

The Fruit from Committed Children and the Judgment of their Father

Acts 4:43-5:11

I. Intro

A. A Spirit filled church will be...

1. Unified,

- a. It is held together by life
- b. Through this unity, the church brings life to others.

2. Magnified

- a. The church was known in the community—even though the religious rulers were against them
- b. The church pointed to Jesus well

3. Multiplication

- a. The Great Shepherd was using the church to impact His kingdom.¹

B. Last week we saw how God is defeating the powers of the world with His boy and girl house slaves.

C. Compare and Contrast

1. This week we will see the fruit and power of the Church's prayers and commitment to God.
2. "As was true of Israel when she entered Canaan under Joshua's leadership, failure followed initial success in the early church. The source of that failure lay within the company of believers, not their enemies."²
 - a. This failure is contrasted with Barnabas.

D. "We might conclude from what precedes that the church was a sinless community at this time. Unfortunately this was not the case. There were sinning saints in it. This episode reveals that God was working dramatically in the church's early days in judgment as well as in blessing. Luke did not idealize his portrait of the early church but painted an accurate picture, 'warts and all.'"³

E. "...one of the things that's often said about Acts is that it's an idealized portrait of the church. To which chapter 5 is the response. No, the church is not being portrayed in idealized ways; the church is being portrayed in very real ways. There are people who fail in the church, who fail miserably, and who pay for it" (Darrell Bock).⁴

1 Some material in this outline point is from Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 336.

2 Thomas Constable, "Notes on Acts" (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

3 Thomas Constable, "Notes on Acts" (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

4 Mark Yarbrough and Darrell Bock, "Unit 2. Acts: The Ongoing Witness of Jesus Christ (Ch. 1-16); Video 5. Acts 5-7: The Witness Prospers and Persists, transcript (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2021), <https://media.dts.edu/player/?course=BE106v2&unit=2&video=5&language=en-US> (log in required).

II. 32 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.

III. The early church in Jerusalem was definitely defined by unity.

- A. One Heart
- B. One Soul

IV. V.32 no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own

A. but they had everything in common. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 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 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

- 1. Giving to one another was a privilege.
- 2. Communal living is not commanded, but there was an undeniable closeness in the early church.
- B. "The unity of the believers extended beyond spiritual matters to physical, material matters (cf. Matt. 22:37-39). They owned personal possessions, but they did not consider them private possessions. Rather, they viewed their belongings as "common [...] property." Their unity manifested itself in a sense of responsibility for one another. Love, not law, compelled them to share (cf. 1 John 3:17-18).⁵
- C. Homer Kent, "Their generosity sprang not from coercive legislation (as modern Socialists and Marxists demand) but from a true union of hearts made possible by regeneration."⁶
- D. Their worldview was motivated out of love for God and each other and was obvious through their care for each other.
- E. Giving gives power to the Gospel (look at vs. 33 that is conspicuously in the middle of the giving passage).
 - 1. Unity brings power to the Church's testimony
 - 2. Power = changed lives
 - a. Warn a divisive man once then have nothing to do with him.
 - 3. "The 'great power' in the witness of the believers was their love for one another (cf. John 13:35), not just their rhetorical (homiletical) and miraculous power."⁷
 - 4. Great grace

5 Thomas Constable, "Notes on Acts" (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

6 Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Jerusalem to Rome*. New Testament Studies series (Brethren Missionary Herald, 1972; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House and BMH Books, 1985), 50. Cf. Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids and Carlisle, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. and Paternoster Press, 1998), 206. As quoted and cited in Thomas Constable, "Notes on Acts" (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

7 Thomas Constable, "Notes on Acts" (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

- F. ILL: “One time a skeptic said to a preacher, ‘I can’t stand this Christianity business. All I ever hear from you Christians is give, give, give.’ The preacher thought a minute and said, ‘That’s about the best description of Christianity I have ever heard!’”⁸
- G. APPL: What should be our understanding of our stuff?
1. We are Managers
 2. Faith vs. responsibility
 - a. manna

V. Giving compared

A. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

1. Barnabas had an important ministry. He is mentioned 25 times in the Book of Acts and another 5 times in the letters of the NT.⁹
2. Levites were not supposed to own land.
 - a. The law may have become lax as interpreted by the Pharisees.
 - b. He may have owned land in another country.¹⁰
 - c. "... the rule was no longer rigidly adhered to, and would not have applied to those living overseas."¹¹

B. Acts:5: 1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

1. **3 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land**
 - a. Sapphira = Aramaic “beautiful”¹²
 - b. Ananias = “God is gracious”¹³
 - c. Holy Spirit and Satan / two beings at work in the life of Ananias.¹⁴
 - i. Filled = being controlled by the Spirit (cf. Ephesians 5:18).
 - ii. Instead of being filled with the Spirit Ananias was filled with Satan.
 - Satan can move upon our hearts
 - I. He is not omnipresent.
 - II. However, he is not alone.

8 David Huss (Contributor), “Give, Give, Give” (Sermon Central, Dec 12, 2011), <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon-illustrations/80553/giving-general-by-davon-huss>.

9 Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 336.

10 Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 336.

11 William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*. New Century Bible Commentary series (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1973; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., and London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1981), 94. Cf. Jer. 1:1; 32:6-15. As quoted and cited in Thomas Constable, “Notes on Acts” (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

12 Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (Bible Lessons International, 2012), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts-5>.

13 Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 336.

14 Cf. Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (Bible Lessons International, 2012), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts-5>.

- “Rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to fill him (cf. 2:4; 4:8, 31), Ananias had allowed Satan to control his heart. However, Ananias was personally responsible for his action. He could not claim: ‘The devil made me do it.’ Peter said, ‘... you have conceived this deed in your heart.’”¹⁵
- 2. “The Story of Ananias is to the book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.”¹⁶
- 3. In fact “keep back” is the rare verb (*nosphizomai*) is used in the Septuagint (LXX) of Joshua 7:1 to describe the sin of Achan.”¹⁷
- 4. “They lied to Peter and the church, but in reality they lied to the Spirit.
 - a. Theologically this is very similar to Jesus asking Paul on the road to Damascus, “Why are you persecuting Me? (cf. Acts 9:4).”¹⁸
- 5. Attention seekers?
- 6. Giving begrudgingly
 - a. **4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?**
 - b. Some did not sell their things.
- 7. **Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”**
 - a. **5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last.**
 - b. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all.”¹⁹
 - c. “We should not interpret the fact that God rarely deals with sinners this way as evidence that He cannot or should not. He does not do so out of mercy. He dealt with Ananias and Sapphira, Achan, Nadab and Abihu, and others—severely— when He began to deal with various groups of believers. He did so for those who would follow in the train of those judged, in order to illustrate how important it is for God’s people to be holy (cf. 1 Cor. 10:6). Furthermore God always deals more severely with those who have greater privilege and responsibility (cf. Luke 12:48; 1 Pet. 4:17).”²⁰
 - d. Notice the Holy Spirit is called “God”
 - e. “I think it’s a reminder that there is accountability before God, even after we have come into the community. And it’s just a vivid reminder of what the standard is. I think it was designed to send a little bit of fear through the

15 Thomas Constable, “Notes on Acts” (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

16 F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 120.

17 Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (Bible Lessons International, 2012), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts-5>.

18 Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (Bible Lessons International, 2012), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts-5>.

19 Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 336.

20 Thomas Constable, “Notes on Acts” (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

church, a little bit of good awe, if I can say it that way. And so there are lots of things at work. You know, one of the lies that our culture tells us is that we are independent beings. This passage is against the idea that we are independent beings. We are always connected to and responsible as creatures to how we're relating to the Creator (Darrell Bock)."²¹

f. ILL:

i. Hypocrite – The story of the Architect and the facade²²

ii. “I am a preacher of the Word—a glorious privilege—and if I have prayed once I have prayed a thousand times and said, 'Don't let me be able to preach unless in the power of the Holy Ghost.' I would rather be struck dumb than pretend it is in the power of the Spirit if it isn't; and yet it is so easy to pretend. It is so easy to come before men and take the place of an ambassador for God, and still want people to praise the preacher instead of giving the message only for the Lord Jesus.”²³

g. APPL:

i. Hypocritical

ii. God is a complex character.

iii. God is holy and a righteous Judge.

iv. Our public self needs to be a reflection of our private self.

C. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.

1. God seems to have wanted reverent fear to be in the people during the Apostles ministry.

D. 6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

E. New Testament giving

F. 7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.”

1. And she said, “Yes, for so much.”

2. 9 But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”

a. 10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

21 Mark Yarbrough and Darrell Bock, “Unit 2. Acts: The Ongoing Witness of Jesus Christ (Ch. 1-16); Video 5. Acts 5-7: The Witness Prospers and Persists, transcript (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2021), <https://media.dts.edu/player/?course=BE106v2&unit=2&video=5&language=en-US> (log in required).

22 Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: NT* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 336.

23 Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Acts* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1943), 129. As quoted in Thomas Constable, “Notes on Acts” (2021 ed.), <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf>.

- b. “The specific issue of “why them and not someone else?” Were there other sinners in the church? ... Of course there were. We know that. I think this does bring up a picture of the sovereignty of God. God moves and acts in ways that we don’t fully understand, and that forces you to kind of evaluate yourself” (Yarbrough).²⁴

VI. 11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

A. Fear

- 1. “We’ve all had moments in our lives of things that we have seen and experienced, and it has given us a new perspective. I need to be rattled from time to time. I do. And you probably do, too. It’s not generally a pleasant moment, but it seems to me this is a rattling of the cage right now, of this call to accountability of: God is real and He cares about His people and how we live in community. And think of the impact that this had not just upon them, obviously, but upon that church. They saw this; they experienced this. So this is the creator God” (Yarbrough).²⁵
- 2. Did have an unusual outcome: distance

B. “whole church”

- 1. Two opinions:
 - a. church = (*ekklēsia*) – is from two words, *ek*, "out of" and *kalēō*, "call" = called out ones. (Cf. Utley)
 - b. church = GK def.: Assembly
- 2. Common word in the first century.

C. “About three hours” shows Luke’s writing style and attention to detail.²⁶

D. God seems to always to judge sin harsher when He is starting something new. (Cf. Constable)

E. 1 Corinthians 10:1-11

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” 8

24 Mark Yarbrough and Darrell Bock, “Unit 2. Acts: The Ongoing Witness of Jesus Christ (Ch. 1-16); Video 5. Acts 5-7: The Witness Prospers and Persists, transcript (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2021), <https://media.dts.edu/player/?course=BE106v2&unit=2&video=5&language=en-US> (log in required).

25 Mark Yarbrough and Darrell Bock, “Unit 2. Acts: The Ongoing Witness of Jesus Christ (Ch. 1-16); Video 5. Acts 5-7: The Witness Prospers and Persists, transcript (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2021), <https://media.dts.edu/player/?course=BE106v2&unit=2&video=5&language=en-US> (log in required).

26 Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (Bible Lessons International, 2012), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts-5>.

We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, 10 nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

- VII. “I surely believe in a supernatural, compassionate Father who has and does heal physically as well as spiritually, but why is this healing aspect seemingly present and then noticeably absent? I do not think that it is connected to human faith, for surely Paul had faith (cf. II Corinthians 12). I feel that healing and believing miracles affirmed the truthfulness and validity of the gospel, which it still does in areas of the world where it is first proclaimed. However, I feel that God wants us to walk by faith and not by sight. Also, physical illness is often allowed in believer's lives (1) as temporal punishment for sin; (2) as consequences of life in a fallen world; and (3) to help believers mature spiritually. My problem is that I never know which one is involved! My prayer for God's will to be done in each case is not a lack of faith but a sincere attempt to allow the gracious, compassionate God to work His will in each life.”²⁷

Note: All notes are kept in long form for future editing purposes.

²⁷ Bob Utley, “Luke the Historian: Acts” (Bible Lessons International, 2012), <https://bible.org/seriespage/acts-5>.