

(15)

(Continuation from last week 03/19/14)

The First Church: Worthy Traits

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH, [Acts 2:1-7:60](#)

The First Church: Worthy Traits, [Acts 2:41-47](#)

4. ([Acts 2:44-45](#)) Church—Unity—Ministry: the early believers were a people who were together and who shared in ministry.

[Acts 2:44-45 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁴“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

⁴⁵and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”

It Was a Sharing Church

It Was a Joyful Church

[Acts 2:46b-47a \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁶Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

It is critical for the church to pay close attention and heed what is being said in this point.

1. The *professing believers* were true believers.

They were those “that [truly] believe” (see below [Deeper Study # 8, Believe—John 2:24](#) for discussion that shows true belief is the commitment of all one *is and has*).

DEEPER STUDY # 8

[John 2:24 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴“But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men.”

([John 2:24](#)) Believe—Commit: the word “entrusting” or “commit” (*episteuen*) is the very same word “believe” (*episteusan*) (cp. [John 2:23](#)).

[John 2:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.”

This gives an excellent picture of *saving faith*, of what *genuine faith* is—of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent.

2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Savior* and *Lord* of life.

3. Saving faith is commitment—the commitment of a man's total being and life to Jesus Christ.

There are **three steps** involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage. ([Romans 10:16-17](#))

[Romans 10:16-17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?”

¹⁷So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

1. There is the step of *seeing* ([John 2:23](#)) or *hearing* ([Romans 10:16](#)). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.

2. There is the step of *mental assent*.

A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so.

3. There is the step of *commitment*.

When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment*, a *personal commitment to the truth*.

2. The believers were “**together**” (*ēsan epi to auto*).

This *means* they were together in the same place *because they were of the same call, mind, and purpose*. It does not mean just being in the same location and place. They would not have been *together* **unless they had been of the same spirit and purpose**. This is critical to God's call.

3. The believers sold their possessions and goods and used the money to minister to the poor and needy.

Now note:

Why would they go to such a drastic extreme to minister? There is one critical reason: Christ commanded it. The church too often denies and ignores it, but denial of the truth does not do away with the truth. (See below [Deeper Study # 9—Acts 2:44-45](#)).

Now note: Who are the rich and who are the poor?

a. A rich person is anyone who has more than what others have, more than what the vast majority of the world has.

b. A rich person is anyone who has anything to put back beyond meeting the true needs of his own family.

This is exactly what Christ and the Bible say time and again (cp. also [Mark 12:41-44](#); [Luke 21:1-4](#); [Acts 4:34-35](#); etc.).

Mark 12:41-44 (NASB)

⁴¹ “And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums.

⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.

⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;

⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

Luke 21:1-4 (NASB)

¹ “And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

² And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.

³ And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than *all of them*;

⁴ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”

Acts 4:34-35 (NASB)

³⁴ “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

In a summary statement, who is rich? A rich person is anyone who has anything beyond what he needs. What Christ demands is that we give all that we *are and have* to meet the needs of those in such desperate need. We are to hold back nothing. This is often the great complaint against Christians that we just do not believe, not really. The evidence of our unbelief is seen in the insistence of Christ, the demand that we give all we have to feed the starving and meet the desperate needs of the poor and lost of the world. But we don't. Gandhi, the great leader of India's independence, is said to have never embraced Christianity for this very reason.

How many others have rejected Christ because of our hypocrisy?

Matthew 6:21 (NASB)

²¹ “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 19:21 (NASB)

²¹ “Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

Matthew 19:29 (NASB)

²⁹ “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.”

Matthew 22:39 (NASB)

³⁹ “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”

Luke 12:31-34 (NASB)

³¹ “But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³² Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

³³ Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 19:8 (NASB)

⁸ “Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

John 13:35 (NASB)

³⁵ “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.”

Romans 12:9 (NASB)

⁹ “*Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”

1 Corinthians 10:33 (NASB)

³³ “Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved.”

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

⁹ “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”

Ephesians 4:28 (NASB)

²⁸“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.”

1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NASB)

¹²“And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also *do* for you.”

Hebrews 13:5 (NASB)

⁵“*Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU."*”