

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 5.11.2025

PART 14 - LIVING WITH GOSPEL CONVICTION

I. Grace Unification

Acts 4:32-37

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold

35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,

37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul,

- The effects of this outpouring of the Spirit was massive. Thousands are saved, the early church is growing in leaps and bounds, and they are communing together as a close knit family of believers.
- Then directly after, we saw a description of the spirit-filled early church in Acts 2:42-47, where Luke tells us that they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and praying. They had all things in common, selling their possessions and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.
- And the effects of the gospel, the outpouring of the holy spirit, gave these believers an amazing conviction to do life together centered around the gospel. Day by day, they broke bread together, were generous, and the effects were daily souls were being saved.
- And now Luke is telling us in Acts 4:32 that unity was descriptive of them. They were of one heart and soul!
- Unity is a beautiful thing. It's reflective of our triune God who is perfectly unified, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And as such, his people are to be unified in him through Christ, and unified with one another.
- This unity was a marker of the early church. It was descriptive of them. It was apparent, on public display for all to see.

- In Acts 2:44 we saw that all who believed were together, physically gathering together. And now see them described as together spiritually, unified with one heart and soul.
- This unity wasn't them just trying to find common ground with one another. They were unified together as one heart and one soul in sound biblical doctrine.
- This was gospel unity! And as such, it wasn't just most of the church unified in this, it was the full number that believed! And we're talking about thousands of believers at this point!
- Psalm 133:1 reminds us *"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!"*
- And unity comes as a blessing from the Lord, as 2 Chronicles 30:12 tells us *"the hand of God was on Judah to give them one heart."* It was a work He did to unify their hearts together.
- Likewise Ezekiel 11:19-20 tells us: *"19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God."*
- That's the same unity we see in this early church in Jerusalem; they were unified in the gospel and unified in their mission as spirit filled witnesses to proclaim and strive for the gospel!
- Are we all united in the gospel? And then are we unified in our doctrine, and in our mission?
- Is that a priority for each and every one of one week in and week out because that was the example we see in this early church!
- The FULL number of them, each and every person, were of one heart, and one soul, unified in their gospel conviction, and unified in their mission as spirit filled witnesses to Jerusalem and beyond!

33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

- Acts 4:29-30 *"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*
- We saw that prayer immediately answered, the place shaken and the renewing of the Holy Spirit upon them, and now if you look over to verse 33, we see here that prayer being fulfilled in their lives!
- These early Christians were seeing and hearing the apostles preaching, teaching, testifying to the resurrection, and they were encouraged in the gospel, encouraged with the bold reminders of the risen Christ!
- It was by the grace of God, his unmerited favor showered upon them to open their eyes to the gospel of the good news of the resurrected Christ!
- And it was by the grace of God that he answered their prayers for boldness in the face of this first persecution, and to fill them with his Holy Spirit!
- This was the first mention of grace in Acts, but i'll be used 10 more times in this book before the end.
- If you have trusted Christ, you have been shown great Grace! Look back, think back to the great grace of God in your life, and be encouraged that that great Grace is continuing this day and every day forward! Praise God for his great Grace!

II. Gospel Conviction

and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

- This shared gospel unity given by grace led to each and every member of that church having an incredible gospel orientation in their lives. Their collective lives as a community centered around the gospel, but also their individual lives.
- Namely, we see that it oriented their view towards their material possessions. Their belongings.
- Just like in Acts 2:44 where the description given of the early church after Pentecost said 44 *“And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”*
- Here too, this unity of the church, their love for one another, having the gospel at the center of their lives and fueling their mission; this provided an orientation in their lives that didn’t center around material things.
- Instead, their material things centered around the gospel.
- 1 John 2:17 *“And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”*
- Their material things would someday pass away, here today and gone tomorrow, they aren’t the main point, but living lives for the Lord, centered on him, doing his will, following his commands, that is lasting. That has eternal significance.
- When we read they had everything in common, this is not prescriptive for us. But this is a call to radical gospel orientation where our lives center around Christ, around the gospel, and then oriented around that center is our homes, our possessions, our material goods, and everything else.
- If my life is centered around the gospel, then how do I view my possessions? As objectives to be obtained, as prized and valuable, or as assets for kingdom work?
- If my life is centered around the gospel, then my home isn’t where I go just to spend time with my family, it’s for the gospel! A place to do ministry, a place to bless others, a place to show hospitality.
- Nothing I have is off limits to be used by the Lord.
- If my life is centered around the gospel, then my time is not my own. We value our time, sometimes we hoard it or protect it. Sometimes we squander it for hours on end with entertainment or hobbies. Sometimes we compartmentalize our time, this time is for church, this time is for family, this time is for work, this time is for me.
- But if our lives are fully focused around the gospel, then so is all our time! How different would your life look if your time was centered around the gospel instead of around other things?
- If my life is centered around the gospel, then my money is to be used to help those in need, to give towards supporting those engaged in gospel work, to further Christ’s kingdom, to bless others, to give to those in need, to give as an act of worship back to our great king for his utmost glory!
- We can give freely to others because all our funds should be utilized based on our gospel conviction.
- Phil 1:27 *“27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,”*
- Every single person in this large early church shared this gospel centered conviction.

III. Generous Action

34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold

35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

- It is not enough to be unified in the gospel, or be oriented around the gospel, or remember the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ shown to us, if those things don't lead to action.
- With Christ as the center of their lives, and their material possessions orientated properly, it translated for these early Christians into living generous, open handed lives.
- There wasn't a single needy person among them because those who had extra generously and graciously saw the need and eagerly took action to fill it.
- This wasn't a general "everybody sell everything you have and throw it into a communal pool" - This was intentional giving.
- The members of the church were so unified in one another's lives and had such love for one another that they noticed the needs of the other members, and those who had extra lands, extra homes, were generous to sell what they had to fill those specific needs.
- 1 John 3:17-18 *"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."*
- This action comes as an effect of a Christ centered life! When our lives center around Christ, then our possessions also are for his use, entrusted to us as stewards to hold open-handedly and use for his kingdom.
- That perspective only comes from a Christ centered orientation, which should then turn into action. Generosity with our possessions, generosity in our giving, stewarding well the things God has entrusted to you.
- Christ centered, gospel fueled lives should lead to proper orientation of our material possessions which is evidenced by gospel action!
- James 2 reminds us of this: *"14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."*
- If your faith is in Christ, and your conviction the gospel, then it must lead to action!
- Romans 12:11 reminds us *"Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."*
- This early church, thousands of people, lived this out. They weren't slothful in their zeal to care for one another, but they had a fervent heart for the gospel which translated into serving the Lord through generous action to care for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

IV. Good Exemplification

36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,

37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

- And lastly, we are given an example, a good example, of what this grace inspired, gospel fueled action looked like in vs 36-37.
- Here we are introduced to Barnabas, the well known companion of Paul, and we are presented with his encouraging example of generous gospel fueled action.

- His name is Joseph, but the apostles called him Barnabas - son of encouragement. Isn't that a great name?
- We like to be encouraged! We need to be encouraged! Because we're prone to becoming discouraged. It's why the Bible commands us to encourage one another and build each other up! It's one of the one anothers we are to do for one another.
- Barnabas was an encourager. Are you? You should be!
- He was the cousin of Mark we're told in Colossians 4. And here we're told he was a Levite, so of the tribe of Levi, and a native of Cyprus.
- Cyprus was a prominent island in the late Roman empire, located in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean sea.
- But now we see him, not in Cyprus, but as a member of the church in Jerusalem.
- And apparently he's a man of some means, he owns a field, which is significant because as a Levite, per the law of Moses, Levites did not receive an inheritance in the land from the Lord, as they were set apart to serve the Lord and he was to be their inheritance.
- He's got this field and he sells it, and lays the proceeds at the apostles' feet.
- He's saying this is for the Lord, for his kingdom, for his people.
- He's eager to give up earthly riches that he may obtain heavenly ones.
- He sells land on earth knowing that he's just passing through on his way to a heavenly kingdom whose king is Jesus!
- Being a Levite and being from Cyprus, that'd make him a Hellenist and likely never served in the temple. And yet here now he is serving the Lord in a new spiritual temple, a temple of people called by His name of every nation, tribe, and tongue, a temple that has Christ as its cornerstone, and in his service to Christ, he exemplifies and lives out a spirit-filled, gospel-centered, radical life to the glory of God!
- He is a good example for us to follow as we see his generosity, his encouragement, and his gospel conviction.
- Next week Lord willing, we'll see the opposite kind of example, a bad one, as we see Ananias and Sapphira who didn't live with this conviction but attempted to deceive with their action.
- These early believers were generous because Christ was generous with them. They loved one another because Christ loved them first. They took action on their gospel convictions because they understood their lives were not their own, they were bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus.
- This was their perspective, and is to be ours as well.
- This was how the apostle Paul laid it out in fact in 2 Corinthians 9, where he goes into the collection of funds through generous giving for the church in Jerusalem.
- Similar principles in 2 Corinthians 9:
- 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, (Generous Conviction)
- 13 that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ (Comes from Gospel)
- 14 because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. (Because of Grace)
- And we'll see next week that when the church lived this way, Satan took notice and sought to sow discord through the dishonest sacrifice of Ananias and Sapphira.
- This kind of living, this perspective, will be apparent to the saints, to our community, to the enemy, and to our Lord.
- This is an encouragement to continue on. To continue without wavering in living a life centered around Christ, to stay on mission for the gospel, giving freely and generously as a good steward of what's been entrusted to you.
- This is an opportunity for repentance in areas where your time or possessions have centered around something other than the gospel, if

you've identified complacency in taking action, or areas of your life lacking in generosity and good stewardship, then come to the Lord in repentance, seeking a renewed fervor and strengthening of gospel conviction.

- Remember the great grace he's showered upon you and continues to show you day after day, days where that grace is sufficient as you fulfill your calling to be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to the Lord which isn't radical, but reasonable service.
- And remember that this living with unified gospel conviction is an act of immense grace which should radically drive us to generous action. Radical in how it appears to this world, but simply generous because of the generous gift of salvation we ourselves have received.
- May we be stirred from our complacency, may God's word light a fire in our hearts because we too are spirit filled witnesses, part of a community of people who together owe all that they have to their Lord and King, Jesus.
- Focus your lives on Christ! Center them and everything you have around the gospel! Glorify the king for the grace he has shown you! And take generous action towards your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that our faith may be proven, our fellow members in Christ blessed, and our Lord and King glorified.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?