

“They Devoted Themselves...”

Acts 2:42

152nd Anniversary Sunday

They gathered at a brush arbor less than a mile from this location just over 152 years ago. After much prayer and discussion, they decided to start their own church. What brought these farm families together was their faith and their community. They would gather as the Zion Hill Baptist Church. They would experience much hardship through the years, including wars, pandemics, recessions, depressions, natural disasters, and conflict. We thank God for those men and women who came before us, and were devoted to God and His Word. We pray that we will continue to be faithful and minister in this community as they did over one hundred years ago.

Believers of the early Church came together from various backgrounds with Jesus Christ being the One who made them family. They were devoted to Christ, to each other, and to their community. Luke, the author of Acts, said *“they devoted themselves...”* Let us look back and see what they devoted themselves to, and how we should follow their example.

**1. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching
(2:42a)**

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching...”

- What did Luke mean when he said that the early believers were *“devoted”*? The word *“devoted”*

means *“to give attention; to be faithful; to spend much time together.”* They gave their attention and were faithful to what the apostles taught. The early believers would spend much time together listening to the apostles teach Christ, and His death and resurrection.

- What was the apostles’ teaching? The apostles’ basic message was Christ and His sacrificial death and resurrection. The Apostle Paul proclaimed: *“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me—that Christ died for our sins, just the Scriptures said. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles”* (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Paul said that this was *“most important,”* because it is the foundation of the Gospel; the foundation of our faith. It is Christ and Christ alone whereby we are forgiven of our sin and guilt.
- The apostles taught fellow believers the Scriptures concerning specific doctrinal issues relating to their faith in Christ. Of the 27 books of the NT, 21 (22 if you think Paul is the author of Hebrews) are written by the apostles. The other books were written by students of the apostles. Whether it was about the Lord’s Supper, dealing with adversity, or intercessory prayer, the apostles taught fellow believers about living out their faith each day. The

early believers were devoted to the apostles' teachings.

2. They devoted themselves to the fellowship and the breaking of bread (2:42b).

“And they devoted themselves...to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread...”

- The word *“fellowship”* does not mean a get-together. It means *“having in common.”* In the same context, it says: *“Now all the believers were together and held all things in common”* (v. 44). The early believers shared their material things with those fellow believers in need. It was voluntary, and done out of love for each other. They were devoted to each other, helping their fellow brother or sister in Christ.
- They devoted themselves to *“the breaking of bread,”* or the Lord’s Supper. It is coming together regularly and remembering what our Savior did for us on the cross. It is a sober reminder of Jesus giving His body and shedding His blood for our sin and guilt.
- What is one of the signs of a healthy church? It is helping a fellow believer in a crisis. It is regularly partaking of the Lord’s Supper, not as a ritual, but as a genuine act of worship. Luke reported: *“Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together...”* (v. 46a).

3. They devoted themselves to prayer (2:42c)

“And they devoted themselves...to the prayers.”

- For the Jews, prayers were normal, but not so for pagans or non-religious persons. The apostles taught the believers to pray in the name of Jesus. They taught them intercessory prayer—praying diligently on behalf of others. Prayer was to be for the believer like breathing for the body.
- Jewish believers would go the Temple to pray, asking Christ to give them the strength to endure the persecution for following Him. Those from a pagan background were taught to pray genuinely to Christ, and not just repeat prayers by rote. They were told to pray for each other, and to pray for those in authority. Prayer would be a big part of their worship experience.
- The early believers saw their prayers answered in powerful and miraculous ways. When Simon Peter was arrested and was facing execution, believers prayed fervently for him, asking God to deliver him. Luke wrote: *“So Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was being made earnestly to God for him by the church”* (Acts 12:5). Their prayers were answered when God sent an angel and supernaturally delivered Peter from prison and execution (Acts 12:1-19). The early believers were devoted to prayer. I thank God for our prayer teams, our men and women who gather week after week to pray on behalf of others. We have seen many prayers

answered through our prayer ministry. Be devoted to prayer, praying for your family, our church, and for our nation. If you don't know how to pray, recite the psalms as your prayer, or pray Jesus' or Paul's prayers as your own. Talk to God as your trusted Counselor and loving Father.

Pastor and author Warren Wiersbe said: "The Christians you meet in the Book of Acts were not content to meet once a week for 'services as usual.' They met daily, cared daily, won souls daily, searched the Scriptures daily, and increased in number daily. Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, a living reality to them and His resurrection power was at work in their lives through the Spirit." On this 152nd Anniversary of our fellowship, let us devote ourselves to the Word of God, communion, and prayer.