

Acts 2:41-47

- Back to be basics – the church of Christ -

Author: Evert Jan Hempenius

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Introduction

- ❖ Is there a future for the church? Yes! Back to the basics:
 - The first Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).
 - "Looking back over these marks of the first Spirit-filled community, it is evident that they all concerned the church's relationships.
 - First, they were related to the apostles (in submission). They were eager to receive the apostles' instruction. A Spirit-filled church is an apostolic church, a New Testament church, anxious to believe and obey what Jesus and his apostles taught.
 - Secondly, they were related to each other (in love). They persevered in the fellowship, supporting each other and relieving the needs of the poor. A Spirit-filled church is a loving, caring, sharing church.
 - Thirdly, they were related to God (in worship). They worshipped him in the temple and in the home, in the Lord's Supper and in the prayers, with joy and with reverence. A Spirit-filled church is a worshipping church.
 - Fourthly, they were related to the world (in outreach). They were engaged in continuous evangelism. No self-centred, self-contained church (absorbed in its own parochial affairs) can claim to be filled with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. So a Spirit-filled church is a missionary church."¹
 - The twenty-first-century church and Christians devote themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1994, p. 87).

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Acts of the Apostles. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

- ❖ The context of the book of Acts 1:1-5:
 - “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, **after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen**. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days **and spoke about the kingdom of God**. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**”
- ❖ And Acts 1:6-8:

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”		
<i>The question of the disciples</i>	<i>The answer of the Lord</i>	<i>Acts</i>
“at this time?”	“It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”	
“are you going to restore”?	“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;”	Acts 2:1-13
“the kingdom to Israel?”	“and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”	Acts 2:14-8:3 (Acts 2:41-47) Acts 8:4-40 Acts 9:1-28:31

- ❖ Acts 2:41-47 is the third part of Acts 2:
 - Acts 2:1-13: The coming of the Spirit.

- Acts 2:14-41: The sermon of the apostle Paul and the baptism of three thousand. He connected the coming of the Spirit with the Lordship of Jesus Christ and his salvation.
- Acts 2:42-47: The New Testament Christian community.
- ❖ Acts 2:41-47 also summarises some of the themes which Luke elaborated in the following chapters:
 - Apostles' teaching: Acts 4:42; 6:1-6
 - Miracles (verse 43): Acts 3:1-10 and 5:12-16.
 - Fellowship (verse 42, 43, 44): Acts 4:32-37 and 5:1-11.
 - The growth of the Christian Community (verse 41, 47): Acts 4:4).

Form and structure

- ❖ Acts 2:41-47:

<i>The saving work of the Lord:</i>	
<i>Summary 1:</i> <i>(verse 41)</i>	Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added² to their number that day.
<i>The new community of Christ (verse 42-47)</i>	
<i>Verse 42-47a</i>	They devoted themselves to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the apostles' teaching and 2. to the fellowship, 3. to the breaking of bread and 4. to prayer.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The apostles' teaching: 2. The fellowship: 3. The breaking of the bread: 	<p>Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.</p> <p>All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.</p> <p>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,</p>

² "were added" (verse 41) and the "Lord added" (verse 47)

4. The prayer:	praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.
The saving work of the Lord:	
Summary 2: (verse 47b)	And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Verse 42

- ❖ Devoted = “προσκατερῶ”: 2. **to persist in something.**
 - a. *busy oneself with, be busily engaged in, be devoted to.*
 - b. *hold fast to, continue in, persevere in something.*³
 - Newman & Nida comment: The translation of the Greek term *proskarterountes* (TEV *they spent their time in*) is by no means easy, especially when it is necessary to relate this to the events which follow. In some languages one may use ‘they gave themselves to,’ ‘they were eager for,’ or ‘they were very desirous of.’⁴
- ❖ Teaching = “διδασχῆ”: 2. **the content of teaching, teaching.**⁵
- ❖ Fellowship = “κοινωνία”:
 - 1. **close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship, a harmonious unity.**⁶
 - 2. **attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism.**⁷
- ❖ “Breaking of the bread” = “κλάσις τοῦ ἄρτου”:
 - 1. **Breaking of the bread** (Lk 24:35).
 - 2. **cultic action of breaking bread, breaking of bread (Ac 2:42).** Whether there is a reference to the Lord’s Supper cannot be determined with certainty.⁸

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 881).

⁴ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 63).

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 241).

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 552).

⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 553).

- Newman & Nida comment: “*Sharing in the fellowship meals* (in Greek literally ‘in the breaking of bread’) represents a Greek phrase which occurs only here and in Luke 24:35. It is generally agreed that these *fellowship meals were common meals* shared in by the early Christian community, and followed by the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.” “A literal translation of ‘breaking bread’ is rarely satisfactory, especially in areas where bread is not broken, but cut or divided. The implication of this expression is that ‘they ate together as believers.’ Obviously, there is more than merely having one’s meals with one another. This eating together was an aspect of their common loyalty to Jesus Christ. In view of the fact that the *agapē* (the fellowship meal) did involve the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, it would be entirely appropriate to have a marginal note to explain the precise nature of these meals, which were so characteristic of the believing community.⁹ (Compare 1 Cor 11:20-22; 33, 34.)

Verse 43

- ❖ Awe = “**φόβος**”: 2.b. *reverence, respect*. α. toward God. β. toward humans, *respect* that is due officials.¹⁰ They were impressed by the wonders and miracles.

Exposition

Verse 41

- ❖ Verse 41 concludes the previous passages and it is the introduction to what follows. And is truly amazing that three thousand people accepted the message, the sermon of Peter that day. They became one body of Christ.
 - “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor 12:12–13).

Verse 42

- ❖ Luke described the New Testament community of Christ, according to the principles of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayer are the fundamentals for each community of believers. This newly founded community was eager for or was very desirous of to listen to the words of the apostles.

⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 546).

⁹ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 63).

¹⁰ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 1062).

- The New Testament embodies the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:22-36, the Sermon of Peter; Acts 4:22).
 - Christ incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22).
 - Christ crucified (Acts 2:23).
 - Christ resurrected (Acts 2:24-32).
 - Christ the Lord and Saviour (Acts 2:33-36).
- To these four important aspects can be added:
 - It is God, who acted:
 - "A man accredited by God" (Acts 2:22).
 - "This man was handed over by God's purpose" (Acts 2:23).
 - "God raised him from the dead" (Acts 2:24; 2:32).
 - "He has received from the Father" (Acts 2:33).
 - "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).
 - And Peter showed the people that Christ fulfilled the Scriptures (Psalm 16:8-11 = Acts 2:25-28; Psalm 110:1 = Acts 2:34-35).
- The Lord Jesus gave his disciples this command: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**" (Mt 28:19-20). Jesus referred primarily to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7-9).
 - The teaching which is found in the Letter of James reflects many passages of the Sermon on the Mount.

❖ "Fellowship"

- This new Christian community experienced 2 Cor 13:13: "May **the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship (koinonia) of the Holy Spirit** be with you all" (2 Cor 13:14). Note the Trinitarian aspect.
 - Fellowship expresses what we share in together. This is God himself, for 'our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ', and there is 'the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'. **Thus koinōnia is a Trinitarian experience**; it is our common share in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.¹¹

- ❖ "The breaking of the bread." This is not a reference to the Lord's Supper, but **'they ate together as believers.'** This eating together was an aspect of their common loyalty to Jesus Christ. The celebration of the Lord's Supper might be part of these common mealtimes.

❖ "Prayer"

- Prayer is the lifeline of the Church: Rom 12:12; Eph 6:18. Col 4:2.

¹¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1994, 82, 83).

- “Their prayers were probably not limited to the prayers of the Christian community only, but likely included as well the Jewish prayer at their stated hours (see Acts 3:1). ‘They prayed to God together’¹² and probably in public.

Verse 43

- ❖ “**Everyone was filled with awe.**” This awe is not the result of fear, anxiety, nor fright, but they impressed by the teaching of the apostles.
- ❖ “**many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.**”
 - “One should note that the apostles are not spoken of as the primary agents of the miracles, but only as the secondary ones. God himself is the initiator, and he works *through the apostles.*”¹³
 - Jesus of Nazareth, “a man **accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs,** which God did among you through him” (Acts 2:22). Therefore, the apostles were accredited by the Lord Jesus Christ!
 - “One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful. Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,** walk.’ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and **praising God,** they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and **they were filled with wonder and amazement** at what had happened to him” (Acts 3:1-10).

Verse 44-46

- ❖ These verses describe a sense of unity and harmony: “**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.**”
 - “The expression **continued together in close fellowship** is an excellent rendering in English of a rather abstract expression in Greek. In other languages, however, quite different forms may be required, for example, ‘*they remained near one another,*’ ‘*they*

¹² Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 63).

¹³ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 64).

*continued to be one group,' 'they continued as a loyal group,' or 'they were very much together.'"*¹⁴

- "This section is not to be interpreted as if the new believers formed some kind of monastic group or commune, isolated from the world, in which no one owned anything and all possessions belonged to the community. What we have is not a community of goods, but a community of believers who were so devoted to one another that they were willing to share everything so that none of them lacked anything."¹⁵ It is a community based on mutual love and awe, not based on any ideology, such as socialism or communism. (See application.)
- The Lord Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount:
 - "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:19-21). "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Mt 6:33, 34).
- The Old Testament was also very clear about caring for the needy (Dt 26:12).

❖ **"Breaking of the bread."**

- Mealtimes are very important. The first Christians were meeting and have meals together in their homes. It is possible that they celebrated the Lord's Supper as part of their meals (1 Cor 11:20-22; although the Corinthians didn't set a very good example).
- ❖ It is necessary not to 'idealise' Acts 2:42-47 but read it realistically. "The believers did not immediately give up everything they possessed or give their goods to a common community storehouse. Verse 45 indicates that they only gave up something when there was a specific need within the Christian community; and the fact that Barnabas (Acts 4:36, 37) received so much attention from the selling of his piece of property would further indicate that this was not something everyone in the Christian community was doing."¹⁶ The same fact is also illustrated by the history of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

¹⁴ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 65).

¹⁵ Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1330).

¹⁶ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 65).

Verse 47

- ❖ “The persons who experience the attitudes toward the believers are put into focus, for example, ‘all the people regarded the believers favorably,’ ‘all the people thought of the believers as being good,’ or ‘all the people felt warm in their hearts about the believers.’”¹⁷
- ❖ “At the same time, they were generally highly esteemed by many of their fellow Jews (Acts 2:46; 5:13), in part apparently due to the performance of signs and wonders—in short, miracles. No doubt they were recognized by other pious Jews **as having zeal for their faith**. Teaching, preaching, miracles, meals, sharing of goods, and worship are said in general to characterize the early church, and no doubt this is an accurate historical summation.”¹⁸

Application

Verse 41-46

- ❖ Be amazed!
 - And consider the faithfulness, the eagerness, the awe and reverence, the loving kindness, the prayers of this first generation Christians.
 -
- ❖ The following questions can be asked:
 - Is the congregation eager for teaching and learning from the Bible?
 - A voice from Africa: “A faith that is not understood is shaky and has poor foundations, and that is why the new believers had to know what and why they believed. **The Church in Africa needs to develop the same devotion to teaching.** The African church is sometimes described as a mile long and an inch deep, meaning that it has many members but that these members have only a shallow understanding of the word of God. Pastors must be willing to teach, and congregations must be enthusiastic to learn the important tenets of their faith.”¹⁹
 - “If ‘prayer moves mountains’, one wonders why so many mountains continue to hinder the development of the African continent and to blight the lives of African believers. Perhaps we need to be as devoted to prayer as the early church was. The prayer of faith will help to bring peace to this beloved

¹⁷ Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1972, p. 66).

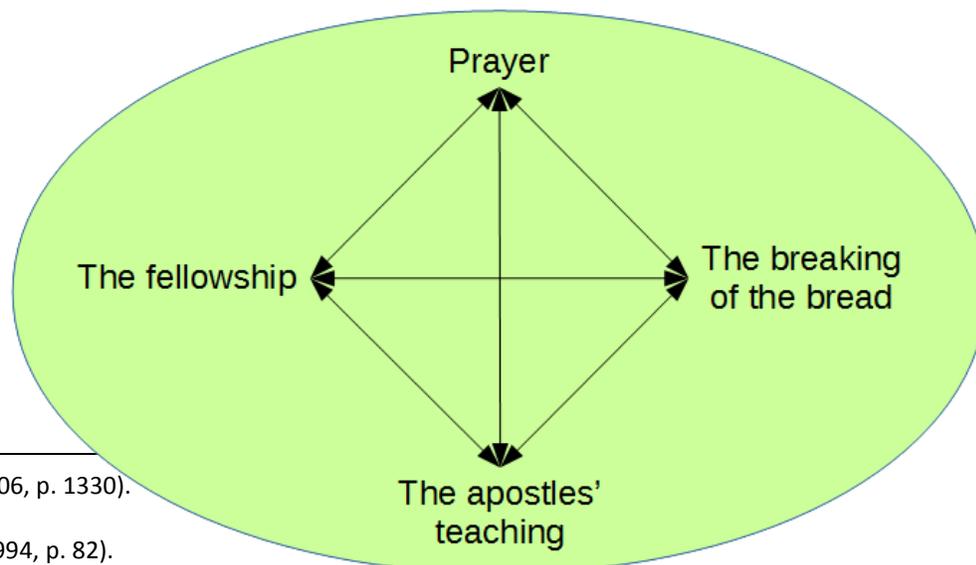
¹⁸ Witherington, B., III. (1998, p. 161).

¹⁹ Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1330).

continent. But it will not be enough on its own; we also need to be devoted to the other three things: to teaching, to fellowship and to the breaking of bread.”²⁰

- Is the congregation a sharing and loving community?
 - Is the congregation praying and giving thanks to God?
 - Is the congregation positively present in the society?
- ❖ All these aspects are interrelated.
- In applying this text, one must be aware of activism. The church is a gift from the love of God, by the grace of Jesus Christ the Lord in communion with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14).
 - John Stott wrote: “The Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God.”²¹ In addition: The Spirit of God leads the people of God to brotherly love and communion. The Spirit of God leads the people of God to prayer and praise.
- ❖ Fellowship (= Faith in action):
- “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 Jn 3:16-18).
 - “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of

THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Acts 1:3)



²⁰ Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1330).

²¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1994, p. 82).

**CHRIS-CENTRED
BAPTIZED BY ONE SPIRIT
INTO ONE BODY (1 COR 12:12,13).**

you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17).

- ❖ The Kingdom of God can be compared with present political ideologies:
 - The new community of Christ (Kingdom of God) is not based on any kind of political ideology, such as socialism,²² communism,²³ capitalism,²⁴ libertarianism,²⁵ totalitarianism,²⁶ populism²⁷ and any of its variants. The new community of Christ is based on faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13).

Verse 47

- ❖ It is the Lord who will add to the growth of church numerically and spiritually.
- ❖ How and by what means can the church be visibly present in the village, the neighbourhood, the city.

Quotes

- ❖ BEDE (A.D. 672/3 – 735, also known as Saint Bede, Venerable Bede, and Bede the Venerable, was an English monk): "If the love of God pervades our hearts, without a doubt it will soon engender affection for our neighbor as well. Hence, because of the double ardor of one and the same love, we read that the Holy Spirit was given twice to the apostles, and the possession of everything without [anyone] having anything of his own is a great token of brotherly love. (COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2.44)²⁸
- ❖ CHRYSOSTOM (A.D. 349 – 407, Archbishop of Constantinople, nowadays Istanbul): "Do you see that the words of Peter contain this also, namely, the regulation of life? ["And singleness of

²² Socialism. (2017, May 26). Retrieved May 29, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism>

²³ Communism. (2017, May 28). Retrieved May 29, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism>

²⁴ Capitalism. (2017, May 29). Retrieved May 29, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism>

²⁵ Libertarianism. (2017, May 29). Retrieved May 29, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarianism>. "Libertarians seek to maximize political freedom and autonomy, emphasizing freedom of choice, voluntary association, individual judgment, and self-ownership."

²⁶ Totalitarianism. (2017, May 29). Retrieved May 29, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totalitarianism>

²⁷ Populism. (2017, May 29). Retrieved May 30, 2017, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populism>

²⁸ Martin, F., & Smith, E. (Red.). (2006, p. 37).

heart.”] For no gladness can exist where there is no simplicity. (HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 7)²⁹

- ❖ AUGUSTINE (A.D. 354 – 430): “If, as they drew near to God, those many souls became, in the power of love, but one soul and these many hearts but one heart, what must the very source of love effect between the Father and the Son? Is not the Trinity for even greater reasons, but one God?... If the love of God poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us, is able to make of many souls but one soul and of many hearts but one heart, how much more are the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit but one God, one Light, one Principle?” (TRACTATES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 39.5)³⁰

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²⁹ Martin, F., & Smith, E. (Red.). (2006, p. 37).

³⁰ Martin, F., & Smith, E. (Red.). (2006, p. 37, 38).