

Lesson 4: Fear of the Lord

Acts 4:32-5:16

The passage of the Bible that we will look at today depicts a story that may be hard to digest. Take some time now to come before the Lord and pray that He would release His Spirit to open your heart and mind to understand the Scriptures. Ask Him to speak clearly and directly into your life through His Word and His Spirit. It is God's will that we know Him, so when we ask Him to reveal Himself, we can be confident He will respond.

The Unity of the Spirit

Read Acts 4:32-37.

1. How are the believers described in the first part of verse 32?
2. According to Acts 4:32-35, what resulted from that oneness of heart and soul in the daily lives of the believers?

The unity among the believers in Jerusalem is astounding in these verses. In order to more fully consider the kind of the unity that would lead to this kind of healthy and sacrificial living, we will look to some verses in Ephesians 4.

3. From Ephesians 4:1-6 (especially verse 3), who is responsible for creating that kind of unity?
4. What did Paul warn in Ephesians 4:30?

“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”

Acts 4:32

5. Looking to Ephesians 4:17-32, what do you think are ways that believers can grieve the Holy Spirit?

6. On the other hand, what do you think are some ways we might honor the Spirit, bringing Him joy rather than grief?

It is the Holy Spirit who creates and maintains unity among believers. When the Lord is honored, worshipped and obeyed, unity among believers thrives, and the power and grace of God flow in abundance. When the Holy Spirit is grieved, that unity is threatened.

7. Looking to Acts 4:32-35, how did the unity of the believers and their resulting actions affect those around them?

8. What positive example did Luke give in Acts 4:36-37 of someone who honored the Holy Spirit, preserving unity among the believers?

A Severe Warning

Read Acts 5:1-11. Juxtaposed beside the admirable example of Barnabas, Luke recorded a story that should give us pause and encourage us to search our own hearts and motives.

9. What did Ananias and Sapphira do? Were they under any obligation to do so (Acts 5:4)? What do you think motivated them?

10. According to Peter in Acts 5:3-4, to whom did Ananias lie?

11. In Acts 5:3, to whom does Peter attribute Ananias' temptation to lie?

12. To this point, Satan had been threatening the early church from without – through unbelieving Sadducees and governmental officials. How do you see his schemes shift in this event?

13. What else were Ananias and Sapphira guilty of doing according to Acts 5:9?

14. In Luke 4:9-12, Luke told of Satan tempting Jesus to test God. How did Jesus respond in verse 12?

Peter was put in a position that none of us would desire. He was looking into the eyes of a man who may have been a dear friend and was at the very least an acquaintance within the community of believers, and he knew the man was caught in sin. Christians have sometimes gotten a bad reputation for being judgmental or condemning of others. Scripture is clear that we are neither to condemn nor to judge another's heart. However, God's Word also tells us that when we see a fellow believer caught in sin as Peter did, we do have some responsibility to act.

15. What did Jesus teach as the model for discipline within the church in Matthew 18:15-17?

16. Read Galatians 6:1, Hebrews 3:13 and James 5:19-20. Considering these words of the Holy Spirit, how are we called to respond to another believer's sin?

17. Do you have friends that you believe would confront you if they knew you were walking in sin? Are you the kind of friend that would risk your own popularity to confront another, in love, about something that is holding her back from the life God has for her?

Continuing Signs and Wonders

Read Acts 5:12-16.

18. In verse 12, what was taking place among the believers? What miraculous sign is emphasized in these verses?

19. How did people respond to the activity of the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:13-14?

20. From Acts 5:15-16, who were especially drawn into the presence of the apostles and into the Presence of God? What was the result?

21. What did Jesus say in Mark 2:17?

22. What do you think Jesus meant by His statement in Mark? How might sickness (be it emotional, physical or spiritual) lead us to Christ, and what can He do for us?

Prepare for Life

Look back to the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

23. According to Acts 5:5 and 5:11, what happened as a result of Ananias' and Sapphira's deaths?

24. What do the following verses teach about fearing the Lord?
 - ❖ Psalm 33:18

 - ❖ Psalm 115:11

 - ❖ Proverbs 14:26

 - ❖ Proverbs 19:23

 - ❖ To summarize, what do you think it means to fear the Lord?

25. Read 1 John 1:5-10. How do these verses encourage us to live? What does God promise regarding our sin?

Beholding the power and holiness of a mighty God led the early believers to a healthy fear of the Lord. This sobering story of Ananias and Sapphira presents an opportunity for us to honestly and humbly consider ourselves before our holy God.

26. Psalm 139:23-24 says: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.” Take some time to turn these verses into your own prayer to God, asking Him to convict you when you sin, to safeguard your ways and to lead you in the way of truth that leads to life in the Spirit. You can write your prayer out below if you would like.

Lecture Notes: Lesson 4