

## The Book Of Acts: Verse-By-Verse

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### Acts 4:32-35

- **The Internal Attack:**

In verses 32-35 Luke's account of the Early Church takes a decidedly different turn. In the prior section we saw the apostle's conflict with the Sanhedrin. As Luke's narrative progresses, we will find a different issue: Satan's work from within the Church.

Comparing Acts 4:32, 34-35 with Acts 2:44-45:

Acts 4:32, 34-35:

"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. 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."

Acts 2:44-45:

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." –

Luke has a different intention for the Acts 4 narrative than the one in Acts 2. The Acts 2 narrative rounded out the events of the Day of Pentecost. The Acts 4 narrative will serve as a contrast between the actions of Barnabas and Ananias (and his wife).

- **Two Infillings – Two Purposes:**

v. 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.

After Peter and John's defense before the Sanhedrin ... the apostles and company were once again, "filled with the Holy Spirit". This time, instead of speaking in tongues, they "spoke the word of God with boldness." It was a direct response to their prayers.

The two infillings of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2 and 3 are not pitted against one another: In the Acts 2 setting, God was fulfilling his promise to give the Holy Spirit to empower them. In the Acts 3 setting, God gave the apostles a fresh infilling in response to their prayers for boldness.

- **Note:** God gave them what they needed at the time – and what best fit what he was accomplishing through them.

After this "renewal" of the Spirit the apostles spoke the gospel message with boldness – but there was also a fresh set of miracles that took place. Empowerment is meant to provide the platform for preaching the good news.

- **The Practical Outworking of The Spirit's Infilling:**

A meaningful connection between the empowerment, the miracles, and the overall tone of these early believers: Generosity.

Luke gives us two accounts of the Spirit's infilling and two accounts of what followed. He also gives us two descriptions of the Early Church in Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–37.

A Summary: A consistent dedication to several things: 1. The Word of God. 2. Prayer. 3. Fellowship. 4. The Lord's Table. 5. Unity. 6. Generosity

to those in need. These descriptions portray a united, highly functional, and Spirit-filled church.

- **The Spirit of Generosity: v. 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.”

1. They “had everything in common”.
2. “No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own.
3. They shared what they had.

Luke is not suggesting that these believers had completely renounced private ownership. Peter tells Ananias about his right to do what he felt was appropriate with the proceeds from the sale of his property.

There is a strong sense that ownership of lands and goods was not more important to these early believers than the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Can we prioritize the needs of others in such a way that we would gladly divest ourselves of discretionary finances? Would we be willing to even give sacrificially to others?

Other features of this generosity: 1. The selling of both properties and goods was completely voluntary and took place as the needs arose. 2. The selling of properties and possessions was in proportion of the genuine needs.

Luke uses the same Greek phrase in Acts 2:45 and Acts 4:35 to describe this generosity. The believers gave “according as anyone had need”. A confluence of two things: A genuine need and a genuine response.

- **Three Approaches Based On The Early Church Model Of Generosity:**

1. Some have dismissed it as a rash “experiment” motivated by the false expectation of an imminent Parousia and causing the poverty which Paul had later to remedy by his collection from the Greek churches.
2. Others have insisted that this was a type of Christian “communism” which God wants all modern churches to use as a model.
3. Many others have seen this as a model of generosity: The Early Church’s efforts to take care of the needy through sacrificial giving is something we should seek to imitate.

Let’s go back and pick up verse 33. Luke writes, “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.”

- **A Great Consistency:**

In both of Peter’s preliminary sermons he made the resurrection of Jesus a central point. As the apostles moved forward that became very evident.

When Luke says, “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus...”, we are meant to extrapolate Miracles with the apostles’ testimony.

- **Great Grace:**

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” .... “And much grace was upon them all.”

When we think of God’s grace it is normal for us to recite the standard definition, “unmerited favor”. That is certainly a valid concept, but grace encompasses so much more. It also expands to mean God’s mercy, compassion, acceptance, kindness, graciousness, goodwill, and divine assistance.

Another side to “great grace”: “Grace is God’s power working through us to accomplish his perfect will.”

I think this is what Luke is really emphasizing: The link between the “great power” the apostles were demonstrating and the “great grace” that upon the entire Church.

In that context, “great grace” is more about the power and ability of the Holy Spirit working through us than it is about “unmerited favor”. Without God’s power working through the Early Church, they could not have effectively preached the gospel with accompanying signs of Christ’s resurrection.

How can we live as Christians if we are divorced from God’s grace working through us? Without the Holy Spirit we are sterile, ineffective, and unproductive. We need the power of God flowing and operating through us if we are going to achieve any real success in whatever He calls us to do.

An article in *Our God-Given Mission* details how pervasive the grace of God is in our lives:

- Our Christian identity: “By the grace of God I am what I am.” - 1 Corinthians 15:10
- Our standing before God: “this grace in which we stand.” - Romans 5:2
- Our behavior: “We behaved in the world ... by the grace of God.” - 2 Corinthians 2:12
- Our living: “Those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ by the grace of life.” - Romans 5:17; 1 Peter 1:7
- Our holiness: [God] “called us to a holy calling ... because of his own purpose and grace.”- 2 Timothy 2:9

- Our strength for living: “Be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus Christ” - 2 Timothy 2:1
- Our serving: “Serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” - 1 Peter 1:10
- Our sufficiency: “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.” - 2 Corinthians 2:8
- Our response to difficulty and suffering: We get “grace to help in time of need.” - Hebrews 4:16
- Our future: “Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” - 1 Peter 1:13
- Our hope beyond death: “Grace [reigns] through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” - Romans 5:21

God’s grace: God’s mercy, compassion, acceptance, kindness, graciousness, goodwill, and divine assistance – and the power of God working through us to accomplish his perfect will.

Next time: Two contrasting stories – Barnabas, and Ananias and Sapphira.