

The Church: A Voluntary Army

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 4, Acts chapter 4, and if we read again at verse 32, Acts chapter 4 at verse 32.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Now volunteering is something that many people are involved in, and I'm sure that there are many people in our congregation and even in our community who volunteer.

They volunteer in one way or another, where they like to help out with charities or even organizations, and they want to use their skills and their talents to help out other people.

And you know, people, they volunteer, not only because volunteering makes people feel good about themselves as they help others in need, but they also want to give something back.

[1 : 32] They want to give something back to their community. But you know, people also volunteer because they see and they recognize a need, and they want to offer their help and use their skills in any way that they can.

And you know, I was reading an article just the other day, which said that over the past year, the UK has enjoyed a resurgence in volunteering. And it's suggested that in the past year, 1.3 million people in the UK have volunteered for the first time.

Where volunteers, they've come forward and they're giving of their time, their skills, their energy, and they're using all these things to try and help others. And people, they've said, they're volunteering from litter picking to life saving.

And as you would expect, these volunteers, they're playing a crucial part in communities all over the UK, just like in our own community. But you know, the article which I read, the article about volunteering, it said that while the number of volunteers is on the rise, work commitments and lack of spare time are limiting the number of people that come forward.

Now, the reason I mention all of this is because this passage is reminding us that the church and all the work that goes on within the church, it's all voluntary.

[2 : 55] Of course, the church, as you know, it's a charity. But more than that, the church of Jesus Christ is a voluntary army. And most of what goes on in the church is done by volunteers, in which people, they not only want to give something back, you could say, to their community and even to their congregation, but their desire is that they serve Jesus.

Their desire is to serve Jesus. They want to make themselves available so that they can serve King Jesus because of all that he has done for them. They want to use their skills and their abilities for the good of the congregation and for the glory of God.

So the church of Jesus Christ, it's a voluntary army and it should function as a voluntary army. And that's what we're being taught in this passage that we're looking at this morning.

In fact, this passage, it's teaching us and we're being taught how the church should function and we're also being taught how the church shouldn't function when it comes to volunteering.

So we're being taught how the church should function and how the church shouldn't function when it comes to volunteering. And so I'd like us just to consider this passage under three headings.

[4 : 11] Fellowship, falsehood and folly. Fellowship, falsehood and folly. So we'll look first of all at fellowship. We'll read again in verse 32.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all. You know, these verses which describe the early church, they're actually so encouraging to the point that you could almost say that the early church was the perfect church.

Of course, when we go into chapter five, we see that the early church wasn't the perfect church. But you know, the description that we're given here is encouraging because we're told that the church was of one heart and soul.

There was unity in the church. They were of one mind and they were of one mission. They were of one heart and soul. And you know, their unity, the unity of the church was based upon their fellowship in God and their fellowship in the gospel.

[5 : 24] Their unity was based upon their fellowship in God and their fellowship in the gospel. And I say all this because we're told that no one in the church had ownership of anything and they had everything in common.

In other words, there was no one in the church who was taking over. There was no one in the church who was taking charge. And there was no one in the church who was bossing one another around. There was no one who claimed that this was their job and their job alone and only their responsibility and that no one else could do it.

No, they were all of one heart and one soul. They were of one mind and one mission and they had everything in common. And that word common, that's at the end of verse 32, it's the word koinonia, which is where we get the word fellowship from.

And it means sharing. It's a good word to remember. Koinonia. It means fellowship or sharing. And that's what the church was doing. They were sharing everything.

They were sharing with one another and they were having fellowship with one another. No one had ownership of anything. No one was taking over. But they were all sharing and working together because they were of one heart and one soul.

[6 : 40] They had koinonia. They had fellowship. They were all sharing together. And you know, as a church, that's what distinguished them from the community around them, especially in the first century.

They were distinguished from the community because the community were always looking after number one, which they were looking after number one at the expense and even the exposure of other people.

And in many ways, and with some people, that hasn't changed down throughout the centuries. But you know, as members of the church, the early church, they shared everything with one another. One another. They had koinonia. They had fellowship with one another. And they were an example to their community in their display of unity to an onlooking world.

You know, we said before, when we looked at the previous passage, that the early church considered themselves to be a family. They were a church family of brothers and sisters.

[7 : 41] And they functioned like a family. They not only functioned as friends living in the community, but they functioned as a family living in the community. And it's how we should function as a church, not just as church friends, but as a church family.

And we encourage one another. And we look out for one another. And we care for one another. And we support one another. And when things happen in our lives, we should be able to share it with one another. My friend, as a church family, we should be able to have that koinonia with one another, where we have all things in common.

And we should be of one heart and one soul. We should be of one mind and one mission, united in our desire to live out the gospel and to spread the gospel in our community.

We're to function as a family that's united and working together. And, you know, like it was for the early church, our love and our care and our compassion for one another and our unity and even our oneness, it's to be an example to our community.

[8 : 56] Because, you know, and the truth be told is that in the past and far too often, the church has been an example of disunity and division. And, you know, there's nothing that puts people off coming to church more than a dysfunctional church family.

There's nothing that puts people off more than in-house fighting and people that can't get on and can't love one another. But, you know, as a church and as the early church sets the example for us, we should function not only as friends, but we should also function as a church family.

And we should be of one heart and one soul. We should be of one mind and one mission. There should be unity. There should be this koinonia where we're sharing and having fellowship with one another.

And, you know, fellowship is so important as a church. Because how are we going to know one another? How are we going to love one another? How are we going to encourage one another? How are we going to look after one another? How are we going to support one another? How are we going to share our problems with one another? How are we going to do that if we don't have fellowship with one another?

[10:10] How are we going to act like a church family if we don't spend time with one another? How are we going to grow spiritually as a church and even as individual Christians if we neglect the opportunities that are given to us to have fellowship with one another?

My friend, how are we going to know what that true koinonia is if we stay away from the fellowship of the church and live as an isolated Christian?

Because in order to grow in your faith, even if you're a committed Christian or not, in order to grow in your faith, if you want to grow in your faith in Jesus Christ, and however small you might think that faith is, if you want to grow in your faith, there are three key elements or three key ingredients that need to be part of your Christianity.

Prayer, prayer, reading the word, and fellowship. It sounds simple, but we neglect it so often. So if you're a Christian or if you want to be a Christian, they must be the three ingredients of your Christianity.

You must pray. You must read the Bible, not out of duty, but out of love. And you must have fellowship with the other people in the congregation.

[11:31] And that fellowship, it may be formal like it is today as we gather in church on Sunday or even during the week. Or that fellowship, it may be informal when we gather together for a Bible study or a testimony evening or even coming to Christianity Explored.

If you're a Christian or if you want to be a Christian, prayer, reading the Bible, and fellowship, they must be the ingredients of your Christianity.

But you know, to neglect any or all of these ingredients, it will stunt your growth as a Christian and it will hinder your faith in Jesus Christ.

No Christian should ever be a Christian. Because one of the greatest evidences of being a Christian is praying, reading the Bible, yes, but we also have to have koinonia.

The fellowship has to be there. You must have fellowship. And you know, that's what the Apostle John said when he wrote to the early church. He said, you should know that you're a Christian.

[12:36] He said, you should know that you're a Christian because you love the brethren. You love other Christians. You should know that you're a Christian because you love the church family and you love having fellowship with the church family.

You love being in church and you love spending time with the Lord's people. And you know, we certainly see that evidenced here in the life of the early church. Because they were of one heart and soul.

They had fellowship in God and they had fellowship in the gospel. They were united. They were of one mind and one mission. They had fellowship in God.

They had fellowship in the gospel. And as we read in verse 33, their fellowship in the gospel, it was centered upon Jesus. It was centered upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We're told in verse 33, and with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

[13:37] They were sharing their testimony with one another. They were talking to one another about Jesus. And they were witnessing about Jesus to one another. They were having koinonia with one another.

They were having fellowship with one another. And you know, my friend, as a church family, they had fellowship in God and they had fellowship in the gospel.

And needless to say, that's what we need to encourage and even cultivate in our church family. Fellowship in God and fellowship in the gospel.

And you know, I love how the church is described because of their fellowship with one another. Because we're told at the end of verse 32, great grace was upon them all.

Great grace was upon them all. Grace was upon them because of their fellowship in God and their fellowship in the gospel. But sadly, as we carry on in this passage, we see that that wasn't to last. [14:40] Because there were some in the church who were more interested in finance than fellowship. And their interest in finance, it's what led to their falsehood. And that's what we see secondly.

Falsehood. So fellowship and then falsehood. Now look at verse 34. We're told that there was not a needy person among them. For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and bought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet.

And it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, a Levite, a native of Cyprus.

He sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property.

And with his wife's knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. And so what we see here is that because of their fellowship in God and their fellowship in the gospel, the early church, they shared everything with one another.

[15:52] And it seems that they not only shared fellowship with one another, they also shared finance with one another. As we read there, there was not a needy person among them.

As many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought their proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet. So the church had functioned like a family where they all looked out for one another, they took care of one another, and they provided for one another.

And they did it because they loved one another. That was the evidence of their Christianity. They loved one another. And is that not what Jesus taught his church to be like?

Where Jesus said, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, so you are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

And that was certainly true of the early church, that they loved one another. Because their Christian love, it was evident not only to the church, but also to the community. Everyone knew that they loved one another by the way that they treated one another, and cared for one another, and looked out for one another.

[17:06] They loved one another as Jesus loved them. And you know, as one commentator says, the church loved their saviour more than their stuff.

The church loved their saviour more than their stuff. And that should be true of the church in every generation. That we love our saviour more than our stuff.

And that our love for our saviour should be evidenced, not only by sharing fellowship, but also sharing finance. Our love should be evidenced by not only sharing our saviour with one another, but also by sharing our stuff with one another.

And with that, Luke, the author of the book of Acts, he introduces us to this man who loved Jesus. And he loved Jesus, and his love for Jesus was evident.

Because he willingly and voluntarily shared fellowship with the church. And he shared finance with the church. Because we're introduced to this man called Joseph, in verse 36.

[18:12] And we're told there that he had been given this nickname by the apostles. This nickname, Barnabas. And he was given the nickname because he was such an encouragement to the church.

And we're told there that the name Barnabas means son of encouragement. And you know, Barnabas, he was a remarkable encouragement to the church. Because he gave the church everything he had.

But what's interesting is that we're told that Barnabas was a Levite. We're told that at the end of verse 36. He's a Levite. And that's important. Because Levites were never given land.

The Levites were the only tribe in the nation of Israel, out of all the twelve tribes, they were the only tribe that wasn't given any land. They didn't have land.

They didn't have crops. They didn't have sheep. They didn't have any of these things. And that was because the Levites, they were to be like ministers. They were to serve the people.

[19:15] They were to lead the people. They were to intercede with the Lord on behalf of the people. And in return, the people were to provide for them. They were to provide homes for them.

And even provide animals for them. And even provide crops for them. And you know, that's why we have the model today of a minister living in Ammanus. Ammanus. Ammanus that's owned and supported by the congregation.

It's a biblical model. A model that God instituted in the Bible. But even though as a Levite, Barnabas, he wouldn't have had land. We're told that somehow he had acquired this piece of land. And maybe he had inherited it or he was given it. But nevertheless, this Levite, who was a native of Cyprus, which means that he was a Greek. He was an outsider as far as the Jews were concerned. And yet we're told that Barnabas was a great encouragement to the church. Because he willingly, not grudgingly, he willingly and voluntarily sold his field. And brought the proceeds to the apostles. [20 : 18] And just laid it at their feet. You know, my friend, Barnabas was an encouragement to the church family. Because he willingly and voluntarily, he shared fellowship. And he shared finance with the church.

And of course, we know that Barnabas, he would become a key figure in the church. As he helps Paul in his missionary journeys. But you know, here, Barnabas is reminding us that we should do all things willingly.

Not grudgingly. We should do all things willingly and voluntarily for the church of Jesus Christ. We might not be able to be like Peter or Paul.

And stand up and preach the gospel to thousands of people. But you know, we can all be a Barnabas. We can all be a Barnabas. We can all be an encouragement to the church family. We can all be an encouragement by willingly and voluntarily serving in the church of Jesus Christ. Because as we said, this passage is teaching us that the church is a voluntary army.

[21 : 23] And most of what goes on in the church, it has to be done by volunteers. It has to be done by the voluntary willingness of those in the church family. And the thing about voluntary work is that you shouldn't need to wait to be asked.

That's the thing about voluntary work. In fact, the word volunteer, if you look up what it really means, or its root word, it means to present yourself as available.

That's what the word volunteer means. To present yourself as available. Where you see the need and you have a willingness to help and you volunteer. You take the initiative and you present yourself as available.

You shouldn't need to wait to be asked. You should volunteer. You should make yourself available. You shouldn't take the half if you weren't asked. Or refuse to do anything if you weren't asked. That's not the attitude of a Barnabas. That's not an encouragement to the church. So you should volunteer. You should make yourself available. For whatever it may be.

[22 : 30] Whatever is needed. Whatever you see the need. You volunteer for it. Because that's what Barnabas did. Barnabas was an encouragement to the church and even his community.

Because he willingly, not grudgingly. He willingly and voluntarily made himself available to serve in the church of Jesus Christ. But you know, I have to be honest.

And it's good to be honest. I'm very thankful. And I will say that. I'm very thankful to the Lord for your willingness. Your willingness to volunteer for things. The church, as I've said, it's a voluntary army. And I'm so thankful that many of you do volunteer. And those who volunteer, I'm thankful for those who volunteer in the creche. Those who volunteer for teaching our children in Sunday school. Those who volunteer to clean the church. Those who volunteer to help with teas or baking or whatever it may be. There are so many things that go unnoticed by the eyes of men.

[23 : 28] But never forget that they don't go unnoticed with the eyes of God. And it's voluntary work. And I'm so thankful for it. And you know, when thinking about the church as this voluntary army, which we are.

You know, I think of one of the most iconic images of the First World War. Well, I'm sure many of you remember the recruitment. Well, you wouldn't remember it. You weren't there. But you'll remember the recruitment poster that was used in 1914 to encourage people to volunteer and to enlist for the First World War.

It was that picture of Lord Kitchener. The man with the big moustache. And he's got the finger pointing. And it's the slogan that's there. Your country needs you.

Your country needs you. And in many ways, I always think, well, that's the slogan the church should have. The church is a voluntary army. And the slogan the church should have, your church needs you.

Your church needs you to get involved. Your church needs you to volunteer and present yourself as willing and available to serve in the church of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 39] And you know, thinking about service to Jesus, however great or however small, however public or however private, it's all service to Jesus. Whatever it is, when it's done in the name of Jesus, it's service to Jesus.

Even as Jesus says himself, a cup of cold water. It's service to Jesus. And we should be willingly and voluntarily making ourselves available to use our skills and our abilities for the good of the congregation and the glory of God.

And we should do it all because of what Jesus has done for us. That's what it all comes back to. It all comes back to the cross itself. Because that's the center of our faith.

He came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And you look at Jesus and we say about Jesus, he willingly, not grudgingly, he willingly and voluntarily gave his life in order to save us from our sins.

Therefore, in many ways, the least we can do is be a Barnabas. The least we can do is be an encouragement to the church family by enrolling in this voluntary army.

[25 : 53] Because the last thing the church needs is someone like Ananias and Sapphira. That's the last thing the church needs. We're told in verse 1 of chapter 5, a man named Ananias, that's the contrast between Barnabas, but a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, they sold a piece of property.

And with his wife's knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?

You have not lied to men, but to God. And you know, in comparison to Barnabas, who had this wholehearted love and commitment to Jesus Christ and his church, you have Ananias and Sapphira.

They were half-hearted in their love and commitment to Jesus Christ and his church. And they were half-hearted not because they didn't give everything to the church. That's not what it was about.

[27 : 14] Because Peter explained to Ananias that the money was his. The money was his. That was the provision the Lord had given to him. The money was his and he could do whatever he wanted with it.

But you know, for Ananias, in order to gain finance, but also to gain friends, Ananias told the church that he had done the same thing as Barnabas.

He told the church that he had given everything to them, just like Barnabas had. All so that he would gain this reputation within the church. Ananias, he wanted to have this good reputation, not only because of his finance, but he also wanted a good reputation among his church family.

But you know, Ananias, he had a major problem. The love of money was his problem. And you know, when we were reslating the roof last year, I was speaking to one of the scaffolders.

Maybe I mentioned this before. I was speaking to one of the scaffolders. I always spoke to them every morning when I came down here. But, and this, one of the scaffolders, he was talking about going for a new job. And he was taking a new job because it offered a lot more money.

[28 : 24] And there's nothing wrong with that. But the reason he was taking the job is because he said, kept saying to me, Murdo, cash is king. Cash is king, Murdo. And as you would expect, I kept saying to him, no, Jesus is king.

Jesus is king. But you know, that was the problem of Ananias and Sapphira. That their problem wasn't. Their problem was that Jesus wasn't king. Cash was king.

Cash was king in their life. And because cash was king, that's why they lied. They were full of falsehood about their finances.

They were full of falsehood about their finances. And they were false with the fellowship of God's family. The issue wasn't the money. That was never the issue.

The money was theirs to do whatever they wanted with it. The issue was the fact that they lied about it. In order to gain this great reputation. And with this, you know, one commentator, he makes the graphic application.

[29 : 24] That Ananias' sin, it's a graphic reminder of our need to speak the truth diligently and without fail. In other words, as a church, and as Christians, as a church family, we are to be characterized by trust and honesty.

We are to be trustworthy. We are to be worthy of people's trust. We are to speak the truth at all times. We are to emulate and imitate the one who is the truth, that is Jesus.

Because if we are liars, if we are emulating and imitating the father of lies, Satan, then well, we are not trustworthy at all. And you know, that is how Peter described Ananias in verse 3.

He said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? You know, my friend, we are to be trustworthy.

We are not to be liars. We are not to be known for deceiving people and cheating people out of things. We are to be trustworthy. We are to speak the truth. We are to always speak the truth in love and not falsehood.

[30 : 38] Because falsehood, it always leads to folly. Falsehood always leads to folly. And that's what we see here, lastly and very briefly.

The last point, fellowship, falsehood, and then folly. Folly. Look at verse 5. When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last.

And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

And Peter said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. And she said, Yes, for so much. But Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in, they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

[31 : 45] And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things. You know, my friend, the account of Ananias and Sapphira, it's a solemn reminder that God is holy and he is not to be mocked.

You know, far too often in the church and even in the community, we forget that God is holy. We forget that God hates sin. Far too often, we ourselves, we just wink at sin.

We overlook sin. We ignore sin. We think of it as just a little bad thing that we do now and again. But the account of Ananias and Sapphira is much more than just a little story of pocketing petty cash and telling a little white lie.

You know, this episode in the life of the church, it was a solemn reminder to the church that God is holy and he is not to be mocked. And in this commentary, Al Mohler, he's written a brilliant commentary on the book of Acts, Al Mohler, he says, our human nature, it recoils at the story of Ananias and Sapphira because we think that one little lie is not deserving of God's wrath and punishment.

But he says, this shows how little we understand God's holiness and our sinfulness. Because sin, he says, it's an assault, it's an assault on the very character of God.

[33 : 16] Then he says, the true marvel is not so much that God killed Ananias and Sapphira, but that God has not executed his judgment upon all of us.

Instead, he says, God sent his son to die in our place so that the church family could enjoy this wonderful provision of salvation.

My friend, the folly of Ananias and Sapphira, it was witnessed by the church in the first century. And it was written down for us, those who are in the 21st century.

And it's all written there for us so that we will respond in the same way that the church in the first century responded. Because we're told in verse 5 and then verse 11 that great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things.

When the church fellowship witnessed the falsehood and the folly of Ananias and Sapphira, they responded in fear. When the church fellowship witnessed the falsehood and the folly of Ananias and Sapphira, they responded in fear.

[34 : 28] The fear of the Lord became for the church the beginning of wisdom. And you know my unconverted friend sitting here today again, that's what you need to be reminded.

That's what you need to be reminded. You need to be reminded to fear the Lord. You need to fear this God. You need to show reverence and respect to this God.

Because as we're seeing in this passage, God is holy. And God hates sin. God hates sin. He's not to be mocked.

He's not to be trifled with. But He hates sin. But He's provided a Savior. And He bids you to come to Him. This is the wonder of it.

And so my suggestion to you today is bend your knee. Come to this Jesus. Confess your sin to Him. and enroll in this voluntary army.

[35 : 32] Bend your knee and come to this Jesus. And when you come to Him, when you come you will know forgiveness. You will know freedom in Christ. You will know what it is to have fellowship in God and fellowship in the Gospel.

You come to this Jesus and you live and you serve under His banner. Because the banner that is over His church is love.

So you come to Him. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the example in Thy Word of how our church should function.

And help us, Lord, we pray, to live up to that example. To be like Barnabas. To be an encouragement to our fellowship. To encourage one another. To love one another.

To take care of one another. To present Jesus to one another. Lord, bless us, we pray. We realize that we faint and fail in so many different ways.

[36 : 36] But all we give thanks to Thee for the wonder of Thy church. That it is a church filled with sinners. No one is perfect. And yet, in this church, we are able to know this Jesus who saves to the uttermost.

Who cleanses us from all sin. Who promises us that it is the blood of Jesus Christ alone that makes us as white as snow. Lord, bless us then, we pray.

Lead us and guide us throughout Thy day that we would seek to glorify Thee and to enjoy Thee forever. Go with us then, we pray. Go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the closing words of Psalm 66.

Psalm 66, it's on page 300 in the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 66, we're singing from verse 16 to the end of the psalm.

All that fear God, come here I'll tell what He did for my soul. I with my mouth unto Him cried, my tongue did Him extol. If in my heart I sin regard, the Lord me will not hear, but surely God me heard and to my prayer's voice gave ear.

[37 : 58] O let the Lord, our gracious God, forever blessed be, who turn not my prayer from Him, nor yet His grace from me. So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 66.

to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. All that fear God, come here I'll tell, what He needed for my soul.

I with my mouth unto Him cry, my tongue did Him extol.

If in my heart I sin regard, thy Lord we will not hear, but surely God, He heard unto my prayer's voice give ear.

O let the Lord, our gracious God, forever blessed be, who turneth not my prayer from Him, nor yet His grace from me.

[40 : 08] Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.