response because their hearts where changed and set on Christ. There was a need and Christ meets needs by means of his people. We will see examples in Chapter 4 and 5 that the totality of their estates were not being sold off, but portions of it.

This should shape our lives as well because we are part of the same Covenant of Christ with the same Gospel and the same Spirit that was radically changing the lives of these people. We are multiple small family units under the great family of God.

What we need to see and learn from this section is that there was a motivation that spread amongst these believers, where they held a high sense of God’s grace in their lives. There lives were being more and more sanctified.

Fellowship in Praise

The Church offers praise with generous, glad hearts.

Acts 2:46–47 ESV
46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 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.

We see a high sense of God's grace in these last two verse which contributed to their daily worship. In the sense of the word daily, Luke is broadcasting the idea that these things were done regularly. Worship is a term that can be misunderstood depending on context. To some worship means singing songs collectively. This is not an incorrect statement, however, in totality worship is the devotion we give to God in our daily lives.

Worship is our everyday living. It is our mornings, afternoons, and evenings. It is what we do with our time on Earth that God has given to us. It might look like quiet prayer, devotional, reading, services to others, and enjoying God's creation by marveling at what he has created. God gives gifts and he expects us to enjoy them. It is what we give back to God. Its not for just the blessings that we are given but our very lives, our breath. We do not just give these gifts back once. We give back to God daily in worship with what he's given to us. This life we have been given is meant to worship God and enjoy him.

The degree to which the early church commited itself to worship is astounding. They fellowshipped regularly as this was their expression of their practical common life together.

One of the places they would have met is the temple as we are told in verse 46. This would have been likely both due to this is where their people gathered for worship as well as the space to accommodate this growing community.

They would have broken bread regularly in their homes sharing meals with one another around their love for Christ.

Notice the sanctified heart around these things. They did it with a glad and generous heart. Their gladness was from a heart that was comforted by the

saving work of Christ and being aware of the work that God was doing in their community.

A gladness would come secondarily from their hearts comforted and conformed to Christ. Their needs were being met by the Church as well as by those whose joy was to give. We see this phrase "generous heart," used in the same way in Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22. It is a sincere heart. This is a wholeheartedness not a portion of it. It stems from God's kindness to these believers knitting them together to Himself. When I think of this I think of David and Jonathon, whose hearts were knitted together and Jonathon meeting the needs of David, breaking bread with him, and their fellowship together.

The expression of this gladness and sincerity of heart, sharing time and meal with one another was praising God and having favor with one another. They were in a routine of praising of God and loving one another. This expressions or manifestation of their sanctified lives, would have spread to those around them and outside of their community.

They lived and displayed Christ with their living. Bystanders and those in need would have witnessed this radical development and close community within Jerusalem. They heard the Word of God preached with boldness and lives were changed. When people see the Word of God lived they are strengthened. Those that have heard and then witnessed the life changing Gospel, would have their beliefs strengthened as the Spirit moved in each believer living the Christian life.

The effects of their faith is that the Lord added to their number day by day. Their lives showed what their faith was in: Obedience to the means of grace, hearts in awe of God's words and works, meeting the needs of those in need, praising God together in fellowship and meal. These believers lived the Gospel message and communicated it often as their lives grew in sanctification. They had a life that glowed with God's glory.

Those who witnessed it and believed were like moths attracted to a flame. This

was a community that was not segregated by classed, family name, or social status. It was a community that was growing in sanctification and united under Christ, a true family of God. Their lives and gracious attitudes were purposed by the Lord to be significant factors in the conversions of those many others who proclaimed Christ as Lord. The Gospel of Christ was Preached and the disciples testified to the Gospel truth with every part of their lives. And the Lord added to their numbers.

Application and Call to Christ

As we move into our Application and Call to Christ, I want to remind us of some important points we covered.

We were shown how the Spirit grew and developed his young Church progressively through sanctification by the preaching of the Gospel as well as the work of the Spirit in the lives of these disciples. This one not of their own doing or cleverness. The Spirit was driving and sanctifying these people to sit under apostolic doctrine.

We are given highlights of the King building his kingdom, his fellowship. These are not just individuals but a community. I hope you see the through line of unity in the work of God. We see the Spirit moving and knitting hearts together. There is a design in God's plan that can often be neglected and that is the Christian community. We can be tempted to keep one another at arm's length, fail to fellowship, and in some cases we see infighting in the Christian community. Th

We are shown example of what was taking place in the early Church, the generosity that comes from grateful souls that have been touched by the Lord.

We must take this text and learn from it. We have now heard concerning Pentecost, Peter's Sermon and the life and fellowship of this sanctifying infant Church under the rule of King Jesus.

We must take these principles and shape our lives to them. God has been faithful to his Word and he is showing us the way salvation and sanctification was given to the believers in Jerusalem. We must be obedient to the means of Grace and to fellowship. We must remind ourselves of the awe we have in God. We must give generously to those in need. We should break bread with one another and join together in praise of our great God both in our gathered assembly and outside of it.

We must share with those around us our living faith if Christ Jesus and his Gospel. That we no longer need stand in fear before God and his righteous judgement because of Christ's obedience to his Father and his death on the Cross. We can stand firm in our faith with Christ's Righteousness before God instead of in condemnation and judgment. We are free of our guilt and shame of our sin.

As the Old Hymn says:

(Ask the congregation to sing with me)

"My Sin- oh the bliss of this glorious thought: My sin- not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord O My Soul!!

That is the good new, That Christ took your sin on himself and paid it in full. Share this with those around you by living your faith, strengthen those that are around you by living the Gospel truth.

1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV
18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.