

5/27/07

**God's People of Love**  
**Acts 4:32-5:16**

Jesus declared to a lawyer that the greatest commandment was to love God with all of one's heart, soul and mind, the second to love one's neighbor as oneself, on these two hung all the law and the Prophets.

This is to be the distinguishing mark of the Church and yet the Bible never hides the failures of it's people nor seeks to disown them but instead they are put to public viewing, warts and all.

1. Peter and John had just been arrested for the healing of the lame man and told not to preach in the name of Jesus any longer.
2. They returned to their companions and rather than praying for protection they prayed for boldness to speak God's word and that signs and wonders might be done through the name of Jesus.
3. The place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

The love of God was the motive behind the empowering boldness of the Holy Spirit, revealing their distinguishing mark from all others, love!

\* Chapter five should begin at chapter four, verse thirty-two, it's a more natural break!

Love in the early Church was characterized by three things. Acts 4:32-5:16

- I. The power of love. Acts 4:32-37
- II. The pretense of love. Acts 5:1-11
- III. The people of love. Acts 5:12-16

**I. The power of love. Acts 4:32-37**

- A. The believers were a family. vs. 32
  1. The people were thinking like a family, united as one. vs. 32a
    - a. The believers had grown considerably indicative of the word multitude "plethos" a great number of people.
      - 1) 3,000 had been saved at Pentecost. Acts 2
      - 2) 5,000 at the healing of the lame man in the temple. Acts 3
      - 3) The possibility of there being 15-20,000 is not far-fetched, with women and children.
    - b. The united and harmonious oneness of the believers is described by the phrase "of one heart and one soul" is indicative of the unity, as the community of God's Redeemed.
      - 1) The heart "kardia" indicates the center of personality, who and what a person really is.

- 2) The soul “psuche” speaks of the breath of life, the vitality which manifests itself through our bodies.
  - a)) Our emotion.
  - b)) Our intellect.
  - c)) Our will.
- c. The unity in heart and soul was based on the word of God.
  - 1) That faith in Jesus Christ could saved a person.
  - 2) That faith leads to repentance.
  - 3) That the Holy Spirit is then given to live the new life.
  - 4) That the Lord adds to the church.
  - 5) That the Lord will heal, do miracles as He sovereignly sees fit.
  - 5) This unity and harmony is repeated in different ways, as “one accord”.  
Acts 1:14, 2:1, 46, 4:24, 5:12  
\* The power of God’s love bond them together as one!
2. The people were not only thinking like a family but acting like a family. vs. 32b-c
  - a. The believers didn’t put greater value on material things over people, “Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own”,  
vs. 32b
    - 1) Through the new birth they had a proper perspective of material things.

- 2) They still had properties and material things but they did not hoard them for only themselves.
- b. The believers were very benevolent, “But they had all things in common.”  
vs. 32c
  - 1) The word “but” marks the sharp contrast of things being for the needs of all, not just for their own needs.
  - 2) This is re-enforced by the word common “koinos” means ordinary or belonging to generality.
  - 3) This has at time been called true “communism”, where all live on the same level but such was not the case or intent.
  - 4) In fact due to this practice, the church in Jerusalem became poor, Paul having to raise an offering for the saints. Acts 12:44-45
  - 5) If you spend or give away all that you have rather than having it work for you, then it won’t be long before someone has to help you!
- B. The believers were bold to proclaim their common heritage. vs. 33
  1. The apostles were enabled. “And with great power the apostles gave witness to

the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”. vs. 33a

- a. The repeated empowerment for service as promised came upon them, to be witnesses for Jesus. Acts 1:8  
\* They were filled with the Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:31
- b. Their witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, involved two things.
  - 1) First to give a witness “marturion”, a testimony of the promise of eternal life through the gospel of salvation.
  - 2) Second to give a witness, a testimony of the power of God to work miraculously sovereignly.
- 2. The apostles were endowed with incredible opportunities, “And great grace was upon them all.” vs. 33b
  - a. The phrase “Great grace” is found only this time in the New Testament.
    - 1) The word great “megas” simply means immense or large, be it in mass or number.
    - 2) The “mega power”, due to the resurrection was the evidence of “great grace being manifested.
  - b. The meaning is simply that grace was abundantly at work saving people.

- 1) By the number of people being convicted and saved by the Spirit.
- 2) By the unconditional acceptance by repentance, apart from the Law of Moses in the name of Jesus Christ.
- 3) By the signs and miracles being performed in the name of Jesus.

- C. The believers were ready to help their brothers and sisters. vs. 34-37
  - 1. They verified their words by their deeds and actions. vs. 34a  
\* “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked.”
    - a. The word lacked “endees” means they were not needy or destitute.
    - b. They were attended to their basic needs not greed.
  - 2. They were willingly to meet the needs that were presented. vs. 34b-c  
\* “For all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold.”
    - a. The used of the imperfect tense in the verb sold “poleo” means they did so continually as the need arose.
    - b. The same as at the end of chapter two, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and

- divided them among all, as anyone had need.” Acts 2:44-45
3. They trusted the integrity of the apostles due to their stewardship. vs. 35
    - \* “And laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.”
    - a. The apostles had received the donated money at the beginning and had been responsible for the distribution in a very efficient manner. Acts 2:44-45
    - b. The apostles were trusted due to their character, so they now continued what they had been doing, distributing to each according to their need.
      - \* They gave voluntary, recognizing the apostles as leaders by the work.
  4. They had examples like Barnabas. vs. 36-37
    - a. He was nicknamed by the apostles. vs. 37a-c
      - 1) His name was Joses. vs. 37a
      - 2) He was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), vs. 37b-c
    - b. He was a Levite by lineage. vs. 37d
      - \* Levites by this time were able to own land. Num. 18:20, Deut. 10:9
    - c. He was originally of the country of Cyprus. vs. 37d

- 1) He was the brother of John Marks mother.
- 2) He was the uncle of John Mark.
- 3) His call was to take a chance on people, Paul, John Mark, etc.
- d. He verified his words by his actions, met some of the needs and trusted the apostles also, “Having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” vs. 37

### **Illustration**

William Gladstone, in announcing the death of Princess Alice to the House of Commons, told a touching story. The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the Princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath. Once when the child was struggling to breath, the mother, forgetting herself entirely took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Gasping and struggling for her life, the child said. Mamma, kiss me! “Without thinking of herself, the mother tenderly kissed her daughter”. She got diphtheria and some days thereafter she went to be with the Lord. # 3647

### **Application**

1. Do you see yourself as part of the family of God?

- a. If you do, it is because you are putting on the mind of Christ through His word.
  - b. If you are thinking biblically, then you will be acting biblically.
2. Do you give a witness of your heritage in Christ?
- a. The personal witness of the gospel for repentance of sins to be saved.
  - b. The promise of God's provision to live abundantly.
3. Do you willingly impart some of your resources to help others as a need arises.
- a. Not particularly through the church but on your own.
  - b. Maybe someone in your neighborhood, your job or family.
4. Do you have to be wise as you give and to who?
- a. Absolutely, for there are people who make a profession of begging and using people.
  - b. You need to use good common sense and balanced with loving-kindness, knowing that what you do, you do as to the Lord.
- \* "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love** one another; as I have loved you, that you also **love** one another." Jn. 13:34

*The power of love was very evident in the early church!*

## II. The pretense of love. Acts 5:1-11

- A. The persons involved were a married couple. vs. 1-2
- \* "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession."
1. The couple stand in contrast to Barnabas. vs. 1
- a. The conjunction but "de" marks this sharp contrast.
  - b. The name Ananias means Yahweh is gracious or has graciously given, from the Hebrew Hananiah.
    - 1) As we will see he was not gracious.
    - 2) He was a contradiction to his name and grieving to God.
  - c. The name Sapphira means beautiful from Aramaic, a precious stone.
    - 1) As we will see she was no prized possession.
    - 2) She was a contradiction to her name and very unattractive to God.
2. The couple stood as hypocrites before God. vs. 2
- \* "And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet."
- a. Ananias retained some of the money. vs. 2a

- 1) The phrase kept back “nosphizomai” means to set apart for oneself,
  - 2) The word appears only three times in the New Testament, one more time in verse three and once in Titus for pilfering money. Tit. 2:10
  - 3) The same word is used in the LXX for Achan for the booty he took from Jericho. Jos. 7:1
  - 4) Ananias did what all other did, but not from a pure heart. vs. 2
  - 5) Without doubt others had not given all but he did it to appears as if he had.
- b.** Sapphira was in agreement with her husband. vs. 2b
- 1) She was one with the plan.
  - 2) She was one to the deceptive lie.
  - 3) She was one in acting pretentious before the church.
- c.** Ananias walked into the gathering and went to the apostles laying down the money he donated at their feet. vs. 2c
- 1) He and his wife wanted to appear benevolent like Barnabas, without being like Barnabas.
  - 2) He and his wife wanted the adulation and honor deceptively, that had been given to Barnabas.

- B.** The pretentious Ananias was confronted. vs. 3-6
1. Peter charged Ananias with his hypocrisy. vs. 3
    - a. The apostle pointed out the person he yielded to, “But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart”.
      - 1) Again we have a contrasting conjunction but “de”, Ananias was not doing what he said he was doing. vs. 3a
      - 2) The phrase “Satan filled your heart” means he yielded to the influence and leading of Satan.
        - a) He did not have yield.
        - b) He gave place to it by choice.
        - c) He allowed it to take place in the heart.
        - d) Peter received a word of knowledge from God.
  - b. The apostle pronounced the personal affront, “To lie to the Holy Spirit”.
    - 1) Lying to the Holy Spirit and keeping back part of the money are not describing purpose as much as the result of Satan filling the heart.
    - 2) Man can be deceived or lied to, but not God.
    - 3) He went further than he perhaps intended!

- c. The apostle unmasked the deceptive plan, “And keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?”
  - \* The genitive implies premeditation, the place is the heart.
- 2. Peter cleared up any misunderstanding that Ananias or anyone else ever was compelled to give any money. vs. 4
  - a. Ananias had full control over his money to do what he willed or pleased, “While it remained, was it not your own?” vs. 4a-b
    - \* There is no indication this parcel of land was all the property they had.
  - b. Ananias had full control “exousia”, meaning authority over his money after he sold it, “And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?” vs. 4c-d
    - \* It is a play on words, “Literally, remaining, did it not remain yours”.
  - c. Ananias was asked a simple question, “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?” vs. 4e
    - 1) All deception is conceived, planned and carried out in the heart. Jer.17:9, Matt. 15:9
    - 2) The word conceive “tithemi” means to set or fix in place.

- 3) The thing “pragma” that which has been done, namely to act hypocritically pretentious.
- d. Ananias was charged with sin against God, “You have not lied to men but to God.” vs. 4f
  - 1) The Holy Spirit is the Third person of the Godhead or Trinity.
  - 2) God and the Holy Spirit are used synonyms. vs. 3, 4
  - 3) Sin is always first against God, secondly against man or with man!
- 3. Peter witnessed the clear divine judgment over Ananias. vs. 5-6
  - a. The execution of Ananias was immediate and final, “Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.” vs. 5a-c
    - 1) The phrase breathed his last “ekpsucho”, means to expire.
    - 2) The phrase appears three times in the New Testament. Acts 5:5, 10, 12:23
  - b. The reaction regarding Ananias was immediate and affective, “So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.” vs. 5d
    - 1) Great fear “phobos” gripped all who heard about the account of God striking Ananias for his hypocritical deception.

- 2) The word is used in the LXX of the death of Sisera. Judg. 4:21
  - 3) The early church experienced “great power”, “great grace” and “great fear”, something that is needed today!
  - c. The inhumation of Ananias was immediate without honor, “And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.
    - 1) A group of young men performed the task.
    - 2) Wrapped up “sustello”, means to place together or bandage up.
- C. The participant and accomplice Sapphira was confronted. vs. 7-11
- 1. Peter observed Sapphira come into the gathering. vs. 7-8
    - a. The time between the death of her husband Ananias is said to be about three hours later, perhaps the hour of prayer? vs. 7a
    - b. Then Sapphira, his wife, came in, not knowing what had happened. vs. 7b
  - 2. Peter confronted Sapphira about her part in the matter. vs. 8
    - a. Sapphira must have said something about the money donated because Peter is responding, “And Peter

- answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” vs. 8a-b
- \* Peter was giving her an opportunity to confess and repent.
  - b. Sapphira respond in the affirmative, “She said, “Yes, for so much.” vs. 8c-
    - 1) She lied like her husband Ananias.
    - 2) She was committed in her heart to the pretentious deception of love.
  - 3. Peter then confronted Sapphira with her own hypocrisy. vs. 9
    - a. Peter accused Sapphira of challenging God by her sin, “Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? “ vs. 9a-b
      - 1) She had agreed with her husband to test the Spirit of Lord. vs.9
      - 2) Putting God to the test “peirazo”, to solicit to do evil and get away with it.
      - 3) A sin of high hand of the O.T. , willful and arrogantly. Num. 15:30
    - b. Peter pronounce her death sentence. vs. 9c-e
      - 1) Peter pointed to the very men who buried her husband, “Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door.” vs. 9c-d



- 2) Peter proclaimed they would do so to her, “And they will carry you out.” vs. 9c-e
  - 3) Peter probably did not know that Ananias was going to be struck dead, being greatly surprised but for Sapphira he knew beforehand.
- c. Peter and the entire gathering witnessed God’s judgment on Sapphira. vs. 10-11
- 1) The execution of Sapphira was immediate and final, “She fell down at his feet and breathed her last.” vs. 10a
  - 2) The inhumation of Sapphira was also immediate without honor, “And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.” vs. 10b-d
  - 3) The reaction was immediate and affective, “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.” vs. 11
    - a) Great fear “phobos”, came upon the Church and all who heard
    - b) This is the first time the word Church “ekkllesia” is mentioned in Acts, a convened assembly, those called out.

- c) The word is used in the LXX for the congregation of Israel.  
\* Notice great power, great grace and great fear! Acts 4:33, 5:11

### Illustration

The loneliest place in the world is the human heart when love is absent. #3208

### Application

1. People have the hardest time with giving money to the work of God.
  - a. They say they can’t afford it, but God say you are to give from what you have not from what you do not have.
  - b. They say that all Christians do is beg, don’t give to those that pressure you or beg constantly but those who teach you about your privilege to give, pay attention and be a doer!
  - c. They say, well 10%, that is a lot, the Old Testament was about 27%, if you added all the tithes, not only that but we threw away about 30% every week by our drinking, smoking, drugs and entertainment.
    - 1) For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your

abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality.” 2Cor. 8:12-14

- 2) “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. As it is written: “He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.” 2Cor. 9:8-9

2. God is concerned with your genuine life and He is very aware if it is not genuine.

- a. God struck Nadab and Abihu dead for offering strange fire to the Lord, under the influence of alcohol. Lev. 10
- b. God struck down Saul for his constant disobedience and abuse of his position and power and sough mediums. 1Sam31
- c. God exposed David through Nathan. 2Sam. 12
- d. God struck some Corinthians with sickness, others He struck dead because they were dishonoring the Lord’s table. 1Cor. 11:30

- e. All things are open and naked to Him with whom we have to do with. Heb. 4:12
- f. The believer can lie, resist, grieve and quench the Spirit. Acts 7:51, Eph. 4:30, 1Thess. 5:19
- g. Judgment begins first at the house of God. 1Pet. 4:17

*The pretense of love was in the early church!*

### III. The people of love. Acts 5:12-16

- A. The people of love were the loving instruments of God. vs.12-14
  1. The apostles became the extension of the love of God to heal, “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people.” vs. 12a
    - a. The signs were done sovereignly by God and not a few but many.
      - 1) The word signs “semeion” means what a person is distinguished from other, as is known.
        - \* They have the idea of pointing people to God as the one manifesting the act or deed.
      - 2) The practice of laying hands is a mere act of faith to pray that God might touch a person miraculously.

- 3) There is no power or ability in the person or the hands.
- b. The wonders were the miracles or healings that made the people be in amazement.
  - 1) The word wonder “teras” is an act or deed performed causing one to be awestruck by the miraculous.
  - 2) A person contemplating the fact they have observed a work of God.
- b. The important fact to know about signs, wonder, miracles, healing or any other work that God would do.
  - 1) They do not save people.
  - 2) They may cause a person to consider and cause them to seek or investigate the God of the Bible.
  - 3) The only way people are born again is through the gospel.
  - 4) Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. Rom. 10:17
- 2. The people of God became a family of love, “And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.” vs. 12b
  - a. The phrase “with one accord” “omoyumadon” means of one mind and one passion.
    - 1) Eleven of the twelve times it appears in the New Testament are found in Acts as the unique

- harmonious condition of the Christian community in unison.
- 2) One heart and one soul is synonymous, committed daily. Acts 4:32
- b. The location of their gathering is repeated, the Porch of Solomon.
  - 1) They continued in the Temple. Acts 2:46
  - 2) The lame man healed walked and leaped and praise God in the Porch of Solomon. Acts 3:11
- 3. The people who observed the people of love admired them from a distance.” vs. 13
  - a. There was a healthy fear of the holiness of the church, “Yet none of the rest dared join them.” vs. 13a  
\* The word join “kollao” means to glue.
  - b. There was an acknowledged respect for the believers, “But the people esteemed them highly.” vs. 13b  
\* The phrase esteem highly “megaluno”, is to declare great.
- B. The people of love were growing in numbers demonstrating their love for others. vs. 14-15
  - 1. The individuals continued to be joined to the believers, “And believers were

increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” vs. 14

- a. The Lord was added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:47
  - b. Men and women were both being saved and taught the word, contrary to the Law, Jew never taught a woman.
2. The individuals born again were contagiously compassionate reaching out to the ill that God might heal them in love. vs. 15
- a. They had come to know the power of God in their lives and they wanted others to come to Him, “So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches.” vs. 15a
  - b. The method that God honored is not a formula, simply His sovereign grace to heal, “That at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.” vs. 15b
    - 1) There were pagan superstitions that were taught.
    - 2) The text does not say they were healed by the shadow.
    - 3) We are told of those healed by the handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul. Acts 19:12

- 3. The individuals from afar also brought sick and demon possessed. vs. 16
  - a. The crowds for the first time came from outside Jerusalem, “Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits.” vs. 16a-b
  - b. The entire number of individuals were healed, “And they were all healed.” vs. 16c

### **Illustration**

The account of the missionary father who requested the life of the murderer of his son and preached to the killer of his son and taught him the gospel, as a vessel of the love of God.

### **Application**

- 1. The Bible teaches that the leaders of the church are to pray for the sick that God might move sovereignly as He wills.
  - a. “Is anyone among you **sick**? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the **sick**, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” Ja. 5:14-15

- b. Some times it is dependent on the faith of the individual, the faith of others and some times God just heals at His will.
- c. There are no methods or formulas for healing and the gift of healings, in the plural, is operated at the will of God not man. Heb. 2:4

\* “God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”

2. The church is the bride of Christ and He alone saves and adds to it every day.

- a. Not by church growth principles.
- b. Not by marketing principles.
- c. Not by “seeker Friendly” methods.
- d. Not by moving people emotionally.
- e. Not by preaching positive motivational sermons.
- f. Not by miracle services.
- g. But by preaching the Gospel of repentance from sin for the forgiveness of sin, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, who died, rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father’s throne.

\* “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” 1Cor. 1:21-26

***The people of love were contagious in the early church!***

### **Conclusion**

Love in the early Church was characterized by:

- I. The power of love was very evident in the early Church!
- II. The pretense of love was in the early church!
- III. The people of love were contagious in the early church!