

Acts 4:32-5:16: Spiritual Focus & Mutual Concern: Transition to Persecution #2

The initial persecution of Christians (4:1-23) led to an even greater intensity of identification among Believers in Jerusalem. Such identity naturally reflected itself in mutual concern for one another's welfare. This led to a communal mentality where private goods were sold to make provision for needy believers. Two illustrations of this action are included in the text, one positive (Barnabas) and one negative (Ananias & Sapphira). The net result: great fear came upon the church and upon inhabitants of Jerusalem (5:11), all of which stirred the animosity of Jewish religious leaders who in turn arrest all of the Apostles. In other words, 4:32-5:16 is the transition from the first persecution to the second.

Verse by Verse Summary: 4:32-37

The key to understanding this paragraph is the verb tenses: in verses 32-35, all verbs are Imperfect Tense, Indicative Mode. In verses 36-37, the verbs are Aorist Tense, Indicative Mode (listen for the explanation). My translations seek to capture the sense of these verbs.

v. 32 "And (the) heart and soul of the multitude of the believing ones _____
_____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.) one."

A powerful sense of unity pervaded this assembly of believers!

"and not even one _____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.) anything of
his possessions was uniquely his own, but all things _____
_____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.) common to them."

v.33 "and with great power, the Apostles _____ the testimony
of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace _____
_____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.) upon all of them."

The primary role of the church was not lost upon them in their efforts to maintain needs of the poor. Maintenance of the group was a manifestation of love; witness to the community was a primary function. Grace manifests itself maximally where responsibilities under grace are properly prioritized. We must continually ask what we are all about!

v. 34, 35 "for neither among them did anyone _____ (Imperf.
Act. Indic.) needy, for as many as _____ (Imperf.
Act. Indic.) owners of lands or houses, after selling, _____
_____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.) the prices of the things sold and _____
_____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.) them at the Apostles' feet and it

(OVER)

_____ (Imperf. Pass. Indic.) to
each according as anyone _____ (Imperf. Act. Indic.)
need."

These verses prove that the believers "who had" did not divest their possessions in one shot: they kept selling as need kept arising. Whereas distribution of moneys in 2:45 was direct from the hands of the sellers, the Apostles now assume this responsibility. According to 6:1, distribution became a daily, burdensome, responsibility and had to be delegated to others (deacons).

Positive Illustration: Barnabas (Joses)

v. 36, 37 **"Summarized: "And Joses...having land sold (it) and brought the proceeds and laid them at the Apostles' feet."**

All verbs are Aorist tense.

"Barnabas" = name given by Apostles: means "Son of Encouragement"

- mentioned 24 times in Book of Acts

- a Levite: as such was not to own land in Israel, Numbers 18:24.

Negative Illustration: Ananias & Sapphira, 5:1-11

5:1,2 **Their Plot:** premeditated deception about the extent of giving.

5:3,4 **Their Sin:** they lied (Aor. Tense) to God the Holy Spirit.

Their Motivation: Satan filled (controlled) their heart; they sought the approval of Christian people.

5:5-10 **Their doom:** instant physical death

5:11-17 **The effect** of all this

v. 11 fear came upon all who heard (believers & unbelievers);

v. 12 a continuum of miracles thru the Apostles;

v. 12b unanimity of passion among believers;

v. 13 growing respect of the community

v. 14 multitudes get saved;

v. 15-16 multitudes from other towns come & get healed and evangelized;

v. 17 **RELIGIOUS LEADERS GET JEALOUS & ARREST THE APOSTLES!** Persecution #2
in the Book of Acts.