
Acts 2:44 describes the beginning of the Church of God, and it states that everyone “had all things in common.” How does this apply, today?

As other Scriptures show, this event was unique to that time in the building of the Church of God; however, this example also reveals the type of commitment that may be needed when the necessity arises.

The context of this account happened surrounding the Day of Pentecost and then the immediate period of time subsequent—perhaps several weeks and months.

Let's first take a look at the account as recorded in Acts 2:42-47:

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”.

The fact that this sharing attitude was sustained for some period of time is borne out in another account, as found in Acts 4:32-35:

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all

who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.”

In verses 36-37 of Acts 4, the specific example of the generosity of Joses (Barnabas) is given. Then, in Acts 5:1-11, the deceptive actions of Ananias and Sapphira are recounted. In both examples, these people were free to make the choice to contribute their possessions. Note what Peter stated to Ananias, “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?” (Acts 5:4).

Understand that many who were called had assembled in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost. While some obviously lived in that area, many did not—that included the apostles and many of those disciples who had followed Jesus (compare Acts 1:15). In fact, it is evident that these early disciples had already made great personal sacrifices: Then Peter answered and said to Him, See, we have left all and followed You.” (Matthew 19:27).

The example of such whole-hearted commitment to God is not without precedent: “And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying: Take from among you an offering to the LORD. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the LORD”.. (Exodus 35:4-5).

This command from God was for the making of the Tabernacle, and the children of Israel gave abundantly and willingly to such an extent that Moses had to stop them:

So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.’ And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done. INDEED TOO MUCH” (Exodus 36:6-7).

When Solomon prepared and dedicated the Temple of God, the offerings were overwhelming,

Because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings" (1 Kings 8:64).

Likewise, in the accounts of the restorations led by Hezekiah, Josiah and later on by Ezra and Nehemiah, the people willingly gave special offerings.

That special period that followed the founding of the New Testament Church of God drew to a close following the death of Stephen (compare Acts 7). "At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1).

Christianity was destined to spread, and as this way of life was preached to both Jews and Gentiles, the Church of God was administered accordingly.

When Paul confronted the Corinthians for their wrong behavior regarding observing the Passover service, he makes this statement: "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?" (1 Corinthians 11:22). In the context, he even addresses those who are poor in contrast to those who were not. However, his focus was the way all should behave when assembling as the Church of God in order to properly keep the Passover.

Paul, in bringing the gospel to the Thessalonians, worked: "For did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us" (2 Thessalonians 3:8-9).

Carefully note the next verses in Paul's letter: "For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

In this same context, Paul teaches: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Also, Paul instructs: "That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

We see, then, that following the remarkable establishment of the Church of God, the necessity was for individuals to set the right kind of examples both within the church and to those outside (compare Galatians 6:10). They were to work and to provide for their own needs:

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

The strength of the Church of God is that its members live as examples, as ambassadors of Christ. That includes having "willing hearts" for good works and service to others. While the current situation does not necessitate that we have all things in common in the same manner as mentioned in Acts, there indeed will arise a time when the things we have will be left behind. Days are coming in which we, as brethren, will be persecuted and will have to rely on one another—not so unlike that beginning history of God's Church following Pentecost.

We must never lose sight of the unequalled example of both God the Father and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, when it comes to their willingness to give what they have for us:

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Lead Writer: Dave Harris