

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMPOWERED CHURCH ACTS 4:32-37

Text:

Introduction:

By the time we come to the fourth chapter of the book of Acts, we must realize that there are thousands of believers in Christ who are gathering together at Jerusalem. Here, in the latter part of Acts 4, we get a glimpse at the characteristics of the early, empowered church. In some ways this could be considered a “State of the Church Address.” These characteristics of the early church should be sought for today.

1. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF UNITY (vs. 32)

Acts 4:32

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.*

A. They had believed

The common beliefs held by all brought unity to the early church.

1. They believed that Jesus died for their sins
2. They believed that Jesus had risen from the dead
3. They believed that Jesus had been exalted at the right hand of God
4. They believed that Jesus had commissioned them to go forth
5. They believed that He would return again

“A church that stands for nothing will fall for anything”

B. They were of one heart and one soul

There was an absence of selfishness and a recognition that all belonged to the Lord.

This is a spirit of true Christian love

1 John 3:14

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

2. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF WITNESSING (vs. 33)

Acts 4:33

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

The persecution the apostles suffered from the Jewish Sanhedrin drove them to their knees, and the Holy Spirit drove them to their feet. All saved men and women possess and can be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:31

³¹ *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.*

Romans 8:9

⁹ *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

A. They witnessed with power

Witnessing is not something we do for the Lord; it is something He does through us if are filled with His Spirit.

B. They witnessed of the Resurrection

Buddhists point only to a statue. Hindus point to thousands of objects. Environmentalists point to the planet Earth. But Christians point to a cross and an empty tomb.

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GRACE (vs. 33)

Grace means “undeserved favor or a forgiveness that is not earned.”

In this verse the word grace means “favor.”

A. They possessed the favor of God

God was blessing their preaching.

B. They exhibited the favor of God

The acknowledgment of and appreciation for God’s grace was their motivation in all they said and did.

Acts 2:47

⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SACRIFICE (VS. 34-35)

Acts 4:34-35

³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, ³⁵ And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

God's grace experienced inwardly is never far separated from an outward expression of God's love.

A. Giving was an expression of God's love

By giving to the needs of fellow believers, they demonstrated an understanding of the love God had shown to them by giving His only begotten Son.

B. Giving was not because of obligation

As we have had special projects over the years I have encouraged our members not to give if they felt pressured. Compelled giving is not a mark of a Spirit-filled believer.

C. Giving was an expression of God's grace

- Our time
- Our talent
- Our treasure

2 Corinthians 8:7

⁷Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ²Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Great churches are known for their sacrifices

Close:

The early church in Jerusalem was characterized by these four characteristics:

- Unity
- Witnessing
- Grace
- Sacrifice