

The Book Of Acts: Verse by Verse

Acts 2:42b-43

Summary of Last Time: Luke description of the early 1st-century Church in Jerusalem: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread."

- **"The Prayers": v. 42**

"They devoted themselves to... prayer(s).

A word study on prayer: The Greek word is a combination of two words: "proseuche" and "euchomai". It translates into the words to pray or to vow.

This is the general word for prayer, as opposed to words like supplication or intercession. The prefix, "pros": The sense of being immediately before God - adoration, devotion, and worship.

Early Greek culture: An offering was brought with a prayer that it be accepted. Later: The thing brought to God was a prayer.

"They devoted themselves to... prayer(s): Luke is not emphasizing individual prayers, but corporate prayers. The believers of the early Church met regularly for prayer. It was, no doubt, also a carryover from their Judaic experience.

John 14: 12-14: "I can guarantee this truth: Those who believe in me will do the things that I am doing. They will do even greater things because I am going to the Father. I will do anything you ask the Father in my name so that the Father will be given glory because of the Son. If you ask me to do something, I will do it."

"They were continually devoting themselves...to prayer." - The whole

Church was coming together for prayer. See: Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2. Paul meant this to be a corporate experience as much as a private experience. See also: Hebrews 4:16

Corporate Prayer In Action: Acts 12.

Herod the Tetrarch is unleashing persecution on the early believers. He's already arrested and executed John's brother, James. Now he arrests Peter – along with some others who are not named – intending to execute Peter as well.

Acts 12:5: "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." –

The prayer meeting was at the home of Mary, John Mark's mother. They did not know that Peter had been miraculously released from prison.

Peter went to Mary's home and knocked on the door. Rhoda, the little maid ran from the door, without opening it, back to the group and said that Peter was at the door. They did not believe Rhoda.

Luke 12:5-17: "But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place."

The early Church learned a valuable lesson from this: Whether or not God rescued the object of their prayers, prayer was still vital.

"Everyone Was Filled With Awe..." v. 43

"Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles." – v. 43

Greek word for "filled with awe": "Phobos". Depending on the

context, “phobia” can refer to something that causes fear or terror.

Use of “Phobos” by Luke – See: Acts 5:5, 11; Acts 19:17

In Acts 2, “Phobos” means a deep respect, reverence, or “wholesome fear” felt by those who witnessed the ongoing miracles associated with the apostles’ ministries.

- **The “Problem” With Miracles: 19th-Century Cessationists**

The changing American theological landscape from the middle to late 1800’s: Cessationists: Those who believed that miracles, gifts, apostles, prophets ended with the first apostles and the completion of Scripture. Continuationists believed that spiritual gifts, including miracles, signs and wonders are still relevant and even needed today.

The rise of Cessationist Theology: Benjamin Warfield, the editor of the Princeton Theological Review in the late 1800’s.

The background: Liberal theology was sweeping the United States, spurred on by efforts at so called higher textual criticism (Its epicenter was in Europe).

Warfield’s Book - “Counterfeit Miracles” insisted that all miracles ceased after the last Apostle died. Any further claims of the miraculous were false. Warfield’s view of cessation became their touchstone reference.

Reading Acts 2 in its 1st-century context: “Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.”

1. The Magnitude and Momentum of miracles: The apostles had certainly seen miracles before in Jesus’ ministry and their own. Matthew 10:8: “Cure the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse those with skin diseases, and force demons out of people. Give these things without charging, since you received them without paying.”

What changed after Pentecost was the volume and consistency of miracles. A clue hidden in the Acts 2 text: The imperfect tense is used for the words “Everyone was filled with awe.” It reads, They were constantly awed at the continuing miracles the apostles were performing.”

Signs, wonders, and miracles took place as the early Church expanded into Judea, Samaria, and eventually Rome.

A Quick survey of these miracles:

- Acts 3:6-8: The Lame Man At The Temple Courtyard:
- Acts 4:33 – The Apostle’s Testimony Accompanied By Miracles:
- Acts 5:12 – Miracles At Solomon’s Porch:
- Acts 9:33-35 – The Lame Man Healed At Lydda

In each of the cases there is one common thread: These supernatural authenticated the Gospel message. See: Acts 14:8ff.

Paul was preaching before this miracle took place ... He was preaching about Christ. Paul could tell that the Gospel message had penetrated a man with crippled feet. “Paul realized he had faith to be healed.”

At that moment the Gospel and a miracle came together. Paul shouts, “Stand up!” And what happens? Luke records, “And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.”

That is a perfect example of a miracle accompanying the Gospel. In the same way, the miracles in Jesus’ ministry were designed to authenticate the message he preached. The emphasis is not on the miracles alone – but their value in attesting to the validity of Christ’s Gospel. See: Romans 15:18-19

A Quote from bible scholar John Phillips:

“The infant church had more than purity; it had power. The gift of the

apostles included the power to work miracles. It was as though Jesus of Nazareth were back, as though He were walking again-giving sight to the blind, making the deaf to hear, the dumb to talk, the dead to live, the lame to walk, cleansing the leper, casting out demons.

And so He was. Only now it was His mystical Body that was the vehicle of divine power rather than the material body in which He had lived when in the flesh." – John Philips, *Exploring Acts*