

The grace and wrath of God: unity and generosity, greed and deception

1. Opening questions
2. Review of Acts 3 and 4
3. Observation and exposition of Acts 4:32-5:11
4. The take-away for us

Opening questions

1. What, if anything, in this account is normative for us today?
2. Were Ananias and Sapphira true believers (Christians)?
 - a. **4:32** may imply that they were not
3. Are there people in the church today who are not true believers?

Review of Acts 3 and 4 (3:1-4:31) [SLIDES]

1. **3:1-10** - Peter and John go to the temple in Jerusalem and while there they heal a man who was born lame.
2. **3:11-26** - Peter's speech to the people who gathered around them in Solomon's Portico as a result of the miracle healing (several thousand at least? see **4:4**).
3. **4:1-22** - Peter and John are arrested by the Jewish authorities, kept in jail overnight, the next day they stand trial before the authorities, Peter makes another speech, and they are threatened and then released.
4. **4:23-31** - Peter and John return to their friends where they tell them what happened, pray to God for courage and boldness, and God answers their prayer.

Observation and exposition of Acts 4:32-5:11

1. **Acts 4:32-5:11**
2. The grace of God (**4:32-37**)
 - a. "one heart and soul" (**32**)
 - i. Why? Or how?
 1. The Holy Spirit in and among them
 - b. "they had everything in common" (**32**)
 - i. Like a family, and not just friends
 - ii. Giving and sharing without an expectation of reciprocity (getting something back in return)
 1. Reciprocity was a normal part of the Greco-Roman world: I give to you, I expect something back in return
 - c. The apostles' testimony (**33**)
 - i. Apostles, plural, not just Peter

- ii. Testimony = they were speaking “the word of God with boldness” **(31)**
- d. The result of speaking (preaching, teaching, etc.) the word of God?
 - i. “great grace was upon them all”
 - ii. Direct connection - discuss?
- e. What did “everything in common” **(32)** look like? **(34-45)**
 - i. Selling property (land and/or houses) and giving the proceeds to the church to care for the needs of the church.
 - ii. What is normative here for us?
 - 1. Caring for one another.
 - 2. Attitude towards “our” earthly possessions.
 - iii. Did they sell everything?
 - 1. See **5:42**, “house to house”
 - iv. Was this ongoing, without end?
 - 1. Eventually the entire Jerusalem church had great need
 - a. **11:27-30**
 - b. **2 Corinthians 8-9**
- f. The godly example: Barnabas
 - i. Joseph
 - ii. Nicknamed by the apostles: “Barnabas”
 - 1. Perhaps to distinguish him from Joseph called Barsabbas in **1:23**
 - 2. Barnabas means “son of encouragement (or exhortation)”
 - 3. What would it take for each of us to earn that nickname?
 - iii. A Levite (tribe of Levi)
 - iv. A native of Cyprus **[SLIDE]**
 - v. What else do we know about Barnabas?
 - 1. He will be a key figure in the mission to the Gentiles
 - a. **11:22-26**
 - b. **12:25, 13:13**
 - c. **15:36-41**
 - 2. **Colossians 4:10** - Cousin of John Mark (Mark)
 - 3. **Acts 12:12-13** - Mark’s mom lived in Jerusalem, owned a large house, and had servants
 - vi. What did Barnabas do here?
 - 1. Sold a field and gave all the money to the church (apostles) to be distributed to the poor.

3. The wrath of God **(5:1-11)**

- a. Is this a partial fulfillment of **Luke 22:31-32**?
- b. What Ananias and Sapphira did **(5:1-2)**
- c. How did Peter know the things he knew? **(3)**
 - i. The Holy Spirit
 - ii. A spirit of prophecy

- d. Rather than being filled by the Holy Spirit, Ananias and Sapphira's hearts were filled by Satan to:
 - i. Lie to the Holy Spirit
 - ii. Keep for themselves what they said they had given (greed)
 - iii. Similar to Achan in **Joshua 6:21, 7:1, 10-11, 19-26**
 - e. Their sin?
 - i. Greed and deception
 - ii. Compare **Psalm 51:4**
 - f. Ananias dies after Peter speaks to him.
 - i. Natural cause?
 - ii. Or God's direct act?
 - 1. Compare **12:20-23**
 - 2. See also **1 Peter 4:17**
 - iii. Buried immediately
 - 1. Hot climate
 - 2. Also to rid or cleanse the community of evil?
 - g. Peter and Sapphira - prophet or pastor? **(7-8)**
 - i. He gave her an opportunity to tell the truth.
 - ii. They, Ananias and Sapphira, "agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord"
 - iii. Her sentence? Same as her husband.
 - h. Great fear **(5, 11)**
 - i. The church and those outside the church
 - ii. Luke's first usage of the word "church"
 - 1. Significant timing?
 - 2. Evil is removed, now they are more pure?
4. The point of this story? Or, why did Luke include this account in the book of Acts?
- a. To show that the church was not perfect - he's an honest historian.
 - b. To show the reality of the Holy Spirit in the community with the "solemn practical implications of that fact." (Bruce, 104)
 - i. How lightly do we treat that fact?
 - c. Genuine Christian community = shared mission (the gospel) and mutual support (caring for each other) "Such community is experienced when the grace of God is powerfully at work through the preaching of the gospel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit." (Peterson, 207)

The take-away for us

- 1. The seriousness of sin, God's holiness, and the purity of his people (whether Israel in the OT or the church in the NT).
- 2. The reality of Satanic attacks, deception, etc.

3. Were Ananias and Sapphira true believers? “There is no point in asking if Ananias and Sapphira were genuine believers or not, because there is no means of answering such a question. On the one hand, they did not behave as if they were genuine believers; on the other hand, it cannot be said for certain that they were not, unless one is prepared to say that no one who commits an act of deliberate deceit can be a genuine believer. The fear which fell on the whole community suggests that many a member of it (like many an Israelite when Achan was exposed) had reason to tremble and think, ‘There, but for the grace of God, go I.’ The best answer to questions of this kind is provided by the twofold inscription on the divinely laid foundation stone: ‘The Lord knows those who are his’ and ‘Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity’ (2 Tim. 2:19).”
Bruce, 107

Resources

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce
2. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
4. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III