

# Acts 4 (Part 2): 32-37 - Acts 5 (Part 1): 1-11 • The Pride of Life

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier  
Calvary Chapel Ontario

We are in the Book of Acts and finishing out the fourth chapter. And then we're going to jump into the fifth here just a little bit because these verses go together. It's an odd place where they made a division here in the Bible. The end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 really goes together, and that's why we're going to take it together this morning.

Start looking with me in chapter 4, verse 32. Acts 4:32, we're going to read down through the end of the chapters. It says, *“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.*

*<sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup> and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. <sup>36</sup> Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, <sup>37</sup> sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (ESV)*

We're going to stop there for just now. As I said, we'll get into some of these other verses, but let's pray.

Father, open our hearts to the ministry of Your grace and teach us Lord from Your Word. We thank You and praise You for this opportunity in Jesus name, amen.

Chapter 4. I like the way chapter 4 ends because Luke gives us a snapshot of what was going on in the early church. In other words, how they were living. And in a word, they were living communally.

And of course, that word, communally, is exactly what he describes starting in verse 32 when it says that, *“...the full number,”* if you look with me again in your Bible. Verse 32, *“Now the full number of those who believed were of one*

*heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common."*

And then skip down to verse 34 again, "*There was not a needy person among them.*" That's pretty interesting, isn't it? For as many as who had land, they owned land or houses or whatever, they sold those things, put them on the market, got the money, brought it to the apostles, laid it at their feet, and then they distributed that money, and that is called Communal living.

We thought that back in the 60s that the hippies invented communes. They did not. It started here as early as the first century A.D. when the body of Christ began to live communally. And it was something that happened organically. It was simply spontaneous on their part, just out of their love for one another. Nobody told them, hey, this is what we need to do, it just came forth, and it's very cool. And it's just a mutual sharing of goods and resources.

However, there are some people that see a connection between this sort of communal living and communism. They share a common root as far as the words go. They both come from that word, common; to have things in common. And they both carry the idea of common ownership.

However, there are absolutely huge differences between the two. And you need to know that because communal living, as practiced by the early church, was an idea that was based on freely giving. Freely giving. Communism, on the other hand, is a government forcibly taking, and that's the difference.

And even though there are similarities from the root of the understanding of those things, they are very different things, and they are not to be confused. Communal living, as it was practiced by the early church, was prompted by love.

And one of the men who was particularly prompted, we're told here at the end of chapter 4, was a man named Joseph. They also referred to him as Barnabas, and that's what we're going to hear about him later on in chapters in the Book of Acts.

And we don't know all that much yet about him, except that his name means, son of encouragement, and we believe, and we're going to see this later in Acts, that he had, he seemed to have that gift, that gift of encouragement. Which by the way is needed in the body of Christ. He was also a Jew. He was of the tribe of Levi, and he was born and raised on the island of Cyprus, which is still the

island of Cyprus. You'll see it out in the Mediterranean, straight west of Syria and it's all still there.

Anyway we also know that he was a generous and a godly man, and you can imagine. It tells us here that he took some land that he owned, he sold it and from the proceeds of that sale, he brought the money to the apostles, and that money was distributed among the believers so that there was no needy person among them.

You can about imagine what kind of admiration that aroused in the hearts and the minds of the body of Christ. I mean, to see Barnabas do that. Did you hear what Barnabas did? I mean, I'm sure that people were just buzzing about this thing. And he had this land sold it and he gave all of the money, he turned it all over to the apostles who are now distributing it among the believers and wow, that's incredible.

And I can also imagine that not only were people buzzing about it, but I bet there were some people also that wanted that same admiration for themselves. Because don't you know, we all like to be admired. We all like to be liked. We all like to be appreciated. If you're at work and your boss comes up to you and says, hey, good job, good job. Yeah. That feels good.

It just feels good to know that you're doing a good job and somebody noticed and they admire you for your work ethic, or your character, or whatever the case might be. Because it always feels good to be honored by other people. And that desire to want to be honored, which is something we all have, we all want to be liked. We all want to be admired.

That desire is one of 3 areas of desire in our lives which can be a great downfall in the in sin. Did you guys know that of all the sins that a person can commit, they all come under 3 categories, just 3 categories. All sin. And the apostle John actually outlines those areas for us. Let me put this up on the screen for you. From 1 John chapter 2, it says,

**1 John 2:16 (ESV)**

*For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

*For all that is in the world—(and then he lists those, he says) the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—(he said, they're) ... not from the Father ... (they're) ... from the world.*

We'll bullet point those below that for you so you can see those again.

**1 John 2:16 (ESV)**

*For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

- *The desires of the flesh*
- *The desires of the eyes*
- *The pride of life*

Again, **The desires or the lusts of the flesh**, as your Bible may call it, that refers to our carnal appetites; the things that are flesh, the longings of our flesh. And by the way, these don't have to be bad. Because the longings or the desires of the flesh, this can even include something like, I'm hungry and I want to eat. I mean, that's a longing of the flesh.

Again, it doesn't have to be bad in any way but we can take these desires, any of them, and we can turn them bad by trying to satisfy them in an illegitimate or ungodly way. For example, even hunger, physical hunger. If I give in to gluttony, that's wrong. That's bad for me physically and even bad for me spiritually. You can see that I can take a very simple function or desire, and because my sinful nature is a part of my life, I can make it something that is bad.

And then the next thing he talks about there is, **The desire or the lust of the eyes** that just refers to what we see and what we want. And again, that doesn't have to be bad. I could be walking through the grocery store, passing the display of apples and I could look at them and say, I want some of those. It's not a bad thing, I put them in a bag, I go to the register and I pay for them. No big deal.

But when we begin to fixate on things with our eyes, it can easily turn into covetousness. And covetousness is where I see something that you have and I want to take it from you so that it's now mine. And that, of course, is an illegitimate and ungodly means of trying to satisfy that desire of the eyes.

And then, of course, we come to this last one, and that's, **The pride of life**. That's what we're going to be focusing on here as we get into the next few verses of Acts chapter 5, because that's what's going on.

What is the pride of life? It's the desire for recognition. I want to be admired, I want to be noticed.

Look at chapter 5 verse 1 with me in your Bible. It says, *“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, (notice, very similar to what Barnabas did) <sup>2</sup> and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.”*

In other words, what Ananias did is he sold this property, gave a gift to the fellowship, but he did it under false pretenses. Telling them that was the purchase price and I'm giving all of it. I'm giving all of it to you. But the fact is, he actually sold it for more than that and he kept back some of the proceeds for himself.

Now that you know what he did, here's the question that naturally comes to mind. Why did he do it? Well, it's exactly what we were talking about when we dealt with the third category of desire, and that is, the pride of life.

Ananias kept back some of the money because he wanted the recognition and the admiration of the body of Christ. He wanted to appear generous. He wanted to appear big hearted, but he was willing to use deception to do it. He was willing to lie to the body of Christ in order to do it.

And what we really want to look at here, in light of what Ananias did, are the words of Peter as he confronts Ananias for this sin.

Look at verse 3. *“But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? <sup>4</sup> While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? (he says) You have not lied to man but to God.”*

Notice here that Peter begins by simply asking a question, and it's an important question. The question is, *“why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...”* There are some people who read that statement right there and they assume that what Peter is essentially saying is that Ananias wasn't a true believer. Because they say, well, how in the world could a true believer have his heart filled by Satan?

You want to hear my answer? Easy. Easy. It happens all the time. All you have to do is give in to the desires of the sinful nature. And yeah, you can be a true, genuine, born again believer, and your heart can be filled with a lie that comes straight from the pit of hell. It doesn't mean you're possessed. It's not what I'm saying. I don't believe a believer can be possessed by a demonic spirit.

You already have the Holy Spirit living in you. There's not room for any demons in there. But can your heart be influenced by the enemy? Absolutely.

In fact, I find that believers in general today are somewhat naive about just how easily sin can get a foothold in their lives. And I tell you that because I hear from a lot of Christians who are just flabbergasted that they've fallen into sin.

And they write to me and they're like, pastor Paul, what is going on in my life? I thought I was a child of God. And I come back and I say, well, what makes you doubt the fact that you're a child of God? This! And then they talk about some sin that they committed.

And I'm like, did you think that sin was no longer a possibility? Did you think sin was out of reach? Did you think your sinful nature went away when you got saved? Heavens. Quite the opposite.

What happened when you got saved is you received the Holy Spirit, and now God placed His nature inside of you, and guess what? Now there are two natures vying for control inside of you. If you felt a little schizo, that's why. It's because these things are opposed to one another.

You have a sinful nature, the Bible calls your flesh, but you also have the Spirit of God living within you and they are like this (Pastor Paul motions to show his hands battling against each other) constantly.

Let me tell you something. It's when you get saved that the battle really begins. Before I got saved, there was no battle. I just sinned and I didn't question whether I was doing wrong or not. And then I got saved and I realized that God placed His Spirit within me and now there was a battle raging inside of me.

And I realized at some point in my Christian life that I could yield to either side of the battle. I could yield to my flesh if I wanted to. Somebody gets in my face and starts calling me names, I can flesh out. I can, and you can too. I know I'm not confessing anything that isn't true in you as well, so I'm comfortable doing this. We can all..., right? We can all flesh out. We can all just choose to go that way.

But I found something else is true in my life, that now that I am born again, God has given me the power for the first time in my life to say no to the sinful flesh. I don't have to flesh out, in other words. When I do, I choose to, and that's the fact of the matter. So this is what's going on inside of all of us. This is what was going on inside of Ananias.

I believe with all my heart that this was a genuine born again man who simply chose the wrong path. He chose the wrong thing. He got caught up in everything that was. All the admiration that was being given to a man like Barnabas. Ananias got caught up and he wanted the same for himself but he wasn't willing to pay the price. Because, with generosity comes sacrifice. Right? Comes sacrifice.

These people were selling their homes and their property and giving the money. to the apostles to distribute among the believers. And that was a sacrifice that was being made in their lives.

They were literally willing to give up something in order that someone else would have. And that's a pretty powerful thing when you think about it. Sometimes when I'm not going to, I'm trying not to be critical. But there are times that the church will at times receive gifts from people because it's their second hand stuff. We got a new one, so we're going to give you our old vacuum. There you go. God bless you. It's on its last leg, but here you go.

There's no sacrifice involved. You guys remember king David? And I didn't say that, by the way, to get anything or whatever. I want you to know that there's a hard attitude that goes along with generosity, and it's the understanding of sacrifice.

There was a time when David, king David, committed a pretty serious sin in the nation of Israel, and he was obligated to offer a sacrifice to the Lord that the judgment of God might be abated. And there was someone who came along and said, here, just take this and do your sacrifice. Here's my threshing floor. Here's the, some oxen. Here's everything you need to make this sacrifice to God.

Here's what David said, I will offer nothing to the Lord that doesn't cost me something. He understood the idea of an offering given to the Lord that involves sacrifice. And that's what Barnabas did, but that's what Ananias was unwilling to do. And that's what we see going on here.

Peter says in verse 4, he tells him, he says, while it was unsold, it was yours. Wasn't your land to do with what you...? And then after you sold it, you didn't have to say that you gave all the money, you could've... It was yours to give as much as you..., it was between you and the Lord. If you wanted to give just 10% of it, that was up to you, could have said that. You could have said, hey, we sold some land, here's 10% of the proceeds. We would have said, hey, thank you, thanks for your generosity. Praise God. You didn't have to lie. You didn't have to lie.

And so Peter tells Ananias that by acting deceitfully, did you catch that? He said, you lied to the Holy Spirit. Did you see that in there? He says, you actually lied to the Holy Spirit. And then at the end of verse 4, he says, you haven't really lied to men, you've lied to God. And therein lies the seriousness of his actions.

But as a side note, I want you also to be very careful to see what Peter is saying to you and me about the Holy Spirit. First of all, he's telling us that the Holy Spirit can be lied to. And what does that tell you about the Holy Spirit? It tells you He's a person, doesn't it?

I catch Christians from time to time talking about the Holy Spirit, and they will use the impersonal pronoun, it. And I correct them when they say it. I say no, no, no, He. Because you see, the Holy Spirit is not a force like gravity, although some people believe that.

The Holy Spirit is a person. He can be lied to. You can't lie to gravity. You can lie to a person. And Peter makes it very clear. You have lied to the Holy Spirit. But he also says, you've not lied to man, but to God. And he tells us even further, the Holy Spirit is divine, He is God.

Now we move on to the consequences of Ananias's actions. Look at verse 5 with me in your Bible. It says, *“When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. <sup>6</sup> The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.”*

By the way, that was consistent with Jewish tradition. They buried people right away after they passed away. But you can see here that as a result of Ananias's actions, the Lord took away his physical life, He just took it away. And Ananias dropped dead as a consequence of his sin.

And then in verse 7, it says, *“After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.”* Isn't that an interesting and rather awkward situation?

*“<sup>8</sup> And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.”* (he's giving her an opportunity here to come clean) *And she said, “Yes, for so much.”*” She confirmed the lie.

*“<sup>9</sup> But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?...”* And by the way, there's a third statement made about the Holy Spirit. He can be tested. All right.



But you'll notice here, he says, ““...Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”<sup>10</sup> Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.<sup>11</sup> And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”

Can you about imagine? I can. What is the Lord doing here? What did the Lord do with Ananias and Sapphira? It might seem as if God had condemned Ananias and his wife for their sinful actions, but people, this is not condemnation. This is discipline. Severe discipline. But discipline nonetheless.

How do we know that this is not condemnation? Well, we know it because of something the apostle Paul wrote in the eighth chapter of the Book of Romans. Let me show you that.

**Romans 8:1 (ESV)**

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Right? If you are a believer, that means there is no condemnation for you. How does God treat you when you and I sin? He disciplines us, and sometimes it's severe, but it's still discipline.

Why do we know it's not condemnation? Well, Paul said so, but we also know Jesus bore our condemnation. That's what He bore on the cross, you guys. He bore our condemnation. And He said, after it was done, it is finished, meaning it is complete. There's no more condemnation to be had for those who are in Christ Jesus. Now what comes our way is discipline. The writer of Hebrews talks about it up on the screen, Hebrews chapter 12.

**Hebrews 12:6, 11 (ESV)**

*For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

*For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” (he says) For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than*

*pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

And that's an important clarification there. He says, God disciplines those He loves. He also tells us that discipline isn't fun, it's painful, but he says it produces something in our lives. What? A harvest of righteousness. To everyone who gets disciplined? Nope. Only to those who are willing to be trained by it.

**Hebrews 12:6, 11 (ESV)**

*For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

In other words, there are some people who get disciplined by the Lord and then they just, they kick back. What's God doing in my life? And they get angry and they get bitter. And they just, they start questioning God's love for them. And what's God's ever done in my life. And they just seethe with anger.

Are they going to benefit from the discipline of the Lord? No, they're not. And that's why the writer of Hebrews is careful to say, it produces a harvest of righteousness for those who've been trained by it.

And you and I are to consider all hardship in life as discipline. All of it. We're to think of it as discipline.

And that means our attitude is to say, Lord, what do you need to show me? What do you need to show me through this? That doesn't mean that everything that you're going through is because you've committed some kind of sin that God feels the need to spank you over.

The Bible is very clear about the fact that God does not treat us as our sins deserve. He's very gracious and forgiving. But when we go through hardship, and we all go through hardship, and sometimes that hardship is just because we're living in a broken world, and that brokenness touches our lives.

When it touches your life, we are to consider all of it as training and discipline from the Lord. To learn from it, to grow from it. To be changed by it and allow God to use it in our lives to shape us into the image of His Son.

This idea of people dropping dead, by the way, you might be asking yourself, why aren't people dropping dead today?

Well, first of all, we're glad about that. I've heard people say, man, I wish I lived back in the first century of the early church, it was so much so cool. Do you really want... , you sure you want to live back then? People drop dead sometimes because of things they were doing and it wasn't all that uncommon. Paul talked about it when he wrote to the Corinthians. Let me show you this on the screen. He says,

**1 Corinthians 11:28-30 (ESV)**

*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*

*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.*

In other words, Paul is telling the church in Corinth that because they were so lacking compassion for one another in the body of Christ, that when they came together and celebrated communion, it resulted in this disciplinary action of the Lord in their lives.

Why isn't it happening today? Well, my guess, because the Bible doesn't actually say, but my guess is because it happened then and there was more serious repercussions to sin because the church was in its infancy. And because it was in its infancy, this kind of corruption, if left unchecked, could ruin the whole thing.

We're living 2,000 years down the road and the tree of the church, if you think of it as a tree, has grown up and produced a lot of branches in those years. And if one of those branches becomes diseased or corrupt, we can cut that branch off and the tree is still going to live. There's enough healthy tree to continue to live.

But can you imagine if that tree was only 12, 18 inches tall, it was just a little seedling like it was in the first century and it became diseased. Well, that could curl up at the root and die right then and there so there was more, a more severe response during that time. But please understand what I'm saying to you now doesn't mean that God has gone soft on sin or that He cares any less about sin.

Because the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so I think it would do good for us as the body of Christ today to have the same kind of awe and reverence that the early church did when they saw the discipline hand of the Lord.

Did you catch that last verse? Verse 11? Look at verse 11 again. Verse 5:11. *“And great fear came upon the whole church...”* That doesn't mean people were afraid of God. It means they respected God, and they respected His Word, and they honored His Word.

And so these disciplinary actions of the Lord had a cleansing effect in the body of Christ.

That's where we're going to stop for today. Let's stand together. We're going to close in prayer.

If you need prayer this morning, come and I guess it's this afternoon, isn't it? It's 12:06. If you need prayer, we'd love to pray for you. Just come on up front here after we're done, and we'd be happy to do that.

Just a reminder, tonight we're gathering for our evening of prayer at 6 o'clock. And for those of you who are subscribed to Calvary Connection, I don't know if you've checked your email yet today, but I sent out a request early this morning for things we can pray about related to healing.

If you or someone you know needs physical, spiritual, or emotional healing, were going to pray for those people tonight. Check your email when you get home and then hit reply if you have something you want to pass along, and we're going to put those things up on the screen and have people praying for him tonight. And I'd love it if you'd come and join us at 6 o'clock.

Father, thank you for giving us this time to dig into the Word and open our hearts to what it says. Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to worship You and adore You.

Thank you, Father, for the remembrance of communion, for the fellowship of the saints, and for prayer. We praise you and we worship you as King of kings and Lord of lords, and we ask you to be with us, Father, until we gather again.

And we ask it in the name of Jesus, your Son. And all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.