

Fellowship Of The First Christians

Acts 2:42-47

Part 6b

Four-fold Devotion Of First Christians

1. "apostles' teaching" - Lit "the teaching of the apostles."
 - a. They were hearing and obeying the message [the inspired teachings] of the twelve apostles who were speaking the words given them by the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:4).
 - b. Christians today must be devoted to the teachings of the apostles.
 - 1) We must not follow what pleases men, but what pleases God. (Matt. 15:9).
 - 2) We should be like Paul. (Gal. 1:10).
 - c. There are many who want us to add or take away from the apostles' teaching, but we must stand firm in it as they did.
 - d. They were not following (1) Moses (2) Men (3) Traditions (4) Majority (5) Feelings (6) Parents and grandparents (7) Conscience
 - e. It is God's plan that believers in every generation follow the teachings of the apostles who spoke the words of the Lord. (Jude 3).
 - f. There is no authority for a new or evolving gospel in this age or any age!
 - g. This kind of gospel would soon not even resemble the gospel of Christ. Every culture and every generation would change it to fit what they desired.
2. "fellowship" - Lit "the fellowship" - "koinonia" [koi noh **nee** ah]. This word means "fellowship, partnership, participation, communion, sharing, relief."

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Among the Greeks it was used to refer to a business partnership, to marriage.2. It could be used to denote close and intimate relationships. (2 Cor. 6:14).3. It was used to refer to the sharing of material goods with those in need. (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 9:13).4. One can be in fellowship through giving and prayers in the work of Christ. (Phil. 1:5).5. We have fellowship in the faith. (Eph. 3:9).6. We can have fellowship with God.. (1 Jn. 1:3,6).7. We can also have fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16; Phil. 2:10), and with the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:11), |
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- a. They were devoted to associating with one another.

- 1) See Acts 2:46
 - 2) Hebrews 10:24-25 warns of the danger of neglecting the assembly.
 - 3) The assembly is a time to worship and be built up by God and believers. (Heb. 10:24, 25).
 - 4) Fellowship in our homes and elsewhere is also vital.
- b. They were devoted to sharing their goods. (Acts 2:44,47; 4:32-37; 5:1-11).
 - c. They were devoted to seeking the welfare of each other in all things.
 - d. **This is the way a body functions best, and the church is the body of Christ.**
 - 1) Members of Christ's body should work.
 - 2) Members of Christ's body should work for the benefit of one another.
3. "the breaking of bread" - This is a reference to the Lord's supper.
 - a. Luke uses the definite article "the" before the word "bread."
 - b. Here are some other verses speaking of "The Lord's supper." (Matt. 26:26-30; Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16,17; 11:23-34; Acts 20:7).
 - c. The "bread" is a synecdoche standing for both the bread and the fruit of the vine.
 - d. The regular observance of the Lord's supper, on the first day of the week, is no doubt indicated. (Acts 20:7).
 - e. History reveals the first Christians met every Sunday to partake of the Lord's supper.
 - f. Some believe this is a reference to common meals, but there would be nothing special or unique about being devoted to common meals.
 - g. Unbelievers like to eat and most often eat together.
 - h. It is strange Luke would praise these first Christians for merely eating together.
 4. "prayer" - lit. "the prayers"
 - a. Christians were united in prayer and were devoted to it.
 - b. They continued to take part in the Jewish public prayers in the courts of the temple. (Acts 3:1).
 - c. Individual Christians were also offering up prayers.
 - d. Steadfast prayer is essential to the faithfulness and growth of the church. (1 Thess. 5:17).
 - e. Things we could never do God can do. (Eph. 3:20).
 - f. He can empower us, open doors of opportunity and bless our labor. (Matt. 7:7-11; Eph. 3:20).

2:43 And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe [reverence]; and many wonders and signs were taking place

through the apostles.

- NIV - "Everyone was filled with awe."
 - The Greek "phobos" [**fah** bahs] means "awe, fear, reverence."
1. It is significant "the apostles" [the twelve] were working the miracles.
 - a. This is further evidence they were the only ones on Pentecost who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4).
 - b. There is no evidence the 120 had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and no record they performed a single miracle.
 2. It is not until later years that we find others besides the apostles working miracles.
 3. This was after the laying on of the apostles hands. (Acts 6:6; 7, 8; 19:1-7).

2:44 And all those who had believed were together [united in close fellowship], **and had all things** [everything] **in common;**

1. "All things" is not literal, but is defined by verse 45.
2. There were some limits and in context "all things" is speaking of their material possessions.
3. Hospitality was certainly included in the words "were together." See Acts 2:46.

2:45 and they {began} selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

1. This was a **voluntary action**. (Acts 5:4).
2. There is not the slightest hint this was a forced action by God or the apostles. (Acts 4:32-35; 5:3,4).

ACT 4:32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them.

ACT 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

ACT 4:34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales,

ACT 4:35 and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need.

ACT 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land?"

ACT 5:4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God."

3. It was an action of great and unselfish love.
4. There is no evidence that this optional action of love was practiced by other first century Christians or is a binding pattern for us today.

- a. The Bible only speaks of these Jerusalem Christians sharing their goods in this way.
- b. It does record other Christians giving very sacrificially to help other Christians. (2 Cor. 8, 9).

5. Note

- a. This was a temporary action taken to help needy Christians in Jerusalem.
- b. It was not an effort to place all the Christians in Jerusalem on the same financial level, but was a way to help believers “as every man had need.” (Acts 2:45).
- c. Help was distributed on a daily basis. (Acts 6:1). NASB “daily serving”...NIV “daily distribution.”
- d. As proof it was not practiced outside of Jerusalem, the New Testament must be read as a whole to determine how other churches handled helping others.
 - 1) Dorcas did relief work as an individual, but this would have not been possible if everything had been placed in a common fund. (Acts 9:36-39).
 - 2) A study of the instructions to the churches of Galatia and the Corinthian church reveals that individuals had control of their own money and property. (Gal. 2:10; 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 9:1-7).
 - 3) Acts 11:29 indicates the disciples in Antioch had their own money and had control it.

Acts 11:29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send {a contribution} for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

- 4) Furthermore if all Christians sold everything upon becoming a Christians, members would be in utter poverty and would not be able to help themselves or anyone else.
- 5) Every member would be broke and not have the financial means to make money to provide for themselves and others. They would not have houses, cars, clothing. They would be soon be without jobs. It takes some assets to survive and to make money.
- 6) The epistles clearly show individual Christians had funds they controlled. (Jas. 1:27; 2:14-17; Gal. 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:17,18).
- 7) The “property and possessions” of Acts 4:34 may not include their personal dwellings. If it did, all the members of the church in Jerusalem would be homeless and without land, livestock, etc. and once the funds put in a common treasury were depleted they would be beggars.
- 8) Acts 2:46 reveals the Jerusalem Christians still had their houses.

6. To whom the goods were sold or the method used to sell the goods is not specified.

- a. It would seem that the selling of their possessions was to unbelievers - not to themselves.
- b. There is no record of the early Christians, however, soliciting funds from unbelievers for missions, benevolence, etc..
- c. The churches were funded by the liberal and cheerful giving of Christians. (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7).

- d. This does not mean they refused gifts from unbelievers.
 - e. For a variety of reasons unbelievers sometimes contribute to churches or believers.
 - f. They had their favor. (Acts 2:47).
 - 1) “All” did not include the Sanhedrin.
 - 2) Neither did “all” refer to the Jews who yielded to their influence nor the Gentiles who were angered the apostles were leading men out of idolatry.
7. **“Sharing with all”** would primarily refer to believers, but it cannot and should not be forced to mean non-believers in those households were excluded.
- a. Christians have a special obligation to help one another. (Gal. 2:10; 6:10; 1 Jn. 3:17,18).
 - b. Christians are to help non-believers as they have ability and opportunity. (Gal. 6:10).

Gal 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

- 1) See also Matthew 25:31-46.

Coming Of Son Of Man

Matt 25:31 "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Christ is coming with His “angels.” (Matt. 16:27; 19:28; 13:41,49; 24:31).

Matt 25:32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

Matt 25:33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

- “Nations” represents both the sheep and the goats. “ethnos” [**eth** nahs] - nations, peoples, multitudes.
- Men are not judged by nations, but as individuals in those nations.
- Thought all men must give account to Christ in the judgment (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:30, 31), this is a picture of the judgment of the righteous.
- The sheep and the goats are Christians in this context.
- Those receiving help are called “brothers of Mine.” (Matt. 25:40). See also Matt. 25:45
- There is no doubt this is a picture of baptized believers who were faithfully helping and ministering to their brothers and sisters in Christ.
- In Palestine sheep and goats were often pastured together, but they were easily separated because sheep were usually white and goats were often dark brown or black.

Those On Christ’s Right Hand

Matt 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matt 25:35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me {something} to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me {something} to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;

Matt 25:36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'

Matt 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You {something} to drink?

Matt 25:38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?

Matt 25:39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

Matt 25:40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, {even} the least {of them,} you did it to Me.'

- It is noteworthy to point out that these sheep are blessed because they had ministered to even the least of the Jesus' brothers.
- The context indicates Jesus is not talking primarily about his physical four half-brothers. (Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3).
- Christ is speaking of helping His spiritual brothers - believers.
- Those who obey the Lord and do the will of God are His brethren. (Matt. 12:48-50; Lk. 8:21).

Matt 12:48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

Matt 12:49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers!

Matt 12:50 "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

- When men persecute Christians they persecute Christ. (Acts 9:4). See also 1 Cor. 8:12.

Acts 9:4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

1 Cor 8:12 And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

- Jesus had earlier spoken of giving one "a cup of cold water" because he was a disciple. (Matt. 10:40, 42).

Those On Christ's Left Hand

Matt 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

Matt 25:42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me {nothing} to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

Matt 25:43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.'

Matt 25:44 "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?'

Matt 25:45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these [brethren], you did not do it to Me.'

Matt 25:46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

- Here we find Christ condemned those who had not ministered to even the least of His spiritual brothers.
- They referred to Jesus as "Lord," but they had neglected [not persecuted] those following Christ.

- It seems best to understand those on the left as baptized believers who had no concern for their brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Those outside of Christ stand condemned not because of their neglect of Christians, but they refuse to turn from their sins and follow Christ the Savior.
 - They are called “goats” because of their neglect of brethren.
 - It is most serious that we help our brothers and sisters in need. See 1 John 3:17,18; Jas. 2:14-17.
 - When men, especially Christians, neglect Christians they neglect Christ.
 - These men/women were surprised by their condemnation as those who condemned in Matthew 7:22,23.
 - They believed they were in a saved state, but were lost because of their neglect of believers.
- c. James 1:27 does not specify that the orphans had to be Christians, but likely some were.

2:46 And 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,

1. "day by day" - They worshiped daily [every day] in the temple. (Acts 5:42).

ACT 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

- a. The place in the temple where believers seemed to have habitually gathered was Solomon's colonnade, running along the east side of the outer court. (Acts 3:11; 5:12).

ACT 3:11 And while he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.

ACT 5:12 And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

- b. In both of these verses the NIV has “Solomon’s colonnade.”

c. Acts 2:46 “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple counts” - NIV

- d. The daily worship was a manifestation of their devotion to God and Christ and to their unity.

2. "breaking bread at home" - “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad, and sincere hearts” - NIV

- a. It is not certain the words "day by day" [every day] modify the words “breaking bread at home.” (Acts 5:42).

1) They were meeting every day “in the temple counts.”

2) The words “breaking bread at home” appears to be an additional action showing the closeness of these first Christians.

3) The word “bread” is not preceded by the definite article “the” as it was in Acts 2:42.

4) This is significant in this context, but the definite article “the” was not used in Luke’s words “to break bread” found in Acts 20:7.

5) The article was not always used when bread referred to the Lord’s supper.

b. Interpretations Of Breaking Bread

1) Common meal

2) Lord's supper

c. It seems impossible to be certain which interpretation is correct, but the evidence seems to be in favor of a common meal.

1) The communal meal could not conveniently be eaten in the temple precincts.

2) The home became a common place of the fellowship meal, but would also be a common place for Christians to eat the Lord’s supper.

3) The Greek has "kat' oikon" which can be rendered "from house to house, by households."

4) Later this practice of eating common meals together is called “the love feast.” (1 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12). See 1 Cor. 11:20-22 where it appears “the love feast” was being abused and was causing problems in the Lord’s supper that followed.

3. "house churches" were common in the 1st century. (Rom.16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 2).

ROM 16:5 also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

1CO 16:19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.

COL 4:15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.

PHM 1:2 and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

a. The Lord's supper was likely eaten in the "house churches" and in other places where saints might assemble.

b. The home would also be a place of common meals.

c. Here the reference appears to be to the fellowship meal and is to be distinguished from Acts 2:42 speaking of the Lord’s Supper.

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