

God extending His church

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[0 : 0 0] turn your thoughts to the passage we read in Acts chapter 2 and the words that we find at the end of the chapter, verse 47. The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. It must have been a wonderful time for the early church, for those young believers, seeing the hand of God at work with such great blessing. They were seeing or they were aware of the Spirit of God coming in power and blessing his word. So when you look at this chapter 2, the day of Pentecost, then remember it was what followed days of preparation. Days of preparation for the day of Pentecost. And we also know that there were days of prosperity when the Lord was blessing his word and when many were coming to the place of belief. And when you look at the chapter, you could sum it up in three ways. First of all, the coming of the Spirit. And we know that there are two things. First of all, the surprise that the vast multitude round about had. Surprised that they were being drawn out to hear the word of God. But also surprised that they were hearing the gospel being preached in their own language so that they could understand. That is so important as we preach the gospel that folk would understand what is being said. So you have the coming of the Spirit. But then also, you have the conversion of sinners. And as I mentioned this morning, God was taking his word and applying it to the hearts of individuals with a power, with a conviction. And there were men and women convicted of their sin.

They were concerned about their sin. They were concerned about their souls. And we are told how they came to believe they were converted by the working of God the Holy Spirit. But then the third thing that you notice in this chapter is the communion of saints. The saints on earth having communion, the one with the other.

And what Luke does is this. He describes the immediate result for the church following the 3,000 converts.

They needed instruction. They needed fellowship. And if they were going to grow in grace, then they needed to be together. That was so important then and it is so important now. And according to Matthew chapter 18, the church was beginning to disciple the new believers. Verse 19, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. That commission was now being fulfilled by the disciples and by the early church.

And then what Luke does is this. He, you could say, moves on from what happened on a particular day to what happened the days following the day of Pentecost. And he is speaking in a general way about the early development of the church in Jerusalem. And what he does is this. He gives us a little insight into some of the experiences that the church went through at that time. He mentions also the effect that the witness of the church had upon those around. So you have the picture of the first early Christian church. The first Christian church. How God brought it into being and how God also brought that church forward. So that not only was the church being blessed, but those round about were being blessed as well. And that's surely the prayer of God's people. That as he has brought his people to that place of belief, then that the church reaches out to those around them and that others would come within the family and the fold of the church. So what I want us to notice about this early church, church. And we are told that especially in these last verses of chapter 2. First of all, there was a sense of fellowship. A sense of fellowship. And you notice what they did. All who believed were together.

[6 : 0 3] Now that speaks about a lot of things. First of all, it speaks about the devotion that they had to the Lord. It speaks about the devotion that they had one to the other. They were together.

Devotion. Their love to God was becoming stronger. Their love for one another was becoming stronger.

But not only devotion. It speaks about determination. And I believe that this early church, they were determined that the blessing of the Lord would be upon them and upon those that were round about. Determination.

But then a third thing you notice is this. That as they met together, they saw that as their duty. And they were coming together. Not out of mere formality. Not just because the others were meeting or they were told to meet together.

But they felt this compulsion. They saw it as a duty. Not anything that was out of the ordinary. But they saw this as a duty. But they saw this as a duty. To meet together. And we are told a number of things.

[7 : 33] We are told that they met together in order to be taught. Teaching. It's good. It's good. It's good. To meet around the word of God. Whether at the time of prayer. A time of fellowship.

A small group of believers and unbelievers and so on. They met together. We are told in teaching. Because they had a lot to learn.

And I believe that those days of preparation that led to the day of Pentecost. Jesus was preparing his disciples for this. And he had taught them.

And he was enabling them to grasp what he was saying to them. So that they could pass that on to this young church. So they met together in teaching.

Because they had a lot to learn. But we are also told that they met in fellowship. Because they had a lot to learn.

[8 : 40] Think of this. When you hear the experience of another believer. It can warm your heart.

It can challenge you. And some of these people. Although most of them were converted. Say in one day or within a short period of time.

They all had their own experience. And you would have thought. Well they all came the same way. And they all went through the same thing. Yes they came to the place of belief.

But they still had a lot to share. And one person could be saying. Well I didn't expect to be there.

But I felt a drawing. Another person might say.

I was so convinced of what was being said. I couldn't resist anymore. And they would go on. They had a lot to share.

[9 : 39] I believe that's what used to happen. Years ago. At that communion time. Especially when folk would be meeting together.

Maybe at the question time. But at other times they were meeting at homes. And they were sharing together. Telling of their own experiences.

Remember what Jesus said to the man of Gadara. Go back to your own people. The point is this. And tell them what great things God has done for you.

Now you may not feel that you're able to express exactly what you feel. But you can still meet with others. You can put in your word.

And you can meet together in fellowship. Because you have a lot to share. But then also. We are told.

[10 : 37] That they met together in breaking of bread. Because they had a lot to remember. Now. I believe that.

When it refers to the breaking of bread. It says from house to house and so on. There would have been times. When. Not just at a meal time. But a time when they would celebrate the Lord's Supper. They met together. Because they had a lot to remember. Remembering the Lord's death. And you know some of them would be saying.

Well. I was there when we put him to death. And maybe you can imagine some of them. And the tears streaming down their faces.

We put him to death. But we see the reason now. Why he died. So that we. Could be forgiven.

[11 : 36] And so that we could be brought. Into the family. And the fellowship. Of God and his people. We are told also.

That they met in prayer. They had a lot. To ask. They met in prayer. It's good. To meet.

Together. In prayer. Maybe you haven't started going to the prayer meeting. Maybe this is a good time to begin. You believe that the Lord has blessed you.

He has brought you to himself. You're wondering maybe about the next step. Then you meet. With God's people. In prayer.

The weekly prayer meeting. It's good. To meet together. In prayer. Because. We have. Yes we have a lot. For which to give thanks.

[12:34] But also. We have a lot. To ask. What do you ask? In the place of prayer. You pray. That God's blessing. Will be poured out upon us.

Upon you. And that there will be a time of refreshing. A time. Of reviving. And these people. As they met together.

In prayer. They were aware. Of God. At work. But then also. We are told. That they met. In praising. As I said earlier.

They had a lot. For which to give thanks. To help. And some. Who probably didn't know each other. But yet. They were meeting together. And they would be saying.

This. The Lord has brought us together. But more than that. The Lord has brought us. Into his family. And. They would meet. To praise God. Because they had a lot.

[13:30] For which to give thanks. But then also. We are told. That they met together. To help. Each other. They had a lot. To give.

Now. They were able. At that. They were able. To give. To help each other. Especially those. That were in need. And that. Is what they did.

So we are told. When you think of this church. The sense of fellowship. What they did. But then we are also told. Where. They did this. Now.

When it says. In the temple. It is really the temple precincts. The parks round about. And there.

They would be meeting together. There would be ample room. Probably.

In the homes. There would not be so much room. But. There would have been some homes. That were opened. Because. Of the size of the home.

[14:26] You know. The. I often think of this. And the names have gone for me. The tent makers. That helped Paul. When he was ministering. And.

We are told. That they met together. The church that met in their house. Because these two people. They probably had huge premises. Because of the work that they did.

And their building. It lent itself. To this kind of meeting. A place that was opened. So. That they could meet together.

And then. I believe they met together. Because there was the opportunity. It was a time. Of blessing. Maybe there was a time.

When everything seemed to stand still. A time of blessing. You know. It is said that. In times of revival. When God's spirit.

[15:22] Is at work. That. For some. Time does not matter. Or they'll rest a while. They'll do a little of their work.

But because there is opportunity. To meet together. To witness together. To praise together. They do that. Time. Is not.

So important. At times like that. So. The way they did this. Yes. They have done it. In the precincts of the temple. Within their own homes. And so on.

But then. The second thing is. When. When. They did this. And we are told. That day by day.

Attending the temple together. And breaking bread.

In their homes. Now. I believe that. This was something. That wasn't meant. To be permanent. Day by day.

[16:21] Meeting together. Breaking bread. And so on. Now. Some of the. You could say. The details. In the pattern. Have changed.

But not. The principles. They. Were retained. You see. We don't meet. Every day. Now. In prayer. In fellowship. In breaking of bread. We do so. As often as we could. We do so. At set times. But here. The early church. We are told. That this was something.

That they did. Day by day. It was a time. Of blessing. The time. Would come. When. It was not possible.

For them. To meet. It was for a set. Time. And God. Made that. A blessing. To them. But then.

[17:17] There's something else. The way. They did this. How did they do this? We are told. With glad. And generous. Hearts. They were there. Together.

They were there. United. Their hearts. Were overflowing. Because of all. That God. Did for them. What a place.

What a picture. What a blessing. A sense. We are told. A sense. Of fellowship. But then. The second main thing. That I want us to notice. There was a sense. Of fear. And the way. It is put. In verse 43. And awe came. Upon every soul. This fear. The feeling. Of a holy awe. Now. If you go back. To Luke chapter 1. Verse 12. Remember Zechariah.

[18:15] He was troubled. When he saw the angel. And we are told. That fear. Fell upon him. A holy awe. Then when you go on.

To chapter 5. We are told. About the amazement. Seized them all. They glorified God. And were filled with awe. With awe. Saying. We have seen. Extraordinary things.

Today. And then. Later on. Verse. Luke chapter 7. Verse 16. Fear seized them all. And they glorified God. Saying.

A great prophet. Has arisen among us. And God has visited his people. A holy awe. In chapter 8. Verse 37. Then all the people.

Of the surrounding country. Of the Gennesaret. Asked him to depart from them. They were seized. With great fear. This holy awe.

[19:13] Now what did that mean? We are told. That the. That awe came. Upon every soul. A sense of fear. I want us to look at it.

In a number of ways. First of all. A restraint. A restraint. Think of it this way. The believers. Didn't. Want. To hinder. The gospel. They didn't want to hinder the gospel. They saw what was happening.

They saw what God was doing. They saw that the spirit of God was at work. And they didn't want to hinder the. The progress of the gospel.

There was this. Holy awe. This fear. That restrained them. But then look at it from. This point of view. They were.

[20:13] You could say behaving like this. Before. Their family. And their friends. A restraint. They were careful in what they did.

They were careful in what they saw. They wanted to be a blessing. To those. That were around them. But then. You could look at it from another point of view.

It's not just from the point of view of the believers. But I believe from the point of view of the unbelievers. They didn't want. To mock. The gospel.

Or there may have been some. We're not told. But I believe that when this awe. When this. Fear. This holy awe. Came upon. The area.

Or the areas. It was a restraint. A restraint that God's people felt. And a restraint. That the unbeliever felt as well.

[21:13] But then also. This sense of fear. It brought about. A realization. What was the realization? That God.

Is in this. In a marvelous way. We are unworthy. To be part of this. And yet. God. Is working. In our midst. God. Has come down. Into our situation. God's spirit. Is moving around us. In our area. In that area. And so on. And this. When it says. This. That they had. This awe. Came upon every soul. A realization.

God. Is. At work. A wonderful situation. To be in. In a sense.

[22:10] I use this expression. Standing back. And seeing. God. At work. Seeing the spirit of God. Moving. In the hearts.

Of individuals. But also. It speaks about. I believe. A respect. The people.

Had a respect. For the message. And for the messenger. Of the gospel. A respect. That's what used to happen.

Years ago. There was a respect. For the message. Of the gospel. There was a respect. For the messengers. Of the gospel.

Now sadly. That's gone. But something else. You notice. In this passage. That the miracles. That these believers. Performed. The early church.

[23:07] The disciples. These miracles. That they performed. That they had. They made. An impression. On those. That were round about. We are told.

That the church. Had. A powerful testimony. In the area. And especially. A powerful testimony. Among.

The unsaved Jews. We could have that. Where the church. The body of believers.

Where we have. A powerful. Testimony. Among. The people round about. You know it says that. It was among. Among. The Jews.

The unsaved Jews. What about. The unsaved. Church people.

[24 : 05] Round about us. Who don't go out. To church. What about. The religious people. Around us.

Who don't go. To a place of worship. That. That. The church. Of. God's people. The body of God's people.

Could have. A powerful. Testimony. To those folk. That maybe once. Were church goers. Maybe very religious.

In a sense. But have nothing. That we could be. A powerful witness. To them. That. Is what happened. On this. With the early church.

After. The day of Pentecost. But not only. Were they making. A good impression. They had a tremendous. Influence. Upon.

[25 : 02] The people. Of the area. Around them. This. I. This sense of fear. This holy awe. It brought a restraint. It brought.

A realization. God. Is at work. It brought. A respect. A reason. Why. Why was there this.

At this particular time. Why was there this sense of fear. We are told. Upon every soul. First of all. An order.

That the young church. The young believers. Would develop. That they would grow. In grace. That they would grow.

In the knowledge of God. Come to know him better. That they would become. More Christ like. But also. A second thing. In order.

[26 : 01] That unbelievers. Would be converted. That's why. What's the reason. For this sense of fear. That God's church.

Would be blessed. And that sinners. Would be. Converted. I wonder. Do we have that vision.

Do we have that. Ideas. In the mind. God is able. To do this. For us. A sense. Of fear. Fear. But then.

The third thing. I want us to notice. There was a sense. Of favor. Having favor. With all the people. Now.

John Calvin. As some of you know. Was a famous commentator. A famous minister. And he. Had this. This. Expression. This.

[26 : 57] Is the fruit. Of a blameless. Life. Having fear. On all the people. The believers.

The church. They found favor. Among. The strangers. The people. As a whole. Thought well. Of the disciples.

They saw the way. The disciples. Of the early church. Conducted themselves. And. If you want to look at it. Like this. They were.

Agreeable. The outside world. The stranger. Was agreeable. To the way. The early church. Lived. It seems. That what they were doing.

What the early church. Was doing. Was being approved. By the stranger. See. It's so easy. For the opposite. For people.

[27 : 56] To point the finger. At the church. What the church. Does. Or what the church. Didn't do. What believers do. Or what believers. Don't do.

But we are told. That as a result. Of this. Having favor. Among all the people. Many were converted. And brought.

Into the kingdom. God's spirit. Was at work. For then. It's not just the fruit. Of a blameless life. Surely.

It is the fruit. Of a blessed life. Their. Nearness. To God. Their. You could say. Filling of the Holy Spirit.

It made them. The church. The early believers. It made them. Fit. Channels. Through which. The blessing.

[28 : 51] Of the Lord. God. Could reach out. To others. Fit channels. Clean channels. Channels. Through which.

God's blessing. Would flow. Now. There are three things. That I want us to notice. Just very quickly. About that. You see. There was a unity.

Within this church. They worshiped together. They went about together. They witnessed together. together. And you see. You know. The different ways. In which. I believe. Old and young. Met together. The preaching. And the teaching. Of God's word. Was a blessing. To them. And to others. The praying together. Would have been a blessing.

Praising together. Would have been a great. Time of blessing. Sitting at the Lord's table.

Participating of the Lord's supper. Would be. Would have been a blessed.

[29 : 46] Time for them. These were the means. Ordained by God. To strengthen. The Lord's people.

In their relationship. With God. But also. In their relationship. With one another. Preaching. Praying. Praising. Sitting.

Participating. At the Lord's table. The unity of the church. But then also. Notice. The unction. Of the church. They worshipped. And witnessed. They preached.

They did all. That they were doing. In the power. Of the Holy Spirit. And the third thing. To notice. Is this. The ungodly.

The unbeliever. They. Were taking. Notice. The last thing. That I want us. To notice. A sense of fear. A sense of fellowship.

[30 : 43] A sense of fear. A sense of fever. Fourthly then. The signs. Of. Fruitfulness.

And you can imagine. This must have been. A very. Exciting. Time. For the church. To see. The fruit.

That was being. Produced. And in these. Last few verses. You see. Three main things. First of all. You see.

The appeal. That the church. Had. To the areas. Around them. You see. Also. The activities. That the church.

Had. With themselves. Among themselves. And also. You see. The addition. To the church. The Lord. Added.

[31 : 38] To their number. Day by day. Now. We know. That at the beginning. Before the day of Pentecost. You remember. When they met. In the upper room.

There were. Probably. A hundred. And twenty. Believers. In chapter one. Verse fifteen. We are told. We are told. That the company of persons.

Was. In all. About a hundred and twenty. A hundred and twenty. Believers. Chapter two. Verse forty. One. There were added that day. About three.

Thousand. Souls. Who was doing. The addition. Who was doing. The adding. The Lord. The Lord. Was doing this. The one. Who is the king. And head of his church. The one. Who said. I will. Build my church.

[32 : 33] And the gates. Of hell. Will not. Prevail against it. And through the preaching. Of God's word. And through the witness.

Of God's people. Through the worship. That God's people. Had. Many. Were being added. To the church. Now just think of.

Two statements. I'm going to make. Not adding. Them. Without saving them. Not adding them. Without saving them. And not.

Saving them. Without adding them. Who was doing. The adding. The Lord. Then also. Who was being added.

Those who were being saved. Different. Different people. Religious people. People who. We would have thought.

[33 : 27] Were far away from the Lord. Maybe some people. Who were right down. In the very gutter. You know. On that day. I think of this.

There may have been people. Sleeping rough. On that day. On that day. When the power of God's spirit.

Was poured out. And. It wasn't that they just happened. To be there. They were there. And. They were blessed. Those who were being saved. You hang on to that.

Different. Kinds. Of people. When. Was this happening? The Lord added to the number. Day. By day. Where?

Where were they being added? We are told. That the place. Where people had gathered. Together. In Jerusalem. A particular time.

[34 : 27] You could say. Of following. A tradition. But they were there. Together. Together. It often happens.

Or it often happened. At a communion time. The service. On a Sunday evening. Lots of people would gather.

They would hear the gospel. It was a time. That was set aside. That God's people. Would have communion. One with the other. And with their Lord.

Especially. But also. It was a time. When many as a soul. Was converted. And we are told. That these people.

They were probably there. To keep. The feast. Of Pentecost. They were there. Because of the feast. Because of the time.

[35 : 23] Because of Pentecost. The folk that come. To church. Or used to come. Because. It was a communion time. And many. Were being blessed. But then.

Something else to notice. The place. Where the power. Of God. The Holy Spirit. Was at work. That. Is important. It was only.

The power. Of the Holy Spirit. That could have made. These additions. Only his power. Additions. Lots of them.

But no. Subtractions. At that stage. We are told. Of multiplication.

They were being multiplied. In one day. The number. Multiplied. Twenty. Five. Times. In one day.

[36 : 22] That. Was the work. The Lord. Was adding. To the church. Daily. Such as should be saved.

What do we learn. From that. Well. Surely. The most obvious. The Lord. Is the same. Yesterday. Today. And forever.

The same. God. With the same. Power. With the same. Word. Is able.

To bring. Blessing. Into our. Situation. Into your. Situation. The same. God. The same.

Power. Surely. What comes from that. Is this. You pray. To that end. And that's why. I would encourage you.

[37 : 19] To be together. In the place of prayer. Or to. Or as you meet. Maybe. The ones. Or the twos. Or whatever. In prayer. That this. Be your prayer. That God's.

Spirit. Would bless. His word. But something else. And although it is not brought out. In this chapter. This was a great time.

Of blessing. Yes. It was. But it wasn't. It wasn't. Always. Easy. It wasn't. It wasn't. Always. Easy. There were times.

Of difficulty. Or times. Of problems. There were times. Of persecution. It's not. Always. Going to be easy. And there is one thing.

To remember. That when God. Is at work. And when God. Is blessing his people. And blessing his church. Then the devil.

[38 : 16] Is not far away. To disrupt. To destroy. To take away the seed. Of God's word. And therefore.

We are to be. Always. On our guard. We are to watch. We are to pray. Always. Always. On your guard. And surely.

Something else. That we have to remember. When we think of this. Particular passage. Oh yes. It was something. That happened. So long ago. But remember. Down through the years.

There have been areas. In different countries. In different lands. And they have known. Times of reviving. Times of blessing.

We. Could see that again. The Lord. Adding to his church. Day by day. Such.

[39 : 16] As were being saved. May God bless. These thoughts to us. We're going to conclude.