

Lesson 9

They Were Together

Acts 2.44a

Now all the believers were together and held all things in common.

Introduction

Together. What an amazing word! And what a fitting word to describe the interaction of the first *believers*. The Acts 2 church worked at fostering togetherness . . . of which we'll see the evidence of as we study further through the final verses of this chapter. When we think of being *together* – we think of people who have close and meaningful relationships with each other.

The word for *together* in our text is notoriously difficult to translate, occurring five times in Acts (1:15; 2:1, 44, 47; 4:26). It seems to depict the gathered community, with a strong emphasis on their unity.³⁶

This was certainly the case for the early church. What can we do to build up our sense of togetherness in the 21st century?

What Threatens Our Togetherness

If we are committed to building up togetherness, first we need to understand the threats against it. In our time, there are so many things threatening our togetherness. First, we need to know that . . .

It is hard

Being a living, functioning part of the body is not about:

- What we like
- What we prefer
- What we would stress
- What we want

We have each grown up in a society that stresses our individual rights. As a right we have been trained to be more concerned about our desires than God's purposes. However, if we come to allow the Spirit to fit us or knit us together inside the body – God can work through the church to achieve His eternal purpose.

We must be committed to doing hard things to fulfill God's expectation.

It requires effort

Acts 16.21-25 is a great illustration of togetherness. Paul and Silas were beaten, jailed, and put in stocks. The Scripture shows us how in that very difficult situation, these two partners were singing and praying

³⁶ Polhill, John B. *Acts*. Vol. 26 of *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992, p. 120.

together. This made their peril, labor, and concern much lighter because they were together. It brought them closer together.

But it takes effort. We are not a bunch of independents running around serving God. It requires each of us to invest the effort to in being patient, forbearing, and suffering together. Sometimes it will be difficult to swallow our tongue and work together . . . but the fruit of brotherly love will be worth it.

We must be committed to expend the required effort to make togetherness possible.

Blessings

It may sound ironic, but blessings can be a hindrance to our togetherness. Some congregations are blessed with financial resources. They must keep from growing stingy. Other congregations are blessed with talent. They must fight arrogance back. Some are blessed with song leaders, teachers, elders/deacons, people who really care . . . working behind the scenes. Sometimes with an abundance of blessings, we can think we are the only ones who can perform a certain task. Blessings can also lead to satisfaction, where some are content to sit back and exert little effort.

Have we let our blessings impede our togetherness?

What Brings Us Together?

Read 1 Corinthians 12.12-27.

Our start

For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink, 1 Corinthians 12.12-13.

We are all part of one body. We are members individually, but one. Note here how we all started the same way. We all had the same start – having been baptized into Jesus. Sometimes it is very easy to view each other through the lens of our disagreements and problems. We can look at someone as hardheaded, unlearned, and ignorant. We must remember that the other brother or sister has been washed in the blood – just like we have. We are brethren!

We are together because we share the same start . . . going all the way back to baptism. This is a common blessing we share.

Our purpose

See 1 Corinthians 12.15-19. We are to function as a body – not as a member. There is a purpose for being in the body. It is to supply what is lacking to the other parts. Every part is necessary and important. We each function as an individual part inside a body that exists for the purpose of bringing glory to God and furthering the kingdom of our Lord.

Our need

See 1 Corinthians 12.20-22. To increase our togetherness, we all need to work in the most effective manner. Young people are needed for their energy, fresh ideas, enthusiasm, work, and questions. Older people are needed for their experience and wisdom. Families are needed for their contribution to growth, learning, and maturity. Leaders are needed who will stand up and work for the Lord.

Our result

See 1 Corinthians 12.25-27. We need to remember the big picture. As we focus on togetherness, taking the emphasis off ourselves, wants, and personal desires – close relationships are the result. If one rejoices, we all rejoice. If one sorrows, we all sorrow. Care for one another is key, Ephesians 4.15-16; Colossians 3.12-14.

The Early Church of Acts 2 Got it Right

The church considered themselves one and acted like it. The extensiveness of their shared lives was evident to all. We all need to ask how true this is of our congregations today. We all have probably heard a story or two where members had been part of a congregation for years and still treated as a visitor by some. In a congregation that is truly committed to togetherness, this will almost never happen.

What happened on Pentecost is what the Lord wants for every person and every congregation.