

“And Great Grace Was Upon Them All”

Sermon Notes

Which master do you serve with your giving?

➤ **What your heart treasures is the true test of which master you serve.**

** So examine what consumes your heart:*

1. Do you grasp the riches of grace? (4:32-37)

2. Do you cling to the honor of men? (5:1-11)

Next Week: Proverbs 18:21 “There’s a Lot of Power Right Under Our Noses”

Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of September 17-23

Context

1. Read Acts 2:42-47. Luke says that the early Christian church in Jerusalem experienced such things as (1) the Apostles' preaching and teaching, (2) prayer, (3) the Lord's Supper, (4) eating together, (5) signs and wonders, (6) generous compassion, (7) evangelism, (8) conversion. What unfolded in chapters 3 and 4 are specific examples of this summary in 2:42-47. Remember Acts 2:44-45 as you study 4:33-5:11.
2. In Acts 4:1-22, what did Peter and John experience at the hand of the Jewish religious leaders? Remember this context as you study 4:33-5:11.
3. When it came to the preaching of the Apostles, what were the Sadducees specifically irked about (see Acts 4:1-2)? How does this connect to what happens in Acts 4:33? Also, what did the Christians pray for in Acts 4:23-31? How is that prayer answered in Acts 4:32-37?

Observation

1. What does it mean that they were of “one heart and soul”? How could such a multitude (five thousand or more people!!!) be of such unity? Who made that happen? How was this unity demonstrated?
2. This is our first introduction to Barnabas. We’ll hear about Barnabas many more times in Acts (9:26-30; 11:19-26; 12:25-15:41). What do you learn about this “Son of Encouragement”? What was his profession? Where was he from?
3. With Barnabas and Ananias/Sapphira, Luke contrasts two types of responses to the preaching of the gospel of grace, as it impacted benevolence towards others. What looked similar? What differed between them?

Meaning

1. What motivated the generosity? Consider what Luke meant by “great power” and “great grace” in verse 33. Think about their displays of generous love for one another (see also Lk 7:47). What were they captivated by? What were their hearts possessed with?

2. What do we learn about possessions. (a) Are they personal or communal? Were they private or public? (b) Were they under compulsion to give, or did they do so voluntarily? (c) What rights of ownership did they have?

3. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit through Peter's conversation with Ananias? How is this passage an apologetic for the personhood of the Holy Spirit?...for the divinity of the Holy Spirit? We can also learn an important, biblical lesson from this. What do our horizontal, human relationships say about our vertical relationship with God?

4. (a) What did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong? What evidence suggests the problem wasn't that they withheld proceeds, but that there was something else going on their hearts? What *motivated* their deceit and hypocrisy? (b) Further, how was Satan involved? Yet what evidence is there that Ananias and Sapphira were *personally* responsible? (c) Finally, what biblical principle does this teach us about tools (money and possessions) — is the problem in the thing itself or in the heart of the user Explain.

5. Some criticize God for his seemingly harsh judgment here. Yet in John Calvin's commentary on this passage, he listed at least seven ways that Ananias and Sapphira sinned. What sins were they guilty of? Why did God render such immediate, miraculous, divine judgment upon them (consider also 1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:14-18)? Why is testing God a most foolish act (Ex 17:2; Nu 14:22; Dt 6:16; 33:8; Ps 78:18; Lk 4:12)? What impact did God's judgment have on the Christian community?

Application

1. How does this passage shape your thoughts and beliefs about possessions and giving? Giving under the Mosaic Law involved tithing and freewill offerings. What do you understand about giving under the New Covenant?
2. How does this passage shape your motivations, that is, your affections and desires, as you consider how you steward your possessions? And as you give to the church and other ministries?
3. How will you choose to act this week, to demonstrate that you are possessed by the Holy Spirit, not by Satan? So what needs to change in how you use your possessions this week? Whom can you share them with? What might you sell off to provide benevolent funds for those in need?