

DEVOTED

"The Church Devoted" Acts 2:42-47

May 25, 2025

INTRO.: Welcome to our morning worship service and the last message in our series, **DEVOTED**. Several things probably come to your mind when this word is mentioned. Tomorrow is Memorial Day, which is a national holiday in the United States. It may be a holiday, but it is not a celebration. It's a time to remember those who were devoted to our country and gave their all, dying for the freedoms we have in the United States. There is a wreath out in the narthex which will be presented tomorrow at the Memorial Day Ceremony, honoring those who paid the ultimate price in their devotion to our country. Let us remember to pray for those who have lost loved ones through their loved one's military service. Tomorrow is a reminder that freedom isn't free, there is a price to be paid. For the believer there has been a price that was paid for freedom from the eternal penalty of our sin, the day to day power of sin, and ultimately for the freedom from the presence of sin when we go to be with the Lord. Romans 6:18 says that we have been set free (past tense) from sin. What was the price that was paid for this to occur?

1 Peter 1:18–19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Colossians 1:19–20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

For our last message in this series we're looking at, "*The Church Devoted*," from Acts 2:42-47 where we have the beginning of the church. How important is the church? Many think that they don't need the church as they reason, "*I can worship God anywhere, so if I choose to take a walk in the woods as my worship to God that is fine. I don't need to go to church.*"

Although, it is very true that one can worship God while taking a hike in the woods. Just read Psalm 19 which begins with this:

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

We should worship God in everything we do and wherever we go. A life in obedience to God is worshipping God. Yet, this does not negate the importance of the church. To be a follower of Christ and not be involved in the local church reminds me of baseball. How many players do you need for a baseball team? You need nine to have a complete team. When I was in college, they had just started a club team, and they needed another guy, so they asked me to play. I had never played organized baseball and let's just say I was no offensive threat with the bat. I could field and they needed nine guys. Whenever we had ten players they would hit for me. What would you think if I were to say, "I'm going to start a baseball team. I don't need any other players because I can do it all myself. Other players will just mess it up. They'll commit errors, strike out, and at times, be difficult to get along with. It's just easier and better to do it by myself." How is that going to work out? You wouldn't even be allowed to do that according to baseball rules.

In the New Testament, after the church came into being there is no such thing as a believer without a church. You and I need the Lord, but we also need one another. After Pentecost, which is celebrated fifty days after Easter, commemorating the advent of The Holy Spirit, who would now indwell believers. It was also the beginning of the church. Now, remember the word *church* literally means, "called out assembly," which tells us the church is the people, not the building. As the people gathered together, to what did they devote themselves. The pattern for the church is found in Acts 2:42-47 which we will read in unison.

Acts 2:42–47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. **46** 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, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

As the church gathered they were devoted to: **THE WORD, FELLOWSHIP, COMMUNION, and PRAYER.**

TO THE WORD

Acts 2:42a

They devoted themselves **to the apostles' teaching** and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

devoted: "this is a present tense participle. What Luke is about to describe is ongoing, it was what they did when they gathered. As a believer's search for a biblical church they need to look for a church that is devoted to what we find in these verses in Acts 2.

"apostle's teaching:" who was an apostle? We have some insight when the other apostles were looking to replace Judas, after he had betrayed the Lord and hung himself. Take note of the following qualifications.

Acts 1:21–22 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **22** beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

Jesus chose the original apostles. The other apostles chose Matthias as Judas' replacement. Paul is called an apostle, also chosen by Christ, who appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. Paul was going to persecute, imprison, and help kill Christians, but God had other plans.

1 Corinthians 15:3–8 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. **6** After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Much of the New Testament was written by the Apostles. This doesn't make the Old Testament unnecessary. To truly understand the New Testament, you need the Old Testament. You see in the New Testament the fulfillment of what is written in the Old Testament.

We could accurately say that when it says, *"they devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching,"* this is referring to what we call, the Bible. This church was a teaching church and what they taught was God's Word. If a church is not teaching and preaching the Bible, it is not truly a church. The first article of the doctrinal statement of First Baptist is as follows:

"We believe that the Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the verbally inspired Word of God (II Tim. 3:16, II Peter 1:20,21) written by men divinely and uniquely inspired, and is therefore inerrant in the original writings (Matt. 5:18), and that it is the supreme and final authority for faith and daily conduct (II Tim. 3:17)."

1 Timothy 4:13 Until I come, devote (present tense command) yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

2 Timothy 4:1–2 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: **2** Preach (command) the Word; be prepared (command: be ready, be persistent) in season and out of season; correct (command), rebuke (command) and encourage (command)—with great patience and careful instruction.

When you come here you will hear the Word of God taught and preached. As pastors we take seriously the preaching of God's Word and we ask for your prayers as we study and prepare. We want to do it accurately, clearly, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Biblical teaching is a key part in our ministries (our Wednesday night ministries, home groups, Bible studies, Sunday Bible School, Vacation Bible School).

As you hear the Word of God preached from this pulpit, we encourage you to study for yourself to make sure what is being taught is biblical. If you have questions or concerns, please come and see us. The church was devoted to the Word of God. It was also devoted:

TO FELLOWSHIP

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and **to the fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

"fellowship:" It is the word "koinonia" in the Greek and it means to share in common, having something in common. For believers we have Jesus Christ in common.

1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

The fellowship we have with fellow believers first and foremost centers around Jesus Christ. That fellowship, common shared belief. Is often far stronger and deeper than with family who doesn't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Our fellowship with God affects our fellowship with one another.

James Montgomery Boice, "Fellowship with God and true fellowship with others go together. The stronger your vertical fellowship is, the stronger your horizontal fellowship will be. If you are out of fellowship with God don't expect your fellowship with one another to be right."

We had a wedding here yesterday which was a truly joyous occasion. In my challenge to the couple, I spoke about what the Bible says about love and what that involves. To love like God desires us to love can't be done without His power, direction, and strength. I began my challenge with emphasizing Jesus and their relationship individually and together with Him.

"Without Him at the center of your relationship your marriage will never be what it could be. Today is the second most important decision of your life. The most important decision was when you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. You admitted you were a sinner and believing Jesus Christ died and rose again for your sin you asked Him to forgive you. Jesus changes everything, including our relationships."

Later on in this passage, Luke shows how their fellowship with other believers influenced their actions towards them. The church was devoted to the Word of God (apostle's teaching), to fellowship and:

TO COMMUNION

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and to prayer. It might have looked a bit different than what we do today. They may have had a meal which preceded having what we refer now to as communion. This was something Jesus Christ did with the disciples.

Luke 22:19–20 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." **20** In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Communion is not just some ritual that we do monthly. It is meant as a reminder, a remembrance of what Jesus Christ has done to provide forgiveness for our sins. It should be a time of thanksgiving and worship.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

There is no prescription in The Bible as to how often the church should observe communion. Some churches observe communion more often than we do and some less. It should be observed regularly. Here we have communion generally on the first Sunday of the month. The church devoted themselves to the teaching of the Word of God (apostle's teaching), fellowship (sharing in common their faith), communion (breaking bread), and:

TO PRAYER

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to **prayer**.

There is a definite article before the word, prayer, in the original language. It could be literally translated, "the prayer." This could include formal as well as informal prayer. Every Sunday we have a deacon, elder, or pastor lead in prayer for various concerns and needs. Our services start with a time of prayer. Sunday Bible School classes have a time of prayer. In the process of fellowshiping with one another as we gather someone might share a prayer request. When is a good time to pray for that request? I have been blessed with people praying for me when they hear of a request for me or my family.

By praying we are admitting our need of God to work, thanking Him for answering prayer, and worshipping Him. Questions we need to ask:

Am I a praying person?

Is this church a praying church?

I would encourage you, after having prayed for someone, to check in on them to see if there is any update. I would also encourage each of us to share updates to answered prayer with one another. You could also volunteer to be part of the prayer chain. There is a weekly list of prayer requests you can pick up. There is a half sheet print out in the back providing daily people and ministries for which you can pray. Each day there is a missionary, student, service personnel, Sunday School teacher, shut-in, and ministry to pray for. There are also other requests listed.

The church is to be devoted to teaching and preaching the Word of God, fellowshiping with one another (sharing centered around Jesus Christ), regularly celebrating communion, and praying.

RESULTS

What are the results or fruit they experienced when they devoted themselves to these things?

***They saw God do amazing things**

Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

They saw God at work! The miracles and wonders done by the apostles were to authenticate them as Christ's messengers and as bearers of the true Spirit-given teaching. The Holy Spirit would now indwell every believer. The office of apostle, as defined in the Scriptures, no longer exists today, but God is continuing to do miracles today. A person coming to faith is a miracle of God. How are we seeing God work through the church?

As God works we should be filled with awe and worship Him for what He alone can do.

***They cared for one another**

Acts 2:44-45 All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

This is not communism or socialism which is forced upon people. When a person comes to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord there is a recognition that salvation is purely by the grace of God. We can never out give God. Understanding God's grace brings a spirit of generosity to a person. As believers we truly don't own anything, for it is all from the Lord. We are called to be stewards of what He has entrusted to us. This allows us to be generous with our time, talents, and resources.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. **7** Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

"cheerful:" this is the Greek word "hilaros" from which we get the English word, "hilarious." (MacArthur) Giving should bring great joy. By the way, if you have a need, and a fellow believer helps to take care of that need, don't rob their joy by being too proud to accept the gift.

The care of the church for one another should be a testimony of every church. Giving to the Fellowship Fund is also a way to help meet needs.

***They had true joy and praised God**

Acts 2:46-47a 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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

Their worship in fellowship occurred in both the gathering in the temple courts as well as in their homes. They met daily in the temple courts, and it was a priority. How important is it for each of us to gather with other believers? Do you miss it when you can't attend? I'm grateful for the ways we are able to reach out with the radio station and online to those who are shut-in, sick, or away.

Most of the homes were small and they couldn't hold many people, but they still opened their homes. What ways can each of us open our homes? Some of you host home groups. We could still use more homes and more facilitators.

They had glad and sincere hearts as they met together. Do we realize what a privilege it is to get together. Many countries it has to be done in secrecy while risking their lives.

"praising God:" this is a present tense. Believers need to be known for how they praise God. This isn't pretending that life is great when it isn't, but sometimes praising God in the midst of the storm.

"enjoying the favor of all the people:" their testimony was apparent to all around them.

***They were evangelistic**

Acts 2:47b And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

There was a desire on their part to share the great news of the gospel. As they shared, God worked. People were getting saved every day! As they were taught the Word, fellowshiped and shared with one another, broke bread together, and prayed they shared the gospel. When the church is what the church should be it is a testimony to those who need Jesus. As a church we're called to reach out to the world.

SO WHAT???

In the beginning I spoke about how futile it would be for somebody to attempt to play baseball by themselves against teams who have nine players. It wouldn't be allowed, and it doesn't even make sense. One of our young men plays baseball for Messiah College and yesterday they won the super regional for Division III and are headed to the College World Series. Here are some of the quotes by the coach and two players as they were interviewed after the game.

"We're a group of imperfect people who need the Lord."

"God is good."

"We play for a greater purpose than just winning and losing."

"We get to be a light."

"Whether we win or lose God loves us."

"His plan is better than ours."

They know what it means to be a team. Just like there is no such thing as a baseball player without a team, after the second chapter of Acts there is no such thing as a Christian without the church. Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians are letters written to churches in those places.

***Do I know Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord?**

***Am I truly connected to a local church that is devoted to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, to fellowship and caring for one another, to communion, and to prayer?**

***Have I willingly put myself under the leadership of a local church by becoming a member?**

***In what ways am I making God's priorities mine when it comes to the Word of God, fellowship, sharing with one another, breaking of bread, prayer, and reaching out to others?**

