

Sermon Title: “Holiness and Self Examination”

Sermon Series: Acts: Kingdom Vision 20/20

Text: **Acts 5:1-11**

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I. Introduction: This is an exciting time for the early Church. After the miraculous healing of a man born lame now walking, Peter and John experienced the beginning of persecution for the Name of Jesus. Upon their release they gathered with the other believers and prayed for a renewed strength to remain faithful and devoted to Jesus despite the persecution that will come.

They prayed for boldness (Acts 4:29) and God answered with a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, empowering them to proclaim God’s Word with boldness (Acts 4:31).

*Boldness to **obey**; not arrogance to **disobey**.*

Believers were recognizing God owns all that they have, and they willingly surrender it to the work of Gospel Ministry. The text of Chapter 4 closes with a man named Barnabas who also sold a field and gave the money to the Church. In this very intimate, Spirit filled community of Jesus followers we find an episode unfold that reminds that early Church, as well as you and me today, that God is Holy and through Christ we are to be Holy as well.

Going Deeper: 1) *Have you ever read the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 before? If so, what were your thoughts? Do you find God’s actions here unloving- perhaps harsher than the act they did deserved?*

II. “Choosing to Sin” (Acts 5:1-2)

Many will speculate as to the *why* of Ananias and Sapphira’s act, but the text is inviting us into an unchanged reality of who God is. Just as the Nation of Israel had to learn that their *Delivering* God is a *Holy* God, so the new Church was to remember as well.

See: **Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:13-21**

Despite this, both husband and wife chose to embrace this deceitful act and move forward with its execution.

(Bonus: Remember Achan from our series through Joshua -> **Joshua 7:10-26**)

Going Deeper: 2) *It can be hard to do the right thing, honoring God by obeying His Word, when those around us are not. What do you think the reasons were for their decision to lie? What are some things you struggle with, sin that just keeps grabbing at your heart, that leads you to feel like you are leading a double life with God and others?*

III. “Peter Confronts Ananias” (Acts 5:3-4)

As Ananias moves forward with their plan, the property is sold, and a portion of the proceeds kept while the rest is given to the Apostles as Barnabas and others had done.

Remember, believers are filled with the Spirit of God and are recipients of gifts- as in this case the gift of discerning spirits (See 1 Corinthians 12:10). As the Holy Spirit shows Peter the falsehood in what Ananias is doing, he confronts him. Note the progression of the deception:

- 1) **Weakened**. Satan had filled his heart to lie (v.3)
 - a. Jesus said Satan is the father of lies; a child of God reflects God’s character a child of this world reflects the devil’s character (John 8:42-47)
- 2) **Ill**. Ananias came up with a plan to follow through with this lie (v.4a)
 - a. Rather than resist the devil (James 4:7), he chose to lean back into his old nature and act like a child of the kingdom he was saved from (Ephesians 4:20-32)
 - b. I must note the story of Joseph here; note his response when approached to sin against his master in Genesis 39:6-10.
- 3) **Dead**. Ananias deception was toward everyone; his lie was toward God (v.4b)
 - a. As King David realized and confessed (Psalms 51:3-6), Peter confirms to Ananias. He lied breaking God’s Law (Leviticus 19:11), or standard of Holiness, not Peter’s or the other Apostles’.

Going Deeper: 3) *What did Jesus say about those who are children of the devil? Instead of being deceitful, what could Ananias have done? Have you ever noticed how the desires of our hearts the devil’s fans into flames loose their brilliance when we think long term? The devil’s lies find strength in the immediate focus, the immediate promise of reward / pleasure / return.*

Going Deeper: 4) *How are we as believers resourced to resist him? (see James 4:7 / Ephesians 4:20-32).*

Going Deeper: 5) *When we choose to sin, although others can be and are hurt by it, who are we ultimately sinning against? Why is it important to remember this?*

IV. “Judgment from God” (Acts 5:5-10)

Upon Peter’s revelation of Ananias’ lie, he falls to the ground dead in judgment from God. Three hours later Sapphira comes to Peter and is given an opportunity to confess; an opportunity to tell the truth. She does not and experiences the same immediate judgment.

God is a Good Father who is working to transform us from being children of this world / kingdom into His Kingdom children through Jesus by the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit.

See: 1 Peter 4:12-19.

The brilliance of the Gospel must be shining into the communities God has placed us into. We are to be growing into the work of the Spirit; not retreating into our old natures.

The bodies were carried out in obedience to Moses' law of judgment brought upon guilty individuals to allow the body to hang on a tree all day to warn observers but had to be buried before the night fell (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

This was a reminder of the seriousness of sin and the cost God paid with His Son, Jesus (Galatians 3:11-14) for you and me.

V. "Self-Examination" (Acts 5:5 & 11)

As Believers were added to the Church this event was an extremely dramatic pause for everyone. A wave is rippling through the entire Body from this act of judgment against Ananias and Sapphira.

I do not think Ananias and Sapphira were the only believers struggling with their old, sinful natures or the warfare from the devil. *For a reason known only to our Sovereign God, they became a display to remind everyone that God is still God Holy.*

The Holy Spirit is transforming us into Christ; not Christ into us.

The Gospel is the good news that through the cross our sin was paid for; by Jesus' resurrection death was conquered and new, eternal life for those who repent and believe.

We have been raised and seated with Christ in Heavenly places.

We have been raised to God; God has not been lowered to us.

We have been raised to God.

God is Holy.

We have been saved to be Holy with Him.

Therefore, we observe Communion every week. This Gospel reality is central to who we are in Christ. What we believe and are becoming is the message and illustration of the Gospel to the world around us.

Therefore, Paul encourages us to "examine ourselves" so as not to be thinking God is fooled or ok with our continual embracing of sin.

Therefore, there are some that are **weakened, ill, and dead**. But if we continually examine (judge) our lives against God's Word we will walk in accord with Him. If not, God will discipline us as a loving Father does His children.

See -> 1 Corinthians 11:27-32.

Communion is about what Jesus did for us and what we are doing in response to Him.

Going Deeper: 6) *Why do we celebrate communion every week? How does self-examination (comparing our lives to God's Word) benefit us as God's Children?*

V. Concluding Thoughts / Application

While this is a harder story to read and preach through in the Bible, God has this story here for us today.

God, as a Good Father wants us to trust Him to provide all that we need even if it is not what we want. No part of this journey with Him is meant to be done in our own strength. When we harbor sin we are deceiving ourselves and carrying a weight of guilt and shame that Jesus died to take away from us.

This story is an *acknowledgement* that God is still Holy.

This story is a *reminder* to take God's Word seriously.

This story is an *invitation* to realize the full beauty of the Gospel.

This story is an *appeal* to value and submit to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit who *fills* and *empowers* us to live obediently to our Holy God- becoming Holy as He is Holy.

God is a Father who wants to enjoy eternity with His children.

God is a Father who desires to take every step with us along the way into His Kingdom.

God wants all of you. Confess, repent, and embrace His healing through Jesus.

1 John 1:9