

Continue Steadfast Acts 2:42

In the 2nd chapter of Acts, we have Peter teaching a multitude in Jerusalem on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost. At the conclusion of Peter's sermon, many people believed and obeyed Peter's instructions on what they needed to do. Some 3000 people became Christians on that day (Vs 41). Now what? They didn't have any way of knowing about this new Christian movement other than what Peter and the apostles told them. They didn't have the Bible to read as we have today. (*Acts 2:40*) **And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.** They were told many other words and it seems that once they were told what they needed to do, they obeyed. (*Acts 2:42*) **And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.** They continued in what they were taught. V42 is a marvelous commentary on the stability of this group of early Christians. The term "continued steadfastly" carries the idea of persistence. This is a significant passage for us today because it teaches us the importance of following the pattern set forth before us by the example of the apostles. What they did in the name of religion, we should do. Four items are emphasized in this text.

First of all, we are to CONTINUE steadfastly in their doctrine. It's not uncommon today to see people "continuing" in a cause started by someone else. Maybe it's a family member carrying on a family business. Frequently in ranching/farming you see a third/fourth generation carrying on the family dream. So, we are to continue or carry on in the apostle's doctrine. The apostles' teaching reveals the standard of authority to which we should submit and their teachings/commandments do not change with time. Their message remains the same. Paul wrote in (*Galatians 1:7-9*) **Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. {8} But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.** This purity of the gospel was so important to the church that Paul repeated his warning again in the next verse and then tells us why in vs. 12 his teaching was so important. (*Galatians 1:12*) **For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.**

The apostles spoke by inspiration from God himself via the Holy Spirit. (*2 Peter 1:21*) **For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.** These men did not inject their own bias or thoughts, but rather they taught what had received. Paul understood this so he wrote to Christians in Corinth and said, (*1 Corinthians 2:13*) **Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.**

The doctrine we received from the apostle's is from God, so when the apostles give us teachings, we ought to heed their word. When they write that husbands/fathers should love their wives and bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, then that's what husbands/fathers should do. When we are instructed to abstain from fleshly lust, then we need to avoid situations in which we are vulnerable. When the apostles tell us to love the brethren, then that's exactly what we are expected to do.

From our text, not only are we to continue in doctrine, but in fellowship. (*Acts 2:42*) **And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship.** When we think about fellowship, we generally think about spending time together coupled with a meal together, and that is indeed fellowship. But the term fellowship is broader than that. It means to "share in common." This is why Paul could write in the short book of Philippians of **three** different types of fellowship. (*Philippians 1:5*) **fellowship in the gospel ...** (*Philippians 2:1*) **fellowship of the Spirit...**, (*Phil 3:10*) **... the fellowship of his sufferings.** You see, the church in Philippi was sharing with Paul in the teaching of the gospel and in the bond of the Spirit and with his suffering for the

cause of Christ. Other places the term fellowship embraces the idea of sharing in financial support, or what we call “contribution” or “the giving of our means.” That’s the idea here. The early church complied with the apostles teaching and they were generous with their giving. Let’s look at what the Bible teaches about giving.

Often today we hear about people tithing and by that they mean they give 10%. That may be a good rule of thumb to follow, but it is not what the Law of Christ teaches. Many years ago, when God was dealing with the children of Israel back in the OT, he gave them specific laws and commandments. They were guided by the Law of Moses which we call the Ten Commandment plus additional ceremonial laws to govern other activities such as what type of animals they could/not eat, how to/when to offer different types of sacrifices, how to deal with disobedient children and law breakers, etc. As part of these ceremonial laws, they were commanded to tithe. *(Leviticus 27:32) And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.* We are first introduced to the tithe way back in Gen 14:18-20 where Abraham presented a tithe to the priest-king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek. The custom was in place, so God included it as a command when he gave his law to the Israelites and here is why.

When the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land, the Levites, one of the 12 tribes, did not receive any territory. Instead, they were to be scattered throughout the land in designated cities. Their duties were to perform the worship ceremonies. Since they did not occupy any land and thus had no way of making a livelihood, the other 11 tribes were to give 10% of their earnings in support of the Levites. *(Numbers 18:20-21) And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. {21} And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

(Numbers 18:24) But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore, I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. Now this giving was serious in the eyes of the Lord because when the people began to cut corners and not offer the best they had; they were described in Malachi 3:8 as robbing God. So, the giving of 10% was a command given to the people living under the Law of Moses.

Today, this Law of Moses has been replaced with a new/better law, a better covenant. The first law had limitations. *(Hebrews 8:7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.* This second law is the law of Christ. By his death, he nailed that old law to the cross (Col 2:14) and put his testament into effect. This is the law under which we live. We do not live under that old Law of Moses. While the old law embraced tithing, the new law of Christ does not teach such. Here is what the Law of Christ teaches on giving. *(1 Corinthians 16:1-2) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. {2} Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

(2 Corinthians 9:6-7) But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. {7} Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. Now here is what we learn from these two passages. First of all, the reason for giving was to take care of other saints in need. There were saints in and around Jerusalem in need and the disciples *(Acts 11:29-30) ... every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: {30} Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.* This sharing was fellowship. Paul instructs the church to gather a collection on the first day of the week (every Sunday) so that there would be sufficient funds to help the needy when he arrived. He is teaching a principle to give on Sundays in order to do the work of the Lord.

The text also teaches us about our attitude in giving. **First**, we are to purpose in our hearts what we plan to give and the amount is determined by our prosperity. The idea of purposing in your heart is planning in

advance what you will give. If when the collection plate is being passed and you start digging in your pocket or purse to see what you have left over to give, that's not purposing in your heart. I endorse the idea of having a personal budget and if you make out a budget, I suggest you put right at the top of that budget what you purpose to give to the church. Again (*Acts 11:29-30*) **every man** (gave) **according to his ability**.

2 Corinthians 9 expands on our attitude toward giving by telling us that we are to give generously and non-grudgingly. Verse 6 reminds us of a principle in life that you reap what you sow. The giver is to have a willing heart and a sincere desire to participate in the offering. He is to give cheerfully. God is not so much interested in our money as He is in our willingness and attitude in giving because your giving is a reflection of where your heart is. Remember what Jesus said in (*Matthew 6:21*) **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**. So, the Lord does not specify that you give 10% but rather he says for us to plan our giving and give generously. 2 Corinthians 9:7 tells us that our giving is not of necessity but willingly and cheerfully.

No. 3. (Acts 2:42) And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread. These early Christians continued in the apostle's example regarding the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted this ceremony the night before his crucifixion and the New Testament Christians partook of those emblems on a regular basis. They continued in the apostle's practice. (*1 Cor 11:23-26*) **For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: {24} And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. {25} After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. {26} For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come**. The express "for as often" implies some regularity. If this was all that was said on the subject, then we would be in scriptural authority to partake of the Lord's Supper once a month, twice a year or perhaps even once a year as so many practice. But we are not left out in the cold to wonder how often because of apostle's example. (*Acts 20:7*) **And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight**. The early church came together on Sunday, the first day of the week for the purpose of breaking of bread – that's partaking of the Lord's Supper. So, if we are to continue in the apostle's doctrine, then we too will partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

Now some think if you partake of the Lord's Supper every week, then it loses its significance. Now while that may be true for some, the Lord puts the responsibility on each of us to partake of the emblems in the proper frame of mind. We are to remember. (*1 Corinthians 11:28-30 KJV*) **But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. {29} For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. {30} For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep**. We have an individual responsibility to partake in a worthily manner. Now this does not mean that our lives during the past week have to be without sin in order for us to be worthy. It's not talking about our character being worthy. Rather, it means that our attitude during partaking ought to be worthy. That means that we ought to reflect back on the cross and remember what Jesus did for us by offering his body and shedding his blood for us. Vs 30 tells us that some during Paul's day had a problem with remembering and there are some that have the same problem today. So, during the Lord's Supper, let us focus on the significance of these emblems and partake of them in a worthily manner.

(*Acts 2:42*) **And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers**. No doubt prayer was a vital part of the Christian's life. Much could be said about prayer, but time will not permit. So, let me say, if you do not have an active prayer life to God almighty, then you are missing out on one of the greatest blessing made available to the children of God. Jesus told his

disciples on one occasion to offer their prayers to God, our Heavenly Father. Now only the child of God has the right to address God as Father. To become a child of God is to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (*Galatians 3:26-29*) *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. {28} There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. {29} And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* (Notice that it is baptism that puts one into Christ.

Invitation.