

“HAVING FAVOR”

INTRODUCTION

A. Acts 2:40-47

In its earliest days, the church was said to have been perceived favorably among the general population.

B. Matthew 5:13-16

The people of the Lord should regard ourselves as a city set on a hill.

C. Proverbs 22:1

A good reputation is a valuable thing. Let’s explore the circumstances that preceded this admiration.

I. “SOULS WERE ADDED”

A. Acts 2:40-41

The gospel was preached publicly and it was obeyed.

B. 1st Thessalonians 1:8

Sounding forth the word of the Lord gains a church its reputation. We might be inclined to think that going against the grain of faith-only salvation and standing apart by insisting on obedience to the full plan of salvation – learning, believing, confessing, repenting, and being baptized – might hurt us. It might. Then again, we could win the trust of the community by our unflinching resolve to uphold the truth.

C. What could be more respectable than sowing the good seed and reaping the fruit?

II. “THEY CONTINUED STEADFASTLY”

A. Acts 2:42

They had a steady habit, from early on, of basic worship activity – nothing fancy, just praying, eating the Lord’s Supper, and getting taught by the

apostles. The church that does these things – not reciting creeds, not jazzing it up with a rock band, not rallying the crowd with a pep talk – will stand out, but can still be perceived as reputable among the population.

B. Hebrews 10:23-25

Our members need constancy in these things because:

1. The Lord is dependable, so we should be, too,
2. It is how we demonstrate consideration of each other, and
3. We need all the exhortation we can get to ready ourselves for the judgment.

C. Churches that don't have calendars overflowing with special events, but just steadily learn and worship in simplicity, being predictable and, therefore, dependable are churches that even outsiders can appreciate.

III. "FEAR CAME UPON EVERY SOUL"

A. Acts 2:43

Widespread fear is coupled with miraculous activity. Believers in modern miracles seem to think signs and wonders should produce joy and delight, though.

B. Luke 5:24-26; 7:11-17; 8:22-25

In reality, those who witnessed actual signs and wonders were struck with awe and reverence. Having seen His power, they were cautious not to offend the Lord.

C. Hebrews 12:28

Acceptable service in God's sight requires reverence and fear. This is a proper characteristic of the church.

D. 2nd Corinthians 5:11

This fear is something we are meant to share with outsiders.

- E. A church like this, wherein God is treated reverently, and members are careful not to offend Him, is a humble church, lacking arrogance, and can be rightly respected in the community.

IV. "HAD ALL THINGS IN COMMON"

- A. **Acts 2:44-45**

When there was need among the believers, sacrifices were made to provide for them.

- B. **Romans 15:25-27**

A pre-existent spiritual fellowship was the basis for material fellowship. Every instance in the New Testament of the church relieving the needy shows the recipients to have been members of the church:

1. *"Those who believed"* (Acts 4:32-37),
2. *"Disciples"* (Acts 6:1-7),
3. *"Brethren"* (Acts 11:28-30),
4. *"Saints"* (1st Corinthians 16:1-3; 2nd Corinthians 9:1-15),
5. *"Diligently followed every good work"* (1st Timothy 5:3-16).

- C. When the church takes care of its own, its credibility rises.

V. "CONTINUING DAILY IN THE TEMPLE"

- A. **Acts 2:46_a**

It can be difficult to get half our members to one midweek gathering, much less daily assembling.

- B. **Acts 5:42; 16:5; 19:9**

Yet, in the first century, preaching was done daily, souls were saved daily, and disciples were learning daily.

- C. **Hebrews 3:13**

After all, that is how often we need exhortation to avoid being hardened by sin.

- D. The church whose members are always edifying itself can be seen favorably by the people.

VI. "BREAKING BREAD FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE"

- A. **Acts 2:46_b**

Note these disciples distinguished between the setting of their collective worshiping and their eating meals.

- B. **1st Corinthians 11:22, 34**

The home, and not the church, has the responsibility of providing meals.

- C. **1st Peter 4:9**

More positively, observe they were in a very frequent habit of practicing hospitality. This demands, on one hand, that Christians open their homes to one another and, on the other, that Christians accept invitations into one another's homes. We ought to be familiar with and comfortable at each other's houses.

- D. The church whose members love each other so much that they spend their free time outside of church at each other's homes can enjoy a good reputation.

VII. "PRAISING GOD"

- A. **Acts 2:47**

The early church was known for praising God.

- B. **Hebrews 13:15**

There is a "*continual*" need for this, as it is how we can express our gratitude to our Savior.

- C. **1st Peter 2:9**

Praise is what we are made for.

- D. A church that is busy singing God's praises can be recognized in the community.