

GTW – Acts of the Holy Spirit
Acts 2:42-5:25 “The Church, Its Life, Its Growth, Its Opposition”
September 23, 2020 – Dr. C. Patrick Hartsock

The Initial Life Practices of the Church:
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“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

- **The Apostle’s Teaching** (The **Learning** Church) – The Greek word ***didache*** is active voice, not passive which means they persisted in listening and being taught by the apostles. The Holy Spirit anoints the apostles to teach the 3000 converts. The apostles begin to give instruction. These converts were kindergarteners in the faith, and were evidently hungry to learn about this Jesus whom they committed their lives to. This teaching ministry of the apostles was authenticated by signs, miracles and wonders. “...and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.” Acts 2:43
- **Signs and Miracles** – Luke draws attention to the **awe, amazement** and **godly fear** that was engendered by signs and miracles:
 - “All were filled with **awe** at the many signs and wonders performed by the apostles.” Acts 2:43
 - “They were filled with **awe and amazement** at what had happened” (Peter calling the lame man to walk). Acts 3:10
 - “**Awe** and holy fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things (Ananias and Sapphira’s lying to the Holy Spirit and dying). Acts 5:5
 - “The people held them in **awe** and high esteem.” (For the many signs and wonders done among the people by the apostles). Acts 5:13
- **Further purposes of signs and wonders:**
 - “So, Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for **the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.**” Acts 14:3
- “...To fellowship” (the **loving** church – *koinonia*) – The word “***koinonia***” in the Greek would better be translated “**participation.**” The new believers were learning and growing in their ability to **understand and participate in what the Lord was doing in their lives, in the church and in the world.**
 - “And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all who had any need.” (internal – Church) Acts 2:45

- "...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness." (external – world) Acts 4:31
- "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 them was their own, but they had everything in common." (internal – church) Acts 4:32
- "The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits and they were healed." (external – world) Acts 5:16
- "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down to Jerusalem...there he met an Ethiopian eunuch." (external – world) Acts 8:26

Open Discussion: What are you participating in that God is doing in the world: internal – church, or external – world?

- **"to the breaking of bread"** (The **worshiping** church) – Probably represents both the Lord's Supper and a fellowship meal together.
 - **The Lord's Supper** – "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." John 6:56
 - **The fellowship meals** – "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..." Acts 2:46

House to house church life that accommodated 3000 converts (Acts 2:41) and 5000 converts (Acts 4:4):

- "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..." Acts 2:46
- "Day after day, in the temple courts and **from house to house**, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah." Acts 5:43
- "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from **house to house**, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison." Acts 8:3

How house churches started:

- “Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits...⁸ These were his instructions: ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” Mark 6
- “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field...⁵ “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.” Luke 10
- **“the prayers...” (the **praying** church) – Private, corporate, and temple prayers:**
 - “These all were devoting themselves with a single purpose to **prayer**, with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” Acts 1:14
 - “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of **prayer**—at three in the afternoon.” Acts 3:1
 - “When they heard this, they raised their voices together in **prayer** to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.” Acts 4:24

The Four Priorities of the Early Church:

1. The Apostles teaching (Learning)
2. The Fellowship or participation in what the Lord is doing (Loving)
3. The breaking of bread – The Lord’s Supper and fellowship meals (Worshipping)
4. The Prayers – Both private and corporate prayer (Praying)

Personal Reflection: Which of the above priorities do you need to work on and improve?

“⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who 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.**” Acts 2:43-44

Notice: They participated in what the Lord led them to do and “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

The second miracle of the new church – the first being 3000 were saved, the second being the healing of the man lame from birth.

3 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. ² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

³ Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. ⁴ And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. ⁵ And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

⁶ Then Peter said, **Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.** ⁷ And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

⁸ And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.”

The various theologies of healing in today's church:

- **Theological precept:** Miracles of healing stopped after the Canon was established.
 - **Answer:** Where in Scripture does it say miracles stopped at any time? And, have the gifts of healing (1 Cor. 12:9, 12:28-20) ceased?
- **Theological precept:** Miracles and healing were restricted to the apostolic times. The apostolic message was confirmed by miracles and healing but that is needed no more.
 - **Answer:** What do we do with miracles and healings which continue to happen today? Wouldn't some of what medical science does today be called a miracle back then? Why can't we believe God has given us medicine as part of the healing of today?
- **Theological precept:** Miracles and healing today are counterfeit, contrived and fake.
 - **Answer:** I have personally experienced at least two genuine healings that are only explained by the Lord gifting me to heal for that particular person. They were not contrived or fake.

The response of the seekers to the healing of the man born lame: (Acts 3:9-10)

“Everybody there saw him walking around and praising God. They recognized him as the one who sat begging at the Temple’s Gate Beautiful and **rubbed their eyes, astonished, scarcely believing what they were seeing.** ²⁻¹⁶ When Peter saw he had a congregation, he addressed the people:

Peter’s second speech:

“Oh, Israelites, why does this take you by such complete surprise, and why stare at us as if *our* power or piety made him walk? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his Son Jesus...**Faith in Jesus’ name put this man, whose condition you know so well, on his feet—yes, faith and nothing but faith put this man healed and whole right before your eyes.**”

Acts 3:16

- “**Faith** is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not yet seen.”
Heb. 11:1
- We are never called to have “great faith in God” we are called to “have **faith in a great God.**”

The response of the skeptics to Peter healing of the man born lame: (Acts 4:1-3)

“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and **the Sadducees** came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² **They were greatly disturbed** because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they **put them in jail** until the next day.”

- **Sadducees** – The ruling class of Judaism.
 - Politically they collaborated with the Romans, so they feared the subversive implications of the apostle’s teaching.
 - Theologically they denied the resurrection, therefore, they vehemently opposed the apostle’s teaching about Jesus’ resurrection.
 - Personally they saw the apostles as both agitators and heretics, as disturbing the peace and opposing the truth.

The response of the Lord to Peter’s healing of the lame man and Peter’s speech: (Acts 4:4)

- “⁴ But many of **those who heard the message** [of salvation] **believed** [in Jesus and accepted Him as the Christ]. **And the number of the men came to be about 5,000.**”

The response of Peter to his detractors and enemies: (Acts 4:8-12)

- ⁸“Then **Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said** to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: **It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.**”
 - It was not about them but the honor and glory of the Lord.

The response of the priests and Sadducees to Peter’s speech: (Acts 4:13-16)

- ¹³“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled (*agrammatoi* = Greek for “they had not received proper training in their Rabbinical schools.”), ordinary men (*idiotai* = laymen, or non-professionals by their standards), **they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus** (Jesus, who lacked formal theological education and professional status as a Rabbi) ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.”

Open sharing: Has there been a time in your Christian life that you have been in the presence of another Christian who astonished you and you knew they had been with Jesus and knew him as Lord and Savior?

The threats of the priests and Sadducees against Peter and John: (Acts 4:17-18)

- ¹⁷“But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

¹⁸ **Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.**

Open thoughts: Does this remind you of anything we are facing as Christians in today’s society? What are we to do as Christians in response to the threats?

Peter and John's response to the threats:

- ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old."

Personal reflection: How brave and how courageous are you as a Christian when faced with opposition to your faith by others?

The above responses were to both the healing and Peter's third speech in the *Book of Acts*. Here are where all the speeches in the *Book of Acts* are located:

- Eight by Peter: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 15
- One each by Stephen and James: Chapters 7 & 15
- Nine by Paul: Five sermons chapters 13, 14, 17, 20 and 28; Four defence speeches in chapters 4-26
- Almost 20% of Luke's text is devoted to addresses by Peter and Paul
- Not verbatim speeches, but the essence of the speakers thoughts were recorded. For instance, Luke says in Acts 2:40, he goes on to say of Peter's speech, "With many other words he warned and pleaded with them."

The new church's response to the threats of the Sadducees:

- ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Personal reflections: How boldly do we pray when faced with the opposition of the world or others?

The Lord's response to their prayers:

- ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."