



## 'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #4

Acts 2:42 - 3:16 (NASB)

Pages 43-56 in *'Acts For Everyone' (Part1)* by N. T. Wright

### Acts 2:42-47 (NASB)

*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* <sup>43</sup> Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> **And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;** <sup>45</sup> and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day **continuing with one mind** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and **having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.**

**Q: Acts 2:42 is often regarded as "the four marks of the Church." Why?**

- "These four go together. You can't separate them, or leave one out, without damage to the whole thing."
  - "Where no attention is given to teaching, and constant, lifelong learning, people quickly revert to the worldview or mindset of the surrounding culture, and end up with their minds shaped by whichever social pressures are most persuasive, with Jesus somewhere around as a pale influence or memory."
  - "Where people ignore the common life of the Christian family, (the technical term often used is '**fellowship**', which is more than friendship but not less), they become isolated and often find it difficult to sustain a living **faith**."
  - "Where people no longer share regularly in 'the breaking of bread', (the early Christian term for the

simple meal that took them back to the Upper Room 'in remembrance of Jesus'), they are failing to raise the flag which says 'Jesus' death and resurrection are the center of everything' (see [1Cor. 11:26](#))."

- "And whenever people do all these things but neglect prayer, they are quite simply forgetting that Christians are supposed to be **heaven-and-earth** people. Prayer makes no sense whatever – unless heaven and earth are designed to be joined together, and we can share in that already." P.44-45

**Q: What does Luke's description of the early Church having "all things in common" tell us about how they saw themselves?**

- "The earliest Christians lived as a single family. When you live together as a family under one roof, you don't see this chair, this table, this bottle of milk, this loaf of bread, as 'mine' rather than 'yours.' The breadwinners in the household don't see the money they bring in as 'theirs' rather than belonging to the whole household. That's part of what it means to be a family. In the ancient world, this was often highlighted by members of a family all working in the same trade or business together, so that you might have three generations, including cousins, working alongside one another, trusting each other, sharing a common purse out of which everyone got what they needed. The early Christian impulse was to see things exactly like that. We are 'family!'" P. 45-46

**Q: What was the impact of the early Church's "shared life" on the world around them?**

- They found themselves being thought highly of by the people around them, and the Lord was bringing in new believers every day. ([Vs. 47](#))

## Acts 3:1-10

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. <sup>2</sup> And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. <sup>4</sup> **But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!"** <sup>5</sup> And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> **But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!"** <sup>7</sup> And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. <sup>8</sup> With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and **he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.** <sup>9</sup> And all the people saw him walking and praising God; <sup>10</sup> and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

### **Q: What does Peter's response tell us?**

- "Peter's response is all the more interesting in view of what we heard at the end of the previous chapter about the believers sharing their property. **Money had stopped being the most important thing for them.** There was a new power, a new kind of **life**, which they had discovered. So what Peter said was the natural response. **He didn't have money, but he had something much better,** something of a different order entirely. He didn't even ask the lame man if he would like to be healed. He just went ahead and healed in the name of Jesus." P. 50

### **Q: Why does Peter say, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk"?**

- There is power in Jesus' name!
- "The idea of names having power is strange to those of us

who live in the modern western world (though we sometimes catch a dim echo of it when some important person, a civic or business leader, or perhaps a senior politician, says, 'Just mention my name, and they'll let you in'). But most people in the first-century world, and many people in non-Western countries today, know exactly what's going on here. Of course names carry power: the power of magic, the invocation of hidden forces, the summoning up of new possibilities beyond normal human ability. And the point which resonates through the narrative from now on is this: the name 'Jesus' now carries that power. Mention His name, and new things will happen. This is as true now as it ever was. In this story, it turned a disabled man who sat outside the Temple into a worshipper who went all the way in." P. 50-51

- "Using the name of Jesus isn't a matter of a new kind of magic, mumbling a secret word, a kind of abracadabra, which will make things happen automatically. There has to be faith, faith in the one who speaks the Name, faith in the one who hears it. Other names, used in magic, keep people enslaved to the power of the name itself and the one who invokes it. The Name of Jesus makes people grow up, become whole people, rinsed out and renewed, standing on their own feet literally (as the lame man was now), morally, spiritually, and personally. ... Believing in Him and in the power of His Name is the way to wholeness, in the twenty-first century just as in the first." P. 56

### **Q: What is the significance that this happened outside the Temple?**

- "But the demonstration of the power of Jesus' name took place not in the Temple, but outside the gate. God is on the move, not confined within the institution, breaking out into new worlds, leaving behind the shrine which had become a place of worldly power and resistance to His purposes. This theme will come to a head four chapters from now.

Whereas Luke's gospel began and ended in the Temple, what he is telling us now is that the good news of Jesus, though beginning in Jerusalem, is starting to reach outside to anyone and everyone who needs it." P. 52.

### **Acts 3:11-16**

While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. <sup>12</sup> But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? <sup>13</sup> **"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. <sup>14</sup> "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> but **put to death the Prince of life**, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.**

**Q: Why does Peter start his address to the people with, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers"?**

- "This way of referring to God is actually a quotation from the book of Exodus (3:6). ... The point is this: Exodus 3 is the moment when God calls Moses, at the burning bush, and tells him to go back from the desert into Egypt and to lead His people out from slavery into freedom." P. 53
- "Peter, quoting this passage, is saying, 'It's happening again!'" P. 54
- "Peter, in other words, is doing what all the early Christians did all the time. Faced with a question to which the answer has something to do with Jesus, he goes back in his mind to the Exodus. That was when God acted spectacularly to fulfill His promises, and rescued His

people. That was when they sacrificed the Passover Lamb, when they came through the water, when they were given the law, when they went off in search of their inheritance. All these themes jostle together in the New Testament, clustering around the question of who Jesus is and how it is that God acts through Him.

**Q: Why does Peter refer to Jesus as, "the Prince of Life"?**

- "The word 'prince' here can also mean 'the one who initiates something': He is not so much the ruler *over* 'life', as the sovereign one who brings life, who *initiates* new life, who pioneers the way through death, decay, and corruption, and out the other side into a kind of 'life' that nobody had imagined before. ...Wherever He went, He brought new life, the life which indicated that God was now in charge. This makes it all the more ridiculous, paradoxical even, that His own people rejected Him and sent Him to His death: they *killed* the prince of *life*! But, of course, God raised Him up – the resurrection continues to be at the heart of the proclamation of the church, and the explanation of why new life is happening – so that His work of bringing new life continues unchecked." P. 55

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### **Follow Up Assignment**

- Q: How is our church doing at living the "shared life"?
- What are you doing to help our church live the "shared life"?
- Q: Has money stopped being the most important thing you have to give?
- Q: Peter and John fixed their gaze at the lame man and told him to look at them. Do you really look at those around you who need Jesus?
- Are you willing to tell people to look at you?
  - If they do, what will they see?