

## DEVOTIONAL TIME

11-10-2014 @ 0900

“One In Mind And Heart”

Acts 4:31-37

### SHINE, JESUS! SHINE!

Shine, Jesus! Shine! Fill this land with the Father's Glory!  
Blaze, Spirit! Blaze! Set our hearts on fire!  
Flow, River! Flow! Flood the nations with Grace and Mercy!  
Send forth Your Word, Lord, and let there be Light!

#### Acts 4:31-37

“When they finished praying, the place where they were meeting was shaken. **They were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to proclaim God's Message with boldness. **The group of believers was one in mind and heart.** None of them said that any of their belongings were their own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. With great power, the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God poured rich blessings on them all. There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, and turn it over to the Apostles; and the money was distributed according to the needs of the people.”

### QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Can you think of anyone, (person or group,) you *love* so much you would literally “do everything you could” for them...to include *selling all you had*...to meet the need(s) you perceived?
- Have you ever known a couple or family, a team or club, so “knit together” by common belief and effort that you sensed they were truly *one* in mind and heart, *united* in spirit and body?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus, Son of God, wants to be “One in Mind and Heart” with you? How do you respond to a “Gift” like that? Does it change the way you “church”?

We often refer to our churches as “the family of God”, and talk about being “children” in the family of God, but what does a real “family of God” look like? How do its “members” speak or act? The Book of Acts gives us glimpses of “God's Family” in the “afterglow atmosphere” immediately following Pentecost. Luke tells us in Acts 2: “On the Day of Pentecost, they were all together, and in one accord”, and goes on to mention in Acts 4: “The group of believers was one in mind and heart.” The “problem churches” today manifest a true lack of the “charity” that unifies the Body. Our churches are full of special interest groups, cliques, and “inner circles” that “get together” rarely, if ever. In such an environment, someone is always “left out”, “kicked to the curb”, or “thrown under the bus”. How much different were those first believers...“all together and in one accord”, or “one in mind and heart”! How differently we would relate within our circles of family and friends if we were “together as one”! How differently our church families would look if we let the Spirit “fill us anew”! Like the early Church of Acts, none of us would claim “any of our belongings” were our own, but we'd all share every blessing we had. What would it take for us to get to this point in our “Christian walks”? Imagine trusting God so much! Consider “believing” so totally “God takes care of us” we no longer worry about any need at all. This would certainly “break the spell” of worldly desires” and “earthly possessions”. See how the first disciples *turned to God* in prayer again, and *stayed in prayer* until the Holy Spirit filled them again! God, grant us the Grace of Patient Prayer! Let your Holy Spirit fill us anew to break the world's hold on us, and empower the “Christ-like” love we must have for one another. We need a “personal Pentecost” to become the “free Christians” You know we can be. Shake our world, Lord; warm our hearts and transform our lives! Selflessness is the “caring Core” of your “economy”. You gave us Your “only-begotten”, and He gave us His life completely! Empower us now to be truly, fully ONE!

## DEVOTIONAL TIME

11-12-2014 @ 0900

“Integrity Is No Joking Matter”

Acts 5:1-6

### SHINE, JESUS! SHINE!

Shine, Jesus! Shine! Fill this land with the Father's Glory!  
Blaze, Spirit! Blaze! Set our hearts on fire!  
Flow, River! Flow! Flood the nations with Grace and Mercy!  
Send forth Your Word, Lord, and let there be Light!

#### Acts 5:1-6

“But there was a man named Ananias, who with his wife Sapphira, sold some property that belonged to them. But with his wife's agreement he kept part of the money for himself and turned the rest over to the Apostles. Peter said to him, ‘Ananias, why did you let Satan take control of you, and make you lie to the Holy Spirit by keeping part of the money you received for the property? Before you sold the property, it belonged to you; and after you sold it, the money was yours. Why, then, did you decide to do such a thing? You have not lied to people – you have lied to God!’ As soon as Ananias heard this, he fell down dead; and all who heard about it were terrified. The young men came in, wrapped up his body, carried him out, and buried him.”

### QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever allowed others to believe you have done a good deed, given a gift, or achieved some award, knowing that wasn't true, but accepting praise for it anyway to “look good”?
- Have you ever “given your word”, fully intending to keep your promise, but later found it “too hard to fulfill” for one reason or another, but mostly due to your own fear or insecurity?
- Did you ever notice how God rewarded a “genuine believer” who “went out on a limb” for God, only to have blessings multiplied in some totally unexpected ways?

We live in an “appearance-driven world”, and so much of that *appearance* lies in the way we present it. Fudging a fact here, or figuring a factor there isn't *all that bad*; after all, everybody does it a little, right? As long as it doesn't really *hurt* anybody, it really doesn't *matter*...does it? We hear the vast array of varied excuses given to justify the rampant lack of integrity afflicting so much of our culture. But God takes “vow” and “promise” very seriously; note the dramatic lesson imparted at the very beginning of the New Testament Church. Many today would view this story with shock at God's rather “harsh penalty” for such a “small” offense. After all, the guy gave *most* of the money to the Church, and only kept a little of it. How can this “crime” be so evil that it warrants *death*? Maybe the question should be: “What is the difference between a ‘little’ lie and ‘big’ lie?” *Is* there any difference at all? We might claim “It depends on a variety of factors”; God would simply say “Live Truth”! Peter lays out the issue fairly well: Ananias was free to do as he chose with both the property and the money from the sale. There was no need to *lie*! He could have said, “I've sold some property, and want to give this much of the proceeds to the Church.” Instead, he tries to improve his status in the community by attempting to trick the people into thinking he had given the total amount. He forgot that He was dealing with God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. May we learn the lesson he would not: God is Truth, and will not abide liars forever. He gives ample opportunity for repentance, but the unrepentant will know His Justice! God, grant us the Grace of True Integrity! Authentic Love demands honesty in a total “gift of self”, and nothing less will do. As Your “children”, we cannot live as liars, and expect to avoid the accounting at Your “Throne of Grace”! You are generous and kindly with the humble and truthful, but astute and stern with the proud and vain. May we consider seriously our own issues with honesty, and go “all in” for Christ...going “all out” for truth in all we say and do.



## DEVOTIONAL TIME

11-13-2014 @ 0900

“Faithfulness Pays Huge Dividends”

Acts 5:12-16

### SHINE, JESUS, SHINE

Shine, Jesus! Shine! Fill this land with the Father’s Glory!  
Blaze, Spirit! Blaze! Set our hearts on fire!  
Flow, River! Flow! Flood the nations with Grace and Mercy!  
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#### Acts 5:12-16

“Many miracles and wonders were being performed among the people by the Apostles. All the believers met together in Solomon’s Porch. Nobody outside the group dared join them, even though the people spoke highly of them. But more and more people were added to the group – a crowd of men and women who believed in the Lord. As a result of what the Apostles were doing, sick people were carried out into the streets, and placed on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. And crowds of people came in from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing those who were sick or who had evil spirits in them, and they were all healed.”

#### QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever so aligned yourself in heart and mind with a team, group, or organization you found “admirable”, even “awesome”, you willingly pulled away from others with “prior claim”?
- Did such a decision seem “daring” at first, (even a little “dangerous”,) but made more and more sense as you embraced your “new” life and identity?
- Have you ever felt so perfectly aligned with “God’s Will”, so fully “connected” with Jesus Christ, all sorts of wonders suddenly seemed not only possible, but *probable*?

How “big” is your God? Of what “wonders” is He capable? Is God “willing” to work miracles, or do you sense He eagerly *desires* to do so? Consider today’s passage; notice Luke’s thrilling affirmation; as the Apostles ministered to the sick, *everyone* who came looking for a healing received a healing... not just “some” of the people...God healed ALL who needed and desired a healing. Following the marvelous Day of Pentecost, as they received the infilling of the Holy Spirit, Its Power “turbocharged” their faith so effectively they were suddenly able to believe with certitude that God would make all sorts of signs, wonders, and miracles available in lavish abundance. Extraordinary things were not only possible, but probable...with God receiving the glory! (If only we were so “Spirit-filled”! How many times in our prayers do we give God an “out”? You know what I mean; “Lord I’m asking you for a healing, however, if it’s not your will, I understand.” It is as if we are “afraid to believe”, or “scared to show too much faith”, so we pray “safe” prayers.) Yet, where in Scripture can you find Jesus ever refusing to heal anyone? He challenged their faith at times, but He never refused to heal those who asked with humility. Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; therefore, whatever Christ was doing then, He is more than able and willing to do now. But He chooses to grace us according to our faith, a faith that will require patience to wait for our own “personal Pentecost” and “infilling of the Spirit”! With that Spirit, we can bring our need for healing to our Heavenly Father with dauntless faith! We will finally “stand” upon the Word of God, assured that whatever we will ask in Jesus’ Name, with fervent faith, He will do eagerly...glad to glorify His Father. God, grant us the Grace of Childlike Faith! Bless us with the willingness to seek Your Will first in all things, and then come boldly to Your Throne of Grace and Mercy. The Book of Acts shows us how faithfulness to You, O living God, pays such huge dividends in healed hearts, saved souls, and transformed lives. In Your Son’s Redemption and Your Spirit’s outpouring, You empower us to go “all in” with Faithfulness!



## DEVOTIONAL TIME

11-14-2014 @ 0900

“Doing Right, and Being Joyful  
as You’re Slapped Down”

Acts 5:17-42

### SHINE, JESUS, SHINE

Shine, Jesus! Shine! Fill this land with the Father’s Glory!  
Blaze, Spirit! Blaze! Set our hearts on fire!  
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Send forth Your Word, Lord, and let there be Light!

#### Acts 5:17-42

“Then the High Priest and all his companions, members of the local party of the Sadducees, became extremely jealous of the Apostles, so they decided to take action. They arrested the Apostles and put them in the public jail. But that night an angel of the Lord opened the prison gates, led the Apostles out, and said to them, ‘Go and stand in the Temple, and tell the people all about this New Life.’ ...Then a man came in and said to them, (the council) ‘Listen! The men you put in prison are in the Temple teaching the people!’ So the officer went off with his men and brought the Apostles back. They did not use force, however, because they were afraid that the people might stone them...They called the Apostles in, had them whipped, and ordered them never again to speak in the Name of Jesus, and then they set them free. As the Apostles left the Council, they were happy, because God had considered them worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of Jesus. And every day, in the Temple and in people’s homes, they continued to teach and preach the Good News about Jesus the Messiah.”

#### QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever tried to “do the right thing”, tell the “honest truth”, stop to help a “needy person”, or witness to “God’s goodness”, only to have it all “blow up in your face”?
- Have you had to endure misunderstanding, opposition, and rejection from “City Hall”, all in the Name of Jesus Christ? Did it involve “inconvenience”, or more serious “sanctions”?
- Have you known or heard of people who “stood on the Word” in a spirit of serenity and joy, even as “the world” tried to grind them down? Did their faith strengthen yours?

It was “just one of those days”...! Nothing “went right” from start to finish; it seemed as if anything that could go wrong went “dead wrong”...quick, fast, and in a “warp-drive” hurry! (Haven’t we all had days like that?) But just imagine being a disciple in the early Church, earnestly seeking to spread the Good News, and trying hard to “get Word out” to all the world! God has told you to take on this task, accept the Mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, and invite all you meet to the “Kingdom of Heaven”! But every time you attempt to share your joy, someone is arresting you, jailing you, and even beating you...“in the Name of God”! Note: you are not breaking any Commandments; you are even seeking to do God’s bidding eagerly, as Christ Himself has ordered! Now does that sound “right”? (Is this a possible reason so few “modern Christians” have really gotten serious about “living out faith” in an active way? Are too many *afraid* of “what might happen” to “authentic Christians”?) Note how the New Testament believers responded to “opposition”: “As the Apostles left the Council, they were happy, because God had considered them worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of Jesus.” They were happy! *Happy?* They have just been arrested, placed on trial, and severely whipped for the doing the right thing for God, but...they are **happy**. God, grant us that Spirit of Joy! As we grow in our knowledge of Your Love, and our experience of Your Grace, teach us to “take the bitter with the better”! In the same way Christ endured His Suffering and Death, with confidence in Your gracious Providence, may we abandon ourselves totally to Your Will so we know Your Life in Joy!