

Acts 4:32-5:42

### **The sharing heart of the early church.**

#### **1. (32) Their attitude towards each other and towards material possessions.**

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*

- a. On heart and one soul
  - united in fellowship
  - United in purpose
  
- b. neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.
  - Acknowledged both, the **Lordship** of Christ and the **ownership** of Christ over themselves and everything they had. A radical discipleship and lifestyle.
  - Need not be seen as communism, wherein resources are taken from the rich and redistributed among the poor by state mandate. Their discipleship was not confined to worship but rather it produced in them a goodness to care for the poor among them at cost to themselves. The fact that it was used for the benefit of the poor can be seen because we don't see the church amassing wealth or growing in worldly power when the people sold properties and brought it to the church.

#### **2. (33) The effective witness of the apostles.**

*And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.*

- a. Great power....great grace
- b. Giving witness to the resurrection of Jesus was the biggest strength and the biggest message. That convinced many.

#### **3. (34-37) Examples of early giving.**

*Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

- A. Extent of fellowship
  - Believers sold even their houses and brought the proceeds.
  - Illus – Padi Mar Thoma Church**
    - Hospitality to me, students and other visitors
    - Selling jewellery for parsonage
  
- B. **Joses, who was also named Barnabas**

Barnabas was a Jew from Cyprus. Son of encouragement. When the disciples were wary of Paul, Barnabas brought him into friendship with the disciples. Later known as an apostle – Acts 14:14 Companion with Paul in his missionary journeys and evangelized gentile converts and defended them against Judaizers.

Known as cousin of Mark – Colossians 4:10

### Emphases

#### 1. The missional church

It's a learning church

Worshipping church

Praying church

Giving church

Sending church

Risking and suffering church

### Acts 5

#### A. The lie of Ananias and Sapphira.

##### 1. (1-2) What Ananias and Sapphira did.

*But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

##### a. But a certain man...

continuing from the earlier story, but a contrast to what Barnabas did. The inclusion of this account in the Bible is an honest admission that there some “bad apples” in the

community. The couple acts deceitfully retaining some portion for themselves while claiming they sacrificially gave their all. Their act is motivated by desire to seek human praise than honor God.

##### b. He kept back part of the proceeds

The ancient Greek word for kept back is *nosphizomai*, which means “to misappropriate.” The same word was used of Achan’s theft in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Joshua 7:21). The only other time *nosphizomai* is used in the New Testament, it means to steal (Titus 2:10).

The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.

##### 2. (3-4) Peter confronts Ananias.

*But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”*

##### a. Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart

Satan at work and not love for Jesus. So even though he expected praise, he got rebuked.

##### b. Lie to the Holy Spirit

- Holy Spirit spoken of as the third person in the Trinity
- Not lying to the church or the disciples but to God

- c. **While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?**

### **3. (5-11) The death of Ananias and Sapphira**

**V11-** the fear that seized the church caused a healthy awareness of God's presence in the church.

#### **Emphases**

There is no end to the good a man can do if doesn't care who gets the credit. Conversely, if people care for credit, they will do more damage than good.

#### **Question to ponder**

This portrait of the early church describes a community in which the members are concerned about what they can contribute. In what ways does the individualism of our culture today prevent the development of such a communal life?

#### **B. Continuing power in the church.**

##### **1. (12) Power shown through miracles and unity.**

*And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.*

- a. **Many signs and wonders were done:** In Acts 4:30, we read that these early Christians prayed that God would continue to do *signs and wonders through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus*. This shows that this prayer was answered

- b. They were all with one accord (or all together): Often, the fact that God's people are together all with one accord is a greater display of the power of the Holy Spirit than any particular sign or wonder.

##### **2. (13-14) The church's reputation and growth.**

*Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.*

###### **a. None of the rest dared join them:**

- The community of Christians had a marvelous reputation for integrity, and everybody knew it was a serious thing to be a follower of Jesus. An Ananias and Sapphira incident would reduce the level of casual commitment.
- Also frightened of the authorities

###### **b. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord**

##### **3. (15-16) The expectation of miracles among the early Christians.**

*So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also, a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

#### **C. The apostles are imprisoned by the Jewish rulers.**

##### **1. (17-18) The arrest and imprisonment of the apostles.**

*Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.*

The Sadducees opposition to resurrection. Authorities afraid of losing control. So, they show what they can do. And God shows what he can do. The church cannot be imprisoned by them. Because the church is larger than just a few human beings.

## **2. (19-20) Angelic intervention frees the apostles.**

*But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."*

**Humor – because Sadducees did not believe in angels.**

Their rescue was not to run away but to preach boldly about Jesus.

## **3. (21-23) The apostles resume their work and are discovered to be missing from prison.**

*And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing*

*outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"*

- a. **They entered the temple early in the morning and taught:** This was remarkable obedience and boldness.
- b. **The report**

## **4. (24-26) The apostles are found and arrested again.**

*Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.*

- a. **They wondered what the outcome would be:**  
They realize they are now longer able to control or curb events
- b. Apostles do not fear arrest now
- c. But officers fear violence on their own lives from the people.

## **5. (27-28) The accusation against the apostles.**

*And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"*

- a. **Again before the council**
- b. **You have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine**

- Shows the effectiveness of their ministry
- “your doctrine”: as if it was a human doctrine

**c. Intend to bring this man’s blood upon us**

- Although that was just a statement in the apostles teaching that was not the aim of the apostles.
- Strangely the council does not seek to refute the apostles important claim of the resurrection of Jesus.
- Probably want to provoke them into saying something blasphemous or contrary to Roman law.

**D. The resolution of their case before the Jewish rulers.**

**1. (29-32) The testimony of the apostles before the Sanhedrin.**

*But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”*

**2. (33) The council’s strong reaction.**

**When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them.**

**3. (34-39) Gamaliel’s advice to the Sanhedrin.**

*If this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest you even be found to fight against God*

Time will tell whether this movement is from God or merely human.

Prophetic forecast of Gamaliel

**4. (40-42) After a beating, the apostles resume preaching with joy.**

*And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.*

- Beaten** can also be translated *skinned*; the beating they received stripped the skin off of their backs.
- Rejoice because they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ**
- They did not stop preaching** – the church cant be stopped now.

**Emphases**

- Peter’s transformation from a cowardly denier to a bold witness**

**Question to ponder**

**Why do you think the church grows inspite of persecution?**