



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Communism or Generous Christian Care in the Church?

APRIL 23, 2014

David Andersen / PO Box 2020, Chesterfield, VA 23832 / David.Andersen@capitolcom.org

Acts 4:32-37

“Now the whole multitude of those having believed were continually one heart and soul, and constantly not one thing of their possessions he said to be his own, but instead all things were continuously to them common. 33) And the Apostles testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was continually rewarded great power, and (most importantly), grace was constantly great upon all of them. 34) For continuously there was not anyone needy among them; for as many as were owners of lands or houses, were selling them, and constantly bringing the price of the things being sold, 35) and were continually laying it at the feet of the Apostles; and it was constantly distributed to each according as anyone was continuously having need. 36) Now Joseph, the one named Barnabas by the Apostles, which is translated “Son of Exhortation,” a Levite, a Cyprian by birth, 37) possessing his field, having sold it, brought the money and placed it at the Apostles’ feet.”

“THE GREAT TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS THAT THE CHILD OF GOD HAS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, THAT IS, ALL THINGS IN COMMON WITH GOD. ALL THE RESOURCES OF GOD ARE AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE CHILD OF GOD. ALL THE RESOURCES OF THE CHILD OF GOD ARE AT THE DISPOSAL OF GOD. THESE MEN OF THE EARLY CHURCH THEREFORE, AND NECESSARILY, HAD ALL THINGS IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER.”

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

Is this passage intended to be descriptive (for our knowledge) or prescriptive (for our example to follow)? Why does Luke include this passage when he has already given this picture in Acts 2:42-47? What does “one heart & one soul point to? What was the driving force of everything in the Church?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- > APRIL 30-MAY 1: ACTS 5:1-11 *DECEIT IN THE CHURCH: SEVERE CHURCH DISCIPLINE!*
- > MAY 14-16: ACTS 5:12-23 *TRIUMPH OVER TYRANNY: ALL THE MESSAGE OF LIFE WAS GIVEN!*

Four times the Apostles had been told that they must stay in Jerusalem and await the power of the Holy Spirit. For ten days following those final words of Christ and His ascension the Church had gathered and waited upon God in prayer. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came, gathering a multitude in Capitol with the sound of gale-force wind and suddenly everyone from all over the world heard the truth about Christ in their own language and 3000 repented and were baptized. That immense group of new believers suddenly had perfect unity in their love for God and one another (Acts 2:42-47). At the hour of prayer in the Temple, Peter and John had been imprisoned for healing a lame man in Jesus’ name. This undeniable proof of the resurrection had not only increased their number to 5000 men, but also had given them an incredible opportunity to preach to the leaders of the Congress of Israel, proving that they could only be saved by Jesus Christ, their “Cornerstone,” whom they had just crucified. But these wicked leaders only wanted to suppress the embarrassing truth, so they threatened them, forbidding them all use of Jesus’ name. Such drove Jesus’ “slaves” to corporate prayer for great power “through the name of Thy Holy Servant Jesus” for greater boldness. The immediate earthquake and filling with the Spirit gave them even greater boldness to proclaim Christ from Word of God!

“THE CHURCH NATURALLY AND INSTINCTIVELY REACTED TO CRISIS AND DECISIONS THROUGH PRAYER, SHOWING THAT THE UNIFYING CENTER OF THEIR FELLOWSHIP WAS COMMUNION WITH GOD IN THE SPIRIT.”

DENNIS JOHNSON

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 8:30 AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM

WEDNESDAY @ 9:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 3RD FLOOR WEST CONFERENCE ROOM

Virginia

Communism or Generous Christian Care in the Church?

I. UNITY IN PURPOSE & POSSESSIONS ACTS 4:32

This may be the second most action packed passage in the New Testament (following the 18 constant actions in Acts 2:42-47). There are fifteen continual actions here with probably over 25,000 believers praying, providing, proclaiming, and sharing their possessions in singular purpose of joyful love for God and one another! The rare passion of “*one heart and soul*” in this vast multitude was focused in love to God and unlimited gratitude to His Son, Jesus Christ. The only other places where we find “*heart and soul*” combined in the Gospels, there is a focus on the Greatest Commandment-loving God (Mt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30, 33; Lk. 10:27; cf. Deut. 6:5). This one purpose in fulfilling the Greatest Command caused obedience to the Second Greatest Command to “*love thy neighbor as thyself.*” This they did perfectly in their intense care for one another with their possessions: “*constantly not one thing of their possessions he said to be his own, but instead all things were continuously to them common.*” Their love toward God and others was so intense that it possessed every action of their life and every resource in their possession! Their love was so focused that possessions were only viewed as belonging to God and His children. Property was owned, but love for God and others so owned their heart and soul, they never said anything belonged to them, only to God and His people. In perfect fellowship with both, “*all things were continuously to them common.*”

“NO MAN SAID SO, BECAUSE NO MAN THOUGHT SO. THE ONE HEART AND THE ONE LIFE HAD COMPLETELY ENDED THE SELFISHNESS OF THESE PEOPLE.

THEY WERE SELF-LESS.”

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

II. UNITY IN PROCLAMATION ACTS 4:33

The unity in sharing their possessions was not to be an end in itself. Their love would follow the passion of God and the greatest need of everyone-true salvation. The

central unifying message in the Church is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “*The Apostles testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was continually rewarded great power.*” This is the most proven event in the history of the world first and foremost because it was done and revealed by God which makes it absolutely true, and also this event is why there were Apostles. They were commissioned to tell this good news of the Gospel and His resurrection (Acts 1:22) and the Church is to proclaim His resurrection until He comes. The “*great power*” refers to the effectiveness of their testimony to the resurrection and is why there were so many whose lives had been transformed. But the great work of transforming hearts is God’s great work of grace: “*(Most importantly) grace was constantly great upon them all.*”

“BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.”

JOHN 13:35

III. UNITY IN PERFECT PROTECTION ACTS 4:34-37

“*Continuously there was not anyone needy among them,*” is similar to the concept of Psalm 23:1, “*The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.*” In His grace and protection, God worked in the hearts of the wealthy to care more for the needy in the Church than themselves so that “*as many as were owners of lands or houses, were selling them, and constantly bringing the price of the things being sold and were continually laying it at the feet of the Apostles; and it was constantly distributed to each according as anyone was continually having need.*” In contrast to Communism or even the Communalism of the Qumran Community, there was no pressure or even a suggestion from anyone but God to motivate this loving generosity. Everyone delighted to show one another grace in a temporal way in comparison to the great grace given them eternally in Jesus Christ. Barnabas was a gracious example of this grace lived out.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Is your communion and fellowship with God overflowing into care for His children?
- 2) Are you self-centered or self-less in how you think about your possessions and the needs of believers?
- 3) How do you show grace to others in a temporal way to demonstrate gratitude for God’s eternal grace to you?