



## Acts 4:32-5:11 | Session 13 | Favor and Fear

### Acts 4:32-37 | Favor in the assembly

Verse 32—

**And the multitude of them.** Three thousand on the Day of Pentecost (2:41), and those who heard Peter’s message in the Temple, about 5,000 (4:4), about 7,000 in total. **That believed.** What did they believe? Not salvation by “grace through faith” (Ephesians 2:8-9), since that gospel had not yet been revealed to the apostle Paul (The first time that gospel was spoken, Acts 13:38,39). They **believed** that Jesus, the one they killed (3:15), was the Messiah. **Were of one heart and of one soul.** Their passion for the Messiah was the same. **Things which he possessed....had all things in common** (See 2:44,45). Christians today want to imitate the “early church” but they stop short of sharing all of their possessions. How do we explain this? By rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15) and realizing this is not the *church*, or *the body of Christ* as we know it today; rather, this was a different dispensation made up of Jews looking for the Kingdom to come.

Verse 33—

**With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection.** Jesus told the apostles “*You shall be my witnesses...*” (Acts 1:8). **Great grace was upon them all.** This is not referring to *salvation by grace through faith*. The word **grace** is *charis* in the Greek. Here it just means they were all in *favor* with one another. In their preparation for the anticipated Kingdom, there was no selfishness among them.

Verse 34, 35—

In order to be ready for the King’s arrival they were remembering the words of Jesus, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God* (Luke 18:24,25ff). From our earthly perspective they were practicing *socialism*, for **as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles’ feet.** The apostles took the money and **distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.**

Verses 36,37—

**Joses...surnamed Barnabas.** Could be *Joseph Barsabbas* in Acts 1:23. He was a Jew, a **Levite, of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.** If this is the same **Barnabas** he was known for being an encourager. We could say **Barnabas** was one who looked out for those who were on the sidelines—the down and outers or those neglected (Acts 9:27; 11:22-26; 15:37-39). Luke records an example of how the preparation for the Kingdom was supposed to work. Socialism is always and utter failure as we will see in chapter 5.

### Acts 5:1-11 | Fear in the assembly.

#### Chapter 5

Verse 1,2—

**But.** Often the conjunction, **but** signifies a contrast is coming. Look out for the *buts* in Scripture. **A certain man named Ananias with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession** (land, in verse 3). **And kept back part of the price.** All of the Jews were living under the dispensation of the Law of Moses. They were commanded to follow the Law and not depart from it. One such Law is found in the Ten Commandments, *Thou shalt not covet* (Exodus 20:17). Since this was a communal (communist/socialist) effort, one’s



possessions were not his own, but his neighbor's. Thus, by holding back the price, they were coveting what belonged to their neighbor.

Verse 3, 4—

**Ananias** and **Sapphira** were part of the believing assembly (2:46) but they chose to do their own thing and keep the money for themselves. The word **lie** is to *deceive*. They were attempting to deceive God the Holy Ghost. But they also kept others, those in great need, from surviving as they awaited the Kingdom. They were apparently the only ones who held back their money. In keeping back part of the money, they had **lied unto men...and God**, making it appear they gave all the price of the land. How Peter knew they were lying we are not told. Today, in the dispensation of grace, giving is all about grace. There is no reason to deceive or lie. Grace giving is each one deciding within his or her heart how much to give.

Verse 5—

**Hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost.** There is no indication how he died. It seems that it was caused by God himself. **Gave up the ghost** is one word in Greek, *ekpsuko*; *ek* means *out of*, *psucho* can be translated, *become cold or cool by blowing*, or, *breath.e* Hence, *out of breathing* would be a literal rendering. The point; once confronted of his sin (and it was a sin since they were under the Law), he died. And **great fear came on all them that heard these things**. News of his supernatural death travelled quickly among the 7,000 believers in the Messiah. The Greek word translated **fear** is the word *me gas*. The word for **fear** is *phobos*. There is no phobos, or fear, for those who believe in Jesus by grace through faith.

Verse 6—

**Young men arose**, presumably because they had the strength to carry him out of the room. **Wound him up**, always a sign of respect to cover the dead. Immediate burials were common in Jewish culture. Often, only a few hours would be reserved for mourning, and hopefully contacting relatives, etc. Even today some cultures bury the dead on the day of death. **Carried him out and buried him**. In fact, Biblical Law expected burials for everyone, no matter what their offense (e.g. Numbers 11:34; Deuteronomy 21:23; Joshua 7:26; 8:29; 10:26-27).

Verse 7—

In **about the space of three hours after**, that is, after Ananias had been buried, Sapphira, **not knowing what was done**: She knew about the money being held back, but didn't know Ananias had died and was buried, **came in**. Where she had been during this time is unknown.

Verse 8—

Now she has the opportunity to confess as Peter, knowing the false amount of the sale of the land asks **(answered) her, tell me** did you sell the **land for so much?** Having conspired with her husband, she knew the agreed upon amount and said *yes, that's how much we sold it for*.

Verse 9, 10—

Earlier they had pretended to lay their money at the apostle's feet (5:2), now both of their lives were laid before the apostles instead. She **fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost**.

Verse 11—

**Great fear came upon all the church, and...as many as heard....** Reminder, this is not *the church* we are in today. This is the *ekklesia*, which means *assembly*. In this case it was the Jewish assembly in Jerusalem.

