WHEN GOD IS AT WORK

ACTS 2:37-47

3-8-2026

WE NEED GOD TO WORK IN AND THROUGH US!

Why? Four reasons:

I. When God is at work,
THE CONVERSIONS ARE REAL! (v. 37-41) (Genuine Salvation)

Proofs of Real Conversion:

A. Conviction Of Sin (V. 37)

B. Change Of Mind (Repentance) (V. 38-40)

C. Glad Acceptance Of God's Word (V. 41a)

D. Obedience In Water Baptism (V. 41b)

E. Willingness To Identify With Other Believers (V. 41c)

II. When God is at work,
THE COMMITMENT IS LASTING! (v. 42)
(Continual Devotion & Growth)

A. Believers Are Committed To Sound Doctrine

B. Believers Are Committed To Sharing With Each Other

C. Believers Are Committed To Remembering Christ's Death

D. Believers Are Committed To Prayer

III. When God is at work,
THE FELLOWSHIP IS UNIFIED! (v. 44-47a)
(Harmonious Oneness)

There will be a:

A. Spirit Of Unity Over A Common Faith (V. 44a)

B. Spirit Of Unity Over A Common Need (V. 44b-45)

C. Spirit Of Unity Over A Common Worship (V. 46a)

D. Spirit Of Unity Over A Common Joy (V. 46b)

IV. When God is at work,
THE WORLD IS AWE-STRUCK! (v. 43, v. 47b)
(Respected Testimony)

A. A Faithful Testimony Causes The World To Fear God's Work

B. A Faithful Testimony Causes The World To Favour God's People

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Proofs of Real Conversion:

A. CONVICTION OF SIN (v. 37)

B. CHANGE OF MIND (Repentance) (v. 38-40)

"Repent" = Have a change of mind about Jesus Christ. In context he is saying: "Accept Christ's authority (v. 22), death (v. 23), resurrection (v. 24-32), ascension and exaltation (v. 33-35), Lordship and Messiahship (v. 36).

NOTE: It is the repentance, not the baptism that brings forgiveness of sins.

(See Acts 3:19; Acts 10:43; Mk. 16:16 - Condemnation is for not believing)

Baptism can't wash away sins because Jesus was baptized, yet the Bible says he never sinned!

Acts 2:38 - "for" -- We use the word "for" in the sense of "because." Jose went to jail for (because) stealing cars - he didn't go to jail to steal cars.

You go to heaven for believing, you do not go to Heaven to believe. You get baptized because you have remission of sins, not in order to have remission.

If Peter means to say: "Get baptized so that you will have the remission of sins," he would have used and the subjunctive.

Why the close connection between belief (repentance) and baptism?

1. Baptism always occurred immediately after belief (Acts 8:37)

2. Baptism was an outward expression of an inward change ("For [because of] the remission of sins")

3. Baptism was the distinguishing mark that showed your new identification with Christ.

"The promise" refers to the "Holy Spirit" (v. 38).

The Holy Spirit is not restricted to a select few, but to <u>all</u> who come to Christ! To "as many as" God calls to Himself.

"Testify" - to seriously give a witness (our witness needs to be solemn)

"Exhort" - to strongly encourage; lit. to call alongside.
Imperfect tense - indicates <u>repeated action</u>
(Peter used: "many other words" to go over and over the Gospel so it would sink in)

"Save yourselves" - passive imperative ("allow yourselves to be saved"), showing that no one can by themselves be saved, but they must let Jesus save them.

C. <u>GLAD</u> ACCEPTANCE OF GOD'S WORD (v. 41a)

"Gladly received" = to welcome. ILLUS: like you would welcome someone who you wanted to come into your house.

A person who <u>really</u> gets saved, does so from his heart; he wants to know the truth.

He is not pressured into a decision (this does not mean, however, that we do not strongly urge someone to trust Christ---Peter did [v. 40])

What it means is that when a person gives his life to Christ, he does not do it to please someone else, nor out of a reluctant, doubtful, hesitant heart - rather, he really wants to be saved!

Men are saved by accepting (believing) God's <u>Word</u>. Salvation in every time period, throughout history has been belief in God's Word!

Noah believed God's Word, so he built an ark.
Abraham believed God's Word, so he was justified.
Moses believed God's Word, so he led Israel to the promised land.

11 of the 12 disciples believed God's Word - they said to Christ, "You alone have the words of life."

"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing the Word of God."

D. OBEDIENCE IN WATER <u>BAPTISM</u> (v. 41b)

E. WILLINGNESS TO IDENTIFY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS (v. 41c)

After receiving the Word (by faith) (aorist participle), the believer was baptized (aorist passive verb) and were added to the body of believers.

"Added unto" = ; = unto, with

= to place, or put; after salvation and baptism, the new converts were "added to" or "brought into" union with the rest of the disciples. They didn't say: "OK, I'm saved, now I can go back to my old friends and forget about uniting myself with other believers" (cp. v. 42 - they continued being together!)

Uniting with a local church is God's will.

Cp. v. 44 - Assembling together (joining a church)) is vitally important for a child of God because:

1. We need exhortation (to love and good works) and this is why we assemble. (Heb. 10:24, 25)

2. We need to be equipped for service. The local church is God's equipping center (God's program for this dispensation (I Tim. 3:15).

   The Holy Spirit sends out missionaries through local church (Acts 13:1-4).

3. We need accountability (check and balance system). Christ authorized the church to exercise discipline (Mt. 18; I Cor. 5)

4. We just simply need to be together! (Acts 2:44). We need each other. A church is not a building, not a denomination; it's a group of people committed to caring for and looking out for each other!

Being a church member is not an end in itself; it's a means to an end.

II. When God is at work, THE COMMITMENT IS LASTING! (v. 42) (Continual Devotion & Growth)

"Continued steadfastly" = to adhere to, to persist in, to be faithful to; to persevere by being devoted to.

NOTE: This continual devotion to doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers is spontaneous. It's natural, it's instinctive (intuitive), it's automatic.

The apostles didn't force this behavior out of the new converts. It was a natural fruit; an outgrowth of the inner seed (Holy Spirit) that was planted in the soul by God (cp. I Jn. 3:9)

A. BELIEVERS ARE COMMITTED TO SOUND DOCTRINE

They received further instruction from the apostles, hid it in their heart, and hungered to learn more.

The early church was a learning church.

As "new born babes" they did desire the "sincere milk of the Word." They wanted to grow!

We should consider it a wasted day when we do not learn something new and when we have not penetrated more deeply into the wisdom and grace of God (Barclay, p. 30).

Real believers are not satisfied being converts; they want to be disciples.

"Doctrine" - the one who looks into the "perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Ja. 1:25)

Jesus said: "If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed." (Jn. 8:31)

B. BELIEVERS ARE COMMITTED TO SHARING WITH EACH OTHER

"Fellowship" = having in common; sharing what we are and have with others.

In verse 42, the reference is specifically to the Lord's Supper; however, in verse 46, Luke is describing both the Lord's Supper and the fellowship meal that would precede it, when they met in houses.

C. BELIEVERS ARE COMMITTED TO REMEMBERING CHRIST'S DEATH

The presence of the articles in the expression "the breaking of the bread" indicates more than just eating (Kent, p. 34). It was an early Palestinian expression for the Lord's Supper.

D. BELIEVERS ARE COMMITTED TO PRAYER

We tend to pray when things are not going great in church, or in our lives. They continued in prayer during a revival!

Why? They knew it was God doing it! God was working!

The definite article "the prayers" may be an indication that the early Christians at Jerusalem observed the set Jewish hours of prayer (cp. 3:1).

When there were just 120 disciples, they "all continued with one accord in prayer" (Acts 1:14).

Paul said that we are to be "continuing instant in prayer" (Ro. 12:12).

EX: Gamaliel said: "If it be of men it will come to nothing. But if from God, no one can stop it." (Acts 5:34-39)

God's work lasts!

III. When God is at work,
THE FELLOWSHIP IS UNIFIED! (v. 44-47a)
(Harmonious Oneness)

Divisions to not happen when God is at work in a church; they occur when man is at work - when work is done in the flesh. (I Cor. 3:3 - "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?") (cp. I Cor. 11:17-19).

There will be a:

A. SPIRIT OF UNITY OVER A COMMON FAITH (V. 44a)

"All that believed were together"

We could not have unity, if a church were made up of believers and unbelievers.

We are in this together!

We need each other!

I don't know what I would do without our deacons; without the men in our church who play instruments, run the sound booth, repair around the building; without the ladies who cook, work in the nursery, clean up our building, etc. Without you, our church would be missing a vital body part.

B. SPIRIT OF UNITY OVER A COMMON NEED (V. 44b-45)

Those early Christians had an intense feeling of responsibility for each other.

We are "our brother's keeper."

Love overlooks differences in personality, race, culture, etc., and meets needs.

SEE Acts 4:34-35
Acts 11:27-30

This is not communism.

Communism is a forced redistribution of wealth; this was voluntary.

Communism is motivated by fear; this was of love.

Communism divides up all wealth and gives to those who don't deserve it or need it. This was to meet genuine needs.

C. SPIRIT OF UNITY OVER A COMMON WORSHIP (v. 46a)

"One accord" - lit. "same mind"

They worshipped together!

God knows nothing of solitary religion.

The Jewish Christians (at this point) did not realize that they didn't have to go to the Temple to worship (see Jn. 4:23). (NOTE: Even Paul felt this was no inconsistency - Acts 21:26).

But at least now they were worshipping the true God there!

The Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.

D. SPIRIT OF UNITY OVER A COMMON JOY (V. 46b)

"Gladness" - we can rejoice in all that God has done for us.

"A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms."

"Singleness" - they had one motive - "love"
They did not have mixed motives. They were sincere!

They did not have Christians over to their house to show off but because they loved; not to impress but because they loved; nor were they selective (partial) in their company because they really loved.

When God is working, the church will blend together in harmony; will work together as a team, will function together as a healthy body, will band together like brothers.

IV. When God is at work, THE WORLD IS AWE-STRUCK! (v. 43, v. 47b) (Respected Testimony)

A. A FAITHFUL TESTIMONY CAUSES THE WORLD TO FEAR GOD'S WORK

When revival breaks out (3,000 saved), the presence of God's working cannot be ignored!

Their enemies even admitted that they had "turned the world upside down."

The world looks on with amazement, admiration, reverential fear. Why? Because such love is not found in this wicked, selfish world.

Do you want to impress your lost neighbor, family, etc. Then show them how much Christ and His children (fellow believers) mean to you!

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

Are wonders and signs being done today? The answer can be found in the answer to this question: "Are there any apostles living today?"

God is working miraculously today, but not with sign miracles, because those signs were to authenticate the apostles' message (See Acts 5:12, 14:3; Rom. 15:19; Heb. 2:4; II Cor. 12:12 - "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.")

You may say, "Well, don't you think we need signs and wonders today so that people will believe our message and fear?" NO! The consistency of your miraculously changed life will speak loud enough and produce the same effect!

B. A FAITHFUL TESTIMONY CAUSES THE WORLD TO FAVOUR GOD'S PEOPLE

This favor was with all the common people. The pseudo spiritual, the religious "big shots" and the political leaders did not look favorably upon this new movement.

When God works in a church, the people will be such, that others can not help but like them. God can produce a winsome attractiveness about you!

In our church, I really believe we have many real good people, but with our goodness "we possess a streak of unlovely hardness."

Let God melt you, let god pull down all of your barriers so that people can see the real you - this will attract, even though you are not perfect (genuineness is a magnet that will pull people toward you).

"When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Prov. 16:7).

We don't inspire the unsaved to trust Christ by:
compromising with the world
fighting with the world
joining with the world
but by being genuine! faithful!

CONCLUSION:

"The Lord added to the church."

Why?

1. It is His work!

2. He is the only one who can truly add genuine converts . . .
   He only adds those who were "being saved." God is not saying he adds people to get saved, but he adds people who are saved.

V. 46 - "Daily" V. 47 - "Daily" -- When God is at work, believers will not be content to meet together just once a week for "services as usual."

They met daily (2:46), cared daily (6:1), won souls daily (2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (17:11), and increased in number daily (16:5). Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week routine (Wiersbe, p. 34).

Why? They let God work in their lives and in their church.
Will you?

When God works:

A church can't be faked! (Conversions are real)
A church can't be stopped! (the commitment is lasting)
A church can't be divided! (fellowship is unified)
A church can't go unnoticed! (the world is awe-struck)