



Big Idea: Sincere, Christlike love for one another is a powerful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1.) Conviction Not Compulsion

-- This passage is not an early affirmation of Communism / Socialism

-- With communism/socialism, giving is compelled by the force of law. Here the giving is entirely **VOLUNTARY**

-- Socialism/communism never produces godly societies because it attempts to replace personal holiness with government mandates.

-- An important Baptist Distinctive has long been the ideal of a *FREE* church operating in a *FREE* state.

-- Christianity operates by freedom of conviction, not the force of compulsion.

-- True faith changes our hearts so that our acts of love are based upon **CONVICTION** not coercion (Acts 5:4).

-- Obedience to Christ is not a matter of force and law, but a matter of freedom and love.

2.) Two Marks of Living Faith

a.) Our attachment to *STUFF* is let loose (v. 32b, 34).

-- Faith in Christ grants us freedom from bondage to worldly things.

-- The believers here saw that sharing their possessions together gave them greater joy than hoarding them for themselves (Luke 12:32-34).

-- The Example of Barnabas (v. 36-37)

-- In Acts, Barnabas shines as one of the most mature, reliable, encouraging, loveable leaders of the early church.

-- Here we see that Barnabas' faithful service to Christ began with freedom from the love of stuff and sacrificial love for others.

b.) Our attachment to *EACH OTHER* is tightened (v. 32).

- "...one heart and one mind..." - Oneness happens when we stop boasting in differences and boast in Jesus Christ alone (Col. 3:11-14).
- v. 34 - The early church was a community of people whose hearts had been utterly transformed through faith in Christ.
- Rather than obsessing over stuff, they devoted their time and treasures to serving Christ and loving one another (Philippians 2:1-2).

3.) A Remarkably Powerful Witness

-- **Authentic Christian community draws people to Christ** (v. 33, Acts 2:44-47).

-- ***ONENESS* in Christ among us might be the single greatest testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we can give.**

- The quintessential proof that we really belong to Christ is Christlike love for one another in the church (John 13:34-35).
- If we aren't doing our best to love each other, then we aren't really following Christ (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 1 John 4:20-21).
- **The Gospel we profess *DEMANDS* oneness among us** (v. 32, John 17:20-23).
 - Division in the church necessarily tramples the Gospel underfoot.
 - Oneness in the church confirms our testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and validates our proclamation of it.

Application

- The proof of our profession should be seen in our ***RELATIONSHIPS*** with one another.
 - This is one of the main reasons why the pattern of our evangelism works in and through Sunday School.
 - *Does the fellowship in your Sunday School class excite people about the power of the Christ in us?*
- We cannot live out the Gospel without loving one another, and we cannot love one another if we aren't connected to each other (1 Peter 4:8).
- Plug in, participate, and practice the love of Christ!