

“THE MARKS OF A GREAT CHURCH”

ACTS 2:22-24;32-47

INTRO: Back on June 1st, one of our supported missionaries, Tom Wallace, was with us to update us on his ministry on reaching Muslims for Christ. As he began, you might recall that he thanked us for being a “**GREAT CHURCH.**” When he said that, in my mind I asked myself why he said that. I did not personally ask him, but ever since he said it, I have been thinking upon that statement. **THE QUESTION IS: IS THE FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH OF ALTOONA REALLY A GREAT CHURCH?** That is a question that each of us should consider. And the answer to the question should not depend upon what we personally think, or how we compare to other local churches, but rather, **THE PRINCIPLES THAT ARE BROUGHT OUT IN THE WORD OF GOD.** But for a short moment, **HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE A GREAT CHURCH?**

- One with large, beautiful facilities?
- One with a large budget?
- One with hundreds or thousands attending?
- One with many ministries?
- One with a good reputation in the community?

Perhaps you would give these answers to what a **GREAT CHURCH IS.** But how does the Word of God describe a GREAT CHURCH? Well, for a few minutes let’s study the **VERY FIRST CHURCH THAT EVER EXISTED...THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM THAT BEGAN ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST, WHICH WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH AGE AS RECORDED IN ACTS 2. THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM WAS GREAT BECAUSE OF ITS BIBLICAL FOUNDATION AND AS THE RESULT WAS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL CHURCHES THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED SINCE.**

THE BACKGROUND: The Apostle Peter and the other disciples had just preached about the work of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. As a result, 3000 souls were saved, and the church was born. In verses 42-47 we see the **MARKS OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN JERUSALEM THAT MADE IT GREAT WHICH LAYS THE PATTERN FOR ALL CHURCHES TO FOLLOW TODAY.**

I. THE FOCUS OF THE GREAT CHURCH – Vs. 42

A. It was Focused on and Formed by Saved Individuals – Vss. 41, 42a.

-This is the foundational key for a **GREAT CHURCH.** The **UNIVERSAL CHURCH OF CHRIST** is made up only of born-again believers and the local church should always reflect the same. Note:1 Corinthians 12:13

B. It was Focused on the Apostles Doctrine – Vs. 42b.

1. Generally, this involves the whole of the Word of God as seen in Peter’s message – Vs. 21 (From Joel 2:32) Vs. 27 (From Psalm 16:10)

2. Specifically, this involves the Apostolic Teachings found in the Book of Acts and the N.T. Epistles which are grounded on the Old Testament. **WITHOUT SOUND DOCTRINE, A CHURCH CANNOT BE GREAT! WITH SOUND DOCTRINE, A CHURCH CAN BECOME GREAT.**

C. It was Focused on Believers Fellowship – Vs. 42c.

NOTE: The word “**FELLOWSHIP**” means “**TO SHARE IN COMMON**”

1. Fellowship in Position – 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

2. Fellowship in Practice – Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1

D. It was Focused on Breaking of Bread – Vs. 42d.

1. Primarily: The Lord’s Table – Focusing on the sacrificial work of Christ.

2. Practically: The General Fellowship of believers at the church often referred to as “**THE LOVE FEAST.**” 1 Corinthians 11:17-22; Jude 12. The “**LOVE FEASTS**” were not just a time to get together to “fill the tummy.” It was a time to get together to edify each other in Christ.

E. It was Focused on Prayer – Vs. 42e.

1. The Apostles practice to prepare for the founding of the church
-Acts 1:14

2. The Believers practice after the founding of the Church - Acts 3:1; Acts 4:31; Acts 6:1-4; Acts 12:5

3. The Believers practice for the ministry of the Church – Colossians 1:9;

1 Thessalonians 1:2; 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:1

APPLICATION: A LOCAL CHURCH CANNOT BE A GREAT CHURCH WITHOUT THIS SAME FOCUS TODAY. AND REMEMBER – *THE LOCAL CHURCH IS MADE UP OF INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS, AND THEREFORE EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN IS TO BE GIVEN TO THIS FOCUS IN A COMBINED EFFORT.*

II. THE FUNCTION OF THE GREAT CHURCH – VSS. 43-47

NOTE: THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH IS AND CAN ONLY BE DONE BY THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH. ***WE ARE ALL TO BE INVOLVED!***

- A. The Function of Ministry – Vs. 43 (Seen throughout Acts)
- B. The Function of Mutual Care – Vss. 44,45
- C. The Function of United Worship – Vs. 46a
- D. The Function of Household Fellowship – Vs. 46b
- E. The Function of Praising God – Vs. 47a
- F. The Function of a Community Testimony – Vs. 47b

APPLICATION: A GREAT LOCAL CHURCH WILL ONLY FUNCTION AS THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS IN THE CHURCH FUNCTION IN OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF GOD AND THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

III. THE FEATURE OF THE GREAT CHURCH – VS 47

“THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED.”

- A. The Feature of a Great Church is souls being saved regularly.
- B. The Feature of a Great Church is when **EVERY MEMBER** is involved, knowing and fulfilling their **SPIRITUAL GIFT** resulting in the **SALVATION OF SOULS, THE EDIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIANS, AND THE EXALTATION OF GOD.**

LESSON/APPLICATION

A GREAT CHURCH RESULTS IN EVERY MEMBER BEING BIBLICALLY FOCUSED AND FUNCTIONING IN SPIRIT-LED MINISTRY THAT RESULTS IN THE FEATURE OF SOULS BEING SAVED REGULARLY. ***ARE YOU DOING YOUR PART?***