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THE NEW COMMUNITY

ACTS 4:32-5:42



What factors control your decision-making? What core values tip the scales such that you go one way instead of another? From chapter 4 on, Acts will illustrate the sharp contrast between the systems of the “world” and the lordship of Jesus Christ. The apostles are threatened, jailed, and beaten, and conflict arises even from within. Despite the rising opposition, the message is clear: the gospel will advance in the world because God is at work in us.

A LIFE OF GIVING (4:32-37)

1. In Acts 4:31 we see that the prayer of the believers was answered, and they were freshly filled with the holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. What evidence do you see of this filling of the Spirit in verses 32-36? List your observations below.
2. The early believers expressed their oneness by holding themselves responsible for each other's needs.¹ Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, 1 Timothy 5:3-16, and 1 John 3:16-18. Are there limits to this shared responsibility? How should giving look in the local church?

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”

¹“We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of [Acts 4:32-37]. In those days the believers gave abundantly of what was their own; we in our day are content not just jealously to retain what we possess, but callously to rob others. They sold their own possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme. At that time love made each man's own possessions common property for those in need; in our day such is the inhumanity of many, that they begrudge to the poor a common dwelling upon the earth, the common use of water, air, and sky.” – John Calvin

ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA (5:1-11)

As soon as the Spirit came upon the church, Satan launched a ferocious counterattack. While it is true that his first and crudest tactic is physical violence, crushing the church by persecution, his second is even more cunning: moral corruption and compromise. This form of attack makes sense because Christ is exalted by the integrity of his church. The early church was not exempt. The first example of the attempt to insert evil into the interior life of the church is the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

3. In Acts 5:1-4, exactly what was Ananias's sin? What might have motivated him to do this?
4. Luke clearly means for us to see the death of Ananias and Sapphira as a work of divine judgment. How do you respond to the severity of God's judgment?

IN THE NAME OF JESUS (5:12-42)

5. How do the Sadducees respond to the apostles in 5:17-28? How does God vindicate them?
6. What do you think of Gamaliel's analysis of the situation (5:33-39)? Do you think he was right or not? Explain.
7. In verse 41, Luke says the apostles felt honored to suffer² for the sake of Christ. What led them to feel this way? Are they crazy? Why or why not?

"Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name."

²Is **SUFFERING** to be considered a normal part of the Christian life? Acts suggests that the normal Christian life included a willingness to publicly bind yourself to a new and distrusted 'sect' whose leaders were being thrown into jail; a determination to stand together with your new spiritual family, come what may, and contend for the gospel; and a self-forgetting commitment to your brothers and sisters in Christ.