

UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY – Acts 4:32-5:11

A Christian community cannot survive without unity! We may have great programs, music, and preaching, but apart from unity we are *actors*, simply hypocrites! **Verse 32** reads, a “multitude believed.” **How is it possible for a multitude to have unity, when two believers can’t get along!?** For the answer we must go back to **(v.31): “...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit!”** Jesus must be behind the wheel, *driving* and *guiding* the church!

Division within the church is evidence that Jesus is not leading the church! Chuck Smith, one of the leaders of the “Jesus People Movement” of the late sixties, use to say, “*Where God guides, He provides.*” **Chuck Smith** Oftentimes Pastor Smith’s comments have been associated with finances; but it *also* speaks of God’s provision for unity!

The church can be a hurtful place because it’s filled with flawed, *recovering* sinners! It’s been said: ***The church is like Noah’s Ark; if it were not for the storm on the outside, no one could stand the stench on the inside.*** It is nothing short of a miracle that *in Christ* we are one! **We cannot accomplish this on our own, because we can’t handle the truth about ourselves!** People often ask me to speak into their lives, which I rarely do; rather I pray for them that the Spirit will speak to them, because when I *say it* they’ll reject it, but when the Spirit *says it* they can’t escape it!

Some (believers) believe *unity* happens when there is *total* agreement or conformity, *which can open the door to occultism or legalism*. Unity is defined here in three ways, being ***“one heart and one soul...having all things in common.”*** Heart – Kardia: thoughts and feelings.

Soul – Psyche: the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing. In other words, shows itself alive – not only in theory, but in practice, ***“having all things in common!”*** In other words, recognizing that *what I have belongs to the Lord for the furtherance of His Kingdom; it's not my stuff!* Thus, the early church is known more by Who possesses them *than* by what they possess! **(Luke 12:15) And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."** To have unity we must hold things (ministry, etc.) lightly, as servants and *not owners*!

For unity to exist, endeavor must be a reality! ***A united fellowship is not known by the absence of conflict, but by their willingness to endeavor, love one another through it!*** Unity is not automatic, but it must be symptomatic (characteristic) of being one in Christ! ***Symptom*** - *is a sign of the existence of something*. Endeavoring to have unity is evidence we've been changed!

(Ephesians 4:1-3) I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all

lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Endeavoring – *spoudazo*: give diligence, labor, study, exert one's self. Endeavoring is laborious, hard work; but without it the church will be lifeless!

There are four attributes of unity mentioned in our text. The first is Great Power - (v.33a) One commentator writes: *The word "power" here denotes efficacy (effectiveness) and means that they had ability given them to bear witness of the resurrection of the Savior. It refers, therefore, rather to their preaching than to their miracles.*

(Barnes Notes) A church with an ineffective, powerless witness is a divided church, spending more time fighting one another than the devil!

Our oneness in Christ is a living testament to the fact that Jesus is alive! Thus, Christ prayed while on earth: **(John 17:20, 21) "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."**

The second attribute of unity is Great Grace – (v.33b) Not just grace; we need great grace for unity to exist in the church! **Grace has to be great for us to love one another!** The source of great grace is Jesus. When we *honestly* consider God's grace towards us, how can we not extend it towards others?! **(Colossians 3:13-14) "...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint**

against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” Someone once wrote: Watching a trapeze artist is breathtaking. We wonder at the dexterity and timing. We gasp at near-misses. In most cases, there is a net underneath. When they fall, they jump up and bounce back to the trapeze. In Christ, we live on the trapeze. The whole world should be able to watch and say, "Look how they live, how they love one another. Look how well the husbands treat their wives. And aren't they the best workers in the factories and offices, the best neighbors, the best students?" They are resilient! What happens when we slip? The net (grace) will surely be there. The blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, has provided forgiveness for ALL our trespasses.

Great grace is *resilient grace* – unbreakable, without measure, uniting us together in love, ***manifested for all the world to see!*** Thus, Paul writes, **(Ephesians 4:32) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.** Great grace makes for a great church!

The **fourth** *attribute* of unity is **Generosity** – (v.34-35) I thank God that I pastor a generous church! **CWC Missions:** **Currently CWC supports 18 missionaries or ministries in more than 15 countries (5 continents); an annual commitment of \$105,000.** Scripture encourages benevolence among the people of God. **(Galatians 6:10) Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

Notice: the “haves” were ministering to the “have nots”; as a result, there was no lack among them! **A generous believer, fellowship will**

never lack! (2 Corinthians 9:6-9) But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. Generosity is evidence of unity.

The last attribute of unity in the community is **Truth** – (4:36-5:11) A united fellowship of believers must be united according to truth, God's word and Spirit! When our *hearts* and *souls* are one with the word, we will be men and women of our word! **Barnabas** was a man of his word (v.36, 37). In chapter 5:1-11 *however*, we find the **opposite**, in the form of a husband and wife team by the name of **Ananias and Sapphira**. Read: v.1-11.

The major difference between Barnabas and this couple was Barnabas gave attention to the small things, while Ananias and Sapphira only gave attention to the big things. *There's a phrase in the Song of Solomon: "It's the little foxes that spoil the vines." (Song of Solomon 2:15).* It's the little lies *that also* destroy character!

The American author and poet **Gamaliel Bradford** once said: ***"In great matters men show themselves as they wish to be seen, in small matters, as they are."*** **Gamaliel Bradford** Ananias and Sapphira *looked good* on the stage, but behind the curtain of their hearts, they were liars! But notice to whom they lied. It wasn't

Peter, but the Holy Spirit! We defraud the church of unity and make a mockery of God when we lie to one another! **(Colossians 3:9, 10)** **Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.**

To say, “**I love you brother/sister,**” when there is hatred in our hearts is to lie *to the Holy Spirit!* **Psalm 139:1-4** reminds us God knows our thoughts before we think them. Why then do we believe He will not detect the lies we entertain in our hearts? **If a man or woman will willfully lie to God, they have no respect for His word and may display evidence of the fact they are not born-again!**

(Psalm 51:6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. David, in the same chapter, recognizing his departure from the truth, prayed: **(Psalm 51:10) Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.** Where God’s truth is supreme in our hearts and souls, reverence replaces arrogance! (v.11). Ananias and Sapphira’s demise had a sobering effect upon the church!

CONCLUSION: Unity produces *power, grace, generosity,* and *truth, to the glory of God!* **(Matthew 12:25) “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” We have an opportunity today, amidst the hysteria surrounding the coronavirus, to show the world how faith *in Christ*, rather than fear, can unite us rather than divide**

us! May God unite our hearts, homes, our church in unity, for His glory in this community!