

# A “Great” Congregation

**Introduction.** We are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought because we are all members of one body, and each one offers something to the development and strength of the body (Romans 12:3-8). A congregation also has to be careful not to think of itself more highly than it ought (Revelation 3:17-19). The stranger should praise us, not ourselves (Proverbs 27:2).

The New Testament churches set examples that instruct, warn, and encourage us to be the very best we can be in God’s sight. Every church of Christ can benefit from prominent features of greatness of the early Jerusalem church (Acts 4:32-5:11).

## ***I. Great Unity (Acts 4:32)***

- A. Hearts and lives were united in the word of God (4:31; 1 Corinthians 1:10).
  - 1. This does not “just happen”. It is the result of devoted teaching of and living by the word of God (Acts 2:41-42, 44, 46; 4:31).
  - 2. Truth produces faith, instilling the value of unity and the strength of oneness into hearts, lives, and the local church (cp. 2 Timothy 2:2).
- B. Unity produces commonality in practice (Acts 4:32; Romans 15:30-33; Philippians 1:27).
- C. We must endeavor to guard our unity in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-3).
  - 1. Where hearts are not united in truth the results are factiousness, strife, and moral chaos (cp. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 4:6).
  - 2. Be likeminded toward one another (Romans 15:5; Philippians 2:2, 20).

## ***II. Great Power (Acts 4:33)***

- A. The power of the Holy Spirit on the apostles emboldened their preaching (Acts 1:8; 4:31).
- B. Congregations rely on their Holy Spirit-powered testimony for certain truth (cp. Mark 16:20; Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:3-5).
  - 1. Our faith is in the power of God, not the power of men (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).
  - 2. Every church ought to rely on God's power to guide us in truth through the word of the Spirit (cp. Revelation 2:29).

## ***III. Great Grace (Acts 4:33)***

- A. Christians are greatly blessed with God’s favor (Ephesians 1:3; Romans 6:14-18).
  - 1. As we stand in God's grace we have peace with God and sure hope in which we rejoice (Romans 5:1-2).
  - 2. We have a favored position of great assurance of hope due to the love of God in our hearts by the Spirit (Romans 5:3-5).
- B. The congregation must understand that it is nothing without God’s favor (grace).

## ***IV. Great Sacrifice (Acts 4:34-35)***

- A. Mutual sacrifice fulfills needs (cp. Acts 2:44-45).
  - 1. Greatness of faith does not wait to be asked to respond to a need; great faith acts sacrificially to help relieve the deficiency.

2. To help the man of God Elisha, the Shunammite woman and her husband built Elisha a bedroom (2 Kings 4:8-10).
- B. A full expression of love by helping each other in times of need (Galatians 6:10; 1 John 3:16-19).
  1. Out of the common treasury (Acts 4:35).
  2. Also relieve brethren in other places (Acts 11:27-30).

#### **V. Great Encouragement (Acts 4:36-37)**

- A. Every church needs a Barnabas (cp. Acts 11:21-24).
  1. To exhort and encourage by words, deeds, and the sacrificing self to serve each other.
  2. Good leaders, such as Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:6-7) and Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:1-2), are also great encouragers.
- B. Every Christian can be a Barnabas (Hebrews 10:23-24).
  1. Each of us can work on becoming more effective in encouraging others (Galatians 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:15).
  2. If you feel you lack this talent, then maybe this is the one you work to increase (Matthew 25:14-30).

#### **VI. Great Fear (Acts 5:11)**

- A. Reverence for God produced genuine character and authentic faith, and that is contrasted with Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-2).
- B. Two reactions (Acts 5:13-14).
  1. No one like Ananias and Sapphira wanted to be part of the church (5:14).
  2. People of genuine faith were saved (5:14).
- C. Reverence can help us to act faithfully and appropriately (Acts 9:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1). It is a powerful emotion (Philippians 2:2; Hebrews 4:1).

**Conclusion.** The Jerusalem church would face challenges from false teachers (Acts 15:1-35) and negligent, apathetic faith (Hebrews 3:14; 4:11; 5:12; 6:9-12; 12:1). Any church that thinks it cannot fall has already started to drift (Hebrews 10:36). We need to follow the example of the Jerusalem church and bring honor to God, who saves us by His grace through our faith.

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