

Friday Communion Service

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Date: 12 May 2006

Preacher: Duncan Macleod

[0 : 00] How devoted are you tonight to Christ and to his church? But what was it particularly that we're told here they devoted themselves to?

Well, we're told that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They loved to be instructed from the apostles and from the word that the apostles spoke to them.

They loved to be taught. They loved to learn. They wanted to grow, not only in grace, but in their knowledge of God their Saviour.

They believed that the message of the apostles and of the prophets was from God. And they were totally given over to being taught by him through them.

Can the same be said of you and of me? How devoted are we to the word of God? Do we search it diligently?

[1 : 09] Are we like the Bereans eagerly examining what we hear in order that we might be assured that these things are so?

I believe that this is a time when God wants everyone within this fellowship here in Bonacord to be more devoted than ever to his word.

To have teachable spirits that together we might learn from what he has to say to us through the scriptures. Devoted to the teaching of the apostles.

Devoted to the word of God as that was proclaimed to them from time to time. You still have that privilege here.

Although the vacancy is ongoing and showing no signs of coming to an end. Count it a privilege that you have the word of God brought to you week by week.

[2 : 15] And make sure you avail yourselves of it week by week. Don't let anything or anyone put you off from being where the word is preached.

Sitting under the word. Demonstrating. Like they did in the early church. That you are indeed devoted to that word.

That God has so blessed you with. And that you regard it as a privilege. To sit under it. That you might be instructed by it.

But it wasn't just that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. They also devoted themselves to the fellowship. There are those who would suggest that in our day and age.

You can be devoted to the teaching of the word of God. And make full use of all the different means that are available to us today. To read.

[3 : 14] To meditate. To meditate. And to hear the scriptures. Without even having to bother going to God's house. But according to this passage that we are looking at tonight.

They were also devoted to the fellowship. As well as to the word of God. And the reason why they were devoted to the fellowship.

Was because first of all they were in fellowship with God himself. And being in fellowship with God himself. They delighted. In experiencing and enjoying together the fellowship of God's church.

Your people said to God. Your people said to Ruth. My people. Your God. My God. And that's always been the hallmark.

Of those who are in fellowship with God. That if at all possible. They want to be in fellowship. With the church of God. Those who feared the Lord.

[4 : 18] Often spoke to one another. And the Lord listened. And the Lord heard. And a book of remembrance was written. For those who feared the Lord.

And who thought upon his name. There is so much emphasis in scripture. On the importance of being devoted to the fellowship. And in particular.

When going through tough times. The writer to the Hebrews says. Do not forsake the assembling. The gathering. Of yourselves together.

As some are in the habit of doing. And all the more. He says. As the day approaches. The more you go on.

The harder the times you may go through. The more need you have. Of being devoted to the fellowship. Of God's church. And if our fellowship is with the Father.

[5 : 16] And with his Son Jesus Christ. And if we're walking in the Spirit. Then that will demonstrate itself. In that we will be devoted.

Not only to the teaching. Of the Word of God. But also to the fellowship. Of the saints of God. And again. All of us need to examine ourselves.

This evening. So as to ensure. That that is as true of us. As it was of them. At this time. But they devoted themselves.

To something else too. And that was to the. Breaking of bread. These people. Took seriously.

The instruction. That had been given them. By their Lord himself. To break bread. And to remember. Whose death. Until he come.

[6 : 15] From the very outset. They regarded that. As something. That was well worthy. Of giving themselves to. As a church. Church.

And they were devoted. To the fulfillment. Of that command. That Christ. Had given them. When he said. Do this.

In remembrance of me. They took it seriously. And they did it. And that again. Is something. That is incumbent on us. In the church still.

And that is why. We still hold our communion. Ceases. And we come together. At such times. To show that. We are no less devoted.

Than the early church. Was. To the breaking. Of. Bread. That we are. As determined. As they were.

[7 : 12] To show for. Whose death. Till. He. Come. But all these things. Being devoted. To the apostles.

Teaching. And to the fellowship. And to the breaking. Of bread. Would count. For nothing. Unless. They were also devoted.

As they surely were. According to this passage. To prayer. Now again. We can think of that. At two levels. Of course.

It is true to say. That we must be devoted. To prayer. In our own personal lives. First. Of course. That comes first. It is of crucial importance.

That before God. We be devoted. To a life of prayer. As someone said. It is far easier. To speak. About prayer. Than it is.

[8 : 09] To speak. To God. In prayer. And so. We are so easily. Distracted. Even at a personal level. From being devoted. To prayer. But I believe too.

That in the context. That we are looking at these words. This evening. The emphasis. Isn't only. Or even so much. On personal.

Private. Individual. Prayer. As on the importance. Of corporate. Prayer. Of coming together. For prayer. Of joining together.

With like-minded believers. In prayer. And of being devoted. To prayer. To pray.

Together. In that. Way. The scriptures. Encourages so much. In terms of. Coming together. In prayer. The scriptures.

[9 : 06] The scriptures tell us. That if two of us. Agree about anything. It shall be done. By our father. In heaven. And the scriptures. Also speak.

In more than one place. Of God's people. Gathering together. Calling upon his name.

Engaged. Engaged in this exercise. Devoting themselves to it. Day by day. And week by week.

How devoted are you to prayer. In your own life. How devoted are you to the prayer life. of this fellowship. Of which you are part.

How can you be part of it. If you are in no way involved in it. At that level. Those who pray together.

[10 : 01] Stay together. And I would urge you. As a congregation. Especially at this time. Not to foresee. The assembly of yourselves.

Together. For prayer. But to make the most. Of every opportunity you have. To come together. And to seek God's face.

And God's faith. This congregation. Desperately needs. All who belong to it. To have the spirit.

At this time. It's the only solution. It's the only way forward. God. And God. Through this passage. Tonight. Is reminding.

Each one of us. Of our own responsibility. In this regard. Diverted themselves. As a fellowship.

[10 : 59] To the apostles teaching. To the fellowship. To the breaking of bread. And to prayer. To the church. And to prayer. And if we truly belong.

To Christ. And to his church. What was true of them. Must also. Be true of us. But what were the distinctive characteristics.

Of this fellowship. As Luke brings these before us. In this passage. Well I believe there were several. And the first thing was this.

That the impression this church gave. Both to those. Who belonged to it. And to those who did not. Was that there was something.

Quite supernatural. About them. Everyone. Was filled with awe. And many wonders.

[11 : 56] And miraculous signs. Were done. By the. Apostles. What filled them with awe.

Above all. Was this. The presence of God. And their awareness of it. There is nothing. That fills. God's people with awe.

More than that. An awareness of God. Filled. Every single one of them. With a awe.

That was honoring to God. It's not for nothing. That the scriptures tell us. That the fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. Of wisdom.

We need to remind ourselves. And be reminded of the greatness. And of the glory. Of the majesty. Of the otherness of God. If our gatherings.

[12 : 54] Are going to give him. The place. That he must come. In our lives. When were you last.

Filled with awe. As you gathered together. Within the church of God. To worship God. Where is our sense of awe. Tonight. As we gather here.

In our Lord's name. Where is our awareness. Of his greatness. As well as of his goodness.

Are we tonight. In this place. Falling down. Before him. Aware.

As another. Put it. Of his holy otherness. And amazed. That such a one. Should be present here. Among ourselves.

[13 : 55] This evening. You see. This was something. That. Was true. Of every single. One. Of those people. Who belonged. To that church.

It wasn't just. The apostles. Who were filled with awe. It wasn't just. Those who. Knew. What was happening. Theologically. Who were. Filled with awe. Everyone.

Was filled with awe. This was something. That was a distinctive. Characteristic. Of every single. Christian. There at Pentecost. And one.

Might say. That if it's not. True of us. Tonight. We should examine. Ourselves. As to where. We're at. In our. Christian lives. If we're not.

Filled with awe. Tonight. In the presence. Of God. As we worship. God. We need to ask. Why? Because. They were. And many.

[14 : 54] Wondrous. And miraculous. The signs. The signs. Were done. By the apostles. There were amazing. Things. Taking place. Now. Of course.

We know. What some of these things. Were. Acts. Were called for us. Some of the great. Miracles. Some of the signs. And wonders. May that God.

Bless them. With. As confirmation. Of the word. That they were. Proclaiming. And we might. Hesitate.

In. Thinking that. We should be expecting. Such signs. And wonders. As they expected. And experienced. And yet.

One has to say. That. When we are. Truly. Gathered. Together. As God's church. Worshipping. God. In a way.

[15 : 49] That is pleasing. To him. Wonderful. Things. Will happen. There is. Nothing. That is. More. Amazing. To the child. Of God.

Than the grace. Of God. There is. Nothing. That is. More. Wonderful. And miraculous. Than that. And just.

As there were. Wondrous. And miraculous. Signs. In the early church. So we should. Be examining. Our own lives. And looking. Around us. Within the church.

To see. Whether or not. The wonder. And miracle. Of God's grace. Is something. That we are. Experiencing. As we gather.

Together. To worship. Or have we become. Not so. Lacking. In faith. And expectancy. As not even.

[16 : 44] To dream. That such things. Could happen. When we worship. God. God's word. Tells us.

That he is. He is able. To do. For us. Immeasurably. More. Than we can ask him. For. Or even. Imagine. God. And surely. That refers.

In particular. To what God. Does. By his grace. As he. Takes over. Our lives. And. Transforms. Our lives.

And works. In us. So as to. Ultimately. Make us. Like his son. Jesus. Have we. Have we. Stopped. Expecting. God.

The God. Whom. We claim. To have. Begun. Working. In our lives. Have we. Stopped. Expecting. To. See.

[17 : 40] Him. Prove. To us. And to others. That. Work. That he. Has. Begun. He. Is. Bringing. On. To completion. In the day of Christ. And are we.

Expecting. To see. God. Working. In other people. Have we. Lost. Our faith. In the power. Of the gospel. To save. Men and women. Where is.

Our sense. Of expectancy. Where is. This awareness. Of God. Doing great things. When revivals.

Come. To communities. And to congregations. People begin. To expect. To see. These things. Happen. And these things.

Do happen. God. Does. Change. Lives. He. Is. Still. Doing. It. There are. Conversations. Within. Our own. Church.

[18 : 34] Tonight. Where. He's. Doing. It. There are. Presence. That are. Very. Dear. To some. Of us. Where. God's. Power. Is. Operating. Right. Now. In the lives.

Of men. And women. Boys. And girls. God. Has. Not. Stopped. Being. The God.

He was. At Pentacles. He. Is. Still. As. As. Able. Tonight. As. He. Was. Then. And. He's. Proving. It. In other. Places. And. At a time. Such. As.

This. We. Should. Ask. Him. To. Prove. It. Here. That. We. Might. See. His. Power. That. We. Might. Behold. His. Face. That.

Signs. And. Wonders. That. Miracles. Might. Teach. Place. Among us. That. Would. Redound. To. The. Glory. Of. Whose. Great. Name. And.

[19 : 30] If. You. Tonight. Are. At. A. Point. Where. You. Don't. Even. Expect. God. To. Do. Anything. Anymore. In. Your. Own. Life.

Let. Alone. In. Anyone. Else's. Life. You. Would. Do. Well. To. Ask. If. He's. Ever. Done. Anything. In. Your. Life. At. All. Because. Surely. If. He. Has. And.

If. He. Is. You. Can't. But. Believe. That. He's. Got. More. To. Do. Yet. The.

Work. That. He's. Begun. In. You. He. Hasn't. Yet. Completed. If. He's. Begun. It. At. All. And. If. He. Begun. A. Work. In. You. And. Is. Bringing. You.

To. Completion. In. The. Of. Christ. Why. Not. Expect. Him. To. Do. That. Same. Work. In. The. Lives.

[20 : 22] Of. Others. That's. What. Was. Happening. Here. They. Were. Distinguished. By. This. Where. This. Early. Church. An. Awareness.

Of. Wonderful. Things. Happened. Something. Supernatural. Was. Going. On. Something. That. Could. Not. Be. Defined. Or.

Explained. Away. In. Human. Terms. Our. Work. Was. Taking. Place. That. Was. From. God. And. That. Is. What. We. Want. More. Than. Anything. Else.

In. All. Our. Fellowships. And. In. All. Our. Churches. That. Work. Of. God. Might. Be. In. Progress. But.

There. Was. Something. Else. Too. All. The. Believers. Were. Together. And. Had. Everything. In. Common. Selling. Their. Possessions. And. Goods. They. Gave. To. Anyone. As.

- [21 : 16] He. Had. Need. It. Wasn't. Just. That. This. Church. Was. Aware. Of. God. They. Were. Also. Aware. Of. One. Another. They.
- Were. Aware. Of. Each. Other. And. They. Related. To. One. Another. As. A result. Of. The. Fact. That. They. Were. First. Of. All. Relating. As.
- They. Should. To. God. And. That. That. Is. What. Genuine. Christianity. Is. All. About. That. We. Love. The. Lord. Our. God. With. All. Our. Heart. And. With. All. Our. Soul.
- And. With. All. Our. Mind. And. With. All. Our. Strength. And. That. We. Love. Our. Neighbour. As. Our. Our. Our. Our. Our. Our. Our. The. Relationship. Is.
- Isn't. Just. Between. Us. And. God. It's. Also. Between. Us. And. Other. People. And. Here. We're. Told. That. They.
- [22 : 08] Shared. Together. As. Those. Who. Realized. That. They. Belonged. To. The. Family. Of. God. And. They. Were. Prepared. To. Sacrifice. For.
- The. Sake. Of. Other. People. They. Put. The. Interests. Of. Others. Before. Their. Own. And. That. Probably. Doesn't. Just. Relate. To. The.
- Way. They. Dealt. With. Each. Other. Within. The. Church. But. Almost. Certainly. The. Way. They. Related. To. Others. In. The. Community. As. Well. Wherever.
- They. Were. Conscious. Of. Need. They. Went. Out. Of. Their. Way. And.
- If. We. Not. Fitting. Them. And. Fulfilling. Them. We. Need. To. Ask. Whether. We. Know. The. Gospel. In. Our. Own. Lives. At. All. And.
- [23 : 04] Tonight. As. We. Examine. Our. Own. Hearts. As. To. Where. We. Are. Before. God. As. Christians. And. As. A. Congregation. We. Need. Not. Focus.
- Sown. On. What. We. Might. And. The. God. Relationship. That. Is. So. Important.
- But. We. Must. Along. With. That. And. Indeed. In. Order. To. Be. Assured. Of. That. Examine. Ourselves. In. Terms. Of. Our. Relationships. With. Others. And.
- Commitment. Towards. them. Because. Here. This. Was. The. Distinctive. Characteristic. Of. This. Church.
- That. They. Loved. One. Another. One. One. Because. Of. Their. Love. For. God. And. That. They. Also. Showed. Their. Love. For. All.
- [24 : 00] Around. Them. By. The. Way. They. Sought. To. Meet. Their. Needs. As. God. Enabled. Them. And. There. Was. Something. Else. True. Every.
- Day. They. Continued. To. Meet. Together. In. The. Temple. Coats. They. Broke. Bread. In. Their. Homes. And. Ate. Together.
- With. Glad. And. Sincere. Hearts. Their. Christianity. Was. An. Everyday. Thing. It. Was. Something.
- That. Affected. Their. Lives. Every. Day. And. That. Was. Expressed. By. The. Fact. That. Every. Day. They.
- They. Met. Together. In. The. Temple. Coats. And. It. Would. Appear. Also. In. Their. Own. Homes. As. Often.
- [24 : 53] As. They. Were. Able. To. Do. Now. We. Know. That. Many. Circumstance. Can. Militate. Against. Us. Gathering. Together. Every.
- Day. As. The. Early. Christians. Did. We. Know. That. For. Many. Reasons. It. May. Not. It. It. It.
- It. It. Was. For. Them. In. The. The. Passage. That. We. Looking. To. Actually. Physically. Meet. Together. Either. In. Church. Or.

In. Home. But. The. Main. Point. That. I. I. Am. Trying. To. Get. Across. Is. This. That. For. Them. Their. Commitment. To. Christ. And. To. One. Another. Was.

Something. That. Expressed. It. It. It. It. It. Was. Something. That. Affected. Them. Every. Day. And. It.

[25 : 47] Was. Something. That. They. Demonstrated. Every. Day. And. There. Are. Many. Different. Ways. In. Which. We. Can. Do. That. As. Well. If.

Our. Christianity. Is. A. Sunday. Only. Christianity. Or. A. Christianity. That's. Reserved. For. When. We're. In. Church.

Alone. It's. No. Christianity. At. All. Genuine. Christianity. Must. Affect. Us. Every. Day. And.

All. Who. See. Us. And. Know. Us. Have. A. Right. To. See. Every. Day. By. The. Way. We. Live. That.

We. Are. The. Lord's. People. And. It's. Something. That. We. Must. Seek. After. More. And. More. The. Grace. To. Glorify. God.

[26 : 39] Every. Day. Of. The. Week. Every. Minute. Of. Every. Hour. Of. Every. Day. Of. The. Week. Finally.

've. Punkt Bamunya. There. Here. Before.

clubs. Everywhere. They. a source of great delight to other people. They ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. They did these things not just because they had to, but because they wanted to.

For them, their Christianity was something that came from the heart. It was something real. It was something that they enjoyed. They didn't regard their Christian commitment as anything other than a great delight.

[27 : 56] Because they were delighting themselves in God. Their hearts were given over to these things. How about us?

Do we regard our Christianity as a duty alone? Of course it's a duty. But do we regard it first and foremost as our greatest delight and joy?

Man's to bend is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. And that enjoyment must begin here. And if we don't enjoy God here, we're not going to enjoy God hereafter.

There's no use us tonight imagining that we're going to enjoy God in heaven if we know nothing of what it is to enjoy Him here on earth.

According to the psalmist, God was His cheapest joy. His love was better than life. He meant more than anything that this world could offer.

[29 : 07] What about us? Are we glad tonight because He has made us glad? And are we, in our lives, sincere before God and man?

The word sincere in the Latin is the old word sinicere, without wax. And the idea behind it is that sometimes somebody would have a precious vase and something would happen to the vase and there might be a very, very slight flaw in it and they would try to sell it.

And they would go along to the local shop and they would ask it to sell the vase for them. And the chap would take it and he would agree to sell it.

But when he placed it in the window, he knew that the sunlight would show up the crack. So what he would do beforehand would be to put a little bit of wax in.

The crack in order that it might not show up. But of course, the wax would show up as the sun shone. And the old person could see that the vessel or the vase or whatever it was, was flawed.

- [30 : 32] And it's from that, that this word sincere without carry comes. Without wax. And we've been told here that they were without wax.
- As they worshipped God. They were genuine. They were genuine article. They were real. There was nothing superficial.
- There was nothing false. About them. Tonight, on the Friday, before the communion, is that not what we want to be as well? sincere, sincere, without wax.
- Before God. They ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God. Their lives were given over to the praise of their God.
- There was nothing that they loved more. And as a result, we're told something amazing. That they enjoyed the favour of all the people.
- [31 : 36] You know, sometimes, our Christian commitment will land us in conflict with people. But there are other times when our Christian commitment will be such as will make others realise that we have something that they don't.
- and will make them seek that something for themselves. And it seems to me as if that was what was happening here. The world took note of the church.
- And the world said, you people have something that's different, something special. And we want it too. What do I base that remark on?
- On this, that the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. God was added to their number as a result of the effect of their witness on the world.
- God was using their witness to nourish for himself. And the church grew and multiplied. And is that not what we want to?
- [32 : 50] Of course it is. We want to see the church grow. We want to see the church multiply. We want the Lord to add to the church. At this communion time, we want the Lord to add to the church.
- But who do we want the Lord to add to the church? Those who are being saved. Men and women, boys and girls, whom the Lord, by his grace, brings from darkness to light and from death to life.
- Brings from the broad path that leads to destruction to the narrow path that leads to life. Delivers men and women from their guilt and misery.
- Brings them into fellowship with God. Sillings them for time and for eternity. That was what the church was like at Pentecost.
- A growing church as the Lord added those who were being saved to that number. Is that not what we want at this communion? To see signs that we are such a church.
- [34 : 02] Is that not our desire to? That the Lord would add to our number those who are being saved. That God would work here even as he worked there so long ago.
- I began this service tonight by referring to the word for today and to the way in which this passage was highlighted there this morning in relation to what it truly means to be a Christian.
- But at the end of this morning's reading there was the reminder that we don't have in this passage but that we do have in the word of God that it costs to be a Christian.
- That there is such a famous opposition, persecution to face. And so tonight as we have sought to present this very positive picture of what it means to be a child of God and of what it means to belong to the church of Jesus Christ let's also remind ourselves that it applies to pay.
- The cost of Christian discipleship is one that we're all being challenged with as we open the scriptures and read them.

[35 : 32] But how can we tonight not be prepared to pay whatever price we need to pay for following Jesus when he paid the ultimate price that we might be his people.

And if tonight we know what God has done for us in Christ then let's see T. Studd the creditor whom I've quoted so often will say if Jesus Christ be God and died for me then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him.

And all the children of God said Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.