

One Heart and Soul – April 25, 2021

1. Introduction:

a. Acts 4:32-37 is a picture of the early church. The depth of both vertical and horizontal relationships is evident.

b. This passage, along with Acts 2:42-47, have been misunderstood to be an early form of communism. But this is not the case based on several very important differences between communism and Christian fellowship and community.

c. The ESV Study Bible note for Acts 2:44-45 explains, “Though some people have referred to this situation as ‘early communism,’ this is clearly not the case, since (1) the giving was voluntary and not compelled by the government, and (2) people still had personal possessions, because they still met in “their homes” (verse 46) and many other Christians after this still owned homes (see Acts 12:12; 17:5; 18:7; 20:20; 21:8, 16; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2; 2 John 10). Further, Peter told Ananias and Sapphira that they did not have any obligation to sell their property and give away the money (Acts 5:4). **In contrast to communist theory, the abolition of private property is not commanded or implied here.**”

2. Read: Acts 4:32 “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.”

a. Question: According to verse 32 who was of one heart and soul?

b. Question: What does it mean to be of one heart and soul?

c. Question: Is it common today for a group of people to be of one heart and soul? What is common today?

d. Question: Verse 32 speaks to more than sharing philosophy and/or ideas. What else was shared according to the last part of verse 32?

e. Question: Today we don’t hold everything in common so how do we, at least at some level, share things in common?

f. Question: How does this remind us of the Lord’s Supper, communion?

3. Read: Acts 4:33-37 “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 sold³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.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.”

a. Last week we discussed Peter saying to the lame man, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” Today we will look again at generosity and at sharing what God has entrusted to our stewardship.

b. Question: What does verse 33 say the apostles were giving?

c. To own land or houses was very uncommon in the 1st century. Most people were what we would call sharecroppers or simply common laborers and thus too poor to give financial gifts. Consider the offering Jesus' parents gave following the birth of Jesus. We are told in Leviticus 12:6-8 when a child is born that an offering of **a lamb and a pigeon** or turtledove is to be made. However, if the people are poor and offering of two pigeons or turtledoves may be made. Jesus' parents made the offering of the poor (ref. Luke 2:24).

d. Question: So, what is a poor person to “give to the community of believers?”

e. According to 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.⁷ **To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”

f. Question: According to 1 Corinthians 12:7 what does each believer receive?

g. Question: According to 1 Corinthians 12:7 what is the purpose of the manifestation of the Spirit?

h. Question: What does this say about the role of each and every believer in the kingdom of God?