

The Transformational Power of Salvation

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⁴¹ Then those who gladly^[a] received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church^[b] daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:41-47) New King James Version.

Dr. John Phillips in his book entitled ***Exploring Acts*** listed the benefits of salvation in the following manner:

- a. A Saved People (2:41a)
- b. A Separated People (2:41b)
- c. A Steadfast People (2:42)
- d. A Sanctified People (2:43a)
- e. A Spectacular People (2:43b)
- f. A Single People (2:44)
- g. A Sacrificial People (2:45)
- h. A Spiritual People (2:46)
- i. A Singing People (2:47a)
- j. A Successful People (2:47b)

I borrowed his outline for my lesson this past Sunday because it represented in a very concise way the outcomes of obeying the gospel. The targeting of specific outcomes in specific verses was a way in which people could understand the significance of the new birth. I hope now in my own humble manner to look into the breakdowns provided by Dr. Phillips, and through other scriptures bring to life this process of transformation.

A Saved People

By obeying the gospel on Pentecost, people were saved from their past sins. Peter spoke of the remission of sins in Acts 2:38. The word "remission" is defined as forgiveness of sins. The strength of that forgiveness is based on two factors in the case of this brief study. First, it is based on the one who forgives. Secondly, it considers that which was done to accomplish the act of the first. There are two parties in this process. God is the one who forgives. Seeing that he is God, no one can question his act of forgiveness or the thoroughness of that forgiveness. The sacrifice of Jesus provided the means for the forgiveness of God. His shed blood in his innocent and holy state for the sins of mankind met the full requirement of God for men to be forgiven upon meeting conditions of forgiveness. The prophet Jeremiah stated what God had said in Jeremiah 31:34.

“People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me,” says the LORD. “For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done.” *New English Translation*). So, the initial result of obeying the gospel or entering the new birth is the forgiveness of sin or salvation from sin—thus a “saved people.”

A Separated People

Those who were baptized after hearing Peter’s sermon on Pentecost were separated from those who weren’t. Considering Luke’s account in Acts, there were quite a few folk in Jerusalem on that day.

⁵ *Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.*
⁶ *When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.* ⁷ *Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?”* ⁸ *Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?* ⁹ *Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,* ¹⁰ *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome* ¹¹ *(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”*

Given this diverse group, one may reckon that 3,000 people were in the minority. Those baptized into Christ that day were indeed a separated people. Their allegiance was not with Moses and the Law but of Christ and the new covenant. They had become the remnant of Jews who had come to God through Christ. I should say rather the beginning of the remnant for other Jews had come to the faith (5:14). We, too, are a separated people--separated from the world and its enticement, separated for use by the Lord in the furtherance of his kingdom. In terms of identification, our behavior should be such that the world will confess that we are different from them in thought and action. The world should be witnesses to the fact that there is nothing about us that it considers its own.

A Steadfast People

Firm in belief and ***immovable*** are words that define ***steadfast***. Now the idea presented by Acts 2:42 is to have these terms associated with the apostles’ doctrine and the manner in which the infant church observed that doctrine. ⁴² *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* The only doctrine that is authentically associated with the teachings of Christ is the apostles’ doctrine.

¹² *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* ¹³ *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.* (John 16:12, 13).

I am a firm believer that the term ‘steadfastly’ is not only associated with the doctrine but also with fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. It embraces to the same degree all that it touches. It is a characteristic of the cup of sincerity filled to the brim with faith.

A Sanctified People

⁴³ *And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. KJV.*

⁴³ *Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. NIV.*

The term **fear** in the King James Version is rendered **awe** in New International Version. Awe means an overwhelming sense of reverence and admiration. But how does this relate to sanctification? How can these two verses mean the same thing? I will answer the second question first, and by answering it, I will provide the answer to the first question. The New International Version connects the awe with the miracles. The New Revised Standard version does the same. ***Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.*** Though the King James Version seems to separate the ideas, they are indeed united. Let me share with you how. The many miracles and signs were a confirmation that the apostles’ doctrine indeed came from heaven. ⁴³ Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ***Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it (Mark 16:20).*** This confirmation coming from heaven provided the means of seeing the presence of the Lord in the work of the apostles. That being the case, it was also a confirmation of their salvation. This obedient group now saved from past sins had the agent of the Holy Spirit at work in them developing sanctification. The separation of the believer from the world for God is what sanctification is about.

A Spectacular People

The power of miracles performed by the apostles represented the power of God. That God would give such powers to men is astounding in itself. Even looking back some almost twenty centuries, men with such power exceeds our ability to fathom. None today can do such, so we have no point of reference. The idea of healing the sick in the manner in which it was done is as astounding to us as it was with them back then. This indeed indicates something quite spectacular that miracles similar to those performed by Jesus were being done by his apostles—an indication of the Lord’s presence in them as well as his presence on the right hand of God.

A Single People

All the believers were together and had everything in common. This makes one think of the body of Christ with all of its members working together. There is a supplying of anything that another member may lack so that unity is maintained. This is unity! Look at the word **unity** and in it you see first the word **unit**. Think of the word **unit** and the idea of **one** is considered. One people represent a single people. A single people are so connected that when one is in need it is known and covered. Too often we make what caused the need a priority rather than addressing the need then looking at the cause.

A Sacrificial People

They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. The text clarifies itself. It also clarifies where we may be in this context. The first century Christians set the bar high as a standard to meet the needs of the people. And no wonder, in my humble estimation, they were just following Jesus. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).* Christianity is sacrifice. It always has been and it will always be. The sacrifice represented in this verse indicates the effect of the Holy Spirit on the inner man when the conversion process is at work.

A Spiritual People

⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

Characteristics of the primitive Christians:

- I. Their **CONSTANCY** -- they continued.
- II. II. Their **FERVOUR** – daily
- III. Their **UNITY** -- with one accord.
- IV. Their **AUDACITY** -- in the temple.
- V. Their **CHARITY** -- breaking bread from house to house.
- VI. Their **FAMILIARITY** -- did eat their meat.
- VII. Their **ALACRITY** -- with gladness.
- VIII. Their **SINCERITY** -- with singleness of heart.

(E. Leigh.)

E. Leigh, so far as I can determine, is one of the many commentators in the *Biblical Illustrator*. I have no further knowledge of the individual although I have tried to find out more information. What I do know is that this person has captured in **eight** aspects the meaning of Acts 2:46. Consider the definitions applied to the terms in bold letters.

a.) **Constancy- the quality of having a resolute mind, purpose, or affection; steadfastness.**

b.) **Fervour** (British spelling), **Fervor** American spelling- **great warmth and earnestness of feeling; passion; zeal**

c.) Unity- oneness of mind, feeling, etc., as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement.

d.) Audacity- boldness or daring, esp. with confident disregard for personal safety, conventional thought, or other restrictions; nerve.

e.) Charity- love directed first toward God but also toward oneself and one's neighbors as objects of God's love.

f.) Familiarity-intimacy.

g.) Alacrity-Cheerful willingness; eagerness.

h.) Sincerity-freedom from deceit, hypocrisy, or falseness; earnestness.

These are characteristics of a spiritual people—things that we should be growing in daily.

A Singing People

James said that the merry person should sing (James 5:13). To praise God in song for all of his wonderful deeds should be something we do endlessly. Day after day, he is a God at hand and not one afar off. Day after day, we eat and are clothed, we are furnished with the strength to conduct our business, we are blessed with family, and we are promised heaven as our eternal home. Why shouldn't we be a singing people? Why shouldn't we be thankful? Are we going through troubles? Are we saddled with tribulations? A Christian mind would find these things worthy of song! Why? These things which are awful to the carnal mind are blessings in disguise to the Christian. They are avenues leading to the character of Christ!

A Successful People

The second chapter of Acts ends with the Lord adding to his church. The Lord adds to the church those who were being saved. They were not being added by men but by the Lord. The Lord has a personal hand in this. If he has a personal hand in this, then our connection with him is a guarantee. Our new birth has been successful. We ARE in the kingdom! Our sins have been successfully forgiven! We have successfully experienced the transforming power of salvation!

