

# Believe And Belong

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 25 January 2015

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     beginning at verse 40 and that's on page 1094 of the church bibles acts chapter 2 beginning at verse 40 with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them save yourselves from this corrupt generation those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3 000 were added to their number that day they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles all the believers were together and had everything in common selling their possessions and goods they gave to anyone as he had need 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 praising god and enjoying the favor of all the people and the lord added to their number daily those who were being saved thanks very much chris and again as we go through this together if there are any questions and if you can hold them to the end and please feel free to talk with me afterwards and discuss anything through we want to learn together what god's word has to say to us well let's pray and ask for his help now father we thank you for the church we thank you for your family and we ask now that as we gather together like this that your spirit would be at work among us speaking your truth into our lives truth that changes us and transforms us and brings us to be the kind of family the kind of church that you call us to be we thank you for one another and we thank you that we can learn together like this we pray that it will be a rich and encouraging time for us all in jesus name we pray amen when you came this morning did you expect to find anybody else here as you walked in the door did you expect that there would be seats and somebody to make tea and coffee when you took your children out to creche and sunday school did you expect that there would be people here to look after them and to teach them if you weren't here would you still expect that there would be people here it raises a big question this expectations business doesn't it what is expected of me if i am part of the church what level of commitment should there be so how often do i need to attend once every six weeks or perhaps nine out of ten weeks is it different if i'm a student or if i'm settled or married

or am i allowed to stay at home and have a break or perhaps am i free to go and visit another church altogether do i come when i'm on the rota but free when i'm not and what happens if church clashes with a sports match or a kids party what takes priority and what about home groups after all church isn't just a sunday meeting is it something we go to when there is nothing else on or do we plan to be there each week what comes first the local church or parachurch who takes priority is it the people within your church family or your best friend in another church lots of questions and i'm sure we would all have very different answers so what is a right expectation or do we just make up our own minds and figure out what the best thing is for us well the expectation i think we'll discover is greater than we ever thought but the experience is much deeper than we could ever realise

Peter has just been preaching to a very large crowd it's soon after Jesus has been raised from the dead he has ascended he sent his holy spirit and he's preaching to the crowd about the lord Jesus Christ and look at his conclusion in verse 36 he says therefore let all Israel be assured of this God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ he is declaring to the people that Jesus who died has now been raised he is the risen ruling saving king now look at the response of the people to that message in verse 41 here's the response those who accepted his message were baptised and about 3000 were added to their number that day do you see the double response that there is they accepted and they were added they believed and they belong and the mark or the sign that they have accepted the good news of Christ and that they have been added to the church family is their baptism they were baptised because baptism is a sign that you believe in Christ and that you belong to the community of believers so believing and belonging can't be separated you can't on the one hand say oh I believe in Jesus but then on the other side say

I don't belong to the church family and you can't say oh I belong to the church and not believe we see the same thing in verse 47 at the very end of the reading we had the last couple of lines and it says there do you see what it says and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved God didn't add people without saving them and he didn't save them without also adding them so people who believe also belong now that means church life is deeply communal not individual look at the language that we have here for example verse 42 they devoted themselves verse 43 everyone was filled with all verse 44 all the believers it's like the king's musketeers all for one and one for all only we have been saved by the ultimate king and we now together serve the true king

Jesus Christ all for one and one for all so let's see how this believing and belonging actually gets worked out in practice two big ideas we're going to look at here's the first one if we say we believe it means we are committed to Christ if we say we believe it means we are committed to Christ so look at verse 42 they that's the believers devoted themselves to the apostles teaching they devoted themselves to the fellowship they devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and they devoted themselves to prayer now this word devotion means this wholehearted exclusive commitment it's the kind of thing a lover might write in their valentine's card devoted to you

[10:11] I'm sure you've all written it at some stage they're saying my life is given completely for you I live for you I adore you I'll do anything for you my life is yours wives isn't that what your husband say to you I express a loyalty a deep affection towards you I'm devoted to you now Christ has showed his devotion and affection for us by dying for us he gave himself for us he says I die for you I suffer God's wrath for you and in response to that amazing love the church in response is devoted to Christ there is this wholehearted exclusive commitment in response to what Christ has done for us we say I'll live for you I adore you my life is yours and so this devotion is being worked out in the following ways as we read in verse 42 let's have a look at them one by one first they're devoted to the apostles teaching they are learning

Christ together now we don't have the apostles alive today but what we do have is what they taught and what they preached and what they spoke about and what they taught has been recorded for us within scripture this is what we are reading right now and how do we know it's true how do we know we can trust them well look at verse 43 it says everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles you see what they said and what they did was written down and all of that was confirmed and affirmed by the miracles and the wonders that they did he was telling people we can trust them we can trust what they had to say and so we now have that written down for us in God's word to learn together to learn

Christ together through what they had to say we learn all about how Christ has accepted us and how Christ has added us or as we started out this morning that he forgives us and welcomes us into his family so we learn Christ together through his word but not only that they are also devoted to the fellowship so they are sharing Christ together fellowship simply means sharing in something that we have in common sharing in what we have in common the church here this morning is made up of all kinds of people we come from different backgrounds we're of different ages we have different likes and dislikes we're just different people we're very diverse people but we have one thing that unites us together the one thing that we have in common is the

Lord Jesus Christ the one who has welcomed us into his family and has given us the assurance that we belong to his kingdom kingdom and this is what we share in together we share in Christ together it's what glues us together it breaks down all kinds of barriers cultural barriers social barriers and it unites us together to be a people who share Christ together but not only that we are devoted to the breaking of bread or as we have it here to remember Christ together now I think and you might want to discuss this with me later I think this is primarily about remembering Christ's death as they ate together so as part of their meals as they invited one another round to their homes as they would sit down and have their meal they would also as part of that meal share and remember

Christ we call it the Lord's Supper or communion they would come to remember the amazing salvation that we have received so remembering that Christ was treated as we deserve to be treated so that by faith we are treated as Christ deserves to be treated we have been given new life when we come to remember Christ together and the meal that we have here this morning is something we will share in together to remember what Christ has done but not only that they were devoted this commitment this loyalty they were devoted to prayer at the end of verse 42 they talked to Christ together now I think this included all kinds of prayers maybe formal prayers informal prayers prayers of thanksgiving prayers of requests the point is that as the people gathered together they were a talking people they talked regularly to the

[ 15 : 54 ] Lord Jesus Christ in whom they had this relationship and as we talk to God in our relationship we are simply coming as his children helpless with absolute dependence on a generous and gracious God who loves to give good gifts to his children so they were devoted together to Christ and do you see what happens when we are committed to Christ in this way together we gain such a wonderful appreciation and the devotion that Christ has shown for us we see as we learn together as we share together as we remember Christ together as we talk to Christ we see how loved and treasured we are you see the church without Christ does not exist and the church that tries to live without

Christ will fall apart Christ is like the air that we breathe the oxygen that keeps us alive right now well without Christ the church will die we simply cannot operate we cannot live we cannot exist and so together we come committed to Christ in our learning in our sharing in our remembering and in our praying so if we believe we are committed to Christ and it's something we do together here's the second big thing to belong means we are committed to the community and when I say the community I don't just mean the community of carigaline I mean the community of God's family the church so we're people who believe but we're also people who belong now what if I were to say to us all let's do church every single day what would you think about that well you might say well I can manage once a week and a couple of hours on a

Sunday that's fine for me but if that's how we begin to think about church we've lost what it actually is because church is 24/7 it's not just about sitting in a meeting it is that but it's so much more than that it's a community of partners of people who belong so look at verse 44 it says all the believers were together verse 46 every day they continued to meet together the end of verse 46 we read that they ate together now this word together is not just saying that they met up it's stronger than that it means a partnership they were involved with each other they had these close relationships they were sharing in the same things the same beliefs and it wasn't just meeting up for formal meetings they met in informal ways as well and this

I think this togetherness this belonging together was worked out in two ways first they were committed to caring for one another look at verse 45 44 rather all the believers were together and had everything in common selling their positions and goods they gave to anyone as he had need now that's really quite remarkable isn't it now as we read it let's be clear that it is not asking everyone to do likewise in other words that we're to go and sell our homes and sell our cars and get all that we've got together and all go and move in a little commune together and build a little self-sufficient ranch somewhere where we all have perhaps the same income we all have access to the same things where we all own everything together it's not that kind of commune separatist type idea in fact we're told in verse 46 that they did meet together and eat in each other's homes so it's quite clear that it didn't mean you sell up your own home and all move in together no this was something voluntary this was something done as

God's people were able to do but what it does mean is that we as a community of God's people are responsible for the practical care and welfare of each other and the clue for this comes at the end of verse 45 they gave to anyone as he had need so it was the needs of the church that dictated so what are the needs of this family church here how do we distinguish what needs are and what wants are because we all want lots of things but what are our needs well let's remember at the time of writing there was no social welfare system you didn't have a dole office if you didn't have a job you go down and sign on and get some money from the government if you had no job if you had no job or no means of income you were poor if you didn't have a family you had nothing and that meant you would be without food or without home so when it's talking about needs here it's talking about the necessities of life not the luxuries for example we all need somewhere to live and keep warm especially when it's cold we all need our breakfast our lunch and our tea we all need to be able to pay our bills electricity water we all need to go to the doctor from time to time and sometimes that's going to cost a bit extra if we need to buy medicine so we might call all of these things daily needs or necessities and if there's people within the church community within the church family who are in need it is our responsibility to do all that we can to make sure that they have these needs and one of the things that we talk about often is our fellowship fund where people give financially and that goes into a fellowship fund and for people who are in need we are able to give financial assistance or practical assistance so let me say to us all if you are in need please let us know your need or if you know somebody else who's in need or struggling let us know so we can help committed to caring together just as Christ was committed in caring for us and gave his life for us so in response we give of what we have to help care for others so we are committed to caring together and second we are committed to supporting together look at verse 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 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people every day they would meet together and let us wait and close for the the