Acts Lesson 6 (2024)

THE CHURCH OF GOD NEVER FAILS

Acts 4:32-5:16

Key Verse 4:33

 “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all.”

 After Jesus’ ascension, the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and filled the believers who gathered together in Mark’s upper room. Peter and the eleven apostles stood and spoke about the salvation in Jesus. The healing of the crippled beggar in the name of Jesus was sensational. People recognized the work of God through the apostles. All believers prayed and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. Today’s passage shows how the believers lived in early church.

1. The believers shared everything they had (4:32-37)

 Let us read verse 32. “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” From time to time they sold their own land or houses and brought the money to the apostles and given to anyone who were in need. This early church’s sharing and generous giving among the believers brought the unity with one heart and mind. It was the community that humanity long desired in history. No one lacked anything. How could they build such a beautiful community?

 Let us read verse 33. “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.” Their hearts were filled with Joy and happiness by the grace of forgiveness of all their sins. As their hearts were burning with hope of the resurrection, they could share without reservation. God worked powerfully among them by apostles’ message of resurrection. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own. They shared everything they had. They became a family. The worldly desire to have more and worries of this life melted away. Their hearts were filled by the love of God for sinners. They desired to love their brothers and sisters just like Jesus did for the people. Inner man’s change by powerful work of God’s grace was the foundation of building the beautiful church.

 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus was the exemplary to the early church. The apostles called him Barnabas. He sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet. He was recognized as a man of encouragement. His genuine giving to serve others encouraged people around greatly. His generous giving spirit contributed to build up the church healthy and strong. Many examples we can find in UBF early ministry. In early 1960s, students were poor and hopeless. Through the Bible study, they found a meaning of life. Many lived sharing and giving life to serve others. Their sacrificial life encouraged people around and became foundation to build the healthy community even today.

1. The unity tested (5:1-11)

 Where there is a work of God, there is also work of Satan. There was a man named Ananias. He sold a piece of property and brought money and put it at the apostles’ feet. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest. Let us read verses 3-4, “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? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.”

 People brought money by selling land or house, sharing with the needy with genuine heart of love. Seeing Barnabas as a man of encouragement by his sacrificial giving, Ananias was tempted to be recognized by people. He sold his property and brought the money to the church. He said, “Here is the money for the people. I sold my land and brought everything I got from it.” However, it was not true.

 How did Peter deal with his sin of hypocrisy? Peter looked straight at Ananias and said, “You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” He pointed that Satan has so filled his heart that he lied to the Holy Spirit. When Ananias heard this, he got a heart attack and died instantly. About three hours later, his wife Sapphira came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” She said, “Yes, that is the price.” Peter said to her, “How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord?” At that moment, she fell down and died.

 Why did Peter deal with Ananias’ sin of hypocrisy so seriously? The church was growing by genuine giving and sacrificial sharing among brothers. It brought strong bond of love in the church. Anania’s sin of hypocrisy with ulterior motives could destroy the unity. If it were not purged, Anania’s bad influence would spread like yeast of the Pharisees. Peter knew this could bring division among the brothers. Peter deeply acknowledged the importance of purity and unity in the church. So he rebuked Ananias’ hypocrisy. It was so serious that God judged them with instant death.

 People can deceive man, but God cannot be deceived. It is God who purges the impurity of the growing church. We give thanks to God who purifies our church by the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us read verse 11. “Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.” The Ananias and Sapphira’s events were shocking to the whole church as well as all others who heard about. Great fear seized them. People became aware of the living God. Ananias and Sapphira’s sudden death was powerful work of the Holy Spirit. What happened after the impurity of the church was purged?

1. The church of God never fails (12-16)

 After purification of hypocrisy of Ananias, the church of God grew continually. The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. The believers met together regularly in public place. People from outside respected the believers, but they were not willing to join them in fear. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and added to their number. Sick people were brought into the streets on beds and mats to be touched by Peter’s shadow as he passed by. Many people brought their sick and those tormented by evil spirits from distant towns. All of them were healed. No one went home sick. This healing and restoring of lives started when Jesus came; this work continued and grew through the apostles. Healing and restoration of people are happening even today by the work of the Holy Spirit among us. Amen.

 How can we experience the work of the Holy Spirit among us today? Let us read our key verse 4:33, “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all.” We have the message of Jesus’ grace and his resurrection. When we testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, God’s grace is powerfully at work in people’s life. The church of God never fails when the Holy Spirit works among the believers.

 When I was a freshman in college, I was so lost in fatalism and hopelessness. But the message of Jesus’ grace and resurrection touched my life through giving and sharing believers in UBF. I came to New York to testify the message of Jesus that I received to share with campus students. Recently, I found myself compromising with easy-going and comfort-seeking lifestyles. After work, tired and exhausted all I wanted was relaxing from everything. I enjoyed watching movies from Netflix until late night. Instead of being stress-free, I found myself empty and powerless. When I was groaning and mourning not knowing what to do, graciously God helped me to study His words weekly.

 Though it was shameful when I repented my flesh desires and lifestyles, God restored my heart and mind to rejoice God’s salvation in Jesus. While I was meditating on the word of God, there was no time to watch Netflix anymore. My heart is rekindled to share with people around who are in need. All I am doing is only giving my heart to the word of God. Now I am a witness that the message of the resurrection of Jesus is powerfully at work in our ministry. I pray that we may testify to the message of Jesus’ grace and his resurrection to the people around and on the campuses through Acts Bible study. May God bless each of us to be giving and sharing believers. Amen.

Prayer: Thank you for giving us the message of Jesus’ grace of salvation and his resurrection. I am thankful for studying the early church believers’ life as the exemplary ministry of the Holy Spirit. May God bless us to see the powerful work of message of the resurrection and revival among us. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.