

The Church That People Were Afraid to Join

Acts 4:31-33

Thank you for joining me today. In just a few moments, we're going to look in the book of Acts, chapter 4. We're going to look at the subject, "The Church That People Were Afraid to Join," but first, let me invite you to view our website today, www.LRWM.org. On the website, you'll be able to leave your prayer requests with us so that we can share those and go to the Lord in prayer for you and with you.

Also, if you would like a transcript of this program free of charge, go to the website and you'll be able to view a transcript there and download it. If you can't do that, be sure and write to me and I'll send you, absolutely free of charge, a written transcript of this program, "It's a Good Life," or any other of the programs that are aired for "It's a Good Life." Write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. Write to me today, and I'll be glad to send you a written transcript of "It's a Good Life."

Now, in Acts chapter 4, we're going to read and study about the church that people were afraid to join, but before we look in Acts chapter 4, let's review by going ahead. We're going to go over to chapter 5 and you can read this later on, Acts chapter 5, verses 1 through 10.

We read there about a man by the name of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira. Now, these people had promised God, they had promised the church, they had promised the Holy Spirit that they would give the proceeds of property they had sold to the Lord. We see that, as Ananias went before the people, he was asked, "Is this the proceeds that you received? Is this everything you received from the property?"

Now, he had promised God that he would give God the proceeds from this property and

Ananias said, "Yes, this is all I received." And the Bible tells us that immediately he fell down dead. Why? Because he had lied to the Holy Spirit.

Then, we see a while later that his wife came in and she was asked that question, "Is this all the money that you received for the property that you sold?"

And she said, "Yes, this is all." And then we read how that, just as the people had carried out her husband dead, they would be carrying her out now dead. And the Bible tells us that she dropped dead.

Well, why did the judgment of God come upon these people? Was it because they had not given money to the church? No. It was because they had lied to the Holy Spirit. And in this section of Scripture, we read in chapter 5 and verse 11, *And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.* When the people heard that Ananias and Sapphira had died, it caused them to be afraid.

And then we're told in Acts chapter 5 and verse 13, *And of the rest durst—or dared--no man join himself to them....* Now, here was a church that people were afraid to join if they were not right with God. The characteristics of this church are given in Acts chapter 4, verses 31 through 33.

In verse 31, it says, *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*

³²*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any [of them] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

³³ *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.*

Notice with me a few things about this church. It was a praying church, because in verse 31, we read, *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken....* One man has written that we must not conceive of prayer as overcoming God's reluctance, but it is laying hold of His highest willingness. One poet has written it like this:

*Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power of such
None can ever ask too much.*

We need to go to the Lord today, not in reluctance or in fear, but we need to go to the Lord today and ask Him for our needs, ask Him for the things that would bring glory and honor to His name. And when we pray when we are in the will of God, we're going to ask for things according to His will.

Now, this was a praying church, and it was also a Spirit-filled church because, in Acts chapter 4 and verse 31, we also read, *[A]nd they were all filled with the Holy Ghost....* This was a Spirit-filled church.

When we think of being filled with the Spirit, we sometimes get the wrong idea. Being filled with the Spirit means that you are willing and letting the Holy Spirit control your life. And no one does everything exactly like God wants them to. Now, that may surprise you, but as long as we're in this flesh, we're going to do things that are not pleasing to God. But as we walk closer and closer to the Lord, we're going to mind the things more of God than we do of the flesh or of this world.

Being filled with the Spirit means being controlled by the Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit the moment that we get saved. The Bible says, *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby*

ye are sealed unto the day of redemption [Ephesians 4:30]. We are sealed. We're saved by and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.

As the world creeps in, in other words, the longer we live in this life and each day comes through, we have the cares of this world come upon us and this can interfere with our relationship with God, not that you're lost after you get saved, but that we let the things, the cares of this world, creep in and thereby separating us from the joy that we know is in the Lord Jesus Christ. We should live close to Him. We should pray daily, asking Him to fill us with His Holy Spirit. This was a Spirit-filled church.

And notice something else. In verse 31, also in the last part of that verse, it says, *[A]nd they spake the word of God with boldness.* It was a witnessing church. One man has said that, in Moscow, he interviewed twenty-five young communists. All said they spent at least three hours a day extolling the alleged virtues of communism. Some spent as much as nine hours. And can it be that Karl Marx has more witnesses in this generation than Jesus?

In Mark chapter 5 and verse 19, the Bible says, *Howbeit Jesus suffered him....this is a man in the Scripture....suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends....The man had been saved.... Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

Some of us feel that we can't witness because we don't know how; we're not great orators. But the Bible teaches us that you don't have to be a great orator to share Jesus. We simply need to share what He has done for us, how He saved us, how that He came into our lives because we trusted Him as our Savior. We simply share the Gospel. We simply say, *Believe on the Lord*

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house [Acts 16:31]. Share with those people around you how that God has blessed you, how that He saved you. That is witnessing for the Lord.

And then we see that this church was not only a witnessing church; it was a united church. Verse 32 says, *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul....* It was a united church; it was not a church of backbiters. It was not a church of someone saying they were better than the other person. This was a church who worked together. They wanted to see the power of God in their lives. They wanted to see people saved, and they wanted to be a united church for the Lord.

And notice something else in verse 32. We see there that it was a sharing church because it says, *[N]either said any [of them] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.* Neither said any of them that what they had was only theirs, but they were a sharing church. They believed in helping people. In this world we need to share what we have.

Now, I don't believe in communism. I don't believe in socialism. I believe what the Bible is teaching here is that, when we see a brother or sister in need or someone who is destitute who needs help, we as a church, we as God's people, need to help those individuals who are in need.

And then we also see that it was a powerful church. In verse 33 it says, *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus....* It was a powerful church because it gave witness, and this ties in once again with a church that was a witnessing church, but great power came upon this church because they shared the love of God.

And then we see it was a favored church, because in the next part of that verse 33, it says, *And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,* and then it says, *and great grace was upon them all.* God favored this church because it was a church that served Him. It was a church that believed in sharing the Gospel. It was a church that prayed. It was a Spirit-filled church. It was a powerful church, because God was the One who was in charge of that church.

Charles Finney said, "Christians are more to blame for not being revived than sinners are for not being converted." We need revival in our country today, in our land. We need to be praying as Christians for a healing of our land.

If you've never trusted Jesus, that should be the first thing you do. You need to come to Jesus today. Receive Him as your Lord and Savior. Would you pray something like this: "Lord Jesus, I know I can't save myself. I'm sorry for my sin. Please come into my heart and save me."

Now, if you're a Christian today and you're not serving Him, you're not a Spirit-filled Christian, you're not serving Him in a local church, you need to turn to Him today and say, "Lord, forgive me for not serving You, for not doing the things You would have me to do. Help me, Lord, to live for you today."

If you'll pray those prayers, God will answer those prayers. He will save you. And if you're a Christian, He will fill you with His Spirit and He'll lead you and guide you.

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I appreciate you being here today. I know that the Lord will bless you for it. Why? Because the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. It's the Word of God that deals with our hearts that makes us happy in the Lord. And I want you to know today that it is a good life serving the Lord. May the Lord bless you is my prayer.