

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 12

I. Exposition of Chapter Two - (Continued).

A. The People's Response and Growth of the Church – (Verses 41-47).

1. Verses 44-45 – “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.”

- a. This is one of the classic Scriptures used by some socialists and communists in an attempt to say that their ideologies are Biblical.
- b. There are several reasons why this is NOT an example of socialism or communism.
 - 1) Unlike socialism and communism, this passage is NOT referring to a political system.
 - 2) Unlike socialism and communism, this passage shows that the Christians shared with each other VOLUNTARILY. There was no coercion or force by the government. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see the church practice a forcing of wealth redistribution with a threat of some kind of penalty if not obeyed.
 - 3) Unlike socialism and communism there was no elimination of the ownership of private property. The Christians were generous, but they did not totally do away with private ownership of property. Christians sold their land and houses in order to provide for the needy (**Acts 4:34, 37**), yet, as **Acts 5:4** makes clear, it was still up to the owners as to what to do with the assets. Ananias and Sapphira got into trouble for lying to God, not for withholding any money. Private ownership is also seen in that churches sometimes met in private homes (**Acts 16:15**).

“This was not communism in the modern sense, or even communal living. It was just Christians caring and sharing with love. They all realized the importance of becoming established in the apostles’ teaching. Some of those visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost soon ran out of money, so those who were able simply sold what they could to make it possible for them to stay. Later Peter made it clear that no one was under any compulsion to sell anything or give anything (Acts 5:4; cf. 2 Cor. 9:7).”¹

- c. It’s also important to note that there is no other mention of this level of sharing happening in the church after chapter five of Acts. This indicates that this practice was temporary.

2. Verse 46 – “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”

- a. “...continuing daily...” – These believers were not only committed to Jesus Christ, they were committed to each other. Meeting together once or twice a week was not enough for them.
- b. “...with one accord...” – This has the idea of “with one mind” and “with one passion.”² (cf. **1:14; 2:1; 4:24; 5:12**).
- c. “...in the temple...” – It seems these Jewish Christians held onto their Jewish custom of gathering in the temple as long as they could. Dr. Robert Utley states:

“They probably met in ‘Solomon’s portico’ (cf 3:11; 5:12). Jesus taught there (cf. John 10:23). Solomon’s Portico or porch was a covered colonnade along the east side of the outer court of the Gentiles in Herod’s Temple... Rabbis taught here. People regularly gathered here to hear teaching.

Notice the early church attended the temple and also probably the local synagogue until the rabbis instituted a curse formula (about A.D. 70), which forced synagogue members to curse Jesus. This caused the break between the church and Judaism. The early believers maintained their weekly worship, but met on Sunday to commemorate Jesus’ resurrection.”³

- d. “...and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” – Not only did they gather together in the public setting of the temple, which probably served as an opportunity for evangelism, but they also met in the more intimate setting of the home. The word “simplicity” means, “sincerity” and “purity of intention.”⁴

“In the ancient Near East, eating together reflected a common commitment to one another and deep fellowship. A meal shared together was both a symbol and a seal of friendship.”⁵

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 85.

²Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977)

³Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 45.

⁴Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

⁵Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 91.

3. Verse 47 – **“Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”**

a. **“Praising God”** was an important ingredient to their assembling together.

“One of the subthemes of Acts is joy, because a victorious church is a joyful one. This is seen in verses 46–47 and numerous other times (5:41; 8:8, 39; 11:23; 12:14; 13:48, 52; 14:17; 15:3, 31; 16:34; 21:17).”⁶

b. The word **“favor”** means, **“acceptance”** and **“kindness granted”**.⁷ It seems apparent that there was something about these believers which was very attractive to the Jews in general.

Stanley Horton states:

“The result was that they found favor (were well liked and enjoyed good relations) with the whole of the people of Jerusalem (cf. 4:33; 5:13). Others saw their unity, their devotion to God, their daily worship in the temple, and their love for one another.”⁸

c. **“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”** – This is not meant to exclude the idea that the believers were doing their part as well. Their witness was apparent through their worship, their joy, their love for one another and their sharing of the Gospel.

Paul said, **“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.”** I Corinthians 3:6.

II. Exposition of Chapter Three.

A. **The Healing of the Lame Man at the Gate Beautiful (Verses 1-10).** Luke now gives an example of one of the many signs and wonders that were done by the Apostles (cf. 2:43).

1. **Verses 1 – “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.”** – The reference to the **“hour of prayer”** and it being the **“ninth hour” (3:00 p.m.)** reveals that the Apostles had not rejected their Jewish roots. There were certain hours of prayer where the priests also offered sacrifices and burned incense in the Temple.⁹

2. **Verse 2 – “And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms from those who entered the temple.”**

a. This was a grown man who had been at that gate EVERY DAY for a period of years, no doubt. Later we find out that he was over 40 years old (4:22). People knew him, or certainly knew of him, which makes this miracle even more impactful in terms of catching people’s attention.

b. **“...the gate...called Beautiful”** – Dr. Craig Keener gives us insight about this gate:

“The ‘Beautiful Gate’ was...the main and largest gate, made of the most expensive bronze...Situated above fifteen steps, beyond which neither women nor the maimed and unclean could pass, it may have hosted beggars on its steps who could appeal to those going to the Court of Israel.”¹⁰

c. **“...to ask alms from those who entered the temple.”** – The word **“alms”** means **“pity”** or **“mercy”**. Keener also points out the following:

“Begging alms at public places was common in antiquity, although other peoples did not stress charity as the Jewish people did...the lame or blind would not have to hungry, especially if they were near the temple.”¹¹

3. **Verses 3-6** – The lame man asked alms of Peter and John and Peter, no doubt being inspired by the Holy Spirit said; **“Look at us.”** (verse 4). The man did just that **“expecting to receive something from them.”** (verse 5). Again, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, Peter said:

“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” (verse 6).

4. **Verses 7-10 – The lame man receives his healing.** This probably would have been the **“gifts of healings”** in operation which requires no faith on the part of the one needing healing. (cf. I Corinthians 12:9, 11).

“As a positive command, Peter then said, ‘In the name [including the authority] of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, [rise up and] walk’ At the same time Peter put his own faith into action by taking hold of the man’s right hand and lifting him up. Immediately the man’s feet and ankle bones received strength (and the shrunken, useless muscles were made firm).”¹²

⁶Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 360.

⁷Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*.

⁸Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 86.

⁹Ibid., 88.

¹⁰Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 331.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Horton, 89.