

Love Does Not Hold Back

Key Verse: *“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.”*

—Acts 4:32, New King James Version

Selected Scripture:
Acts 4:32-5:11

OUR KEY VERSE TELLS US

much concerning the altruistic nature of the early Christians. The excitement they shared in the fact of Jesus’ resurrection was amplified by the miraculous signs and powers granted by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Thousands were being added to the church. In the midst of all the good will among the brethren, however, a very sour note fell. Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a piece of land belonging to them. They gave of the proceeds to the church, but the gift was tainted.—Acts 5:1,2

Their sin was not so much holding back some of their money, but rather that they lied about giving it all. “Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” (vss. 3,4, NKJV) The sale of the land was fully under Ananias and Sapphira’s control. However, they misrepresented what they had done,

perhaps trying to buy influence in the church. By lying to the apostles, they had actually lied to God, and their punishment, which was death, provides us a sobering lesson. Influence among the brotherhood is gained only by humility, honesty and selfless service.

The Early Church's experience with communal living did not continue. Some may see in their arrangement justification for a sort of Christian communism. Paul argued against this notion. He put responsibility on each believer to "lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing." (I Thess. 4:11,12, *NKJV*) Paul practiced what he preached: "You yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat."—II Thess. 3:7-10, *NKJV*

Being self-sufficient in providing for our households teaches us the virtues of responsibility and accountability. Paul could have relied on other brethren to support him, but he knew it was best to provide for himself and his companions with his own hands. Note his insightful words to the Corinthians, "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong! Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you." (II Cor. 12:12-14, *NKJV*) Regardless of our temporal station in life, our zeal and love for the Lord must not hold back. Let us willingly give our little all for his cause. ■