

Acts

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[0 : 0 0] ...to the chapter that we read together, the second of the Acts of the Apostles, and the last clause in the 47th verse. The last clause in the chapter, in fact. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Now what is your mind with regard to the measure of the church of God?

Do you measure it according, as it were, to the unfoldings of God's purposes in the gospel era, that is the New Testament, and subsequent experiences among the people of God? Or do you consider the church of God from the beginning? That God, from the beginning of the world, God separated to himself a people for his praise. There were two brothers, Cain and Abel. Cain was a member of the church by God's choice, God's grace, God's mercy, God's power.

The distinction that existed between Cain and Abel was not man's work. It was God's work.

God, as it were, separated him in an everlasting way from his brother, because God had chosen him in Christ Jesus to eternal life. You say, but the world went on for 4,000 years before Christ appeared. Surely there weren't Christians. My friends, there's no soul, there's no son or daughter of Adam in heaven who wasn't a Christian. Abel, by the very sacrifice that he offered, manifests an understanding of salvation through the Son of God.

God, he didn't bring, he didn't bring as Cain, a sacrifice of the fruits of the earth. There was a death, there was a shedding of blood, there was a sacrifice that had in it a clear, positive definition that his eye of faith by the teaching of the Spirit of God was resting upon the Son of God.

[3 : 3 5] And I believe these Old Testament characters would fall into the designations of Abraham. Abraham saw my day and was glad, said the Lord himself. And my friends, this is the only foundation of reconciliation the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these Old Testament characters, they were brought by God's Spirit into such an understanding of those things that should eventually come to pass, that they were virtually added to the Church. I could run through, could I not, the history of the saints in Old Testament times. And we realise their experiences varied greatly. They had their trials, they had their troubles and temptations, they had their sadnesses to experience. But God used those things. And we have in the 11th of Hebrews a very wonderful record of the way God exercised his people in faith toward himself and the 11th of Hebrews a very powerful faith. And we hope that the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can, without question, embrace them as brothers and sisters in the faith. Now, this is the Church, isn't it? This is the Church. The people whom God has set apart from eternity and to eternity as his people, his church.

now we have I know in the New Testament opening here the wonderful miracle of the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit I don't believe there was ever anything like it in the past and I don't think there's been anything just the same in subsequent years when 3,000 souls have been born again of the Spirit under one sermon and not just as it were people with a similar background from a similar period of time or from even the same locality they were from various quarters drawn together by the sovereign purposes of God to listen to that memorable sermon that Peter preached when he preached to the multitude at Pentecost but my friends what was the secret of the success of Peter's ministry it was what I was trying to speak of this morning the power of the Spirit attending the Word souls as it were being opened by the Holy Ghost to receive the doctrine of Christ and the way of God in salvation and they responded together they felt as it were that drawing roaring the Spirit to the doctrine and they wished in a public way and manner to show their adherence to the principles of godliness they were baptized they were baptized yes yes there was a tremendous influx if I might use that expression cautiously by God's grace into the church at the beginning as it were of the apostolic era the beginning when the Spirit was poured out in a copious way from on high the day of Pentecost and the second chapter opens and when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place now can't you see the shepherd of Israel gathering together a great company and we go on in that chapter to read do we not some of the places from which they came but

Parthians Medes Elamites dwellers in Mesopotamia in Judea Cappadocia Pontus Asia Pridia Pamphylia in Egypt in the parts of Libya about Cyrene strangers of Rome Jews and proselytes Cretes and Arabians what a gathering together of a cosmopolitan crowd if you like to speak with reverence but this was the day of Pentecost this was when the Lord was going to very powerfully and graciously exhibit his sufficiency to overrule all those natural divisions and separations which exist among men and the pouring of his spirit united them united them united them in spirit and then united them in the outward manifestation of the blessing that they had received in their hearts together do we look upon

Pentecost as a demonstration of what the Lord can do you say but it was absolutely marvellous the extent of the blessing the reaching out as it were of the arm of omnipotence to various parts and places and people and bringing them all into union together to hear what the apostle Peter had to say man to man if we're looking just at a physical relationship but when we think of the power that was operating as they listened to Peter's testimony we realise that God was speaking God spoke to them their hearts melted as it were under the power of the truth as he laid before them the wicked hands that had taken the

Saviour and crucified him upon Calvary's tree now exalted to the right hand of God as in resurrection power to exercise himself in the defence and the deliverance of his people to the end of time I want to come then to this point and the Lord added to the church I'm emphasising a point that I tried to emphasise this morning that spiritual things are heavenly things the Lord added to the church the Lord added to the church it wasn't just an ordinary change of mind and attitude it was the Lord working and my friends the Lord can work and the

[12 : 38] Lord has worked and the Lord will work because the church is his peculiar treasure in the unfolding of time here below and the Lord added to the church obviously in the fellowship of these people under the power of the truth there was a great liberty or liberation from natural considerations fear came upon every soul many wonders and signs were done by the apostles and all that believed were together and had all things common and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need now can you see how they were freed liberated from what is so much a modern disease that is possessions possessions worldly possessions it seems as though they said well everybody should share everybody shall benefit and they were already as it were in a very temporal way to part with their belongings if so be others stood in need of it and that is one of the influences of the spirit to liberate us from being over anxious about things temporal while we seek as it were to do under God those things that are for the benefit others especially within the church but also outside of the church do good unto all men especially to the household of faith is the mind of God revealed well now we have this and all and all that believed were together and had all things come and sold

I read that and they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart this is sanctification by the spirit look how the temple was as it were a place where they met together in one accord they were so united they were so blessed with the same love toward each other that to be in one another's company in the house of God was something most desirable most sought after and I believe these things in themselves are evidences of the work of the spirit in our souls my friends can we say we love the house of God can we say we love the people of God can we say the fellowship of the saints is precious to us so that when an opportunity is afforded to us we don't need pressure to incline our hearts toward the sanctuary we would run there because they're my best friends my kindred dwell there

God my saviour reigns I love the habitation of thine house and the place where thine honour dwelleth these scriptures evidence the sanctifying grace of the spirit in the fruits of it now praising God and having favour with all the people yes this was the wonderful effect of those who were set apart by God to especially carry forward the ordinances and the practices of gospel worship how important it is to keep in mind who it is that brings these blessings upon us or to us praising

God praising God God have you got anything to praise God about for the change that God has made in your heart and in your outlook by his sanctifying grace and I underscore grace because we're not worthy of heavenly blessings and benefits in and of ourselves it's free grace that saves praise God and having favour with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved now the characteristics that I just so briefly run through surely they are connected with the blessing that continually came to them when they were in fellowship within the church the

Lord added to the church daily now I bring this forward because I feel it's so important the condition of a church spiritually I believe brings forth from the hand of God those things which are in harmony with their spiritual state now my friends when a church and sadly I've had experience of this myself when a church is in this attitude of contention and strife there's not much movement of the spirit there's not much adding by the Lord you say well nobody would join a church in such a state as that well in in great measure that's true is the

[20 : 01] Lord going to incline hearts into a fellowship that is full of contention and strife it's like casting a Christian to the lions isn't it as they did in Rome in those days of persecution no my friends I believe the Lord withholds the blessing because the spirit is not right here the Lord added to the we see that the church was in as it were the dawn of a beautiful spiritual day when the power of the spirit was so present and prevalent that many not only here at Jerusalem but in those places round about realised the majesty and glory of the workings of

God in sinners souls and the Lord added to the church daily now I suppose it would be right for me to say that those that really fear God and those that really love the cause of Jesus Christ rejoice in this work of God adding to the church adding to the church you know sometimes I've been to places to preach in my little ministry and a deacon has said to me you know we've had nobody join for 10 years or 12 years or something long period of time and my inclination is to ask the question why why the

Lord is not short of power the power that he exercised at Pentecost is a demonstration of the power with which he is unchangeably able to work as it pleases him I don't mean to suggest that we're going to have a succession of Pentecostal experiences as history unfolds but there have been times of great blessing when churches in the fear of God and in the exercises of grace have been enlarged suddenly and copiously by the good hand of the Lord God upon them baptisms have not always been rare occasions in the history of the church there have been seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and a wonderful thing it is and when this is not the experience it's right that we as churches should look at ourselves and say why is not the Lord blessing us what is grieving him what is occasioning the withholding of this

God glorifying and church profiting experience of additions being brought into the fellowship by the irresistible power of divine love because this is a true measure of reaction to the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost I will run in the way of thy commandment as thou shalt enlarge my heart and when the Lord is enlarging the hearts of his people my friends they don't want dragging they want freedom to exercise their love in a practical way and manner and the Lord added to the church now the

Lord is adding to the church I don't mean I don't want to give a wrong impression that the Lord as it were has withdrawn himself so from this earth that there is nothing going on as far as the building of the church the Lord is still building the church and he says the gates of hell shall not prevail against it so we can say that there is an ongoing work in the face of all satanic opposition but I'm thinking more particularly in the context of our own country and I might say the Lord's work is going on and there was a time when the Lord's work went on here and the Lord was adding to the church we read historically of wonderful seasons of additions being constrained to join the church of God and you know when the

[25 : 52] Lord sanctifies by his grace the heart of a man a woman or a child the church is a blessed spot isn't it the people of God are the people we look at the world sometimes and the enjoyment of church fellowship and we say poor world poor world what have they got they don't know anything of real happiness of an enduring nature they don't know what it is to be encompassed with the prayers of the godly they don't know what it is to be comforted through the precious teaching of God's holy word we have so many avenues of help in the church of God to which the world are total strangers and deprived of some of the greatest experiences that are known to us under the sun but the

Lord added to the church daily and I do feel my friends in some places throughout the world at the moment we hear of wonderful things going on in China I'm not here to form a judgment I'm not in contact with those avenues of information to be able to say I could embrace all of it and say it's God's word from first to last because when God's work often the devil is busy too and sometimes things can get a bit confused in their identity but nevertheless I do believe that the Lord never is absolutely inactive in the history and unfolding of the world and the Lord added to the church daily do you ever stop to think that somewhere in the world somewhere in the world the Lord has been busy to die to die because the

Lord is so jealous of his glory his arm is not shortened that he cannot save his ears not heavy that he cannot hear the Lord's work the building of the church the separating of a people from the Adam fall to his praise to all eternity it's God's work and my friends how great is the sacrifice that God made to the end that this work should be present in the world and surely that work is going on and I would venture to suggest that there scarcely a day if ever passes away when someone somewhere is not added to the church whether in this country or any other part of the universe for you know the scripture declares from every nation kindred and tongue the people of God will be gathered by the grace of

God whatever their colour whatever their language whatever their standards of living the Lord chooses a people from among the people and there are all sorts of conditions and nationalities but representatives universally of his power to save and the Lord adds them to the church there's no disposition in them to be added to the church as they're born naturally but as the Lord opens the eyes of their understanding and blesses them with the influence of his love and grace in their souls they're different they're new creatures they have a different relationship and they realise the blessed people in the earth are the people of

God nobody to compare with them whatever their position and condition in this present life they are the rich among the poor because the world is a poor place without the gospel but the world is a rich place as brought from the bondage of the Adam fall into the life light and liberty of the gospel of Jesus Christ although the Lord added to the church daily the Lord added to the church daily now what is the effect of the work of God as this objective shall be brought to pass the Lord added to the church how does the Lord add to the church well by nature we're dead in trespasses and sins the church by nature is not attractive in that sense that I've tried to delineate in my remarks the poor church and some of us can remember the attitudes of youth when we thought the church and the people of God were anything but the excellent of the earth we may even have entertained thoughts of separating ourselves from the fellowship as soon as we were strong enough and old enough to take an independent mind but the people of God they're brought from death unto life they're brought from ignorance to knowledge they're brought from the awful deceptions of the heart and of

[32 : 55] Satan's temptations that virtually as the Lord begins to draw his people to himself there's a complete change in them what we used to call in general terms a change of heart a change of heart old things pass away and all things become new and my friends the great effect of that work of God in the soul is this we love the things we once hated and we hate the things we once loved and the Lord begins his work of grace in the souls of his people and he convinces them of their condition by nature he brings them to a consciousness of their total unworthiness so much so that they almost despair of ever being added to the church because they feel to be so unlike the people of God so far off from the experiences which the godly talk about but the Lord goes on he adds to the church once he begins to work to salvation in the heart of his people he goes on to its perfection my friends it's an ongoing work of the spirit in spiritual experiences not that those that are the subject of this teaching always can feel that the work is going on and that they're growing in grace sometimes they get to be so far off so cold and barren in their own souls as to wonder whether the beginning was ever worked within them but the

Lord teaches his people they can't keep alive their own soul they can't independently exercise themselves in the realm of godliness they're helpless they're hopeless they're totally dependent upon the grace of god in Jesus Christ now when we see Christ as the saviour able to save to the uttermost my friends and you feel to be perishing sinking in sin to destruction forever I say the door of hope is opened to you by the Holy Spirit and you see a way to escape from the wrath to come you see that your sins are not the prevailing future with regard to your eternity and you begin to see that God has provided for sinners a saviour a saviour now how can you see the work of Christ the love of Christ even in coming down from heaven to earth the love of Christ in living as he did 33 years as a man among men the God man Immanuel God with us but nevertheless he was here in poverty he was here in so many characteristics of privation and persecution but he took every step that the Father gave him to walk out every step never deviated never neglected I do always those things that please him the regulating perfect principle of our Lord Jesus Christ was to do the work that his Father laid upon him and my friends where did that work lead him to well it led him to Calvary it led him to from the highest to the lowest there he was arraigned falsely accused labelled as a deceiver an arch deceiver he finds himself I perhaps ought not to use that expression because it takes somewhat away from the he gave himself a ransom for many he gave himself to be crucified he willingly went to the cross what impelled him in such an act of willingness the love of his heart to the church the love of his heart to the church he he loved the people all his saints are in thy hands my friends we see that in

Calvary the most remarkable evidence of the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich and that's when I speak about the richest the children of God being the richest people on the earth because they are Christ has made them rich he's bestowed upon them in covenant love a future that is beyond their highest ability to comprehend and you know when you see Jesus and you hear his voice and you look at his example he says follow me follow me love really says you know in a natural way let me put this as an illustration

I must hasten to the amen but let me put this in a natural way you know if you really love a person you'll go where they are won't you I didn't I don't think I had a great difficulty presented before me when I was to take my good wife Mary from the farm and all its advantages down in the heart of what was Berkshire now it's Oxfordshire and asked her to come into the city of Coventry I didn't have any trouble because love love prevailed between us she was willing to leave her home and all that environment with its pleasantries to come into the city of Coventry to live love true and this is the relationship isn't it but my friends what about

Christ what about do you know anything about the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost do you know what it is really to sing from your bottom from the bottom of your soul I could from all things parted be but never never Lord from thee look nothing else is comparative compared with Christ in all beside no comeliness I say the one thing needful dearest Lord is to be one with thee the Lord gives us an example and he says follow me my friends it's a wonderful thing the Lord adds to the church he brings the love of Christ to bear upon the heart and the wonderful gift of heaven in the gift of his dear son as their surety and their saviour and they they want to be identified with him they want to be numbered with those that constitute the church of the living God the Lord added to the church don't think this is a natural decision

[42 : 15] I found it to be what I might term a compelling from heaven the work of the spirit I could do no other I could do no other and he needed the power of God to bring me to the decision but when the power of God entered into my heart I ran in the way of his commandments I took it out as a privilege I felt now I'm identified with those with whom I hope to dwell forever and forever and the Lord added to the church and my friends the Lord brings his people to see themselves as lost see themselves as hell deserving see themselves that if they're left to die as they live they'll go into banishment from God in that awful place where hope and mercy can never come and then and then over against the black cloud of condemnation

God puts the bow of his love and his grace in Christ Jesus how wonderful how beautiful is the bow in the cloud isn't it naturally speaking but how beautiful is the bow in the cloud when the Lord brings to your sin stricken conscience a view of Christ Jesus is the way to God Jesus is the way to bliss in this way the fathers trot down from Abel's day to this the Lord adds to the church you know it's a wonderful thing is the drawing influence of divine love and surely that is the cause of us taking up our cross daily that is the cause why we're willing to expose ourselves to the reproach and shame of a godly world of an ungodly world isn't it where I was going to say and I ought to be careful using this word we're pleased to be

Christians we're proud to be Christians was the word I nearly said but hesitated to say my friends there's nobody else has got before them what we have before us as we can find the Lord has been at work in us to bring us from darkness to light from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of his dear son praising God praising God and having favour with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved now I'm just going to finish with a question some of you have known what I've been talking about bless God and you can look back and realise there was a time in your life when the

Lord really laid his commandment upon your heart and you felt drawn with love to run in the way of gospel obedience are there are there any here this evening that have got no concern about the ordinance no concern about the call of Christ follow me no concern about the celebration of the supper do this in remembrance of me you're living shall I say in a world that's wherein this is to you meaningless oh my friend may God have mercy upon your soul and may you in God's full time and own time be brought under the compelling power of the love of Christ shed abroad by the Holy Spirit that all your difficulties and all your indifferences will melt like snow in the sun as the sun of righteousness shall rise upon you with healing in his wings that's the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved

Amen the Lord will there will be a prayer meeting on Friday evening Mr H Mercer is engaged to be here next Lord there all God willing be a quarterly church meeting tomorrow evening to commence at 7 o'clock in 512 to 532 thy church O Lord who's planted here O make it to the prince with numbers blessed with filial fear and joy heavenly peace in 512 to 132■■■ do to everybody to

[48 : 20] Israel have a chili wat