

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute"

Volume II Number 1

Editor's Note: This sermon is the 1st email message of 2003 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message focuses on the AWE and HARMONY of Christ's church as it was first found in Jerusalem. May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Regional Development Director

The Church that Makes Straight "A's"

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with AWE, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

1. WILL YOU HELP US RE-ESTABLISH AWE IN OUR CONGREGATION?

HAVE WE LOST THE ABILITY TO BE FILLED WITH AWE?? Let's look at our full text: Acts 2:38-47

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off-- for all whom the Lord our God will call."

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

44 All the believers were TOGETHER and had everything in common.

45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

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,

47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (NIV)

AWE IS A NATURAL INCLINATION THAT ALL OF US ARE BORN WITH AN CHILD'S INSTINCT TO BE FASCINATED, AMAZED, IN WONDER!!

Since God is the Author and Central Person of the Scriptures, we are not surprised to find "AWE" in many texts:

1 Sam 12:18 Then Samuel called upon the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel. (NIV)

Ps 119:120 My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws. (NIV)

Hab 3:2 LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. (NIV)

Matt 9:8 When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to men. (NIV)

Luke 5:26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." (NIV)

Luke 7:16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." (NIV)

Heb 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, (NIV)

Ho hum .. lackadaisical laid back ... utterly calm... do those describe our typical attitude?

But they had miracles, you say.... note the sequence... awe .. THEN WONDERS DONE. There awe was not the result of wonders ... led to wonders. We don't need signs to be in awe... the Pharisees ask for signs, Jesus said.

We need to see evil and say: OH MY, THAT IS SOOO BAD... AND SEE GOD AND SAY, 'OH MY, HE IS SOOOO GOOD! But rather, we see horrible evil, heinous sin and say, "so what" and look upon the power of our God and make a flippant remark about the man upstairs....

LET US RECLAIM AN AWE OF GOD!

2. WILL YOU HELP US RE-ESTABLISH AN 'ALL TOGETHER' CONGREGATION?

You ask: "What do you mean an all together congregation?" Note verse 44 All the believers were TOGETHER and had everything in common.

The assembly was basic to the church of the first century because they were a TOGETHER group. They weren't looking for **privacy or space**; they were looking for **interaction, fellowship, and sweet communion!**

Part of that interest derives from the AWE OF GOD. When we see God as He is, we can see others as they really are.... imperfect but family, fallible but friendly; earthly but enriching. "As iron sharpens iron," says Proverbs 27:17, "so one man sharpens another."

Let's look at some of the "TOGETHER" scriptures ..

Acts 1:6 So when they met TOGETHER, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (NIV)

Acts 1:14 They all joined TOGETHER constantly in prayer,

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all TOGETHER in one place. (NIV)

Acts 2:44 All the believers were TOGETHER and had everything in common. (NIV)

Acts 2:46 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, (NIV)

Acts 4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices TOGETHER in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. (NIV)

Acts 5:12 The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used

to meet TOGETHER in Solomon's Colonnade. (NIV)

Acts 6:2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples TOGETHER and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. (NIV)

Acts 10:24 The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called TOGETHER his relatives and close friends. (NIV)

Acts 14:27 On arriving there, they gathered the church TOGETHER and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. (NIV)

Acts 15:30 The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church TOGETHER and delivered the letter. (NIV)

IT GOES ON AND ON THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST CENTURY WAS A TOGETHER CHURCH! And its strength and influence was enhanced.

There is an old legend about a herd of mules that was attacked nightly by a pack of wolves from a nearby forest. When the wolves came, the mules began kicking viciously in all directions. Consequently the mules maimed and injured each other while the agile wolves escaped unharmed. Finally, a wise old mule called the rest together for a conference and made known his plans. That night the wolves came yelping from the forest as usual, but instead of the mules kicking, they all ran and put their heads together in a circle and began kicking outward. The wolves were put to flight, and the mules did no harm to each other. Christians need to get their heads together and kick outward against the forces of iniquity. The world must sometimes wonder why we, who call ourselves Christ's followers, have such a hard time putting heads together.

3. WILL YOU HELP US TO BE AN 'ASSISTING' CHURCH???

Acts 2:44 All the believers were TOGETHER and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

WHAT A HELPING BODY!! WHAT A GENEROUS BUNCH!! NO GOV'T WELFARE NEEDED FOR THOSE IN THE CHURCH! HERE THE PICTURE IS REINFORCED IN ACTS 4:

Acts 4:34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet. (NIV)

NOT COMMUNISM, NOT FORCED, NOT COERCED. BUT THEY WERE IN AWE OF GOD, THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER, AND THEY WERE ASSISTING ONE ANOTHER.

The whole world is in competition ... either fighting or feuding.. or at least competing and at odds with one another. All want two pieces of the pie ... even if some end up with none.

AND IN STARK CONTRAST IS THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. SACRIFICING, HELPING, GIVING, AIDING. NOT SUBSIDIZING SIN OR IRRESPONSIBILITY, BUT PRACTICING TEAMWORK. TEAMWORK TO REACH THE LOST, TEAMWORK TO SUPPORT MISSIONS, TEAMWORK IN GLORIFYING CHRIST.

CLOSE: A minister once remarked to Sir John Barbirolli how he wished he could fill his church building the way Sir John and the Halle Orchestra filled every seat of a large concert hall. The conductor

replied, "You could, if you had a hundred members who worked together as well as the members of this orchestra." The white cuffs of the violinists stood out against a black background and made a bold horizontal line across the left side of the stage. As they played, those white cuffs remained an almost perfectly straight line which often moved up and down very quickly. It was a splendid demonstration of how the members of a great orchestra will not only play the right notes, but will play them together.

A great church is somewhat like a great orchestra. The members will not only make the right moves, but will make them together. They must learn to decide upon a task and execute it with perfect harmony. A musician who always wants to play his favorite piece (which may be exceptionally beautiful) and refuses to play--or else plays very halfheartedly or slowly--when another composition is chosen, not only will not help the cause but will be a detriment to the whole orchestra and may destroy its appeal. And a church member who is out of step with others, and who approaches his tasks carelessly or reluctantly, may generate more sour music than the sweet notes all the rest can draw out. Let's be in AWE of our Conductor and in harmony with those with whom we serve!

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"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B