

## **1PP Acts: To the End of the Earth**

**Part 9-Acts 4:32-35**

**11/28-29/2020**

When you visit a church for the first time, you inevitably, and rightfully evaluate it  
 I honestly feel sorry when people visit our church, because I know I am a quirky, somewhat  
     unconventional, in your face preacher  
 I tend to grow on people like mold...not really the most flattering picture  
 Thank the Lord for such a good music ministry that can carry the day until the mold grows  
 But we all evaluate a church, all the more closely if we are considering making it ours  
 So imagine moving to Jerusalem, hearing about this new thing sweeping through the city,  
     causing an upheaval and checking it out  
 Normally the Jewish people would attend one of many synagogues in Jerusalem, on Saturday  
 This new thing, it wasn't called a 'church' until chapter 5, gathered on Sundays, and by this time  
     in Acts 4, best guesses are that they numbered at least to 10,000 believers  
 Imagine if you visited one of their fellowships and later talked with your family about it  
 What would you say of it, how would you describe it?

### **2PP 'This church is so unified'**

***"Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common." 32***

We are about to be given a second glimpse of what a church looks like where its people are filled  
     with the Holy Spirit  
 Again, as I have been saying throughout this series, Luke, inspired by the Spirit does not  
     describe the church by its effective preaching, powerful worship services, speaking in  
     tongues or prophetic utterances  
 These experiences have become for many in our modern world, marks of a Spirit-filled church  
 And while I believe that God still performs signs, wonders and miracles today, they have never  
     been the regular marks of a Spirit-filled church  
 Here is one of them...unity  
 In fact, unity is something that the Holy Spirit produces among His people

**3PP *"walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:1-3***

These early believers were ***'of one heart and soul'***, so much so that they opened their hands to one another in order that no one lacked what they needed

Let's think on this for just a moment: unity is not the absence of conflict between people  
 In fact truth will often divide

We cannot elevate unity to the number one thing in a church...loving God and each other is  
 And when we love ourselves more, that is, precisely, what will create conflict  
 James so insightfully said in his epistle, **4PP *"What is the source of wars and fights among you?"***

***Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you?" James 4:1 (HCSB)***  
 But look what happened when the Spirit of God diminished the selfish desires in His people: ***'no***

***one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own’ 32***

It is insightful then, that Luke connects unity of this early church with loving each other well  
You visited this church, and came away amazed at how selfless, loving and unified they were

**5PP** ***‘This church has such powerful teaching’***

***“And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” 4:33***

The apostles ***‘were giving their testimony’***, which is the same word in the Greek for witnessing  
And what they were testifying was that Jesus Who had died, had been raised to life  
This is the central theme of preaching, and without it we would have the heroic death of a noble martyr, or even worse, the death of a madman

**6PP** ***“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins”***  
**1 Corinthians 15:17**

The two pillars of message of redemption are the cross and the tomb  
On the first Christ died, and in the second He was raised from death to life

**7PP** ***“[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”***  
**Romans 4:25**

In the death of the Son, the Father poured out His wrath for our sins, in His resurrection the Father declared that His wrath was satisfied toward us  
The penalty for our sins was paid on the cross, and because of the resurrection, we were declared to be right with God, justified  
It is not that the resurrection accomplished our justification, the sinless life and sin-bearing death of Jesus did that  
Rather His resurrection assures us of our justification, that we are right with the Father  
His resurrection was proof that He was the suitable, sinless lamb of God, a sacrifice that was accepted by the Father, one that turns away the Father’s wrath from the believer  
If Jesus stayed dead, it would have proved He was a sinner, for the wages of sin is death  
His resurrection proved His sinless nature, and in being raised He broke the power of death for every believer  
All believers have a powerful assurance that there is now no condemnation from God

The resurrection of Christ assures us that even right now He is in heaven at His Father’s right hand interceding for us, declaring us forgiven forever!  
The resurrection assures us that the power of sin and death are broken, and all believers will be raised to life as well and never die or suffer again, being forever with the Lord

The resurrection of Jesus so gripped the early church that 9 times in the book Acts we see its truth being declared  
There is no gospel, or gospel hope without the resurrection and it must be declared!

**8PP** ***‘This church is so blessed that it has become a blessing’***

***“and great grace was upon them all.”***

Grace here is well understood as favor, but what Luke meant is very difficult to understand

It may be that God's favor was greatly upon the early church, evident in their unity, the strong preaching and as we will see, their generosity  
 Or it may be that they had the favor of the common people of Jerusalem, though not its leaders  
 My view is that quite probably, both are true, for God's grace leads to His blessings in both  
 I take it to mean that the early church was experiencing great blessings from God, that led to them being great blessings to the community around them as well as each other  
 And that is exactly what we see next

**9PP** *'This church is so generous toward each other'*

There is a wonderful assurance God gave to Israel that is tucked away in Deuteronomy and it goes like this: **10PP** ***"But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess"***

**Deuteronomy 15:4**

This promise was conditional on their obedience to Him, and well, there were poor in the land  
 As we look again at the early church, God's blessings of favor were being poured out on them and there were no poor, no needy in the church at that time

The reason was because the the people were living the way God commanded...generously

***"There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need."*** **4:34-35**

Plato envisioned the ideal society as one without any private ownership, but this is not a 1st Century version of communism or socialism

The early church retained the rights of private ownership, yet gave voluntarily

The Greek tense indicates that from time to time someone sold property and brought the money and ***'laid it at the apostles' feet'***, similar to putting it in the basket

The apostles then distributed it to fellow believers when a need arose, so that ***'there was not a needy person among them'*** **4:34a**

It is grace that unlocks this generosity, unmerited favor from God that motivates our favor to each other

Would you want to be part of that church?

Would you not only pray that God would transform our church this way, but that each of us would strive for unity, pray for our teachers, give favor to each other, and be generous when needs arise?

Amen?

Pray