

Introduction

Before we get into the passage today, let me ask you some questions.

- How many of you want to see the gospel preached with great power?
- How many of you want to see signs and wonders today?
- How many of you want to see people healed and delivered on a regular basis?
- How many of you want to see God move mightily through us to reach the lost in this area?
- How many of you would like to see God's abundant grace on our church?
- How many would like to see people daily being added to our number?

These things would be very exciting. I would like to see them happen. I think that all of us are in agreement that these are the things that we want to see happen in our church. All of this is possible. These things are given to us for an example. They are possible for us. This was not just something special for the early church. They are possible for us today.

What were the conditions that made these things possible? What were the things that the early church did that facilitated all of this? Are we willing to do those same things so that we can have the same results? Those are the questions we have to ask ourselves.

A few weeks ago Donald preached on Four Practices of the church. The church was continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. As a result, everyone kept feeling a sense of awe and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. The church today does most of these things practices today. In my estimation, the church is not continually devoting itself to all of these, particularly prayer. People are uncomfortable with prayer, particularly corporate prayer.

(Acts 2:42-43) "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. {43} Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles."

We also saw in that same passage that they were together and had all things in common. They were selling their property and possessions and were sharing with anyone who had need. They were not living selfish and independent lives. They were living unselfishly and were looking out for the interests of others. This attitude lent itself to unity; there was great unity. It says that day by day they were continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. There was great unity and fellowship. The Greek word used is *koinonia*, which means to have in common or fellowship. The church also had great joy. There was gladness, and they were continually praising God. Joy is contagious, and we see that they had favor with all the people, and the Lord was adding to their number daily.

(Acts 2:44-47) "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; {45} and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. {46} Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, {47} praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

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So, when we ask those questions, how many of you want to see signs and wonders? How many of you want the gospel preached with power? How many want to see the Lord adding to our number daily? We have to ask ourselves are we willing to do the same things that the early church did. Our passage today gives us another snapshot of church life in the early church.

This week we are covering Acts 4:32-37. When the Bible was written, it was not subdivided into chapters and verse numbers. In the 13th century, it was divided up into chapters. They tried to keep most chapters to a single page length. Then, in the mid-16th century, each chapter was further divided up into verses. These divisions really help us in finding and referencing specific verses or passages. Sometimes, these divisions break up passages that were really meant to go together. Our passage today falls into that category. In Acts 4:32-37, Luke gives us a snapshot of the unity that the early church was experiencing. He sets us up for Acts 5:1-11, where there is a threat to the move of the Spirit and the unity that is in our passage today.

Acts 5:1 starts with the conjunction, “But.” Luke gives us the account of Ananias and Sapphira, and how their actions threatened the unity of the body. The lesson today is the backdrop to the account of Ananias and Sapphira. These two passages really go together, and should not be separated and put into two different chapters. The efforts to keep each chapter at a single page length overruled their efforts to keep some passages together, which is the case today.

Sometimes Donald and I regroup passages together, and sometimes we break up passages into smaller pieces. Sometimes there is so much contained in a small passage that we keep it separate. A few weeks ago, Donald covered Acts 2:41-47 as a separate passage. It had so much important doctrine in it, that we taught it as a separate passage, rather than keeping it with the rest of Acts 2. And, we will do the same for our passage today. There are some important lessons for us out of this part of the overall passage that we will cover it in two different messages.

In our passage today, we will look at the Power of Corporate Unity. First, we will look at the condition of unity. Second, we will look at the results of unity. Finally, we will look at the example of Barnabas, who truly represents the prevailing attitude in the church.

The Power of Corporate Unity

1. Condition of Unity
2. Results of Unity
3. Example of Unity

Let's read our text.

(Acts 4:32-37) “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. {33} And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. {34} For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales {35} and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. {36} Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), {37} and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

1. Condition of Unity

Our text begins by saying the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul. The condition was one of unity. The KJV says the multitude of them that believed... The Greek word is plethos, which means to be full, or a great number. I think the KJV is actually a better rendering. When we think of a congregation, we think of a specific body with its own pastors and members. At this time the number of believers in Jerusalem was probably between twenty and thirty thousand people. It was a multitude of believers, and their may have been a number of different congregations represented, not just one.

The condition was unity, which is quite remarkable. It is difficult to get ten people to be of one heart and soul, much less thousands of people. They understood and practiced some things that are foreign to us today.

The word for heart is kardia. The term, cardiac arrest, comes from this Greek word. While kardia refers to the organ, the use of heart in Scripture does not usually refer to the organ. The word for soul is psuche. **Our soul is made up of our mind, emotions, and will.** Our soul is who we really are. The heart and soul are very similar in definition.

The heart refers to our intellect. Hebrews 4:12 says that the word of God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Thoughts are associated with our mind, so our mind is part of our heart. It is also part of our soul. **The heart refers to our intentions, or our will.**

(Heb 4:12) “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Romans 10:9 tells us that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved. Our hearts not only think, but **our hearts are the seat of our beliefs.**

(Rom 10:9) “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;”

In Proverbs 15, Solomon talks about a joyful and cheerful heart. These are emotions. **The heart is the seat of our emotions.** Our soul is made up of our mind, emotion, and will, so you can see from these different passages that the heart and soul are very similar in many ways.

(Pro 15:13, 15) “A joyful heart makes a cheerful face, But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken. {15} All the days of the afflicted are bad, But a cheerful heart has a continual feast.”

The early church had common thoughts and beliefs about things. That is pretty amazing to me. At one of our men’s meetings several years ago, we had a visitor who was a staunch republican. There was another man there that morning who was a lifetime democrat. Our group got into politics that morning, and I can tell you that even though there were only about ten people there, we were not of one heart. We did not have common thoughts. We did not have common beliefs. What does it take to have one heart and soul? Let’s take a look at some important considerations.

A. There is unity through the Scriptures.

The key to having one heart is for all of us to be submitted to the Scriptures. If the Scriptures are the plumb line of our lives, then we will all have the same source for our thoughts and beliefs. I believe it is important for the church to align itself with God's word and His practices. We should not be about politics or parties; we should be about the kingdom of God. We find out the important considerations for government and leadership in the Scriptures.

When God chose David from the sheepfolds and raised him up to lead Israel, it says that he ruled with integrity and skillful hands. We need to look for candidates that have integrity. Character matters to God. It should matter to us. Is the candidate honest? Is the candidate morally pure? We need to look at a person's ability to manage or lead with skillful hands. Finally, which candidates are going to represent our Biblical values? Who will defend the rights of the unborn? Who will stand up for marriage between a man and woman? These are the types of questions we must ask.

(Psalm 78:70-72) "He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds; {71} From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. {72} So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them with his skillful hands."

For us to have common thoughts and beliefs, we must have the same source document. One of the things that I did for the company that I manage is to create a policy manual. Everyone in the company follows the policies set forth in the manual. We don't have ten ways of doing things. We have one way of doing things in the company, and it is based on the policy manual. We also have a procedures manual for how we conduct our simulator training. Whether someone goes to a class in Houston or at our Albuquerque Training Center, they are going to receive similar training. Why? Because we have a common manual that tells us how we are going to do things.

In our Christian life, that manual is the word of God. For the church to be of one heart, we must have the same source document. We have to be committed to the Scriptures. When our beliefs or thoughts do not line up with the Scriptures, we must repent and change our thoughts and beliefs. Paul tells us in Romans that we are to renew our minds. We are not to be conformed to the world, and its beliefs. We are to be transformed by the Word of God. **We should renew our minds with the Scriptures.** Here are some applications to help us become of one heart.

(Rom 12:2) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

We should read the Scriptures. Develop a Biblical world view by becoming familiar with the Scriptures. Establish a good reading plan. Your reading plan may be very different than mine. That is okay. There are lots of reading plans available to choose from. You can choose one that will help you read through the entire Bible once a year. You will need to read about three and a half chapters a day to read through the Bible in a year. I created my own reading plan. I type it into my Bible software program, and I update it monthly. I read through the entire Bible between two and three times a year. It helps me to be more familiar with the entire book, not just my favorite passages.

We should study the Scriptures. Paul told Timothy to study to show himself approved to God as a workman who can handle accurately the Scriptures.

(2 Tim 2:15 KJV) “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The writer of Hebrews taught us to train our senses to discern good and evil. Pick a book of the Bible and begin to study it. Join a Men’s or Ladies’ Bible study, and do your own study on the side.

(Heb 5:12-14) “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. {13} For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. {14} But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

We should memorize the Scriptures. One of the best ways to get the word into your heart is to memorize the Scriptures. The Psalmist said, “thy word I have treasured in my heart, so that I may not sin against Thee.” Treasuring or hiding God’s word in our hearts is memorizing it. Memorizing God’s word will help you minister to others, particularly in witnessing or teaching.

(Psa 119:11) “Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee.”

We should meditate on the Scriptures. I like what it says in Psalm 119:148. “My eyes anticipated the night watch that I might meditate on Thy word.” The psalmist memorized portions of Scripture so that during the night he could meditate on them. Memorization and meditation go hand in hand. There are so many benefits of meditating on the Scriptures. Joshua tells us that we are to meditate on the Scriptures so that we are careful to do according to all that is written in them.

(Psalm 119:148) “My eyes anticipate the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word.”

(Joshua 1:8) “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

James taught us to look intently at the word of God. To me looking intently means to read, study, and meditate on the Scriptures. As we do these things, we will renew our minds and develop a Biblical world view. Once our minds have been renewed, our actions will line up with our beliefs. Church, if we will read the Scriptures and become familiar with God’s word, we will be more unified in our hearts. If we will memorize, meditate, and study the Scriptures, we will become more united in our hearts.

(James 1:22-25) “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. {23} For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; {24} for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. {25} But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”

But, none of this will matter unless we accept the Scriptures for what they are. The Scriptures are inspired by God. They are His words. They are the authority in all matters of faith and doctrine. We must use the Scriptures for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. It is not our opinions that will unite us. It is having a common source for all our beliefs and thoughts. **We must be submitted to the authority of God's word.**

(2 Tim 3:16-17) "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; {17} so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

B. There is unity through a common goal.

On September 11, 2001, our nation was attacked by radical Islamists. Several of the jets that they hijacked were flown into the Twin Towers, and the Pentagon. Shortly afterwards, our nation was brought together powerfully. Democrats and Republicans stood together against this great evil committed against our nation. For a season, our nation had a goal, and experienced great unity.

The church in Philippi had a common goal. Notice what Paul says, "only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." They had one mind, and were striving together for the faith of the gospel. A common goal brings people together. We need to have the same goal that the church in Philippi had; we need to strive towards the faith of the gospel. We need to work together to bring the lost to Christ.

(Phil 1:27) "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

C. There is a unity through the Spirit.

Notice in Philippians 1 that the church was encouraged to also stand firm in one spirit. A few verses later in Philippians 2, Paul says, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."

(Phil 2:2) "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."

In the book of 1 Samuel, during Eli's time as a priest, the ark of the covenant was taken by the Philistines. They put the ark in the temple of Dagon. The head of the Dagon statue was decapitated, and the palms of the hands were chopped off. The hand of the Lord was heavy on the Philistines and He struck them with tumors. They could not wait to get rid of the ark of the covenant. They decided to send the ark of the covenant back on a cart that would be pulled by two milch cows on which there had never been a yoke. They reasoned that if the cart went undisturbed back to Israel, it was God who had struck them with tumors. The ark of the covenant was where the presence of the Lord was. In the presence of the Holy Spirit, those two untrained milch cows worked together in unity and made a beeline to Israel. There is a perfect unity that comes with the Holy Spirit.

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(1 Sam 6:7-12) “Now therefore, take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them. {8} "Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may go.... {10} Then the men did so, and took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. {11} They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the likenesses of their tumors. {12} And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left...”

In Ephesians 4, Paul tells us to be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” He goes on to say that “there is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of our calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” There is a unity of the Spirit, and we are exhorted to be diligent to preserve it.

(Eph 4:3-6) “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. {4} There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; {5} one Lord, one faith, one baptism, {6} one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

Notice that Paul says that we are to be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is a bond that comes through peace. We are called to be peacemakers. We are called to live at peace with our neighbors, and with one another. In our conversations, we need to be diligent to say things that bring peace. We are not to be those who sow strife with our tongues. I have found that gossip and slander in the church bring strife and destroy corporate unity. Proverbs tells us that a backbiting tongue brings an angry countenance. A backbiting or slandering tongue brings anger and strife, not peace. We are called to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

(Pro 25:23) “The north wind brings forth rain, And a backbiting tongue, an angry countenance.”

D. There is great unity that comes through sharing.

The church in Jerusalem understood that **God is the owner of all things**. Luke writes that “not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.” Because they shared with one another, it felt like one big family. People cared for one another. They felt connected to one another. There was a tremendous unity that comes through sharing.

(Acts 4:32) “And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

We try to handle much of this through our small groups. There is no way that all of us are going to know the needs of everyone in the body. But, in our small groups, where relationships are developed and nurtured, the needs of the members can be identified and met. When a need of a member in the group is larger than the group can meet, we have a Benevolence Fund that Lee Griego oversees. Our body can step in and meet those bigger needs. We want to be a church that meets the needs of our members. We want to demonstrate the love of God to one another.

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The church understood that whatever they had ultimately belonged to God. **We are just stewards.** David said in Psalm 24 that “the earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.” We belong to God, and everything we have belongs to God. We are merely stewards. Everything we have has come from God and belongs to God. We often treat what we have as our own, and therefore we have a choice of what we want to do. That is partially correct. We have a stewardship, and there are choices that we make as a steward. But, a good steward is one who uses the resources how the owner wants them used. The early church understood that they were stewards. They did not claim anything of their own. It all belonged to God.

(Psa 24:1) “The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.”

Since they understood that it all belonged to God, they used any extras that they had to meet the needs of others. They sold houses and property and brought the proceeds to the apostles so that needs in the congregation could be met.

(Acts 4:34-35) “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales {35} and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

Our country is regarded as one of the wealthiest countries in the world. I think we have one of the highest standards of living, but I do not think we are necessarily the wealthiest country. We are a country that is drowning in debt. We complain about the nineteen trillion dollars of national debt, but that simply mirrors the personal debt in this country. We are full of credit card debt, college loan debt, new car debt, mortgage debt, etc. Most Americans are living paycheck to paycheck. Even though we make a lot of money, our debt payments limit our ability to share with others. We choose to have a higher standard of living than honor God with our tithes or offerings to help those in need.

2. Results of Unity

Things happen when there is unity in the church. In Psalm 133, David said that it is “good and pleasant for brothers to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head.” There is an anointing of the Holy Spirit that comes in unity. He also said that when there is unity, the Lord commands his blessing. That is powerful.

(Psa 133:1-3) “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! {2} It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. {3} It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.”

Our church in Atlanta experienced that at times. We partnered in some evangelistic outreaches with an African American church called Zion Hills. We also held some joint services. I even preached over there several times. On one particular Sunday, their worship team came and led our congregation in worship. During the worship time, a lady named Devney was healed. She had been bleeding for several months and the doctors had not been able to stop her bleeding. But, she got touched by the Holy Spirit during the service, and the bleeding stopped. She was not prayed for. Nobody laid hands on her. It was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and she got healed. Things happen when brothers dwell together in unity.

A. The apostles testified with great power.

Luke gives us a couple of wonderful results of that corporate unity. First, the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power. Earlier, I asked how many would like to see the gospel preached with great power. One of the keys to having this is having corporate unity.

(Acts 4:33) “And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.”

B. There was abundant grace upon them all.

The second result of their unity was there was an abundant grace upon them all. He goes on to say that there was not a needy person among them. There are lots of different forms of grace. There is a saving grace. We are all saved by grace. **Grace is God’s unmerited favor.** (Eph 2:8-9) That is a favor with God that we did not earn because of our righteous behavior or deeds. We did not earn this grace; it was freely given to us. It was costly to Jesus, but it was free to us. It is unmerited favor.

There are also gifts of grace. (Rom 13:3-8) These are gifts given to us by God that we did not earn. They are given to us to serve one another and to further the kingdom. There are also ministries given to us through grace. Paul said that he was given grace to do the work of an apostle. Paul was a persecutor of the church. It was not his righteous behavior that earned him that ministry. It was the grace of God. It was God who chose him to be a special instrument and apostle to the Gentiles.

There is also a provision of strength and resources that is called grace. Paul was suffering from a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, and he petitioned the Lord three times to have it removed. The Lord answered Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you...” God was giving Paul the strength, stamina, perseverance, and resources to handle the afflictions that he was suffering.

(2 Cor 12:7-9) “Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! {8} Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. {9} And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”

God’s financial provision was an evidence of God’s grace. There was also not a needy person among them. God’s financial provision was being given to everyone. This is just another example of God’s abundant grace being given to them. It was not that everyone earned this provision. It was simply God’s abundant grace given to them so that there was not a needy person among them. I would love to see God’s abundant grace given to our church in this area.

(Acts 4:34-35) “For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales {35} and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.”

The church in Jerusalem had abundant grace. God's unmerited favor was upon them. People were being saved daily. People were being added to their number every day. God's gifts of grace were being given to the church. There were prophets, teachers, administrators, servants, givers, tongues, interpretation of tongues, discernment of spirits, and all kinds of gifts of grace being given to the church. It was God's abundant grace being given to them. We have been praying for every member to find their place and to operate in their gifts. We all want to see God's abundant grace given in this area. I would love to see that kind of abundant grace poured out on our church.

3. Example of Unity

The church had unity. They were of one heart and mind. The results of that unity was bold preaching, and an abundant grace on the church. There was not a needy person in the church. People were selling property and houses and bringing the proceeds to the apostles to distribute to those in need. At this point in the life of the church, they did not have pastors. The first mention of elders is in Acts 15, where the elders and apostles looked into the doctrinal question that Paul and Barnabas brought to their attention. The apostles planted and led the church in Jerusalem. They were the ones that managed the affairs of the church. They handled the finances. They received the money and they also distributed the money. The pastors of the church have always had that responsibility.

Luke uses Barnabas because he was a great example to the church. His real name was Joseph, but he was called Barnabas by the apostles. His actions epitomized what was going on in the church. I think that Luke uses Barnabas because he was a great example, and also to introduce him to all of us. It is Barnabas who will vouch for Paul's authentic conversion, which allowed him to begin moving about and ministering in the church. (Acts 9:26-28) It was Barnabas that would lead the church plant at Antioch. (Acts 11:19-13:3) It was Barnabas that would bring Paul on as a pastor at Antioch. (Acts 11:25-26) It was Barnabas that would lead the first two apostolic journeys, with Paul as his right-hand man. Barnabas and Paul were quite the team.

(Acts 4:36-37) "Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), {37} and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet."

Why did the apostles call him Barnabas? The word Bar means son, and nabas or nabiy' means a prophet. The literal meaning is that he was the son of a prophet. The NASB translates it as son of Encouragement. The KJV translates it as son of consolation. In 1 Corinthians 14:3, we find that one who prophesies speaks to men for edification, exhortation, and consolation. **A prophet encourages, exhorts, and comforts.** Therefore, both of those translations works.

(1 Cor 14:3) "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation."

Barnabas was a prophet. In Acts 13:1, it said there were at Antioch prophets and teachers, and it lists Barnabas first. Luke calls Barnabas a prophet. There are manifestations of prophecy that all of us can do. There are gifts of prophecy, that many in the church have. Then, there is the ministry of a prophet that is given in Ephesians 4:13. The ministry of a prophet is a five-fold gift to the body of Christ. It is a much higher calling than just having the gift of prophecy. It is someone who has ministered prophetically for quite some time and is mature in that gifting. An Ephesians 4 prophet

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plants and lays foundations in churches, and is very often translocal, meaning that he ministers to the greater body of Christ, not just locally. Barnabas is an Ephesians 4 prophet. He planted and laid the foundation at Antioch. He was then raised up to be an apostle, and planted lots of different churches.

(Acts 13:1) “Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

Barnabas was a Levite of Cyprian birth. Cyprus was an island in the Mediterranean sea. I have landed at the airport in Cyprus when I was younger, but have never toured the island. Some scholars say that he did not come from a wealthy family, as the Levites were recipients of the tithes, and were not big land owners. I have not found any Scriptural or other evidence to suggest this. One thing we do know is that he owned a tract of land and sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. It was apparently a tract of land that he had bought as an investment. He turned an earthly investment into a kingdom investment.

I believe that Barnabas is used as an example because he was a perfect example of what people in the church were doing, and because Luke wants to introduce us to this outstanding leader in the early church. Here are just a few other comments about leaders. Peter tells the pastors in 1 Peter 5:1-3 to shepherd the flocks. How are they to shepherd the flock. They are not to lord over the flock, but they are to be examples to the flock. The primary way a leader is to shepherd the flock is by example. **Pastors are to be examples to the flock.** A leader must be an example to the flock in his character. A pastor must be an example to the flock in his prayer life. A pastor must be an example to the flock in his family life. An elder must be an example to the flock in the way he manages. An overseer must be an example to the flock in his giving. Barnabas was an example to the flock and that is the reason that Luke uses him.

(1 Pet 5:2-3) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; {3} nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

Conclusion

We have seen how the church was of one heart and mind. We looked at some various ways that we can become of one heart. We have to be submitted to the authority of God's word. We must spend time in God's word, renewing our minds. We must also have a common vision. We also must be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. We also saw that the church had the right perspective about their possessions. Everything they have and we have belongs to the Lord and is to be used for His purposes. They were not selfish with their money; they gave freely to help others out. They treated one another as family members. Family members take care of one another.

The results were incredible. They preached the gospel with great power, and God's abundant grace was upon them all. Church, this is our heart and our prayer.

Let's pray.

Introduction (Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37)

1. Condition of Unity

- Our _____ is made up of our mind, emotions, and will.
- The heart refers to our _____. (Heb 4:12)
- The heart refers to our intentions, or our _____ (Heb 4:12)
- Our hearts are the seat of our _____. (Rom 10:9)
- The heart is the seat of our _____. (Pr 15:13, 15)
- A. There is unity through the _____. (Psa 78:70-72)
 - We should _____ our minds with the Scriptures. (Rom 12:2)
 - We should _____ the Scriptures.
 - We should _____ the Scriptures. (2 Tim 2:15, Heb 5:12-14)
 - We should _____ the Scriptures. (Psa 119:11)
 - We should _____ on the Scriptures. (Psa 119:148, Josh 1:8, James 1:22-25)
 - We must be _____ to the authority of God’s word. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- B. There is unity through a common _____. (Phil 1:27)
- C. There is a unity through the _____. (Phil 2:2, 1 Sam 6:7-12, Eph 4:3-6, Pro 25:23)
- D. There is great unity that comes through _____. (Acts 4:32)
 - God is the _____ of all things. (Ps 24:1)
 - We are merely _____. (Acts 4:34-35)

2. Results of Unity (Psa 133:1-3)

- A. The apostles testified with great _____. (Acts 4:33-35)
- B. There was abundant _____ upon them all.
 - Grace is God’s unmerited _____. (Eph 2:8-9)
 - There are also _____ of grace.
 - There is also a _____ of strength and resources that is called grace. (2 Cor 12:7-9)
 - God’s financial _____ was an evidence of God’s grace.

3. Example of Unity

- Barnabas was a great _____ to the church. (Acts 4:36-37)
- A prophet _____, exhorts, and comforts. (1 Cor 14:3)
- Barnabas was a _____. (Acts 13:1, Eph 4:13)
- Pastors are to be _____ to the flock. (1 Pet 5:1-3)

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