

## Sermon Discussion 10/11/2015

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Acts 4:32-5:16 – “Generous Grace, Holy Fear, & Surprising Growth” by Drew Hunter

### Sunday’s Outline

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Not only does the Church face opposition from the *outside*, but there is also trouble from *within* it as well. Satan is actively working to destroy the Church by any means necessary. This text is a story about how God creates a culture of beauty in His church and the length to which He goes to protect and expand that beauty.

We see three things God provides to that end:

1. Great grace (4:32-36)
2. Great fear (5:1-11)
3. Great growth (5:12-16)

This culture in the Church is only made possible by the hand of the Lord as described in 4:33 – “And with great *power* the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great *grace* was upon them all.” There was great growth in the early Church because of the Lord’s blessing upon its members’ faithful witness.

### Quotations

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“In its preoccupation with heart attitudes, Luke’s portrait of early Christian [fellowship] is a discomfiting challenge to economically comfortable Christians, relentlessly probing our motives.” -Dennis Johnson, 78

“Aslan is a lion – *the* Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh,” said Susan. “I’d thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” “Safe...” said Mr. Beaver. “Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he ain’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.” -C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

### Help for Understanding & Application

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- 1) Acknowledging its present (but not lasting!) imperfections, in what ways is the Church of Christ beautiful? In what ways have you seen God-given beauty here at ZF?
- 2) In Acts 4 & 5, how is the Church under attack both from the outside and from within?
- 3) After reading Acts 4:32, explain the motive for generosity in the early Church. How did this differ from that of the Old Testament?
- 4) 4:36-37 describe Joseph, who is given the nickname “Barnabus (son of encouragement).” How did his generosity extend beyond merely the giving of money? In other words, with what else was he generous in light of his nickname?
- 5) The standard for generosity in the New Testament is for us to treat others with the same generosity we receive from Jesus. It is not defined by a percentage of giving. In what ways must you grow in your generosity toward others? How do we become generous like this? (Hint: see Acts 4:33, 2 Cor. 8:8-9)
- 6) Why does God strike down Ananias and Sapphira? What does this tell us about God?
- 7) How did the Church respond to this action against Ananias and Sapphira? For another example of a proper response to God, see Acts 9:31. How can fear and comfort be mingled together?
- 8) In light of all of this, how does Luke explain the early church’s growth and vibrancy?