

**Text: Acts 4:32-37**

**Title: “Unstoppable Community”**

While we're standing, take out your Bibles and let's read from God's Word ... Acts 4:32-37. Pray. For weeks I had been planning to preach on this text today, but in light of what God did among us this past week in our OneCry Prayer Summit, I feel led just to focus on that first sentence of our text.

**Acts 4:32 - All the believers were one in heart and mind.**

What an amazing statement about any church. These believers who had been through the fires of persecution were freshly filled with the Holy Spirit were knit together in a community that might be hard for us to comprehend. Imagine a group of people all being one in heart and mind.

**ESV - Acts 4:32 - Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul...**

I gather from this that the Spirit was moving in most everyone's life. Whether that means 100% or at least an overwhelming majority, the fact is that the whole church was together in what God was doing ... heart and soul. What we have here in the first chapters of the book of Acts is the record of one of the greatest revivals in history. Something happened in their hearts and minds that knit them together in such a way that the Gospel was able to go forth in power and needs of people in the church were met in a miraculous way.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Many years ago as a young pastor God gave me a vision of something while Nan, the girls and I were on a camping trip. One night everyone else had gone to bed but I stayed up sitting by the campfire. God was stirring in my heart about the need for revival. As I stared into the campfire the Lord used what I saw to teach me something. By this time of the evening the fire had been burning for most of the day and now it was beginning to die down. A fire that is dying down produces more smoke than it does heat. There were a few logs that were no longer aflame ... little heat, mostly smoke. I could see deep down in the fire pit that there were some embers that were still glowing. I took a stick and poked the fire but nothing seemed to change. But as I sat there looking at this, the wind began to pick up and I saw something happen in that fire pit that I have never forgotten. Those glowing embers soon caught flame once again. And the fire began to spread to the logs that had just been smoldering and smoking. Soon flames began to leap from those logs and we had a great campfire burning once again.

The Lord showed me that night that that's exactly what happens in times of revival. When the fires of our devotion to and passion for Jesus die out, we need the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow over our lives fanning the fire into flame once again.

If you were here for one or more of our services this past week you witnessed God beginning to answer our prayer for revival. Many of us have been praying for God to begin to revive us. It started last Sunday morning and continued through the week. I sensed a special spirit each evening as we worshipped, listened to God's Word and responded at the end. The Holy Spirit did a great work in many hearts. There was fervent praying, obvious brokenness as people shared what God was doing in their lives. On Sunday night one of our young men was so overwhelmed with conviction that he stood up and said, "I'll start." He came to the front and in brokenness shared how he needed God to

shake him out of his hard-hearted complacency. Many people stayed around praying at the altar or praying together. Tuesday night after I had dismissed us one of our single adult young ladies came to me and asked if she could share something with everyone. She admonished us not to run out of the room right away but linger and pray until we had a breakthrough with God. Many stayed and prayed. An hour after the service ended, many were still praying.

Last week I got an email from one of our young men. Listen to what he shared: “The prayer summit this week was beyond description; God moved in ways that can't be put into words. Initially I was going to come maybe one night, but God kept laying on my heart that I needed to come each night. On Sunday night, God convicted me that I needed to reevaluate my prayer life by looking at how I pray & what I pray for. It's going to be amazing to see what God does in the life of Travis over the next months and years. The question is how committed are we in following through with doing what God has called us to do!!!!”

That's a great observation. If this kind of revival is to gain traction we going to have to persevere and stay focused on what God is doing in our lives, our families and our church. Bill Elliff repeatedly reminded us last week that we must be careful not to quench the Spirit ... not to put out the Spirit's fire.

When things like this happen among God's people it's very much like Jesus talked about in the parable of the soils. If you're not familiar with that story Jesus told, He talked about a farmer who went out to sow seed in his field. He had a sack over his shoulder and he threw the seed to the ground. Some of the seed fell on the hard-packed path where there was no loose soil. The birds just came and ate the seed because it didn't have any way of taking root. Some of the seed fell into rocky ground that had a little loose dirt on the top, but underneath it was very hard. The seed took root and sprouted but because it had no roots it withered when the hot sun came out. Some of the seed fell into soil where other seeds had already fallen ... the seeds of weeds. So the plants grew, but so did the weeds. And the weeds choked out the plants so that they couldn't produce any fruit. But some of the seed fell on good soil. That is soil that had been broken up and cultivated so that the when the seed sprouted the roots could go deep into the moisture and nutrients of the soil. That plant produced a huge crop, a hundred or sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Later Jesus explained the story to His disciples. The seed that fell on the hard path is like people whose lives are so hardened to the things of God that the seed never has a chance to make a difference in their lives. They may be so preoccupied and distracted by other things that there's not a chance they will hear what God is trying to say to them. Jesus said that Satan comes and snatches away the seed sown in that person's heart. Every time God does a work in a church there are those who will never get it. What's happening to other people never happens to them because their hearts are so hard.

Then Jesus said that the seed that fell in the shallow, rocky soil represents people who hear the message and immediately they accept it with joy. But because their commitment to what God is doing is so shallow, the first time they are faced with trouble, their faith is so weak that they fall away. Maybe that happened to you this week. You came one night and God spoke to you about something and you said, “Yes, Lord. I'm all in.” But a day or two later the pressures of the world were so great that you couldn't persevere.

Then Jesus said that the seed that fell among the weeds is like the person who hears the message and receives it and they begin to grow, but there's never any fruit in their lives because they are surrounded and smothered by people who will not allow them to grow. Jesus said that the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the plant so it isn't able to produce fruit. Maybe you experienced something this past week that you know was God's work, but when you went back to work or back home it all seemed to choke out what God was doing, and it never comes to fruit.

Jesus went on to say that the seed that fell in moist receptive soil is the believer who hears what God is saying, understands what God is up to and perseveres in that. And from that person's life comes the fruit of a transformed life. Their actions, attitudes, and way of life change dramatically. Others begin to see there's a real difference in their lives and they want to know what has made the difference.

So which one of those kinds of hearts do you have?

I learn from Acts 4:32 that it is possible for all of us to be of one heart and mind in this ... that all of us are seeking God in this way. In Acts 4, these believers were one in heart and mind, not because they agreed on everything. They were one because they were all looking to Jesus. They had their eyes on Jesus and when that happens He makes them one.

**Philippians 2:5 - Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:**

This is a command. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

This oneness of heart and mind was not something that happened by accident. It happened because a vast majority of the people in the Acts church decided to reorient their lives to Jesus, and to live that out in community with other believers.

**ILLUSTRATION** - A few years ago several of us had the opportunity to visit the church in Loughor, Wales where God got ahold of a young man named Evan Roberts. He would become the central human instrument in a revival that swept through Great Britain and spread to other parts of the world in 1904-1905. As Evan Roberts prepared people for what God wanted to do he admonished them to do four things. Bill Elliff made reference to this last week.

Ephesians 5:18 tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit, or keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit ... under the control of the Holy Spirit. Evan Roberts showed the people how to do this, practically speaking.

First, deal with unconfessed sin in the past. Every sin you know of confess it honestly before God. Start fresh with God.

Second, remove any questionable or doubtful things from your life. If your heart is tender toward God He will put His finger on things that you just don't need in your life anymore. Questionable habits or pleasures are things that you can't really do and give glory to God.

Third, be completely and immediately obedient to the Holy Spirit. If God prompts you to pray for something or someone, obey Him and pray. If God prompts you to witness to someone, promptly obey. If God by His Spirit prompts you to give something to someone, promptly obey and give it. The Bible teaches us not to resist the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, publicly and personally confess Christ every opportunity you have. Speak to others about what Christ has been doing in your life. It will encourage others as they strive to do the same.

And when all of us are intent on following Christ in this way we will find it true of us as it was in the Acts church:

**Acts 4:32 - All the believers were one in heart and mind.**

When I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, I am absolutely sold out to Jesus, not to a church-ianity, but really sold out to Jesus as Lord. When I'm filled with the Holy Spirit of Jesus I will walk in step with Him. And if you are filled with the Holy Spirit then we will find ourselves walking in step with one another because we're all walking in step with him.

**ILLUSTRATION** – Back in December Texas A&M was playing in a bowl game and the band came to march through downtown Fort Worth. I love the Aggie band because they march fast and play loud. The band came by where we were standing downtown and I decided that I wanted to keep hearing them so I took the grandkids and we just walked along the sidewalk in pace with the band. And the song they were playing had a great tempo to it and I found myself walking along in step with the band. I looked over and there was person walking next to me and it had the same effect on them. We were walking in step with each other because we were listening to the same drumbeat.