

Acts 2:40-47 The Practice of the Church (James P. Butler)

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Preacher: Jim Butler

[0 : 00] Father in heaven, we thank you very much for this time to gather together to worship you! We know that you are the Most High, that you are from everlasting to everlasting,! That you are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray even now that the Spirit would guide us as we consider Holy Scripture.

We ask that you would edify and encourage and build us up in our most holy faith. We pray that if there are any here that are dead in their trespasses and sins, that self-same Spirit would affectionately call them out of darkness and the marvelous light to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. For as the prophet says, as the apostle reminds us in this passage, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We pray that for our meeting here, we pray that for other churches in this community throughout this country and to the uttermost parts of the earth, that you would send forth your glorious gospel, conquering and to conquer. And may men, women, boys and girls from every tribe, tongue, people and nation come to the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit. Forgive us now for all of our sins and cleanse us in that precious blood of the Lamb. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, in Acts chapter 2, you see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied by the prophet Joel in the book of Joel chapter 2. And the first manifestation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is them speaking in tongues. And of course, people that were watching this thought that the apostles and that the people that were speaking in other languages were drunk.

And Peter says, these aren't drunk, as you suppose. And then he highlights that this was what was spoken in the prophet Joel. So if you look at Acts 2 at verse 17 or verse 16, he says, but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last day, says God, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions.

Your old men shall dream dreams. And on my men servants and on my maid servants, I will pour out my spirit in those days and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Blessed words from the prophet reiterated by the apostle on this occasion of the day of Pentecost. So then as the sermon moves on, Peter identifies the Lord who sinners are supposed to call upon such that they may be saved. Again, note the connection in verse 21, it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. So he sets forth the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ as that object of faith. When sinners believe on him, they receive the forgiveness of sins and they receive a righteousness imputed to them and that by faith alone. And so what

Peter then does is he describes or highlights the true humanity of our Lord Jesus in verse 22. He is the divine son. John 1 tells us in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

[3 : 11] And then in John 1 14, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. The glory of the Christian message, the glory of the Christian faith or religion is that God, the son assumed our humanity did what we couldn't do in terms of fulfilling and obeying the law and then died on a cross as a sacrifice for us men and for our salvation. So Peter underscores the true humanity of Jesus in verse 22. He then highlights the crucifixion of our Lord in verse 23. There he functioned as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He then moves on to the resurrection of Christ in verses 24 to 32 and then the ascension and current session of Christ in verses 33 to 36. And the sermon crescendos or ends on the high note of

Peter rebuking all the house of Israel. Notice in verse 36, therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. Peter understood Jesus didn't come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And so it was imperative that Peter remind them or tell them of their guilt before a thrice holy God and that they needed to come to this one for salvation.

It has its blessed effect by the power of the Spirit according to verse 37. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Notice how they answer. Go out and clean up your act. Go out and get better. Go out and do more moral reform. Go out and be faithful. No, that's not it. The message is simple. Peter says to them, according to verse 38, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. And I need to remind us the remission of sins in this particular context is one of the biggest sins ever perpetrated by mankind. They had crucified the Lord of glory. Again, verse 36, therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. That is an enormous sin. Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled. He only ever went about doing good. He was the only perfect man that ever lived. And they crucified him. They destroyed him. They cried out, away with him, away with him, crucify him, and had Pontius Pilate nail him to a cross. And yet Peter is able to say, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ for the remission or forgiveness of sins. He is preaching to Jerusalem sinners. He is preaching to God-hating wretches. He is preaching forgiveness through the very Christ that they themselves had crucified. That's the glory of the gospel. The gospel isn't just good advice, clean up your act, come to God, and everything will be hunky-dory. No, the gospel is good news that in Jesus Christ, there is full, free forgiveness. That in Jesus Christ, there is a righteousness by which we can enter into the very presence of God. It's by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone.

If you have not given attention to this message, if you have not looked to this particular one and lived, then I encourage you to do so. If Jerusalem sinners could find mercy from the Lord Jesus Christ, Dryden sinners can, B.C. sinners can, old sinners can, young sinners can, all shapes and sizes of sinners. In fact, the apostle Paul says, this is a faithful saying. It's worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And then Paul says, of whom I am chief.

[6 : 52] Sometimes people have this kind of an idea that I'm too bad and Jesus won't accept me. That's like saying, I'm too hungry, so I'm not going to eat a sandwich. It's because you're so bad that you come to the Lord Jesus with that blessed promise of our Lord that all that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me, I will not cast out. In other words, you come in faith by the grace of God, and you get blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So Peter exhorts them. He tells them, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.

So in other words, what Peter is setting forth by way of a paradigm or example is that the message of the church is primarily Christ and him crucified, and the message of the church needs to go out all over the place because it's a message for children. It's a message for all who are afar off. It is a message for as many as the Lord our God will call. So that ought to be the function and the practice and the primary emphasis of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church in Dryden is to make much of Christ and him crucified. Paul says, I determined to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified.

Paul wasn't concerned at the Areopagus or at Mars Hill in Acts chapter 17 to go toe-to-toe with the Epicureans and Stoics on some finer points of philosophy out there. He preached the same message.

[8 : 32] Repent. Come to the Lord Jesus. Believe on him and you will have everlasting life. Now the gospel has been preached and then we see the response and what happens in the early church.

So in verses 40 to 47, I want to look at two things. First, the power of the gospel in verses 40 and 41, and then secondly, the practice of the church in verses 42 to 47. You usually go till 12. Is that correct? I don't want to wear out my welcome and never get invited back. So notice that the power

of the gospel in verses 40 and 41, they received the word. Verse 40, and with many other words, he testified and exhorted them saying, be safe from this perverse generation. Be safe from this perverse generation. Again, it's not a message of moral reform. It's not a message of just stop doing these things, clean yourself up, and then you'll be ready to go into the presence of our Lord. I thought about this recently. I had a dental appointment and you know what I've never done is eating Oreo cookies and then gone to the dentist. I always try to clean up my teeth. I don't want them to heave. I don't want them to retch. I don't want them to chastise me further as dentists are want to do, but I always clean up my teeth before I go see the dentist. Sinners think that at times. I got to clean up my act before I go to Jesus. I got to get myself right before he'll take me. Well, Paul says elsewhere, if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. This is Christ's purpose.

This is Christ's function. This is Christ as mediator, prophet, priest, and king. We might say it's his job. He fixes. He cleanses. He straightens you out. He puts you on the proper path. He fills you with the spirit after he washes you clean in his own blood. So again, Peter is not preaching to these people. Just stop being horrible people and God will accept you. Unfortunately, that's a message taught in some churches today. Stop being horrible people and God will look favorably upon you. Again, that's good advice. That's not good news. And he says, be saved from this perverse generation. Then note verse 41, then those who gladly received his word were baptized. And that day, about 3,000 souls were added to them. There's the power of the gospel. There it is blessed by God.

[10:51] The Holy Spirit affectionately calls sinners unto himself such that they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The glad reception of the word is seen by faith. Notice if you drop down to verse 44, it says, now all who believed were together and had all things in common. All who believed were together.

What does it look like to receive the word? It looks like believing that word. It looks like trusting in that living word, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to appropriate it with the very hand that God gave you and receive it unto yourself. To receive and rest upon our Lord Jesus Christ. So they receive the word and it also looks like repentance. Verse 38, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for their mission of sins. Oftentimes those terms are used synonymously in the book of Acts. Believers repent and repenters believe. They're used synonymously. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means I have a change of mind about the sins that I no longer want to have truck with.

And so these things are two sides of the same coin. But as well, notice they obey. Verse 41, then those who gladly received his word were baptized. They were baptized. They obeyed the word of Christ. In fact, if you look at the pattern here in Acts chapter 2, it follows very specifically the great commission given by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 28. What does Jesus say? He said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And then he says, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. So what is going on in Acts 2?

Obedience to the master. The master says, make disciples. How does he mean that? Preach the gospel. Call sinners to believe on me. Then the master says, after those disciples are made, you baptize those disciples. And then they enter into local churches to be taught all the things that Christ has commanded. This is precisely what is happening all throughout the book of Acts. They are following what the master commanded and the simplicity of it ought to amaze us. It's just simple, ordinary people doing glorious and extraordinary things by the power of the Holy Spirit. So they receive the word.

And then notice in 41b, the growth of the church. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. And that day, about 3,000 souls were added to them. It was added by God. The 3,000 souls were added by God, the power of God, the sovereignty of God, the effectual call of God. Notice in 47b, and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. We don't look at verse 41 and conclude, well, it was all these, you know, noble sinners that added themselves to the life of the church. It was the power and the persuasive ability of the apostles that added, no, no, no, it was God. It was God in accordance with the prophecies in Joel chapter 2. In these last days, the Spirit will come, and the Spirit will bless, and the Spirit will add to the church, and the Spirit will increase the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in this lower world. It is a blessed showing forth of them

taking seriously the commission entrusted to them by the Lord Jesus Christ. So again, Peter preaches, but it's God who adds. It's God who affectionately calls. It's God who grants the graces of faith and repentance. So then note the practice of the church.

[14:29] That was probably the longest introduction I've ever given. Verses 42 to 47. I want to look at the practice described, verses 42 to 47a, and then the power involved. That won't take long. The power involved is God's. Just spoiler alert, the power of God is what made the church the church. The power of God is what made this church the church. I mean, if you look back five years ago, it seems like forever ago. A lot has happened with not a ton of people, but the blood-bought children of God are in Dryden, and they've been bound together now for the purposes of glorifying God each and every Lord's Day, of fellowshiping one with another, and getting that great privilege to hold forth the word of truth to needy sinners. God in his providence did this. Christ builds his church. So let's look at the pattern described in verses 42 to 47a. And I've got five points here, five things. First, the steadfastness of the church. Secondly, the practice of the church. Third, the effect upon the church. Fourth, the brotherly love of the church. And then fifth, the ongoing conduct of the church. But note first the steadfastness.

Verse 41, we read, then those who gladly received his word were baptized. So two parts of the Great Commission done. They were made disciples. They were baptized. Now the third part of the Great Commission is going to be done, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

So notice, that day, about 3,000 souls were added to them. Verse 42, and they continued steadfastly. If there's one thing that I have learned over 29 years in Chilliwack, and I'm sure Dr. Barcelos can testify in the couple of pastorates that he's had, and the various positions in terms of academics that he's had, it's perseverance over the long haul. It's steadfastness. I wish there were secret keys I could tell you, you know, little helps and little tips to make your church grow. It's steadfastness.

It's faithfulness. It's perseverance. It's tirelessly. Thanklessly. Earnestly. Diligently. Look at what the text says. They continued steadfastly. It wasn't a shot, you know, a flash in the pan. It wasn't a one-off. I think that Luke chooses his words carefully under the Spirit to underscore for us what churches today need to look like. There's some questions with reference to the book of Acts. For instance, the book, or chapter 2 starts off with the pouring of the Holy Spirit, and then people speaking in other languages. Charismatics and Pentecostals think that that's prescriptive for the church today. It prescribes what churches should look like. I don't think so.

I think it's descriptive, and that it was the ministry of the Spirit through the agency of the apostles to authenticate and affirm that what they were speaking was, in fact, God's Word. Now, when it comes to prescriptive, I think we're dealing with a prescriptive text. In other words, what is prescribed? It's not go out and pray for the gift of tongues, but it's be faithful and steadfast in your churches.

[18:11] Right? We all like the romantic. We all like the exciting. We all want to stand on a street corner and speak in tongues. Do we want to show up every Lord's Day? Do we want to, in your case, trudge through the snow and lots of it to get here on the Lord's Day? Yep. Amen, sister. Amen.

Amen. They continued steadfastly. The particular word here governs the following four datives, and it means to persist in something, to hold fast to, to continue in, to persevere in something.

If I could give any encouragement to these young officers in the church, be faithful, be persevering, be steadfast. People are going to come, and people are going to try to change directions with reference to the church. Hold fast. This isn't, you know, anybody's game. This is the Lord Christ having built his church, installing duly qualified officers to hold the line. That's your job. Just hold the line. Just do what he says. That's it. There's not much more than that. Do what the master commands.

Very simple. I don't know why it's not more commonly held. So the steadfastness of the church, as I said, it governs. This word used, steadfastly. Notice the practice. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. They had just seen the outpouring of the Holy Spirit resulting in the gift of tongues. What are they continuing in?

Scripture. Theology. Preaching. They had witnessed these things, but they wanted the truth taught by the apostles. They weren't seeking experience. They weren't seeking ecstasy. They weren't seeking entertainment. They were seeking the word of God, and they were doing so steadfastly to persist, to hold fast, to continue in, to persevere in something. You don't get the aroma from the

passage that if the apostles would have stood up and started to entertain them, that they would have received that favorably. They would have said, we want your doctrine. We don't even want you, but you're the vehicle by which the doctrine comes. I'm sure Peter was a great guy, and they would want him, but the emphasis is on the doctrine. How does Paul describe the church in 1 Timothy chapter 3? He calls it the house of God.

[20 : 54] When people come to your house, do they get to change the rules? Do people come to your house and say, you know, I think the refrigerator would look better in the living room. Oh, you sure? Go right ahead. It's the house of God. So guess who gets to make the rules in the house of God? It's the householder. And what's the primary emphasis as he goes on to describe the church? She's the pillar and the ground of the truth. Do you know, brethren, what you always will need? You will sometimes need more money. You will sometimes need, you know, better circumstances. You will sometimes need a whole host of things, but you know what you always need is the word of truth. Guess what's going to stabilize you in times of affliction? What comforts you in hardship? What puts wind in your sails when you need to get up off the floor and go to work? What is it that steadies the saints of Christ? It's the apostles' doctrine. It's their teaching. It's their instruction. It's the word of God correctly expounded and applied to the hearers. Calvin says, neither doth he name all manner of doctrine, but the doctrine of the apostles, that is, that which the Son of God had delivered by their hands. Therefore, listen to this, wheresoever the pure voice of the gospel doth sound, where men continue in the profession thereof, where they exercise themselves in hearing the same ordinarily that they may profit, without all doubt, there is the church. Amen, brother. Amen. Not where there's the best band or the best nursery.

When Pastor Barcellus and I started off a thousand years ago, we rented a fellowship hall at a Nazarene church for our meetings. And I used to work graveyard shift on Saturday night, so I would get off in the morning, and I was a deacon at that point, and I would go and get the nursery ready. Do you know what that meant? Spider patrol. Getting rid of all the spiders, because we didn't want our babies crawling with the spiders. We're kind like that. Right? That's what we're doing, what we're thinking, what we're about. I don't know where I was going with that. As I get older, I'm losing it. But with reference to the spider patrol, there you go. I have seen churches advertise, oh, we have the cleanest nursery.

We have all these things for your kids. I'm of the old school. Parents are to deal with their kids. The church teaches and preaches and equips the parents and the children as they sit and participate in corporate worship. But we don't sell churches and market churches based on all the extracurriculars.

We're the pillar and the ground of the truth. It's a full-time calling. That's the best of callings. That's what it's about. This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Do not deviate from the apostolic doctrine. Notice then, secondly, they continued steadfastly in fellowship. I would suggest the primary emphasis is likely on the charity scene in verse 45. They sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need. So they continued steadfastly in fellowship. I think fellowship gets, you know, broadly, generally defined. Two Christians go to a Canucks game. I don't even know who the Ontario team is.

I know nothing about hockey. Maple Leafs. All right. You go, two Christians go and they call it fellowship. I'm not suggesting that's wicked and that's going to end you in hell for defining it thus. But fellowship in the context of the church, it means to have each other's back. It means to be there for one another. It means to encourage in the gospel. It means to be the kinds of people that function together in the context of a church, not just on the Lord's Day, but every day, in a very Christ-centered way. It means to divest yourself of personal resources to help assist those who are less fortunate within the context of the church. As Calvin again says, mutual society and fellowship unto alms and unto other duties of brotherly fellowship. They continued steadfastly in that.

[25 : 18] It's a challenge, brethren. It's kind of described the church like the family. Sometimes people say, you know, in the church, oh, you don't always get along together. Does everybody always get along in their families? No. We butt heads. We cross paths. We get irritated. That doesn't dis-church or de-church the church. It just means you got to deal with each other the way that God says to. Fellowship is something that needs to be persevered in. Something that needs to be steadfast in our communion together.

He says, thirdly, they continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread. The close connection with preaching and prayer indicates that this was the Lord's Supper. They participated in the sacraments of the church. They baptized, according to verse 41, and they gave the Lord's Supper for the saints of Christ to remember in a particular way using physical symbols to demonstrate the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. They broke bread together to commune with one another and to commune with God Most High. And then notice they continued steadfastly in prayers. They continued steadfastly in prayers. You want to see a church that is properly functioning? It's going to be a church that is properly praying. You cannot bypass that. You don't get supernatural power from on high without fetching it. Lord God, bless, help, strengthen, fill us with your spirit, guide us with wisdom, strengthen us to persevere, strengthen us to do that which your word commands us to do. And again, this is steadfastly. This is continuing in it. This is perseveringly. This isn't one time back in, you know, 2008, our church had a prayer meeting together. No, this is something that is the backbone and life of the church of Jesus Christ. When Paul comes to exhort Timothy on first things, do you know what he says to Timothy? I want you to go out and have coffee with all the elderly ladies.

I want you to be the most gregarious fellow in all of Ephesus. I want you to be the most happy guy. I want you to tell jokes. I want you to be, first of all, I urge that prayer, supplications, intercessions, and givings of thanks be made for all men. In other words, Timothy, make it a priority in your life. Don't tack it on at the end. Well, I've got, you know, a minute and a half in the rest of my workday, so I think I'll pray. No, the church needs to be prayerful. God willing, you had a prayer meeting, and God willing, all of you see the value, the import of what at times can appear to be boring and ordinary and not extraordinary. But again, it's faithfulness to the Christ who is building his church and has called us to be steadfast, in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. And then notice in terms of the effect upon the church in verse 43, then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

The presence of God promotes the fear of God. The Bible speaks of two types of fear. There's what's called a filial fear. That means a son to the father we have respect for, and we revere our earthly fathers. Even if some of us didn't have great fathers, we know in principle we're supposed to honor and revere and esteem. That's a filial fear. Well, of course we're supposed to have that with God. The prophet Malachi, God upbraids them. You show all kinds of respect to your earthly governor. Where's my honor? Where's my fear? So that filial fear is what the church experienced. The other kind of fear is called servile or slavish. It's the fear of God just pounding us, cutting us off, and throwing us into hell, which is not appropriate for the blood-bought child of God.

[29 : 19] There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. If you've believed the gospel, if you've been forgiven of your sins, if you have the righteousness of Jesus Christ, why fear hell? We fear God with reverence, with respect. We honor him. We adore him. We worship him accordingly. But that's what happened in the early church. Again, brethren, you got to sort of think about possible exemptions to this. Church on Sunday isn't entertainment hour. Church on Sunday shouldn't just be frivolity and joke telling. Church on Sunday should be a place where the fear of God is. There ought to be that reverence. There ought to be that awe that we're standing in the presence of God, clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, having been forgiven. And it's a filial fear that's always mingled with joy. Serve the Lord with fear. Rejoice in trembling, Psalm 2. How do the disciples, after they see the empty tomb? It says they ran. They were exceedingly afraid and were joyful.

Those things are bedfellows, fear of God and joy in God. In fact, later in the book of Acts, in Acts chapter 9, it describes some of the churches this way. Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. Those aren't inconsistent. The fear of the Lord is where the comfort of the Holy Spirit is. The fear of the Lord is where true joy is found. So this fear comes upon the church.

Verse 43, then fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. The psalmist says God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be held in reverence by all those around him. And commentators understand it was the converted. It was the blood-bought. They experienced that filial fear of God, but probably some fear spilled over to even unbelievers.

They couldn't deny that a work had been done. They couldn't deny that the power of God had been displayed. They couldn't deny that. I mean, I'm sure there were those who denied such, but that fear was pervasive. And then notice in verses 44 and 45, the brotherly love of the church. Verse 45, now all who believed were together and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need. Their love was seen in togetherness. Their love was seen in togetherness.

I don't know how better to describe that, but verse 44, now all who believed were together. I know this is going to sound odd and wacky and zany, but the people of God actually like each other. They like each other's company. They like to eat together. They like to obviously worship together.

[32 : 10] They like to hang out together. They like to go to Maple Leafs games together. They want to be in each other's presence, and that's exactly what you've seen here. The ones who repented, verse 38, the ones who were baptized, verse 41, are here specifically called believers, those who believed, and they're together in that common confession of Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. As well, their love was seen in charitableness. Verse 45, they sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need.

This charity was not coerced by the state. Some try to find socialism or communism in this passage. That's a fool's errand. That's not what the text is teaching. This isn't state coerced. Roman Empire saw this group of people and said, okay, you must sell your stuff and give it to others. No, not at all. It's not even church mandated. In Acts chapter 5, the case of Ananias and Sapphira, we're told, didn't you have the right when that property was in your possession to do with it as you would? The scriptures are not invalidating the eighth commandment. The scriptures are highlighting the charitableness of the blood-bought, spirit-filled children of God one to another. As Matthew Poole says, Christ's gospel does not destroy the law, and the eighth commandment is still in force. There's no common fridge. There's no common community in terms of everybody just throw your clothes in that hamper, and we all just share together. No, but it demonstrates their charity one to another as persons had need. Their charity was a display of voluntary compassion. As one man has well said, what people do with their money testifies strongly to what they believe, and that is precisely what Luke outlines here. And then finally, in terms of this section, the ongoing conduct of the church in verses 46 and 47. Their public conduct, verse 46, so continuing daily with one accord, in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, probably common meals, not Lord's Supper, as our brother reminded us, as our pastor reminded us, that the supper is for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so when it says they continued daily with one accord in the temple, breaking bread from house to house, that's probably it. They ate together. Why? Because they liked each other. They wanted to be with each other. They enjoyed one another's company, and they had the common confession of Christ and Him crucified. So their private, their public conduct was the practice of daily unified worship in the temple, and their private conduct sharing meals together with gladness and simplicity of heart, or singleness of heart, or sincerity of heart.

They were bloodbots, and they conducted themselves as bloodbots. They continually praised God. Notice, breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with the people, with all the people. Continual praise to God. Again, Calvin says, the knowledge of God's love toward us and the hope of His protection do bring us this goodness with them, that we praise God with quiet minds whatsoever the world doth threaten. So whatever the circumstances, whatever the situation, whatever the outward external trials or afflictions, the church experiences, this is what she's supposed to be doing. But this is, again, I think it's, it describes what they did, but I think it as well is prescribing what we should do, what we should look like in the world today, and this favor with all the people. Again, I take it with some of the commentators, not just the believers, but unbelievers. They couldn't deny what they had seen.

They couldn't deny what was going on. Alexander says, the Jews collectively, no doubt with individual exceptions, favored them. This state of public feeling is remarkable and seems to be recorded on account of the unhappy and inexplicable change which afterwards took place. So initially, what he is saying is they looked upon them favorably.

[36 : 03] Didn't take long for that to go south, but nevertheless, initially that was the way it was. As yet, they enjoyed popular as well as divine favor. Poole says, the goodness, meekness, and patience of the apostles and the rest of the believers did wonderfully prevail to beget a good opinion

of them. We don't agree with them. We think they're off on some doctrinal things, but we can't deny that something is there. I think Luke is showing us that within the context of the church and the conduct expressed by the church, they weren't looked at as wingnuts.

They weren't looked at as renegades. They weren't looked at as usurpers. They weren't looked at as those who had to be shunned and denied. Again, you move through the book of Acts, you see the unbelieving Jews wanted to basically destroy Paul, destroy his message, destroy the church, all that sort of thing. But initially, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit comes, there is obvious power displayed by God, and they're seeing the fruits of this, and they're going, yeah, it's pretty good. It looks okay at this point. And as I said earlier, the power involved, recurring emphasis. Verse 41 tells us they were added. Verse 47 beat.

The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. The Lord added, and it was through the agency of the preaching of the apostle Peter.

All right? So we should preach the gospel. For since in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God. It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. So don't just sit here and say, well, you know, God is the sovereign one. God has elected. God has predestined. We know all that. We understand our Reformed theology. We'll just wait until they find us, and we'll wait till they come in, and we'll wait till they trip over our confession, and we'll wait till they say, yeah, I believe in the...preach the gospel.

[37 : 56] Always. Constantly. Earnestly. That is absolutely crucial. Proverbs 21, 31 tells us, the horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the Lord. Deliverance is of the Lord, but you've got to prepare the horse for the day of battle. You don't wander out into a battlefield with no horse and no armor and no weapon and say, well, I know the Lord's going to deliver me. No. No. I know God's going to keep me safe. I know that, but God has also said, you know, pray and keep your powder dry. Well, he didn't say that. Cromwell said that. Paul says as much in 1 Corinthians 3, 6. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Matthew Poole on this text says, not Peter's sermons, no, nor the miracles of fiery cloven tongues and the rushing mighty wind could have converted any, but that which was signified there. Specifically, the powerful operation of the Spirit of God in their hearts. We preach and trust that God blesses. We preach and trust that God blesses. We prepare the horse for the day of battle, knowing that deliverance is from Yahweh. We plant, we water, and we trust that it's God who gives the increase. But we need to water, we need to plant, we need to nurture, we need to encourage, we need to exhort, we need to call all men everywhere to repent and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Trusting the Spirit of God is able to overcome their hardness of heart, make them willing in the day of his power, and draw them savingly to his blessed Son.

That's the mission. That's the ministry. That's the function. So I just want to conclude by suggesting just a few things. The description of the church. You see it's proper practice in verse 42. Doctrine, fellowship, Lord's Supper, prayer. The presence of the fear of God. Again, that doesn't mean everybody looks miserable. I've preached in situations where, you know, and they always find the front row. It looks like they just chewed on a lemon. I don't think our religion promotes that.

I trust tonight, Pastor Barcellus is preaching on the Lord's Supper. Yeah, there's a moment where we reflect and we see that, yeah, I've got issues. I've got remaining sins. But I've got a great Savior. And if you're inclined to smile at that thought, you go right ahead. You go right ahead. Praise God most high, from whom all blessings come, chief among them, the salvation of my guilty, vile, helpless soul.

If that doesn't make you want to leap for joy and praise the Lord, I would want to give you a shake. This is a happy place. Yeah, the fear of God is pervasive. Yeah, we revere him. Yeah, we honor him.

[40 : 48] But when our children revere us and they honor us, we don't want them to do it in such a way that there's no joy in their hearts. There's no delight in their being in the presence of their parents. God is a good God. He's a gracious God. He's abundant in mercy. The apostle says, in him, in Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Do you realize there are riches of grace to be had in God to overcome the riches of sin that are in our hearts? There are riches of grace for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. If that doesn't make you smile, maybe you're not an external smiler, but internally you ought to be thinking, wow, praise God. You can say with John Newton, I'm a great sinner, but Christ is a great savior. That's the beauty of our religion. The togetherness and the charitableness of the

people of God, the gladness and singleness of heart of the people of God, the praising of God by the people of God. All these things are described here. But as you move through the New Testament epistles, you'll see that this is what the apostles emphasize. What does a New Testament church look like?

According to 1 Timothy 2, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, the latter letters in the New Testament canon, there's not a word about tongues. There's not a word about prophesying. There's not a word about those special revelatory gifts that demonstrate and authenticate the preaching of the word. It's on sound doctrine. It's on sacrament. It's on discipline. It's on fellowship. It's on the things that you're seeing described here. And if you're listening and you move through the rest of the New Testament, you'll say, this is not only described, but it's prescribed. This is what God calls us to be as churches in the 21st century, way out of the way in Dryden, Northern Ontario, way out of the way in Chilliwack, British Columbia. It's always amazed me ever since I've been there. You get to the city of Vancouver and everybody thinks that anybody who lives in Chilliwack is a dairy farmer. No, we're not all dairy farmers. So in the mind of the Vancouverites, Chilliwackians are a bit hillbilly, a little bit redneck, which is fine. It doesn't bother me. But God in his infinite wisdom and in his providence has groups like yours scattered throughout the globe. You know what they're supposed to be doing? They're supposed to be doing what this group did. Don't change it up. Don't get innovative. I think one of the biggest challenges for pastors and churches is to want to be innovative.

It's to be creative. God doesn't want your innovation. God doesn't want your creation. God wants your obedience. It's very clear. You can innovate in your living room. Don't innovate in God's. You can create in your garage. And some of you probably do. At least I know one of them does very effectively and very well. But not in the house of God. God says, do what I say, which is perfectly appropriate and reasonable as creatures redeemed by sovereign grace.

[43 : 57] The practice of the church. I like Belgic Confession. Dan hinted at it. Belgic Confession 29. So the church here, if you're new or you're visiting, is a church that subscribes to the second London Confession of Faith of 1677 slash 89. It was written in 1677 and then it was formally ratified because there were some political changes in 1689. More often than not, you'll hear it referred to as the 1689 Confession. A little backstory about that confession. They copied other confessions, which was perfectly fine at that time. They copied a Presbyterian document and what was called the Congregationalist or an Independent Document. And so they went as far as they could with those brothers to show their solidarity with those brothers. Changed a couple of places where it better reflected Baptist church life and polity and understanding of baptism. But in that time frame, there were a lot of confessions written. People of God confessed their faith. The people of God were clear on what they believed the Bible to teach. In the Dutch Reformed churches, they have what's called the three forms of unity. It's the Heidelberg Catechism, it's the Belgic Confession, and it's the Canons of Dort. In my study, limited as it may be, I have found that Belgic Confession number 29 is a great description of the marks of the church. The church engages in the pure preaching of the gospel.

It makes use of the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It practices church discipline for correcting faults. In short, it governs itself according to the pure word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and holding Jesus Christ as the only head. By these marks, one can be assured of recognizing the true church. Can churches do other things? Yeah, we've witnessed that. God doesn't, you know, open up, you know, earth and send renegade churches into hell. They can do other things. They must do these things. These are non-negotiable. If you have these three things, these three marks, you've got a church. And that is the challenge to be faithful in it. And then I want to just say something about the ordinariness of the church. It's ordinary, isn't it? You're probably, as ordinary people would, you know, getting ready to eat. I would never say, you horrible sinners. Listen to me. No, I'm ready to eat too.

It's an ordinary. There's an ordinariness about the church that I think at times challenges people because we want extraordinary. We want the razzmatazz. We want the bells and the whistles. We want the choirs. We want the incense. We want all these. It's ordinary. The preaching of God's word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline. These are ordinary things with extraordinary blessing and benefit effects by the power of the Holy Spirit. It works through ordinary things. It's a beautiful arrangement. So I would suggest steadfastness in your appreciation for the ordinary things. God blesses through the ordinary. And then I want to end by

the entrance into the church. It's not through that door. I mean, I guess physically it is. The church is the people of God. You can meet out in the parking lot. You could be under a tree. You could be out in a tundra, should you so desire, and meet as the people of God. How does one become the people of God?

Peter's sermon. Repent. Believe. And let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. That's the entrance into the people of God. It's by grace looking to our Lord Jesus Christ who uses an analogy drawn from the book of Numbers. Everybody gets to, you know, Numbers and they wonder, wow, some hardcore things going on here. There's some long genealogies going on here.

[48 : 18] There's some long censuses going on here. You know what else is going on in Numbers? The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Numbers chapter 21, the children of Israel were grumbling and whining and complaining against the Most High. So what does God do? He sends fiery serpents to bite them.

And of course, it hurts. And of course, they're on their way unto death. What was the remedy? Moses, I want you to build a brazen serpent. I want you to lift it up into the wilderness, and I want those bitten to look and live.

Notice he doesn't say, drag yourself over to the base of the pole and kiss it. He doesn't say, suck the venom out of your affected wound and then look. No, no, it's look and live.

Jesus in John 3 said, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up. It's a look and live. It's not a do and try. It's a look and live. If you have not looked and lived, then I encourage you to look and live. Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. For the promise is to you. It's to your children. It's to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call. Jerusalem sinners were told to look and live. Certainly Dryden sinners can be told to look and live. Well, let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this description and prescription for the church. We ask that you would bless the Trinity Reformed Baptist Church of Dryden, Ontario, that they would be steadfast, they would be persevering, that they would continue in these things for the glory of God, for the good of their own souls, and again, for the salvation of any and all who would come amongst them to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank you for this day. We thank you for your blessings. We thank you for that chief blessing, the sending of the son of your love into this world, sinners to save. We rejoice in your gospel. We rejoice in your mercy.

[50 : 24] We rejoice in that infinite grace, those, the riches of grace that you have for needy sinners, and we bless you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.