02/08/2024 03:44 Status: #Sermon Tags: [First-Century-Church] Passage: [Acts2:40-45] # First Century Church

# Introduction

* According to a [Gallup poll](https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx) “US Church Membership has fallen below half for the first time”
  + The first time this poll was conducted was in 1937 where 73% of Americans claimed to be “a part of a church”
  + For the next six decades that percentage stayed around 70%
  + By 2020, that number had dropped to 47%
* So what how do we prevent this from being the case?
  + I am not here to suggest any new idea or profound method of evangelism.
  + I would suggest that a good start is to look at the first century church and how they grew.
* I want to especially notice what I believe to be key attributes which point to the success of the first century church

# Body

* Fellowship of the First Century
  + Greek word - Koinoia
    - Used to mean fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation
    - a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship
    - The word is defined for us and exemplified in verses 44 and 45
    - Those who have been in the military might consider the fellowship you have with your fellow soldiers - something in common
  + Notice, they were together **daily**!
    - Paul taught to bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)
      * They were together all the time, so that they could bear each other’s burdens; they knew what their brothers needed.
      * It was much deeper than a group of friends, it was family!
    - This formula of being together all the time, allowed them to grow closer as they grew closer to God.
  + Not only did they spend time with one another, they also gave to each other as was needed [[1]](#footnote-22)
  + It seems that some churches were very quickly moved from the “traditions” of this first body (e.g Corinth)
  + If we are honest, are we like the earliest example of the church in this sense?
    - We talk about how we are the first century church; but to my shame, we might have failed in this regard.
    - Sometimes I wonder if we; like the people of Israel did at times (Hos 6:6), do the right things with the wrong attitude
    - No doubt, there love for one another was an integral part of their growth (spiritual and numerical).
* The Doctrine of the First Century
  + Paul summed the first century in Eph 4:1.
    - Notice the connection Paul makes between unity with the doctrine they were teaching
    - Briefly notice the doctrine he was teaching we must have in common!
      * One body - defined church earlier (Eph 1:22-23).
      * One Spirit - There is no other word from the Spirit than that which we have in the Bible
      * One hope - the resurrection is our hope (1 Cor 15)
      * One baptism - not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet 3:21)
    - There might be implications in each of these categories, but this is the bedrock of Christian faith
  + We need to be on the same page in regards to doctrine - perhaps especially the doctrine which Paul lay out here.
    - It is why Paul told Timothy to continue in diligence or study in order to be a good workman (2 Tim 2:15)
    - This is why the Bereans were noble (Acts 17:11).
    - Finally, in order to be certain that we are not being carried away by “another” gospel, we must know what the true gospel is (Gal 1:6).
* The History of Christendom
  + When we look back at Christendom and its evolution throughout the centuries, we can find clear departures from God’s word
  + For example - perhaps the first departure was in organization
    - Instead of having overseers in each autonomous church as prescribed by Paul (Titus 1:5, 1 Tim 5), the church began to appoint parish overseers - an elder over several churches
    - Then from there we reach the papacy
  + Point is somewhere along the way, we especially lost the brotherly love which Luke expressed in the first century church.
    - The idea that laity were not able to understand the Scriptures is a killer to Christianity; as people were not allowed to study.
    - The church also adopted the mass system which taught “church” was only necessary on special occasion.

# References

Martyr, Justin. The Writings of Justin Martyr (Annotated) (p. 19). Logia. Kindle Edition.

1. we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate to every one in need; [↑](#footnote-ref-22)