

Theme: Resurrection Reaction – The Early New Testament Christians

Acts 2:14a, 36-47 (EHV)

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and spoke loudly and clearly to them: “Men of Judea, and all you residents of Jerusalem, understand this, and listen closely to my words...”

³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” ³⁷ Now when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Gentlemen, brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸ Peter answered them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ He testified solemnly with many other words and was appealing to them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added.

⁴² They continued to hold firmly to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers. ⁴³ Awe came over every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They were selling their possessions and property and were distributing the proceeds according to what anyone needed. ⁴⁶ Day after day, with one mind, they were devoted to meeting in the temple area, as they continued to break bread in their homes. They shared their food with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ as they continued praising God and being viewed favorably by all the people. Day after day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Last week we looked at a reaction to Jesus’ resurrection from the Apostle Peter, an eyewitness of Jesus’ resurrection on Easter Sunday. Today we’re going to look at some **Resurrection Reactions** from people who listened to Peter speak about the resurrection of Jesus, but very likely had not seen the risen Savior for themselves. In other words, these **Early New Testament Christians** were very much in the same boat as us.

The crowd that had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost (which is when our text takes place) was made up of people, not just from Jerusalem, but from all over the known world (**Acts 2:5-11**). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that many of these people who were listening to Peter’s Spirit-inspired sermon were, like Peter, eyewitnesses of Christ’s resurrection.

Yet we are told that God worked the miracle of conversion in the hearts of many on that day of Pentecost through Peter’s preaching. Luke tells us in **v. 41**, **Those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added.** These people, like us, had not seen the risen Christ, but believed on the basis of God’s Word to them through the eyewitness like Peter and were saved. However, that was not the only **Resurrection Reaction** that the Holy Spirit produced in these early New Testament Christians. The most important part had been taken care of: God’s Word had produced repentance and faith in the hearts of **“about three thousand” (v. 41)** hearers that day. Our text also tells us that the Holy Spirit produced many incredible “fruits of faith” in the hearts and lives of the entire Christian church in Jerusalem for many days after this miracle of Pentecost.

Let’s look at what they did: First of all Luke tells us in **v. 42**, **They continued to hold firmly to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers.** The **“apostles’ teaching”** was exactly what Jesus taught. Their teachings were the very words of God, just as Jesus had commanded in the Great Commission: **“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20).** These early New Testament Christians, then, **“continued to hold**

firmly” in the Word of God and in **“fellowship”** with the apostles. They also **“continued to hold firmly”** in the **“breaking of bread”** together, which refers to their fellowship meals together, called *Agape*, or love feasts, during which the Lord’s Supper was celebrated. These early New Testament Christians also expressed their unity and faith with the apostles and their fellow believers by **“continuing to hold firmly”** in **“prayers.”**

Our text also tells us that these early New Testament Christians expressed their unity of faith and devotion to the apostle’s teaching in a way that was unique in all of Scripture, **“All the believers were together and had everything in common.”** ⁴⁵ **They were selling their possessions and property and were distributing the proceeds according to what anyone needed.”** (v. 44-45). Notice the text does not tell us that this sharing of all things among the believers was commanded by the apostles. It doesn’t even say that the apostles were the ones who came up with the idea! They weren’t trying to put some sort of God-mandated economic theory into practice either (as some have falsely tried to propose). No, these early New Testament Christians in Jerusalem shared in all things both spiritually and physically as an expression of their love for their risen Lord and Savior and for their brothers and sisters in Christ. They were in every sense of the word completely devoted to the **“fellowship”** (*sharing*). And remember, most of these people had not even seen the risen Lord Jesus for themselves! They were trusting steadfastly and solely on the **“apostles’ teaching”** and their eyewitness accounts of Christ.

What about us? What about our Resurrection Reaction? It has now been two weeks since we’ve celebrated the miraculous resurrection of our Savior Jesus on Easter Sunday. Are we still living in the joy of the Resurrection, like those early New Testament Christians did months after Christ rose from the dead? Can people see it in our lives? Can they hear it in our voices? Can they sense the sincerity of our hearts as we prepare for another Sunday of worship? If not, why not? Aren’t we in much the same position as those early New Testament Christians: redeemed and forgiven through Christ’s perfect life and innocent sacrifice on the cross? Haven’t we been made God’s own sons and daughters through the miracle of baptism? Aren’t we also dependant on the Holy Spirit’s work through the words of His inspired eyewitnesses, the apostles? Yes, yes, and yes!

We have also been greatly blessed with some of the same fruits of faith that were evident in the lives of the early New Testament Christians; gifts which I think too often we take for granted. Don’t we also, by God’s grace, devote ourselves each week—and hopefully even each day—to the **“apostles’ teaching,”** the very inspired Words of God written down for us in the New Testament? Don’t we also base our **“fellowship”** on that Word, and only that Word, not on reason, or on compromise? Don’t we also express that fellowship with each other through the **“breaking of bread”** at the Lord’s Supper and in **“prayers”**? Although we don’t live in the communal style that early New Testament Christians in Jerusalem lived for a while, haven’t we also **“shared”** our **“possessions and goods”** with people who are in need, both locally and for others in our fellowship across the country and around the world? Do we always realize how amazingly God has blessed us, not only with our saving faith, but with the Spirit-driven ability to express our faith, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially? The Holy Spirit is the one who has worked these things on our hearts and lives and has blessed us with some of the same **Resurrection Reactions** that we find in the early New Testament Christians! That’s hard to believe, isn’t it? We have much in common with this incredibly strong, growing fellowship of first century believers in Jerusalem!

How did they remain spiritually strong and continue to grow in faith and in numbers? The last two verses of our text tell us, **Day after day, with one mind, they were devoted to meeting in the temple area, as they continued to break bread in their homes. They shared their food with glad and sincere hearts,** ⁴⁷ **as they continued praising God and being viewed favorably by all the people. Day after day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved** (v. 46-47).

Isn't that the same method we use? Don't we with **"one mind"** and one purpose, base our fellowship solely on the Word of God? Yes, we do. Where then does the problem usually lie for us? Doesn't it often boil down to what **"all the people"** in Jerusalem—believers and unbelievers alike—could see very clearly in the lives of these early New Testament Christians? Our text tells us that these believers **"viewed favorably by all the people"** (v. 47). Was it just because they **"continued daily with one accord"** in fellowship with each other and in steadfastness to the **"apostles' teaching"**? No, because they could have done that in their "own little corner," in private, where no one else would have heard their faithful teaching and preaching. Instead, they did it publicly **"in the temple area"** (v. 46). If they hadn't also lived their lives according to the **"apostles' teaching"** the people of Jerusalem probably wouldn't have thought much of their Christian faith, either. Instead, they both **"Day after day, with one mind"** continued in the apostles' teaching and did it **"with glad and sincere hearts, as they continued praising God"** (v. 46-47)!

Does the **"gladness"** of our faith shine through in our lives? Does the **"sincerity"** of our hearts come through in all we say and do? Are we "playing" Christian, or are we actually living and being followers of Christ? Do we come and worship with **"sincere hearts"** each Sunday? Are we just "playing" church, or are we truly worshiping and **"praising"** a risen, living, and almighty God and Savior?

Our Savior lives! That's a fact! Be **glad**, live joyfully! The same Holy Spirit that worked **"sincere hearts"** those early New Testament Christians is still at work in our hearts and lives through the Words of His apostles. Let people see and hear that **sincerity** in your words when you speak to them, and in your whole life that you live in front of them. Our Savior lives! We have His sure eyewitness testimony in the Word and the promise that at the end of our short lives we too will be eyewitnesses of Him and will **"see Him as He is"** (1 John 3:2). Praise God!

Now, obviously our **Resurrection Reaction** by the way we live our lives won't bring anyone to faith in Jesus, but it can certainly tear down many obstacles and hindrances to their faith, and will give others a living example of the power and blessedness of the Gospel of the crucified and risen Savior, Jesus. When they ask us why we live the way we do we can share with them exactly what the apostles' taught: the very Words of God. We can do this with **"glad and sincere hearts,"** and with **"praise"** to God because it is the truth of the saving Gospel of the risen Christ that we are sharing with these needy, dying souls. We can be confident, also, that through this powerful, saving Gospel the Lord will continue to **"[add] daily to the church those who [are] being saved"** (Acts 2:47 NKJV). Amen!