

ment; but the questions which arise concerning both are so important it may be well to repeat here in brief what is elsewhere said at length. Their actual misdemeanor was that with ostentation they sold their property, pretending to give all its price to the needs of the Church, but withholding a portion for themselves. Their *sin* was much deeper than this act; it was the spirit of the Pharisee, pretense to special consecration while living for selfish ends; it was not miserliness merely; not lying merely; it was *lying to the Holy Ghost*; conscious, defiant, blasphemous hypocrisy. A great part of our Lord's mission on earth was to proclaim God's everlasting hostility to the Pharisaic spirit, that sort of contemptible hypocrisy which lays down duties for others and dodges one's own. If the infant Church stood for anything at all in the world it stood as a protest against this venomous spirit, which had saturated with poison every religion, false and true, and which had so permeated the Jewish hierarchy that its discordant leaders harmonized in a hurry to put Jesus to death. And now, before the Christian Church is a year old, in steps a man with the heart of a hypocrite, and performs an action so admirable that, if he had not been unmasked by God, he would at once have been put on a pedestal as a saint.

Verse 32. Peter and John have been released. Their Christian friends unite in thanksgiving and prayer, and the Holy Spirit descends upon them all; and while the house in which they are assembled is shaken the worshippers are lifted to a holy courage, and so filled with heavenly affections that at once they find themselves of **one heart and one soul**—one in love and purpose, in feeling and will. Nowadays we familiarly use the word "body" for a club, or church, or society of any sort; and when a society is harmonious it has, of course, one heart, one soul, for its body. With the early Christians this became true to an unequalled degree. They were the "body of Christ." The heart of each overflowed with love and kindness toward all who had become fellow-members of that Body. If one of them saw another in pain or poverty he became in pain or poverty himself till that other was relieved. **Neithersaid any.** At Pentecost (Acts 2. 45) the wealthier disciples had freely given to the poorer, but now none claim their goods as their own, although they truly own them. Such was the power of love, making five thousand **one**.

33. With great power. Spiritual power; essentially different from intellectual power or social influence; it came from the residence of the Holy Spirit, not only in their hearts, but in their words. As an illustration, Mr. Gladstone, when Prime Minister, published a book of strong and beautiful thoughts in translucent style. It is a noble book, such as in any case would be effective on the thought of thousands. But the political and social position of the author carries its influence much farther than it could go alone. The two forces work together, but are different in kind. Now, these disciples had a certain forceful truth to utter, which of itself was impressive; they had a certain measure of intellectual ability (how much, perhaps, we of the nineteenth century cannot properly measure); they had by their very lack of social position a certain advantage with common people; but added to all these they had, by direct gift, a divine power in every sentence which multiplied to an untold degree the effectiveness of their message. The passing of years does not weaken the

influence of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*; but the power of that book does not reside in its thought, or its style, or the social position of its author; for the first two are not remarkable, and the last is hardly known; it resides rather in the Holy Spirit, attached as a supernatural Motor to every chapter, every sentence, every word, in answer to the prayer of the writer. Centuries ago the weeds hid his grave; but each year careless people by the thousand take up his book to be thrilled and made thoughtful and devout by the divine power with which (we may reverently say) by means of prayer he endowed it. We must never forget or ignore the reality of this divine power. Such power attended the apostles when they preached. Such power will back every word you utter, every sentence you write, if you attach yourself to God and are filled with the Holy Spirit. **Witness.** Testimony. Notwithstanding threats the apostles continued to make the **resurrection of the Lord Jesus** the emphatic fundamental fact of their teaching. **Great grace.** "Grace" is primarily a gift. All gifts which would help these Christians to perform their holy task were given them—health, ability, logic, eloquence, personal magnetism, attentiveness of hearers.

34, 35. Neither was there any among them that lacked. Christian love (glorified in the First Epistle to the Corinthians under the name of **CHARITY**) here had its perfect manifestation; but we must not assume that socialism based on religious neighborhood originated with the Christian faith. At all public religious feasts in Jerusalem there was a sort of temporary community of goods; and though many, perhaps most, citizens found themselves to be indirectly reimbursed by the stir of trade that such sudden inflows of people brought, nevertheless in its beginning this public hospitality was essentially religious. **Possessors of lands or houses.** This is interesting, for it seems to point to wealthy converts resident in Jerusalem. Most of the early converts to Christianity apparently were poor, but there were not lacking believers in Jesus among the rich and aristocratic families of the capital. **Sold them and brought the price.** This primitive