

"Living for Eternity"

Acts 4:32-37

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we finished looking at the prayer of the apostles pertaining to the opposition for the Sanhedrin.

Notice Acts 4:29-30

They prayed for only two things:

1. They prayed for boldness to speak the Truth of God's Word.
2. They prayed for God's power to work through them to save souls.

They never once prayed for God to take away the opposition nor to make the path easier. The opposition and the difficult path were part of the plan to magnify the grace of God in their lives. These apostles had the same Godly desires that Paul would later manifest in his letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 1:20

²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

Getting back to the apostle's prayer, we see in verse 31 that God was pleased with their prayer, and it was answered.

Notice Acts 4:31

Now as we move on, we shall see the manifestation of compassion in the lives of these early believers.

I. Common-ism In the Early Church

There is a major difference between common-ism and communism. Communism says, "What's yours is mine" but common-ism says, "What's mine is yours." Communism is when the government becomes the god over the people and declares that everything should be shared and then the elites control it all and they oppress the people, and the people suffer greatly.

Communism is responsible for more than 100 million deaths in the 20th century. It is a system that is purely satanic. Communism and Christianity cannot exist together because under communism the government demands the worship of the people and becomes the god.

What takes place in the verses before us is NOT communism. What we are about to see was not forced upon the people by the government but instead it is a willingness in the hearts of the believers to do all they could to help fellow believers in need.

Notice Acts 4:32

These believers were of one heart and one soul. This is a wonderful statement! This is the result of being controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is God's desire for His church. There were no divisions, no strife, no contention and no denominations. This will never happen again until the rapture takes place and in that moment the church will have the same unity that was seen here.

Here in this verse we see that the believers did not cling tightly to their possessions. They had all things common. They were living out the statement, "What's mine is yours!"

Application:

One of the characteristics of being a disciple is to not cling tightly to the things of this world.

Luke 14:26-27, 33

²⁶ *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

²⁷ *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

³³ *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*

¹⁷ *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;*

¹⁸ *While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Notice Acts 4:33

This verse contains much spiritual Truth. The apostles gave witness of the resurrection with great power. This means that the power of God was flowing through them as they testified. The power of God in them was evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ because it was the same power that had raised Jesus from the grave. This is the very same power that God wants to manifest in the lives of every believer.

Ephesians 3:19-20

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.

When we are controlled by the Spirit then the resurrection of Jesus Christ is manifest in us as they see Jesus in us.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

¹¹ For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Romans 6:3-6

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Notice Acts 4:33 again.

The end of this verse tells us that GREAT GRACE was upon them. Keep in mind that GRACE is unmerited favor. The idea here is that they were receiving a blessing which they did not deserve, and the blessing was that they were being used by God to manifest Jesus Christ and His power to the people of Jerusalem. This was a great blessing!

Application:

When we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, and we are used by God to manifest Jesus to the people around us this is an absolutely blessed experience. There are many accomplishments a person can reach in life but there are none that can compare with being used by God for His purpose. There is a joy and a fulfillment that exceeds all other experiences in this life when God works His power through us.

Let us notice a particular way in which the disciples were used.

Notice Acts 4:34-35

Let us first of all understand that the practice here is not found anywhere else in the Scriptures. This was a situation where the disciples were moved to sell what they had to help those who were in need. What brought about the great need? Most of the jobs in Jerusalem were connected to the Temple and the Temple sacrifices. Keep in mind that it was the Sadducees who controlled the Temple. They also made up the Sanhedrin. So, when these people came to Jesus Christ and preached of the resurrection (which the Sadducees did not believe in) they then lost their positions within the Temple system. They had families and therefore they had great needs. It was then that the Holy Spirit began to move the people who owned things to sell what they owned in order to help out those who lost their income. So the blessing extended to these believers came through giving.

Application:

This very blessing is also made available to each of us as we too have opportunity to give. Let me show you how Paul instructed the Corinthians concerning giving to the needs of the saints at Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1-3

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

² Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

³ And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

We are to give what we purpose in our hearts. Many believe that the believer is to give ten percent which they refer to as a tithe. But that is found in the Law, and we are not under Law, but we are under grace. Some people cannot give ten percent and some people can give fifty to seventy five percent. We are to give as God hath prospered us and it is to be given willingly. If you give and it is not willingly then you need to just keep it because it does not count for eternity. If you are someone who wants to give but worries about tomorrow, then verse 8 speaks to you. If you give, God will see that you have what you need. He is able to make all grace abound toward you. Getting back to the point, there are great blessings in giving when there is a need.

Notice Acts 4:36

I love what is said here about Joses/Barnabas. He was given the nickname, Barnabas which means son of consolation/encouragement. He is mentioned 24 times in the book of Acts, and he will go with Paul on his first missionary journey. He was a man that had a way of encouraging others. His words were always uplifting. He had a way of helping people get through the valleys of life. He would have been a great man to travel with.

Application:

What if someone gave you a nickname that fit your personality, what would it be? It may be Discourager, Gloomy, Irritable, Worry Wart, Complainer, and the list goes on. Maybe it would be Encourager, Comforter, Cheerful, Loving, Forgiving or Patient.

Jesus was known for being an encourager, so he was named Barnabas. His faithfulness was a big encouragement to many people, and this will be forever remembered in eternity. Let us ask ourselves a question, "What will we be remembered for?"

Notice Acts 4:36-37

Barnabas owned land and he sold it and gave all the money to the apostles to distribute to the needy. Now if you know your Old Testament history you know what God said about the Levites owning land.

Deuteronomy 10:9

⁹ Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him.

The Levites were meant by God to be spread out over the land, traveling, ministering and helping people as they would come to worship God at the temple. The Levites were not one of the twelve tribes in terms of territory. There were twelve sections of land, but this was because Joseph got a double portion, divided between his sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

Notice Acts 4:36

Barnabas lived in Cyprus so the land he owned was there, so he was not in violation of the Law.

What we need to see here is that he lived up to his nickname by selling his land and giving all the money to help the poor believers. Just think of how this would make you feel if you were the believer who had lost his income, was cast out away from his home place, trying to provide for his wife and children and then you hear about Barnabas. He sells his land and gives the money to help you and others who are struggling. What an encouragement that would be! You would know through Barnabas that God was going to provide no matter how dark the situation would be.

Conclusion:

We do not know how much of an encouragement we are when we are willing to give to the believer who is in need.

Notice Acts 4:33 again.

This is what takes place when we are willing to make the sacrifices.