
Acts of the Apostles

Acts 4:23-37

Lesson 10 – Pressure Leads to a shaking

Acts 4:23-37 (NIV)

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. ²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." ³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. ³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. ³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

1. Discuss a time where you felt support or encouraged by your church family?
2. When you pray what are some of your favorite expressions you use that describe God?
3. When in trouble our nature is to run to a place of safety/strength.
 - a. God wants us to run to Him, why do people even Christians not turn to God first in a time of trouble?
 - b. What in your mind does turning to God in a time of trouble actually mean? Be specific
4. Too often when we pray, we speak about what we want God to do in the present and in the future, but we see in our scripture that their prayer is bringing up how God has acted in the past. Why is it important in our prayer life to bring up God's past actions on our behalf? What does bringing up past actions do for our faith?
5. They interpreted their suffering through the lens of scripture.
 - a. Why is this action important?
 - b. What does this action say about the importance of Bible Study?
6. The sermon stated "God didn't cause the evil against them but he governed the outcome."
 - a. How does it impact your faith to know that people coming against you are not God ordained but they will be God maintained? (God will use my enemy to shape me but wont let my enemy break me!!)
7. Speak to a time where you were amazed by the power of prayer (i.e. prayer answered in the affirmative in a spectacular way). How did that experience change your prayer life? Did it have an effect on others around you?
8. It is fascinating to see how the early church shared with one another. Why do you think it is so difficult to share what we have with one another?
9. Share your major takeaways from the Sermon/Lesson for this week.

Workshop discussion: Since the inception of the African American community in this country it has always been anchored by the church. It was then strength of the church the provided financial resources during the civil rights movement which made it a success. Did you know it was the churches that paid bail money, bought

cars and provided rides back and forth to work during the Montgomery bus Boycott? IF it were not for the finances of the church this boycott would have failed miserably. Today it seems as churches in the African American community are fragmented and without the financial power to do anything transformative in the community.

1. What do you think happened from that time until now?
2. What needs to happen in that we will resemble the first century church and the churches from 1945-1970.

Meditation for the week: Each person asks themselves the question of am I being sacrificial so say God in my financial giving as well as my service to the ministry in hopes that we may be that transformative agent in our community for God?

I. The Church Triumphant in Persecution: Victory Over Abuse, 4:23-31

(4:23-31) **Introduction:** the true believer shall suffer persecution. Christ said so (cp. John 15:20). Christ suffered persecution; the early church suffered persecution; believers today shall suffer persecution. It is inevitable.

- ⇒ It may take the form of abuse, anger, slander, gossip, mockery, cursing, isolation, or violence.
- ⇒ It may take place in the market place, church, home, community, or school.

What believers need is not deliverance from persecution, but victory and triumph over it. Believers need a conviction of mission, a conviction so strong that they become immovable.

1. Peter and John were released (v.23-24).
2. A conviction of God's power (v.24).
3. A conviction of man's futility and God's plan or providence (v.25-28).
4. A conviction of mission and of God's concern (v.29-30).
5. The results (v.31).

1. (4:23-24) Ministers— Humility: Peter and John were released. As soon as they were released, they sought out their fellow believers, the church. Most likely the church was already meeting together, praying for Peter and John.

1. They reported and shared their experience with the church. Note several striking facts.
 - a. Peter and John were not depressed, discouraged, or downcast. Neither were they stricken with fear and trembling. They were not suggesting the church withdraw into a hole and keep its message to itself. They had been imprisoned and tried by the Supreme Court itself, threatened and warned, but they were not defeated and silenced.
 - b. Peter and John were not puffed up. They had suffered undue strain and pressure in serving Christ, and God had marvelously used them as witnesses to the highest rulers of the land. Yet there is no mention, no suggestion, not even a tinge...
 - of boasting
 - of self-glorying
 - of being God's special servants
 - of conceit
 - of being more used by God
 - of being exalted above fellow believers
 - c. The concern of Peter and John was to encourage and edify (build up) the church and to warn them of the coming persecution that lay over the horizon. Note the words "reported all." They shared all that the court had said: their questioning, their threats, their warnings. They shared how persecution would come if they continued to preach Jesus, and they shared how God had so wonderfully defended them.

Note a striking fact. A decision whether or not to continue preaching was not even considered. The decision to carry the gospel to the whole world was made by Christ. It is not up for debate. Believers are commanded to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

2. The church could do but one thing: it triumphantly lifted its voice to God in prayer. But note: the prayer was triumphant and united "with one accord." The triumph of the church is seen in the points of its convictions throughout the prayer. The "one accord" means they prayed *with one mind and one spirit*. They focused and concentrated upon what was being prayed. Their minds were not wandering about. They were not half-heartedly praying, some praying and others thinking about their own affairs. They were "all of one accord," zeroing in on God and His wonderful care and provision. It is such group prayers that God hears and answers.

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).

"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

2. (4:24) God, Power; Creator: there was a conviction of God's power. God is the One who created the universe in all its massiveness. God alone is the One who has such omnipotent power to create. Therefore, there is no one—no person, no being, no ruling body, no nation—not even a world that can stand and stop His will and power. This was the church's great conviction of God's power.

1. Note the word "Lord" (see Deeper Study #2—Acts 2:36).
2. Note the phrase "heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is." This encompasses...
 - all the earth and all upon earth (sea or land).
 - all in the lower heavens (atmosphere).
 - all in the middle heavens (outer space).
 - all in the ultimate heavens (beyond space and time, where Christ is).

All things, whether visible or invisible, have been created by the Sovereign Lord of the universe. He and He alone is God; He is the One who possesses all power, the One whose will and purpose will be victorious. And more immediate, more at hand, He is the One who cares for and loves and oversees those who serve Him. He is the One who stands against the evil of lost and mean men, men who abuse and persecute other human beings.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

"But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. 8:6).

"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16).

"[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10).

DEEPER STUDY #1 (4:24) Lord (Despota)

3. (4:25-28) God, Will of— Predestination— Determinate Counsel: there was a conviction of man's futility and God's plan or providence. The thought is that men will do evil. Men will persecute believers and attempt to stamp out the gospel and the church. But they will fail, for God has a plan and He will overrule and carry out His plan.

Now note a critical fact: God's plan—His providence and His working all things out for good—had already been proven. David's prophecy and the death of Christ had proven it.

1. Men will oppose God. God through David foretold their opposition in Scripture (cp. Psalm 2:1-2).
 - a. The heathen, that is, the *lost* of the world, "rage" (*ephruaxan*^{PWS: 3153}): to neigh, stomp the ground like a fierce horse; to act untamed, haughty, unruly.
 - b. The people, that is, the *worldly*, "imagine vain things": to be anxious over *empty* things; to focus one's life, time and energy upon *meaningless* possessions and *material things*, the empty, unsatisfying things of the world.
 - c. The *kings and rulers* stand up and gather together against God and His Christ, the Messiah. They stand against; stand in an opposite direction; stand in opposition and hostility to God and Christ.
2. God planned and overruled man's opposition. God's *counsel determined* what was to be done.
 - a. The prophecy was primarily fulfilled in the death of Christ. Men stood against God's "holy child Jesus"; they gathered together against Him and killed Him. But God overruled and raised Him from the dead. God took the events—all the evil of men—and worked it all out for good. His will to save the world is still marching on. God's counsel—His deliberation, His knowing all things and His possessing all power—worked everything out for good. (See Deeper Study #2—Acts 2:23; Deeper Study #3—Acts 2:23; and note—Acts 3:13-15 for more discussion and verses.)

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

- b. The prophecy is still being fulfilled in the lives of believers and the church. The world...
 - still rages,
 - still imagines empty things,
 - still stands and gathers together against God, His Messiah and His church,
 ...but to no avail. God's will and purpose still marches on. He overrules all the meanness and persecution of evil men. He sees to it that the glorious message of salvation is not stopped, the Word of God is not bound. He causes it to be spread and to save all who hear and will believe.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery [the gospel], even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Cor. 2:7).

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2:8-9).

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:2-3).

4. (4:29-30) Witnessing: there was a conviction of God's mission and of God's concern.

1. Their mission was to "speak God's Word." Note what they needed and what they prayed. They did not pray, did not need...

- for evil men to be destroyed.
- for the persecution to stop.
- for God to allow them to stop witnessing until things quieted down.

They prayed for boldness, for more courage to bear testimony, no matter the abuse and opposition. They asked to be fearless, for God to remove their fear. Note they asked for "all boldness."

- a. The word "now" (*nun*) is stressed; there is heavy emphasis upon it. The church desperately needed its fear removed, and it wanted a strong courage to get about its business of witnessing.
- b. The word "behold" (*epide epi*^{PWS: 332}) means to look upon. The church was asking God to concentrate and focus upon the persecution; to deal with it and to overrule the enemy; to give whatever was necessary to endure through it all.
 - ⇒ To consider the persecution and remove what He would of it; to remove whatever fury was not to be used for His glory.
 - ⇒ To consider the persecution and to give the faith and endurance to bear testimony *through* it; to use the persecution to praise His name.

"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10).

"Wherefore doth the wicked contemn [spurn] God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite [require] it with thy hand" (Psalm 10:13-14).

- c. The word "servants" (*doulois*^{PWS: 3466}) is the word for bond-slaves. The church was saying that they were the slaves of the Lord, to do His will, to share and speak God's Word despite persecution.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8).

2. Their need was also for power to heal and for signs and wonders, for a demonstration of God's power to prove their claim, the claim that...

- God's Son did come to earth.
- God's Son did die.
- God's Son did arise.
- God's Son was exalted to the right hand of God.
- God's Son was still active and working in men's lives today.

Only one thing could prove such a message: the power of the living Lord proving itself in signs and wonders. Note two significant points.

- a. The power lies "in the name" of Jesus (see Deeper Study #2—Acts 3:6. Cp. Acts 4:7, 10, 12, 17, 18.)
- b. The power is for the glory of Jesus alone.

"And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matthew 10:1).

"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mark 3:14-15).

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17-18).

"To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:9).

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Ephes. 1:19).

"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" (Ephes. 3:20).

5. (4:31) Boldness— Witnessing: the results of the church's prayer were threefold.

1. The place was shaken. The shaking was a miracle, a sign showing that God controlled the physical universe, just as they had prayed (Acts 4:24).
2. They were filled with the Holy Spirit (see Deeper Study #1—Acts 2:1-4). They needed a very special manifestation, a fresh experience with the Spirit.
3. They received the boldness for which they had asked. They bore strong testimony, speaking the Word of God with boldness and courage.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

"And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him" (Acts 9:29).

"Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:3).

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8).

"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

J. The Believers of the First Church: Essentials for Life Together, 4:32-37

(4:32-37) Introduction: the life of the early believers and church was most unusual—a far cry from the way the church and its believers live today. Yet a study of their lives gives us a clear picture of the essentials for living together and for fulfilling the mission of the Lord.

1. They were of one heart and soul (v.32).
2. They gave a great witness to the resurrection (v.33).
3. They took care of all who had need (v.34-37).

1. (4:32) Brotherhood— Unity: the early church was of one heart and of one soul. The order of the Greek sentence says, "the heart and the soul [were] one." The person's *whole being* was one with all other believers. There was complete and total...

- oneness
- unity
- accord
- harmony
- love

And remember, there were multitudes, thousands of believers at this time (cp. [Acts 2:41](#); [Acts 3:4](#)). How in the world can a body of people achieve one heart and one soul, become so unified? This verse reveals how.

1. The early believers gave their heart and soul to Jesus' Lordship and mission. They believed, *truly* believed, that the Lord Jesus...
 - had died for their sins.
 - had risen from the dead.
 - had been exalted to the right hand of God.
 - had commissioned them to go forth, reaching and helping people.
 - was to return and reward believers for being faithful to the great mission of saving and ministering to people.

They were thoroughly convinced of the mission of Christ, of the great commission ([Acts 1:8](#); [Matthew 28:19-20](#)); therefore, they gave all they were to *speak the Word of God* ([Acts 4:29, 31](#)). Nothing, not even threats and persecution could keep them from proclaiming the Word and carrying out the mission of Christ.

The point is this. They knew Jesus to be the Lord; therefore, they gave their lives to be His servants (doulos, slaves). They surrendered themselves totally to the Lordship of Christ...

- to His life and will.
- to His purpose and mission.

Christ became their life and will, purpose and mission—their all in all. They lived and existed to do what He said; they did it so that men might be saved from sin, death, and hell and receive eternal life. As just said, nothing, not even threats and persecution, could keep them from proclaiming and carrying out the mission of Christ. In fact, opposition only spurred them on with more boldness and energy in their witness (see outline—[Acts 4:23-31](#) and notes—[Acts 4:23-31](#)).

Another way to say the same thing is this: the early believers knew what the Lordship of Christ really meant. It meant the surrender of all one is and has so that the whole world may know that no man need ever die. A man can live eternally, truly live forever, beginning right now. The early believers just could not keep such a glorious message to themselves, no matter what it cost them personally or financially.

2. The early church gave their heart and soul to the Lord's demand, the demand to love and to share *all things* with the needy. (See outline—[Acts 2:44-45](#), notes—[Acts 2:44-45](#), and [Deeper Study #6—Acts 2:44-45](#) for more discussion.)

The early believer did not...

- insist on owning property
- count his possessions as his own
- trust in riches
- take from others
- glory in possessions (things)
- lay and store up wealth

The early believer truly believed...

- in the Lordship of Christ.
- in the inheritance of eternal life (heaven).
- in being rewarded for faithfulness to Christ.

- in denying self (all one is and has) to be saved.
- in forsaking all for Christ.
- in loving others sacrificially.
- in God's ownership of all.

The early church believed they were on earth to serve Christ and were being blessed with material possessions to help others. Therefore, they met the necessities of their own families, then they gave what they had left to meet the needs of a lost, desperate, impoverished world.

Scripture drives the point home: the early church believed...

- that the true believer was to "labor, working with his hands...that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephes. 4:28).
- "That...your abundance may be a supply for their want" (2 Cor. 8:14).
- "That their abundance [whether things or labor] also may be a supply for your want" (2 Cor. 8:14).
- that "he that had gathered much had nothing left over" (2 Cor. 8:15).
- that "he that had gathered little had no lack" (2 Cor. 8:15).
- that "God [will] put the same earnest care into the heart of [believers] for you" (2 Cor. 8:16).

Note a very practical point, easily seen. Unless the rich use their money to the point of sacrificing, millions will continue to die from senseless causes, causes that could be eliminated by a concentrated effort of the wealthy.

- ⇒ The hungry will continue to starve.
- ⇒ The cold will continue to freeze.
- ⇒ The unclothed will continue to be embarrassed, be misfits.
- ⇒ The unsheltered will continue to suffer exposure.
- ⇒ The uneducated will continue to be ignorant.
- ⇒ The diseased will continue to be eaten away.
- ⇒ The abnormal will continue to suffer and be useless.
- ⇒ The lost will continue to die without Christ.

There are businessmen and leaders with the ability and know-how (under God) to meet the desperate needs of the world. Sorrow, suffering, pain and death could be eliminated by just *some* of the world's leaders if they would just surrender their lives to Christ—all they *are and have*—and get to it.

A man should never forget this: Jesus said that the rich man lost his soul and went to hell because of indulgence, extravagance, storing, hoarding, and neglecting the needs of those in the world who were in such desperate straits. (See note—' Luke 12:15-19; note—' Luke 16:19-21 and Deeper Study #1—Luke 16:19-21.) There is no hope for the man, no matter what the institutional church and its leaders say—no hope for the man who *holds back* more than what he and his *dear* family need. The reason is simple: the starving child is God's *dear* child. Let no man think God will excuse him for the death of His *dear* child who starved to death when the man had the money to help. Imagine the scene. A starving child leans against the outside wall of a building. Inside is a man with food or money to help the child. Yet the man refuses to help; he *holds back*, *stores up*, *banks*, *invests* his money to get more and more. All the while, God's *dear* child starves and starves and dies starving. What is it that confuses the mind of man so much? What is it that blinds man, that causes him to think that he will be acceptable to God and allowed to live in heaven forever, that causes him to think

that his sin will be overlooked? God's *dear* starving child died because of the man's *holding back*. Christ teaches that there is no way God will excuse the man. The man will be held accountable and judged severely.

Think about this for a moment. If God cares so much about man's human suffering, how much more does He care about man's spiritual and eternal suffering? He cared enough to sacrifice His Son for man's spiritual rebirth. If any man *keeps back* anything when it could be spreading the gospel of eternal life around the world, how much more punishment does he deserve? Christ teaches that every soul is lost and doomed that does not accept Him. The responsibility to send the gospel around the world lies in the hands of men. God is not going to send any other being to earth to do the job. It is up to men. Men must work to earn a livelihood, but they must also work so they will have enough to meet the needs of the world. In addition, some must be willing to go and become personally involved. This is the only way the needs of the world will ever be met.

Now, for the question asked at the beginning of this point. How in the world can a body of people achieve one heart and one soul, become as unified as the early church did?

⇒ By giving their souls and hearts, their whole beings to Jesus' Lordship and mission. When men and women surrender to the Lordship of Christ, they become one in following and doing His will. His life and mission become their life and mission. They live the same *kind* of life, the same *style* of life, and they work diligently to achieve the same mission. They become one in life and mission which is to say they become one in everything. There is something else as well, really the most significant factor: when people surrender to the Lordship of Christ, the Spirit of God gives them a supernatural love and a spiritual bond with other believers (cp. Romans 5:5; GALATIANS 5:22-23; John 13:34-35. See Deeper Study #3—Acts 2:42.) It is this that creates one heart and one soul in the church.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office [gifts]: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another" (Romans 12:4-5).

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephes. 4:12-13).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

2. (4:33) Church—Witnessing: the early church gave a great witness to the resurrection. (See outline—' Acts 2:24; and Deeper Study #4—Acts 2:24; outline—' Acts 2:25-36 for discussion and verses.) They witnessed with great power and great grace was upon them all (see note—' Acts 1:8 and Deeper Study #1, Witnessing—Acts 1:8; cp. Acts 4:31; see Deeper Study #1, Grace—Titus 2:11-15 for discussion).

3. (4:34-37) **Stewardship— Ministering**: the early church took care of all those who had need. Note four *revealing* facts that are extremely instructive and challenging. These facts show how obedient the early believers were and just how obedient God expects all believers to be. (As these facts are studied, imagine how different the church would be if believers today reached out like the early believers. What a change would be wrought in the heart of the world!)
1. Fact 1: no one lacked. There was not "any among them that lacked" (*endeēs*^{PWS: 2288}), that was left in need or in want, that went without. The idea is that no family, no man, no woman, no child was neglected. No one was *left* without the necessities of life; no one had to face a day without the food, clothing, or shelter that he needed to take care of himself or of his dear family. All of God's dear children were taken care of. Remember a critical question: what was it that caused the believers to take *care* of the needy? It was love—the duty laid upon them by Christ. Christ had told them to love and share with all those who lacked the necessities of life. There was a true brotherhood, a genuine love and caring for each other.
 2. Fact 2: all repented of their *hoarding*, and they gave everything beyond their own necessities.
 - ⇒ Some possessed lands (estates, plural) they did not need. They sold them and gave the monies to meet the needs of others.
 - ⇒ Some possessed houses (plural) that were not essential to their necessities. They too sold them and gave the monies to meet the needs of others.

Some picture this as saying that people sold the homes in which they lived, as though they moved into the streets or under the stars, exposing their families to all kinds of elements and dangers. This is most unlikely. Where would such a multitude of families (over 8,000 at this time) move, live, and survive? Shelter or housing is a necessity. Christ said so (Matthew 6:25-34). What the believers were doing is just what Christ demanded:

"If thou wilt be perfect [complete], go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself [give all one is and has], and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (Luke 12:33).

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:19).

"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalms 24:1).

They truly *loved Christ*, so they were repenting of their *hoarding*, covetousness, and extravagant living. They were focusing upon a world that was full of desperate needs and death.

They truly *loved others*, so they were giving all they had *beyond their own necessities* to help meet the world's desperate needs.

3. Fact 3: the needy received only what they needed, only what their necessities were. There are always those among us and around the world who need help, who are not able to take care of themselves. The reasons are innumerable. They are...

- too old
- too young
- diseased
- injured
- unemployed
- orphaned
- widowed
- divorced
- oppressed
- broken-hearted
- unskilled
- uneducated

What the early church did was very simple.

- ⇒ They looked at all those around them and pin-pointed the needs.
- ⇒ They repented of their *hoarding* and gave to those who had need.
- ⇒ They gave only what the necessities were.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

"When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12).

4. Fact 4: one man in particular set a godly example—Barnabas. (See note—Acts 4:36-37 for discussion.)

4. (4:36-37) **Barnabas**: this is the first mention of Barnabas, the Levite, who was from the Island of Cyprus. His name means "Son of exhortation" or "Son of consolation." Barnabas was an extremely important person in the life of the early church. His life is a dynamic example to all.

- ⇒ He was gifted by the Spirit of God with the gift of an *apostle* (Acts 14:14; cp. Ephes. 4:11).
- ⇒ He was totally committed to Christ and to helping others, even to the point of selling land to help (Acts 4:36-37).
- ⇒ He stood up and defended Paul before the early believers who feared Paul because Paul had been a spy and had persecuted the church (Acts 9:26-27).
- ⇒ He was sent forth by the church to exhort believers in the first known Gentile church, Antioch (Acts 11:22f).
- ⇒ He sought after Paul, wanting Paul to serve as his associate, and he discipled Paul in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).
- ⇒ He served with Paul (Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:2-15:40).
- ⇒ He was one of the first two missionaries, Paul being the other (Acts 13:2-3).
- ⇒ He discipled John Mark (Acts 12:25; Acts 15:37-40).
- ⇒ He was called upon to defend Gentile salvation before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:2, 12).
- ⇒ He differed and split with Paul (Acts 15:36-40).
- ⇒ He backslid, drifted away for a brief period (Galatians 2:11-13).
- ⇒ He is mentioned as an example by Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:6).
- ⇒ He was a cousin to John Mark (Col. 4:10).

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