

Acts 4:32-37 FEFC What's Mine Is Ours

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Last week we were at the park. Our narrative began a few weeks ago with Peter and John healing a lame man. Peter explained that it was faith in the name of Jesus that this man was healed. And then they preached about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter and John took a lot abuse from the leaders of Israel because Israel's leaders rejected Jesus Christ their own Messiah. They handed him over to be crucified. Now here he is again. The power of Jesus is at work in Peter and John healing people and setting them free.

Peter and John were taking ground for the kingdom of Jesus. And they were taking away ground that used to belong to the kingdom of darkness. Thus they experienced push back and resistance. And we can expect resistance when God moves in power. But we can also trust that *greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world*. We can stand our ground in the name and power of Christ.

And so Peter and John were jailed for their faith in Christ and for preaching in the name of Jesus and preaching the resurrection. But they were released because everyone could see the man who was healed standing in front of them. So they told Peter and John not to preach in the name of Jesus any more and they let Peter and John go.

Then Peter and John went immediately to the people of God and explained what happened. And the first response of the body of Christ was to pray from the heart and cry out to the Lord.

Their prayer was not that God would remove the threat, but that in light of the threats against them God would give them supernatural boldness and that

God would work signs and wonders to authenticate the message of faith in Jesus Christ.

And that was a challenge for us. Our first response should be not to figure everything out but to immediately go to prayer and see what God has figured out. And we can pray for supernatural boldness that comes as the Spirit of God fills us and gives us confidence to share the word of life with others. And God will also authenticate His word in all kinds of ways that we can't imagine nor control.

This week the scene changes and Luke shows us the authentic love that the Holy Spirit has created in this group of believers. Let's read the text.

READ THE TEXT

Acts 4:32-37 (NIV)

The Believers Share Their Possessions

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who 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.

PREACH THE TEXT

Acts 4 (NIV)

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind.

In Acts 5:11 Luke will use the word “church” for the first time. But right here, before Luke even uses the word “church”, he gives a description of what the church is like.

The Greek word for church used in 5:11 is **ekklesia**. *Ek* means “out of”, and *kaleo* means “to call.” Simply stated, it means “called out and called together.” And so we are called out of our old way of identifying ourselves. We are called out of our old way of life. And those who have the Spirit of God living in them are called together by that same Spirit and by our common God breathed faith in Jesus Christ. We are called together by the love that the Holy Spirit puts in our heart for God. And we are called together through the love that the Holy gives us for one another. Love that is multifold greater than we can come up with on our own. The love that God the Holy Spirit gives us for one another is so great that when we are filled with the Spirit we act like we belong to God and to the body of Christ.

Our culture tells us that we belong to ourselves. However, the word of God tells us that we belong to God.

John 8:47

Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

And part of belonging to God is that we belong to one another.

Romans 12:5

so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We know faith is real when we love God more than ourselves. And we

know our faith is real and powered up by Jesus when we live like we belong to one another and we are one heart and mind. This is the posture of serving rather than taking. This is the posture of loving God and being in His presence rather than hating Him and listening and never speaking with Him from the heart. This is the posture of heart when by the Spirit of God when someone else suffers we feel the same thing.

Let's examine this truth that we are one in heart and mind. What exactly does that mean?

ONE IN HEART AND MIND (ψυχη = Psuche)

One Heart

The heart, Kardia, is used by Luke in the Hebrew sense of reason, emotions, and will. It stood for a person's entire mental and emotional activity. So our reason, emotions and will make up our heart.

1. Our reasoning is part of what the bible calls our heart. With our reason we are able to consider the facts of creation and the plan of salvation. With our reason we are able to communicate clearly the plans of God to this world that has no great plan or vision of its own.

With our reason we work and plan and create and fix things and make order out of chaos. And we mirror God in this way as it was God who created an orderly world.

The bible says that we who believe have access to the mind of Christ. That means that God can take our minds and reasoning capacity and point us in the right direction so that we are figuring out the right stuff and focusing on the right stuff.

Apart from the mind of Christ we will be figuring out all kinds of things that don't really matter. Apart from Christ we will be unbalanced and be people of

great thought but people who have little love or compassion for others. So being one heart is more than just thinking or wishing we were one heart with one another. It begins with lining up our mind with the mind of Christ. This is something God does when we are born again. And it is something that continues to occur as we submit our thinking to Him.

2. Our emotions are also part of what the bible calls the heart. Our emotions can lead us to be of one heart when our emotions are sanctified. Our emotions can lead either to one-heart-unity, or our emotions can lead to great disunity.

SANCTIFIED EMOTIONS BRING UNITY

When we are feeling what God is feeling we are going to experience the one heart and one mind stuff in this passage. And when our emotional issues are dealt with and healed we will be people that are finally capable of being “one heart” with others.

Here are some of the dynamics of how this works. When you are going through a really difficult time I don't really care about you as much as I should in the flesh. I care, but it is not the “one heart” kind of caring that believers are capable of.

I have many of my own struggles that preoccupy my mind. However, God cares deeply about everything that you are going through. And when I am filled with the Holy Spirit, the emotions and love that God feels for you come through me and suddenly I care about you more than I care about myself. And that creates "one heart unity."

UNSANCTIFIED EMOTIONS BRING DISUNITY

On the other hand when we have unfinished business and unresolved conflicts and issues in our lives our emotions work as a defense mechanism and

actually push people away. Our emotions actually lead us into disunity.

STORY: Kathy suffered many kinds of rejection growing up. Her parents rejected her. She had a husband that rejected her. Her kids grew up and rejected her. Kathy came to Christ and was filled with the love of God and finally felt accepted and loved and not alone. But Kathy refused to deal with her past and she refused to forgive the people in her past. And so just below the surface Kathy had festering bitterness.

Kathy decided to begin a cell group. At first it started off great. However it was soon apparent that if anyone disagreed with her even in the most mild way she would blow up and begin to gossip and badmouth people she perceived were not loyal to her. Soon her cellgroup died. No one wanted to poison of bitterness and gossip.

If you struggle with emotions of bitterness or jealousy or envy and you find that others are constantly disappointing you, it might be that you need healing. It might be that your failure to deal with your emotional wounds of the past is a problem. And your unsanctified emotions might actually hold others back from the one-heart unity and love that God wants for His body.

When we deal adequately with our unresolved issues our emotions mirror the heart of Jesus and our emotions are used to draw us into unity with one another.

The last part of what the bible refers to as our heart involves the human will. 3. Our will can be used to create oneness of heart in Jesus Christ. When we are living by the Spirit and the word we do not care about getting our preferences and our will and our way. Our will is united in the heart-felt desire to do the will of God. We want what God wants.

Oneness of heart means that through the Spirit of God we have the mind of

Christ. Oneness of heart means that our emotions mirror that of Jesus who celebrates the good and weeps over the losses and pain of others. And oneness of heart means that through the Spirit of God getting our way is not as important as knowing and doing the will of Jesus and extending His kingdom.

The will of God is that we love one another deeply from the heart. When we submit our will to God we WILL love one another and have one-heart unity.

One Mind (or One Soul)

This passage speaks of being not only one in heart but also one in mind. What is meant by the term “mind?” The word mind in Greek is different than the way we use the word “mind.”

The word mind comes from the greek word Psuche and should be translated “soul” or “spirit.” The psuche is the life spirit in a person which can be touched and quickened and then filled by the Holy Spirit.

I think what is being referred to by the word Psuche is that believers have a human spirit that is literally possessed by the Holy Spirit of God. God moves into our spirit and fills us. And then through our Psuche or spirit the will of God and the thoughts of God filter into our hearts and we act out the will of God in our reason our emotions and our will.

PASSAGES ONE HEART ONE MIND

Luke 10:27

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ ; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

Romans 5:5

And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to

us.

We can not come up with this kind of love for one another. God's love has to be poured out into our hearts. God please pour out your love into our hearts and cause us to love one another deeply from the heart and soul.

2 Corinthians 2:4

For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

When our hearts are in the right place we share each others joys and tears. And we do not have to try hard to do it. It is God causing us to love one another through His Spirit.

1 Peter 1:22

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.

In this passage we see that we are purified by obedience. When we decide to obey Christ in all things the result is that we will love one another deeply from the heart.

So what is the result of being of one heart and one soul? How does that play out in the real world?

vs 32 cont...No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.

Net Bible: and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but everything was held in common.

IT'S NOT MY OWN

This is a passage that clearly shows two kingdoms in conflict. When I was running a business I can honestly say that I did not order my life God's way. I was in business to build my own kingdom. I thought up the number of cars that I

wanted and the house that I wanted and the amount of money that i wanted in the bank and then I set my goals and worked really hard to achieve the American dream. I did not spend a dime helping others. I blew all my cash on the things I wanted with no thought of God or others.

I spent time only with those whom would further my business but I did not care about those who could not help me get ahead. And my life was organized around building my kingdom.

The good news is that there are businessmen and women who order their lives with Godly principles. Their business is their mission field. And they hold their resources loosely and put their wealth at the disposal of the will of God. God does not hate the wealthy and He does not want us to be jealous of the wealthy or anyone. God uses wealthy people to bless communities and churches. What God does not appreciate or bless is when people love their money and resources more than they love God and people.

Our higher calling is to agree with God that none of this belongs to me. God you tell me what to keep and what to give away. Because I am here to build the kingdom of God first.

EVERYTHING IN COMMON

I know of individuals who can't wait till they get more resources so they can give it away and be a blessing to others. What does that look like in the body?

TESTIMONIES OF EVERYTHING IN COMMON

We started a Cell group at our last church. And then God led me to resign from the church but our cell group wanted to keep meeting. Shelly and I were a little anxious about where the money was going to come from because it takes a long time to get placed in another church. So Shelly and I prayed for God's help.

Then one of my friends from the cell group called and wanted to meet me

for lunch. After visiting for a while we got up to leave and he handed me a card. I opened it in my car and much to my surprise there was a large amount of cash worth about a month's salary. The words; "God told me to give this to you" came with the gift. Those words told me that God was a generous God and God would direct His people to help us when we needed it. He got to be part of this story because He listened to God. He gave it first to the Lord and then the Lord told Him where to deliver God's resources. And this told me that God was moving in power and taking care of my family. That is what it looks like to be of one heart and soul.

I was part of another cell group. One brother needed a trailer. I had just built a trailer and I suddenly had a strong desire to give my trailer to him. It was a gift given for free because I gave all I had first to the Lord, and then the Lord directs where it goes and when it stays. It all belongs to Him. And now the Lord gave me another trailer. I don't get my life from it and it's up to the Lord if I keep it or give it away or let someone else use it or whatever. That is a picture of one heart and one mind.

After I left the cell group and planted another, that first cell group sort of adopted someone who just got out of prison. They took him in and showed him the love of God and helped with him with a place to stay and walked him through how to make it on the outside. This man got to see what it looked like to live with one heart and soul. And God used their generosity and sincere love to prepare Brian to come here and serve as our youth pastor.

What is the connection between the Spirit of God and our physical resources? Well, those who are totally sold out to the Lord and filled with the Spirit are generous. Why? Because God is generous and if you are controlled by the Spirit of God you will be generous. And if a whole church is filled with the

Spirit and getting their life from God then they will consider their possessions as not even belonging to themselves. And when that happens God will create all sorts of God sightings and answered prayers among His people.

³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify (Lk 24:48) to the resurrection (Ac 1:22) of the Lord Jesus.

It is not with persuasive words that they testify. It is with power, and not just a little power, it is with great power that they continue to testify. If they are testifying with great power then I am sure there were miracles occurring. And I am sure that they had the Spirit of God upon them to give them supernatural boldness when they spoke of the resurrection.

This verse is right in the middle of the reference that said they did not consider their possessions their own. And in the next passage we see people selling their possessions and real estate to support the poor in the body of Christ.

BLOCKING GOD'S SPIRIT AND OUR WITNESS

One of the surest ways to dry up a church is to embrace the values of the culture over the kingdom of God. If we do not consider that we belong to one another there will be no outbreak of God's power. If we hold our stuff too closely then God can not use our resources to show off his grace to others.

Conversely, if we say; "I am here for God first and whatever belongs to me really belongs to God then God's grace and power will certainly not be blocked.

I think that is a good pattern. When we do not consider our possessions our own and when we organize our lives around serving one another in love, then God surely will pour out His great power upon us so that we can testify to the resurrection.

Here is the difficult part....all that we see on the television and in our culture

tells us that we will not be complete as people unless we get the right car or the right jeans or shoes or the right girl or the guy or house or whatever. All we see tells us to search for satisfaction not in Godly contentment but by gathering stuff under our roof for our own benefit.

But what happens when we tell God that all we have is at His disposal? Here I am God, you tell me where to go, what to do and who to serve. You tell me God if there is something you want to give away because all that I have is hereby placed at your disposal.

If you want to surrender your whole life and your resources to the Lord you will have a war on two fronts. Satan will try to convince you that you can still live for yourself and there is no need for full surrender. And your flesh will war against surrender to God. Your flesh wants to accumulate and control and spend on your own pleasures.

But when God causes you to love Him more than your stuff and when God causes you to love your brothers and sisters more than your personal dreams and ambitions you are going to have more joy and more boldness and more spiritual power that you even know what to do with.

vs 33 continued **...And God's grace (Ro 3:24) was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, (Mt 19:21; Ac 2:45) brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.**

GOD'S GRACE WAS AT WORK POWERFULLY

God's grace was at work in the believers. What does it look like for God's grace to work powerfully in those whom believe? Grace means unmerited favor. Unmerited favor means that we never earned God's love and blessings. God

gave us His favor and love and blessings and salvation for free without strings.

So what does grace have to do with generosity? God breathed generosity is a picture of God's grace. As the Spirit of God leads us, we contribute to others something that they did not earn or deserve but which is gladly given. This is the grace of generosity.

THE NATURE OF GENEROSITY

This is not forced generosity. This is not communism. Forced generosity or communism would be if there was a rule that all property now belonged to the church or the government. Anything done by force removes the love and heart from the act.

And we are not talking about crippling generosity. Crippling generosity is when someone can work but they chose not to. And so people give them money and motivate them to not work.

Grace-based generosity is giving our time and energy willingly to Jesus. And then he takes our willing hands and hearts and offerings and does amazing things to extend His love to others. From our actions of grace-based generosity people see the heart of Jesus. And because of the generosity they get a new picture in their mind of Jesus whom also gives forgiveness and grace and salvation gladly and generously. Spirit breathed generosity is a sign that the Spirit of God is moving in many different ways. Only the Spirit of God can get us over our selfishness and cause us to walk in Spirit led generosity and service.

Now Luke gives us a specific example of a person that sold a field and gave the money to the apostles to use as they saw fit.

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.

It is kind of interesting that the first thing in the bible about Barnabas is the generosity of God flowing through Barnabas. Soon he will show up as a traveling companion of the apostle Paul.

SUMMARY

We started with a look at the nature of the church. That church that is comprised of people whom are bound to one another by the Holy Spirit is of one heart and soul. One heart means that our emotions and will and thoughts are sanctified and with our thoughts and will and emotions we give away grace and love to one another.

And one soul or psuche means that God the Holy Spirit has moved into our spirit and he communicates His will and desires into our heart of hearts. And we are not just on the same page. Rather God the Holy Spirit gets us on God's page.

Then we saw that God's people who are one heart and soul are generous. If we love one another deeply from the heart then if you have problems or financial struggles then I share those problems and care deeply from the heart.

And then we saw that one of the ways you will know that God is really working in a body of people is through their Spirit led generosity. Spirit led generosity is a sign that people are walking in the Spirit. And this is a picture of God's grace that is given freely.

TAKING IT HOME

1. What is preventing you from being one heart and one soul with others? Is it an issue with your will, your emotions, or your thoughts?
2. Have you come to the place in which you have told God and meant it that your time and your stuff and your money belong to Him?
3. If God told you to give your car or boat or a large gift to someone right now,

what would you honestly do?

4. Does your Spirit led generosity show off the grace of Jesus that is freely given?