

LIFE OF FAITH. Mr K Gerner B.A.

Lesson 7. NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF LIVING FAITH

(i) THE EARLY CHURCH COMMUNITY.

The Early Church shared all they had and put a priority in getting out the Word. This followed the clear teaching of Jesus, and what was not given, was probably destroyed in the sacking of Jerusalem in A.D.70 by the Romans.

(a) OBEDIENCE to the command of Christ to SELL AND GIVE ALMS, was the clear practice of the Early Church after OPentecost.

ACT 2:44 NIV All the believers were together and had everything in common.<sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.<sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,<sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

(i) "were together" shows a COMUNAL LIFE STYLE for rich and poor alike, following Christ.

MAT 19:21 NIV Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

(ii) "had everything in common" v.44. This shows COMMUNAL USE, not necessary communal ownership, of what they had

(iii) "selling their possessions and goods" v.45. This shows no ASSETS stored up.

(iv) "gave to anyone as he had need" shows (v.45) distribution based on NEED.

(v) "together in the Temple courts" (v.46) shows a community based on old Jewish religion with "meeting together to break bread in homes" as a new format DAILY.

(b) COMMUNISM ?

ACT 4:32 NIV All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.<sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.<sup>34</sup> There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales<sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.<sup>36</sup> Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement),

(i) "one in heart & mind" shows VOLUNTARY LOVE not IMPOSED GIVING.

(ii) "claimed...his possessions as his own.." v.32.shows concept of being TRUSTEES for God in use of His provision.

(iii) "grace was upon them all" shows atmosphere of spiritual love that made this possible.

(iv) "put it at Apostle's feet" (v.35) shows Apostolic control of distribution of goods. We see this done daily (Acts 6:1-2) and the work passing to Deacons, with DAY BY DAY reliance on God.

(v) "Barnabas" later called to life of faith with Paul; actually went to the country where he had given up his goods for God, and led the Governor to the Lord.

(ii) ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. Acts 5:1-11

(a) SEVERE JUDGEMENT fell on those pretending to do this for their own ends<sup>4</sup>

(b) PART of price withheld

ACT 5:1 NIV Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.<sup>2</sup> With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. This shows the danger of good intentions, not fully carried out, and the LIE that is ACTED WITHOUT A WORD BEING SAID.

Complicity (like that between Adam and Eve and Achan and his family, led to corporate guilt and punishment)

(c) WORD OF KNOWLEDGE REVEALS THE LIE

ACT 5:3 NIV Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?

(i) This was a LIE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, Who revealed the sin.

(ii) The Spirit revealed the withdrawal of what had been dedicated to God to a SELFISH END. Be careful of this.

(iii) SPIRITUAL power of Satan seen in this act of deception. The action had to be shown and punished or it would have spread. In a Revival, Heavenly outpouring, no LIE can be allowed (as in Heaven) for trust is thus destroyed.

(iv) OTHERS ARE INVOLVED where there is an act of deception (v.9) and so the punishment had to bring fear of God lest more would follow. Notice that the execution was DONE BY GOD.

(v) NO LIE can exist in Heaven and Revival is like days of Heaven on earth, so that DEATH had to happen

REV 21:27 NIV Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful **or deceitful**, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(iii) BARNABAS

(a) LEVITE OF GOOD STANDING.

ACT 4:36 NIV Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), He made a complete dedication of his land & possessions to God and the Lord gave him back the country, as a missionary to it.

(b) DEFINITELY CALLED TO MISSIONARY FIELD

He launched out with Paul after making this consecration.

ACT 13:2 NIV While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(c) PREPARED TO WORK FOR HIS OWN LIVING to make up shortfall. He went to the poor.

1CO 9:6 NIV Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living?

(d) A GOOD MAN, he WAS FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST and was now freed to TRAVEL and to a teaching ministry at Antioch.

ACT 11:24 NIV He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

SELLING HIS LAND meant that he was released from ties and free to go where the Lord sent him.

(e) GENEROUS AND SENT MONEY TO JERUSALEM LATER when Agabus prophesied

ACT 11:30 NIV This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

(iv) PAUL

(a) WELCOMED AND STARTED IN MINISTRY BY BARNABAS

ACT 9:27 NIV But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

Barnabas took him under "his wing" and developed his ministry at ANTIOCH ACT 11:25 NIV Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,<sup>26</sup> and when he found

him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

LATER PAUL SURPASSED HIM, but owed much to him

(b) PAUL PREPARED TO LOSE ALL FOR CHRIST (Phillippians chap 3)

He deliberately chose sacrifice in the place of luxury to make missionary work possible. (2 Corinth 11:24-33)

2CO 11:24 NIV Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea

HOW MUCH ARE WE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE FOR CHRIST ?

(c) WORKED HARD TO SUPPORT HIMSELF AND OTHERS

ACT 20:34 NIV You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.

1TH 2:9 NIV Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

(d) Made Gospel free. Worked where people could not pay

(e) Accepted Gifts from Heathen where miracles took place

ACT 28:7 NIV There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably.<sup>8</sup> His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.<sup>9</sup> When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.<sup>10</sup> They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

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#### EXERCISE

1 IN YOUR OWN WORDS GIVE EARLY CHRISTIAN PRACTICE, WHEN NEEDS AROSE from:

(a) Acts 6:1 (b) Acts 10:27-30 (c) Gal.2:16 (d) Philipp 4:15-19 (e) 2 Corinth chapter 8

2.WHAT PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN GIVING DO WE FIND in 2 Corinthians chap 9 IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

Send answers with sae to AVM, PO Box 1, NEWCASTLE, Co Down

