



Sermon Series Notes

“Hypocrisy Meets Holiness” (Acts 5:1-11)

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An honest man was being tailgated by a stressed out woman on a busy boulevard. Suddenly, the traffic light turned yellow just in front of him. The man stopped, and the tailgating woman hit the roof, and the horn, screaming in frustration because this guy had ruined her chance of getting through the intersection. As she was still in mid-rant, she hears a tap on her window and looked up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer ordered her to exit the car, then placed her under arrest. At the police station, she was searched, finger printed, photographed, and placed in a holding cell. After a couple of hours, a policeman approached the cell and opened the door. She was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting for her personal effects. He said, Mam, I’m sorry, we’ve made a mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing the horn, flipping off the guy in front of you, and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the “Choose Life” license plate, the “What would Jesus do?” & “Follow me to Sunday School” bumper stickers, and the chrome plated Christian fish symbol on the trunk. Naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car.

Matthew 23:25 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but on the inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

See Matthew 15:17-19

Read Acts 5:1-11

THEIR SIN

Please note right away that it is not one sin they committed but several. But that’s the way sin works, you will to commit one sin, and if you want to keep on in that sin, other sins will be committed as well. For example, King David commits adultery with Bathsheeba, she gets pregnant. David brings her husband Urriah the Hittite from the battlefield, thinking he will go home to be with his wife, but he doesn’t. David even gets him drunk, but he still does not go home. His comrades are on the battlefield away from their families, so he remains with them in spirit. Urriah is sent back to the battle, and David has general Joab put Urriah on the front lines, and when the battle is the most intense, pulls back the other men, and Urriah is killed. David then takes Bathsheeba to be his wife.

I used to love to smoke pot. I saw a Visine commercial in those days and a light went on in my head (“Visine gets the red out”). I’ll use Visine just before I go home so that my family won’t wonder why my eyes are so red. But I was too greedy to pay for Visine, so while in a store one day I just pocketed a bottle.

This became a habit. I remember eventually counting 13 bottles of Visine in my clothes drawer and I thought, "Boy you're stocked up to hide red eyes for a while!"

The sin I tried to cover up in those days was my drug addiction. What sin was Ananias and Sapphira attempting to hide?

1. Greed

Col.3: 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, **which is idolatry**. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Luke 12:15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

1 Tim.6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Eccl.5:10 Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.

Greed got to Balaam, Gehazi (II Kings 5), the rich young ruler, the Pharisees; Judas Iscariot, and many more.

Illus: Hold up a few hundred dollars, noting that there is nothing evil in the bills. The evil is within us.

2. Lying

I told my kids the story of Ananias & Sapphira when they were young and I said at the end, "Don't lie or you might die." They've never forgotten that.

Peter is careful to point out that they have lied to God, lied to the Holy Spirit. This text is another evidence of God's triune nature (Father, Son & Holy Spirit). This is one of the most fascinating things about the depravity (moral corruption) of man. I mean, think about it, lying to GOD!

The children were lined up in the cafeteria, and on a large basket of apples was a note that read, "TAKE ONLY ONE, GOD IS WATCHING." At the other end of the basket of apples was a big tray of chocolate chip cookies, and someone had placed a note on them that said, "TAKE ALL YOU WANT, GOD IS WATCHING THE APPLES."

Heb.4: 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Num.32:23... you may be sure that your sin will find you out.

3. Hypocrisy

Comes from a Greek word that in the past was used to describe a stage actor.

They attempted to maintain a reputation of spirituality, while living in hypocrisy.

Rev. 3:1 (Sardis)...you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead...

4. Pride

Ananias = gracious; “whom Jehovah has graciously given.”

Sapphira = “a sapphire”; beautiful

He’s a really nice, respected guy, and she’s a beautiful lady. And it appears they were a successful, popular couple in society.

Satan had filled Ananias & Sapphira’s hearts (see James 1:14); What did Satan’s enticement to Ananias sound like? If indeed Ananias & Sapphira were successful & popular before they made commitments to Christ, perhaps Satan’s enticement was to keep up that kind of reputation & popularity in the church. The original sin was pride, and that could have been part of the enticement. If this was the case, then their motive for selling the land and giving it to the church was all wrong to begin with.

I Cor.4: 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the **motives** of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR SIN

On the surface the consequences seem pretty severe. Certainly God does not take the lives of every greedy, lying, proud hypocrite in the church, right? So why such severe consequences for Ananias & Sapphira?

Throughout biblical history God at times gives man a fresh view of the blackness of sin and the brightness of holiness.

In doing this, we are reminded of the depths of His love, mercy and grace. He shows himself holy here, and the result was “great fear seized the whole church, and all who heard about these events.” God says this twice (5:5 & 5:11). There was a renewed reverence for God.

Nadab & Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3); Achan (Joshua 7:19-21); Uzzah (II Samuel 6:3-7).

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

Lamentations 3:22 Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed...

In the story of Ananias & Sapphira we are reminded that some sin leads to death (I John 5:16-17); see I Cor.11:29-32.

Could it be that judging Ananias and Sapphira in this way is evidence that they really were saved? If so, the reception in heaven was not one any of us would look forward to!

THE CONTEXT OF THEIR SIN

Read Acts 4:32-37

A.W. Tozer: "Has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers...each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship."

I John 1: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...

The unity of this early church is something that you and I may never have the privilege of experiencing in this life. It is certainly possible, but very rare.

The giving spirit of this church was pretty amazing too. The phrase in 4:33 that "God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all" is translated in the old KJV "great grace was upon them all." The word for "great" in the Greek is "megas," so it was mega-grace.

And mega-grace turned into mega-giving. Can you imagine, no needy persons among them? Add to that the miracles that were taking place, & the daily powerful teaching of the apostles. It was a church anyone would have wanted to be a part of, despite the persecution they faced. There was complete unity, deep & meaningful fellowship, no one in need, and no greed, at least not until Ananias & Sapphira show up.

As a result of the mega-grace poured out on this church, a Levite named Joseph/Barnabas was set free to follow the call of God upon his life (4:36-37). A Levite was not to own land (Num.18:20; Deut.10:9); A Levite was called to serve the people "full time," being provided for through the offerings of God's people. Evidently Joseph/Barnabas got caught up in greed/materialism and up to this point had ignored/neglected the call of God for His life. Now free from greed, he would go on to become a great minister of the gospel alongside the apostle Paul. What might Ananias & Sapphira have become for God? We will never know.

Ananias & Sapphira aren't the only ones who made terrible mistakes in a time of great blessing.

Adam & Eve, in paradise, Adam is married to the most beautiful woman in the whole world, there is no sin, they have perfect fellowship with God, a perfect marriage, & free reign in the Garden of Eden – except for **one** tree...

The Israelites after experiencing the blessings of the Promised Land (Deut.8:6-20).

King David, II Samuel 7:18-19; II Sam.11; 12:7b-10

Uzziah after becoming successful ((II Chron.26:4-5, 16)

HOW TO KEEP FROM MAKING THE MISTAKES ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA (& OTHERS) MADE.

Prov. 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

See James 4:6-8

How do I purify me heart?

- Come clean/Confess sin (I John 1:9); Don't be a hypocrite
- Humble yourself (James 4:6-8); For Ananias & Sapphira this would mean giving all the profits from the land sale to the Lord.
- Deny yourself (Matt.16:23-24); "I die daily" (I Cor.15:31)
- The Word of God (Jer.17:9-10; John 17:17; Heb.4:12)
- Prayer (Psalm 51:10)

CONCLUSION

Prayer: Father, from this story may you grant us a fresh reverence for your holiness, and a deep appreciation for your love, grace & mercy. Purify our hearts O Lord, In Jesus name, Amen.