

MAXIMUM IMPACT IN OUR WORLD

October 18, 2009

SERMON TITLE- ACTS-traordinary: Spirit-Filled Community

(Acts 24:32-5:11)

NOTES BY BILLY GROSS

I. “May we be radically open to whatever God wants to do in and through us rather than being so afraid of excess that we shut ourselves off from His purposes and miss Him altogether.” Are we willing to live in the sometimes disruptive wake of the stirrings of our good God? Will we trust in HIM?!

First off, I need to say how deeply grateful I am to God for kneading into our Body this core value of dealing with things, even difficult things, with openness, honesty and integrity. It is so true that God works in the light, and this is indeed where we want to deal with challenging things – up front, in the open, in the light! The corollary to this is: I am so grateful God has blessed us with a pastor with such wisdom and integrity. “Keith, we are so proud of you and so grateful for you - - for your integrity, your courage, and your devotion to the Word of God. You are like Barnabas among us, your faithfulness and character call us up and **enlarge us** as a congregation. Thank you for modeling the way of the Lord; we join you in this!”

Just a few bullets from Message I.

- I Corinthians 12-14 gives us good guidance and instruction in the value and operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- We believe scripture affirms ALL the gifts, and that these are still active (or should be) in the church today as they were in the early church.
- I Corinthians 14 gives guidelines for the exercising of the “sign” gifts in **public** gatherings, where there are typically folks in very different places on the continuum of spiritual maturity and understanding. The heart of these guidelines is to be sensitive to those who may be confused about gifts (like tongues) that may be unfamiliar and unsettling to new or un-believers.
- All gifts are valid, but the “most excellent way”- the paramount value – is **LOVE!** (I Corinthians 13)

II. A Tale of Two Givings

- Keith highlighted the path of the early church’s generous life (Acts 4:31-34):
 - They were devoted to a life of prayer

- They were filled with the Holy Spirit
 - They were united in heart & spirit
 - They gave sacrificially to each other
 - There was not a needy one among them
 - Once again, we see in this tale of 2 givings, the two “rails” of the life of faith :
 - The fingerprints of God in the generous spirit of Barnabas that was contagious among the people
 - The messiness of real life in the hypocritical, deceptive actions of Ananias & Sapphira
 - The latter action of hypocrisy was so serious to the integrity of the emerging community of faith that God chose to deal with it very harshly, unto death!, to protect the health of His church and their witness in the world.
 - A Barnabas heart of generosity, whereby we give of ourselves freely to others (not just money, but our time, attention, affirmation, prayers, etc.) to build others up. Such life multiplies the goodness in others and enlarges their lives. It is leaven in the community of faith.
 - The hypocritical spirit manifested in Ananias and Sapphira was one of self-absorption. They were focused not on giving to others, but on making themselves look good. Such life quenches the good in others and makes them smaller. It is a poison in the community of faith.
1. Do you yearn to live a Barnabas-spirit of generosity? Are there specific “places” where you want to grow in this in your life right now?
 2. Do you struggle with self-absorption? In what areas of your life? Will you confess this to the Lord and open your heart to His Spirit to transform your heart to one of generosity?

Teach us, Lord, how to give ourselves away!