

Great Grace Was On Them All

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The Church / Power; Singleness of Heart / Acts 4:32–33

Great Grace was on Them All

Great Grace

We open with our theme verse,

Acts 4:33 LEB

³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony *to* the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all.

Isn't this the report we would all like to have of our lives and in the Church in our community?

Instead we often find ourselves confined to the four walls of our local Church, intimidated at work or among friends, challenged when we speak the name of Jesus Christ.

How is it that these early believers came into this power and grace?

Lets go back just one verse to

Acts 4:32 "the group of those who believed were one heart and one soul".

Think about this for a minute, this is really an amazing statement. This isn't just one believer having the mind of Christ. This isn't two or three agreeing together about something, although there is great power in us agreeing together. This is "the group of those who believed" being "one heart and one soul".

I am going to suggest to you that this is not a natural state. What I mean is, it doesn't just happen. You don't meet someone for the first time and connect like this.

I am also going to suggest that this is the state we all want to be in. And we want to be in this state because that is the way God created us to be. God created us without guile, without sin, without any separation from him or from each other.

We all want a place where we are accepted, where we are valued, where we are heard, a place where we are contributing and appreciated. We all want to be connected, with one heart and one soul, together with those around us.

Brought About by One Heart and One Soul

So, let me ask you, have you ever experienced being “One Heart and One Soul” with someone else?

- In a personal relationship?
- Maybe with people you have worked with?
- Maybe as part of a sports team?

Marriage

If we simply read this “one heart and one soul” phrase, we might think of a married couple. And it is true that in

Matthew 19:4–5 “the one who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female **5** and said, ‘On account of this a man will leave his father and his mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’”

Then in Matthew, Jesus goes on to talk about divorce. God made us to be one flesh, but in the fall, in this age of sin, we are seldom of one mind. In fact, under the curse, we can only have what Prepare-Enrich calls a “Conflicted marriage” in

Genesis 3:16 To the woman he said, “ ... to your husband *shall be* your desire. And he shall rule over you.”

But we don’t live under the curse of sin and death anymore. We can, in Christ, have a “Harmonious” or even a “Vitalized marriage”.

What does it take to have a Harmonious or Vitalized marriage? Certainly you need to know each other, you need to be able to communicate easily, you need to support each other in reaching your personal goals, which means that you agree that those goals are valuable and worthwhile.

Transition:

But here, I am only talking about the challenge of getting the relationship between two people right. It is much more challenging to get a whole group of people with “one heart and one soul”.

Sports Team

Why is it that we are so enthralled with sports?

Isn't it that we identify with a team that is working together. We see them each playing their part. And we see them win for their efforts.

There is something in us that wants reward for our efforts. We want to know that we aren't wasting our effort, so we look and admire when we see others being rewarded, even if the reward is a few points on a scoreboard.

And in the most recent SuperBowl 53 between the New England Patriots (13) and Los Angeles Rams (3) it really was a few points. They say 98 million CBS viewers, the lowest in a decade.

The Church

Have you been in a Church service where there is a palpable presence of God? When this happens, it is often during a time of praise and worship, when everyone is singing together, when everyone is seeking God together. When we come together with reverence, honoring God, we find that he is there. This also often happens at the end of a service, after the teaching or preaching of God's word, because there is power in God's word and in these few moments afterward, during an altar call or a time of prayer, we find the power of God is there.

Enable by the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Peter Before

Before Acts 2:1, we find this man, Peter, is the one that had denied Christ three times.

He denied that he knew Christ, denied that he was with him as a disciple, and denied knowing anything about him in Luke 22:54-62.

Then, after Jesus resurrection, after Jesus had appeared to the women, and

appeared to the twelve with Thomas, Peter, apparently not knowing what to do, led other disciples back to their old livelihood, saying in John 21:2-3 "I am going fishing".

Peter After

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1, we find a new man in

Acts 2:14 "But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them, 'Judean men, and all those who live *in* Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words!'"

Peter is now speaking with authority and, without shrinking back or any fear, says to the crowd in

Acts 2:22 "Israelite men, listen to these words!"

Now, Peter delivers the message of salvation through Jesus Christ in

Acts 2:21 "And it will be *that* everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

And Peter doesn't hold back or soften the message in any way saying in

Acts 2:23-24 "this man ... you executed ... **24** God raised him up".

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Great grace didn't happen until after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4 that Jesus had said would give them "power" in Acts 1:8.

Often, "The Spirit of God is often portrayed in Scripture in terms of "breath", "life" or "wind", indicating his role in sustaining and bringing life to God's creation".

and it is this same "Holy Spirit (that) equips and empowers believers so that the reign and reality of God is revealed through them in the world".

Manser, M. H. (2009). Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies. London: Martin Manser.

Growth of the Church

Great grace didn't happen immediately at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This "one heart and one soul", this "great power" and "great grace" described in

Acts 4:33 "And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all".

Great grace didn't come until the believers came into this place of "One Heart and One Soul".

This "One Heart and One Soul" didn't come until the believers began ordering their lives according to God's word.

Without going into too much detail, there were three thousand added to the Church one day, the Lord added daily to the Church those that were saved, and five thousand were added another day. This was no small undertaking. The Church had grown, but there was a pattern that the Apostles had established.

Lets go to Acts 2:42 where we find four things that were happening.

Devoting Themselves

They were devoting themselves, but not just to anything.

To the Teaching of the Apostles

They were "devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles"

I don't want to spend time here, but you can look at another message, "You Almost Persuade Me" (<http://tellone.org/messages/you-almost-persuade-me/>)

The disciples were teaching what they had learned from Jesus, and what he had revealed to them as he opened their eyes to the scripture after his resurrection.

To Fellowship

It says in Acts 2:42 they devoted themselves to "fellowship", then in Acts 2:46 it says "devoting themselves to meeting with one purpose". They spent time together, and yes, it was about hearing God's word from the disciples, but it was more than that.

The Greek work used here is koinōnia and its primary definition is fellowship.

Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament) 3126

κοινωνία

3126 κοινωνία (koinōnia), ας (as), ἡ (hē): n.fem.; ≡ Str 2842; TDNT 3.797—1. LN 34.5 fellowship, close mutual association (1Jn 1:3; 1Co 1:9); 2. LN 57.98 share, participation (2Co 8:4); 3. LN 57.101 willing contribution, gift (Ro 15:26+)

But it is fellowship with close mutual association. It is also translated as share , participation. And it is also translated as willing contribution, gift.

Think of this as vibrant interaction, not just taking in, but full interaction and expression one to another. This was time for them to know each other and it is repeated in

Acts 2:46 “And every day, devoting themselves to meeting with one purpose in the temple courts”

This wasn't the only thing they did, and these meetings didn't last all day, but there was time for them to gather daily.

To Breaking of Bread

Acts 2:42 says they were devoting themselves to “the breaking of bread” which we could take to mean breaking a communion wafer as we might do in some Churches. But if we read on just a little, we find in

Acts 2:46 “breaking bread from house to house, they were eating their food with joy and simplicity of heart

They were taking meals together. They were going house to house which also implies a very open and transparent lifestyle as they were coming and going together.

To Prayer

This last bit, in Acts 2:42, they were devoting themselves “to prayers”. Now, we know that Peter and John were going to the Temple at the hour of prayer in

Acts 3:1 LEB

¹ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

So we might take this as a routine scheduled, maybe even religious prayer as is practiced by some with repetitive and sometimes responsive chants. But this I think is better understood by reading how Peter and John prayed together with

“their own people” in

Acts 4:23–24 LEB

²³ And *when they* were released, they went to their own *people* and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And *when they* heard it, they lifted *their* voices with one mind to God and said, “Master, you *are* the one who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them,

You can read the full context here, but let me jump down to

Acts 4:29–30 LEB

²⁹ And now, Lord, concern yourself with their threats and grant your slaves to speak your message with all boldness, ³⁰ *as* you extend your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

This was prayer that was targeted at the specific issues they were facing. This was prayer expecting God’s intervention and his stamp of approval on their actions through “signs and wonders”.

Results of Their Devotion

The result of their devotion was favor and people being added to the kingdom.

If we go back to Acts 2:42, the pattern of life they were following, we find

Acts 2:47 LEB

⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding every day to the total *of* those who were being saved.

This is a daily routine, this is them living for Christ every day, and as they do, they experience favor and people are being saved daily.

We are often looking for the big bang, like the day of Pentecost, the day that will change everything. But in Christ, every day is changing us. Every day that we follow these simple disciplines, we grow more into the image of Christ.

Their singleness of purpose increased as they “they were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles” (see Acts 2:42).

The grace on them increased as they exercised love for each other.

The power to “give testimony” increased when the community around them saw the love they had one for another.

This was what Jesus had told the disciples in

John 13:34–35 “A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another—just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples—if you have love for one another.”

This is the body of Christ, as he intended, “love for one another”.

Great Power

Lets go back to our theme verse in Acts 4:33. It wasn't just “great grace” that was on them all, it was also “great power”.

Acts 4:33 LEB

³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all.

This is what Jesus commissioned, that we would be witnesses, and here it is being fulfilled.

Many Signs and Wonders Were Being Performed

They all continued together and God was confirming his word, he was answering their prayer from

Acts 4:29–30 LEB

²⁹ And now, Lord, concern yourself with their threats and grant your slaves to speak your message with all boldness, ³⁰ as you extend your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

And many sign and wonders were happening in

Acts 5:12 LEB

¹² Now many signs and wonders were being performed among the people through the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico.

Even more were added in

Acts 5:14 LEB

¹⁴ And even more believers in the Lord were being added, large numbers of both

men and women,

A Different Level of Power

But, now we see a shift. It isn't Peter and John reaching out to the lame man who was the only one healed. Now, people were coming and being healed as Peter walked by.

Acts 5:15 LEB

¹⁵ so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and put *them* on cots and mats so that *when* Peter came by, at least *his* shadow would fall on some of them.

People are being healed as Peter's shadow touches them. People from all around were bringing their sick and

Acts 5:16 LEB

¹⁶ And the people of the towns around Jerusalem also came together, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, who were all being healed.

This says "who were all being healed".

We had seen this happen with Jesus, and now we see it happen with Peter.

There is a principle at work here. God had always been happy to heal. Jesus demonstrated God's will to heal. Yet, even Jesus said in Mark 6:5–6 "And he was not able to do any miracle in that place except to lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. 6 And he was astonished because of their unbelief. And he was going around among the villages teaching".

Faith to Believe

The principle at work is that people need to hear God's word first.

Then, they begin to believe.

As faith in God increases, people are able to receive what God has for them.

As it says in

Romans 10:17 LEB

¹⁷ Consequently, faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing through the word about Christ.

And in

Hebrews 11:6 LEB

⁶ Now without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and is a rewarder of those who seek him.

The Apostles and the people are experiencing this in action. The word of the Kingdom is being taught. Believers are demonstrating love, one to another, people in the community are beginning to believe and miracles are happening.

Conclusion

Our theme verse is

Acts 4:33 LEB

³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony *to* the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all.

This is also our aspiration for the church today.

This is what Jesus came to accomplish, he gave himself for the church, our sin forgiven.

Cleansed and washed, by the word.

“the church glorious” in

Ephesians 5:25–27 LEB

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for her; ²⁶ in order that he might sanctify her by cleansing *her* with the washing of water by the word; ²⁷ in order that he might present to himself the church glorious, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such *thing*, but that she may be holy and blameless.

Will you take on this devotion? Will you devote yourself as they did as early believers?

The Lexham English Bible Chapter 2

⁴² And they were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers.

This is the way for us to find “Great Power” and “Great Grace”.

Prayer of Salvation

If you have been listening and have never accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, simply say this prayer with me.

"Dear God,

I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness.

I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life.

I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will.

I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

If you prayed with me, I want to seal that with a short prayer for you.

"Father,

I thank you for these that have accepted Christ today. Lead them by your Holy Spirit to a local Church where they can learn more about you and your plan for their life, In Jesus name, Amen".

Commission Prayer for Christian

For those of you that are Christians, we have a commission to preach this gospel of the kingdom. Go and read Paul's message. Make it your own. And, pray with me now.

"Father,

I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Father, I know it is your desire that all would be saved and come to know the truth.

I commit myself to this work of ministry and ask you to order my steps daily and prepare me through relationships with the body of Christ.

I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

For those of you that prayed with me, would you please go to prayny.org and add a prayer request so that we can connect with you and continue to pray for the

fulfillment of God's plan in your life.

End Notes

Thank you for this time on <http://omegamanradio.com> and thanks to our friend Rev. Joseph Cohen

- Eric and Noemi Ross
- The Master's Hand Christian Fellowship – <http://the-mastershand.org>
- Prayer Line – 712-432-6100 Code: 35051381 6:00-7:00 am Eastern Time
- <http://prayny.org>
- <http://mymarriagementors.org>
- <http://www.nationaldayofprayer.org/>
- Rev Joseph Cohen – <http://newhopeinthelord.com>