

THEME: Your sanctification will influence a sinner's salvation!

OPENING REMARKS:

Personally, I've been to dozens and dozens of churches during my lifetime. Without exception, each one had meticulously crafted their own special blend of what *church* ought to look like. From a bird's-eye view, many of them appeared to be quite healthy, flourishing with an abundance of God-exalting, Christ-loving disciples. Some of the other churches, however, might be better off doing nothing more than showing up next Sunday and voting for a do-over.

Maybe you've visited a few churches like that as well?

I've visited mega-churches with thousands of members, new church-plants where having twenty people show up was something to rejoice about, and churches that met behind steel doors in a cold prison facility. I've been to churches with audio sound systems that cost more than a Rolls Royce, and to churches that met in school classrooms with no microphones at all. I visited one church where the lone usher was a college student wearing a Superman t-shirt, and others where every usher had gray hair and wore a pressed suit and tie.

There are churches with soft padded pews and churches with hard metal chairs; churches with ornately-carved wooden pulpits and churches with only music stands; home churches that meet in someone's living room and churches with multiple super-sanctuaries; churches with a warm, inviting atmosphere and churches that are so unfriendly even Mr. Iscariot would have blushed. Some churches permit only hymns to be sung while others wouldn't know what a hymnal was if you shoved one under their nose.

The fact of the matter is that there are tens of thousands of churches to choose from and they're each filled with fascinating people from all walks of life. One thing I have noticed, however, is that there is no such thing as the *perfect* local church.

So that begs an important question: Which church is actually doing *church* right?

READ: Acts 2:42-47

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. 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 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. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

OUTLINE / POINTS:

- I. INTERNAL DEVOTIONS - (vs.42)
- II. EXTERNAL MINISTRIES - (vs.43 - 47a)
- III. OMNIPOTENT RESULTS - (vs.47b)

I. INTERNAL DEVOTIONS - (vs.42)

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- A. "continually devoting themselves" -
- no part-time Christianity; always —> not just when you're motivated!
 - something you do internally; can't be forced by others

B. “apostles’ teaching” -

- The Old Testament; The Bible, God’s Holy Word
- One evidence of true conversion is a steadfast desire to be instructed in the Word of God.
- (1 Peter 2:2) *“like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation”*
- (1 Timothy 4:13) *“Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”*
- **(2 Timothy 4:1-4) “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.”**
- (Titus 1:9 Elders) *“holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”*
- (John 8:31) *“If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.”*

C. “fellowship” - (*koinonia* - lit. “partnership” or “sharing”)

- It is the spiritual duty of believers to stimulate one another to faithfulness.
- (Hebrews 10:24-25) *“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another”*
- They were together and communicating; not together BUT lonely and isolated

D. “breaking of bread” -

- **COMMUNION:** It is interesting to me that this is here in this list (Why?)
- **Calls for self-examination and purging of sin, thus purifying the church.**
- (1 Corinthians 11:27-30) *“Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.”*

E. “prayer” -

- Corporate prayer and personal prayer.
- Quote: *“Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of omnipotence.”*
- A genuine revival will always be followed by a love of prayer.

No hypocrites in the Acts 2 church!

ILLUSTRATION:

An ocean liner was slicing across the Pacific when its captain spotted an S-O-S smoke signal ascending from what was thought to be a small and deserted island. As the rescuers landed ashore, an old man standing in front of three man-made structures greeted them joyfully. The man had been stranded alone on the island for nearly twenty-five years.

Wondering about the three huts along the tree line, the ship's captain asked him, "Is there anyone else on this island?"

"Just me," came the reply.

"Then why do you have three buildings?"

"Well, y'see," said the skinny old man, "the one on the left is my house, and the one in the middle is my church."

"What about the one on the right?" the captain asked.

"Oh, that's my *old* church. I stopped going there years ago. Too many hypocrites, y'see."

II. EXTERNAL MINISTRIES - (vs.43 - 47a)

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

- A. “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe” -
- Personal devotions led to corporate experience
 - “kept feeling” —> present tense
 - They weren’t awed by the church because of its buildings, programs, or anything reflecting human ability, but by the supernatural character of its life.
 - **“awe” (GREEK: *phobos*; ENGLISH: *phobia*) - refers to fear or holy terror due to being in the vicinity of divine presence**
- B. “all those who believed were together” -
- Constantly in one another’s company; one another’s presence
- C. “selling ... sharing them with all” -
- A complete lack of desire or satisfaction for earthly goods and comforts
 - “Us” mentality rather than “Us versus Them”
- D. “as anyone might have need” -
- They were looking for ways to serve other Christians, rather than “accumulate”
 - (1 Peter 4:9) *“Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”*
- E. “Day by day” -
- As in ‘daily’
 - Not just on Sunday’s or during a mid-week Bible study
 - **Seven consecutive days of spiritual activity - (Internal Devotions & External Ministries)**

F. “continuing with one mind in the temple” -

- They were in the Temple to:
 - 1) “praise God” (2:47)
 - 2) Observe daily hours of prayer; 9am - 3pm (3:1) *“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.”*
 - 3) Witness to the gospel (5:42) *“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”*

G. “breaking bread from house to house” -

- Christians were sharing food and meals with one another

H. “gladness and sincerity of heart” -

- “gladness” from Greek word meaning “to rejoice”
- **“sincerity” from Greek word meaning “free from rocks” or “smooth”**

I. “praising God and having favor with all the people” -

- Internal Devotions led to External Ministries which led to Holy Praise
- Their joyful lifestyles were a tremendous witness to the unsaved
 - (John 13:35) *“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
 - **(Acts 6:7) “The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”**

“The Apology of Aristides” the second-century philosopher; made before Caesar Titus Hadrian Antoninus, the King

“But the Christians, O King, while they went about and made search, have found the truth; and as we learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations. For they know and trust in God, the Creator of heaven and of earth, in whom and from whom are all things, to whom there is no other god as companion, from whom they received commandments which they engraved upon their minds and observe in hope and expectation of the world which is to come. Wherefore they do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honour father and mother, and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man; and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them, they do not to others; and of

the food which is consecrated to idols they do not eat, for they are pure. And their oppressors they appease (lit: comfort) and make them their friends; they do good to their enemies; and their women, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest; and their men keep themselves from every unlawful union and from all uncleanness, in the hope of a recompense to come in the other world. Further, if one or other of them have bondmen and bondwomen or children, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction. They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them; and they love one another, and from widows they do not turn away their esteem; and they deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly. And he, who has, gives to him who has not, without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him in to their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother; for they do not call them brethren after the flesh, but brethren after the spirit and in God. And whenever one of their poor passes from the world, each one of them according to his ability gives heed to him and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity, and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food. They observe the precepts of their Messiah with much care, living justly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and every hour they give thanks and praise to God for His loving-kindnesses toward them; and for their food and their drink they offer thanksgiving to Him. And if any righteous man among them passes from the world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God; and they escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another near. And when a child has been born to one of them, they give thanks to God; and if moreover it happen to die in childhood, they give thanks to God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And further if they see that anyone of them dies in his ungodliness or in his sins, for him they grieve bitterly, and sorrow as for one who goes to meet his doom.

Such, O King, is the commandment of the law of the Christians, and such is their manner of life.”

III. OMNIPOTENT RESULTS - (vs.47b)

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

A. “The Lord was adding” -

- Salvation is always God’s work
- (Psalm 127:1) *“Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it”*
- **Effective evangelism is the result of personal devotions & public ministry.**

B. “to their number” -

- They kept track of people who believed and were saved.
 - (Acts 2:41) *“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”*
 - (Acts 4:4) *“But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”*
 - (Acts 5:14) *“And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number”*

C. “day by day” -

- **Back to 2:46 (“Day by day”) → THIS IS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTAND**
- Your holy living leads to sovereign salvation.
- True evangelism flows from the daily life of a healthy church.

D. “those who were being saved” -

- Present tense
- Not merely added to the church membership list, but their names are written down in heaven!
- QUESTION: Is your name written down in The Lamb’s Book of Life?

THEME: Your sanctification will influence a sinner’s salvation!

Two Outcomes of Effective Christianity

- 1) The effect of a consistent Christian life will be to command the respect of the world.
- 2) The effect of a consistent Christian life will be to increase the number of saved.

Application:

- * QUESTION: Have you lost your joy, or maybe you've gotten over your salvation?
- * QUESTION: Do you feel like you're just going through "Christian exercises" but you've lost your zeal for Christ?
- * QUESTION: Do people think of you as someone joyful, someone focused on Jesus, or just as someone focused on secular, non-eternal things?

CONCLUSION:

Don't allow the difficult circumstances in your life to diminish your godly influence on the unsaved people around you!

Acts 16:22-34 - (Paul & Silas in Philippian Jail)

22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. 23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 "But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; 26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" 29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. 33 And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*. 34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household."