

Acts 4:36–5:11

“The Danger of Lying to the Spirit”

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Why did Ananias and Sapphira die that day? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Acts 4:36–5:11 prepares us for the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that when God the Holy Spirit is working savingly and fruitfully in the church, we are in danger of trying to fake His work for the eyes of men, rather than seeking Him to produce fruit in us that brings Him praise. But, He Himself is a sure help in the face of this danger.

Saturday, April 2, 2022 ▫ Read Acts 4:36–5:11

Questions from the Scripture text: Whom does v36 mention? What was his new name? From whom? What does it mean? Of what tribe was he? From what country? What had he had (v37)? What did he do with it? And what did he do with the money? Whom does 5:1 introduce? What did they do? What did he keep back (v2)? Who was aware of it? What did he do with the rest? Who speaks to him (v3)? Whom does he say has filled Ananias's heart? To Whom does he say Ananias has lied? Who had a right to the possession (v4)? Who had a right to control the proceeds? But what had he done? Who heard what (v5)? Then what did he do? What came upon whom? Who arose in v6? What three things did they do with Ananias? How much time passes before v7? Who came in? What didn't she know? Who says/asks what in v8? How does she answer? What does Peter ask her (v9)? What does he say are where? What will those who buried her husband do? What does she do (v10)? Where? Who come in? What do they find? What do they do with her? Where? What comes upon which two groups (v11)?

Jesus had said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:30).

Persecutions, they certainly had. And even those who did not lose lands by persecution were voluntarily “losing” them for Jesus's sake and the gospel's sake (v35–36). But there are some who wish to be admired for preferring Christ over all who are not actually preferring Him. That's the problem in 5:1–11. Ananias heard about Jose's new nickname: Barnabas, “Son of Encouragement” (v36)! Perhaps he wondered to himself what wonderful new nickname he or Sapphira might receive from the apostles.

Reading through self-approving eyes, we may think ourselves very different from Ananias and Sapphira. But are they really so different from the family that indulge in entertainment late into Saturday night, wake up grumpy and unspiritual of soul on the Lord's Day, are at each other's throats all the way to church, and then try to put on a good face as a “good Christian family”? In many such situations might we rightly hear from this passage “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” (v3) and “You have not lied to men but to God” (v4) and “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?” (v9).

They wanted “spiritual” credit before the eyes of men. “He kept back of the proceeds, his wife also being aware, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet” (v2). That laying at the apostles' feet was so ceremonious, and so holy-looking. Just like they wanted!

How desperately we need to learn that there is no “spiritual credit” for what is before the eyes of men. There is spiritual fruit like what God produced in the boldness and in the unity and in the generosity and witness to the resurrection. And that spiritual fruit must redound to the Spirit Who gave it.

For us to embrace persecutions in this life and eternal life in the next, we must have eyes to see that the spiritual and eternal are real. Ananias and Sapphira didn't, and their divine executions are a wakeup call to us. God is holy and just and insists upon our taking Him and spiritual things seriously. So, we mustn't rejoice in the praise of men but in the genuine presence and praise of God. May He deliver us from craving the approval of men!

When are you most tempted to seek the approval of men? How can you foster honesty before God and seeking His favor in order to combat the temptation to man-pleasing?

Sample prayer: Lord, how we thank You that in You we have a hundredfold in this life: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands. Forgive us for when we seek instead the esteem of men and commit the deadly sin of lying to God. Grant instead that we would rejoice even in persecutions and enjoy the favor that Christ has earned for us and the fruit that the Spirit works in us—which we ask in Christ's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP15 “Within Your Tent Who Will Abide” or TPH164 “God Himself Is with Us”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Acts chapter 4, verse 36 through verse 11 of chapter 5. These are God's words and Joseph who was also named Barnabas by the apostles which is translated son of encouragement.

A Levite of the country of Cyprus Having land sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostle's feet. But a certain man named Ananias was a firea, his wife sold a possession and he kept back part of the proceeds. His wife also being aware of it and brought a certain 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 keep back part of the price of the land for yourself. While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?

You have not lied to men, but to God than NMIS hearing these words fell down and breathed his last. So great, fear came upon all, those who heard these things, and the young men arose, and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now, it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

And Peter answered her Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. She said, yes for so much. Then Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord? Look the feet of those who have buried your husband or at the door and they will carry you out.

Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathe through last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out. Buried her by her husband. So great, fear came upon all the church and upon all who hear these things.

It is our desire and should be our desire to be part of a church where the Holy Spirit is active and working. That's been one of the main themes about this church. In the beginning of Acts is that Jesus had promised that he would pour out the Holy Spirit.

And then Jesus had poured out the Holy Spirit. And now as the Holy Spirit applies, the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the elect for whom he died. We get to see what a church looks like in which the Holy Spirit is working. And one of the things that we find out about a church in which the Holy Spirit is working, is that it is dangerous to sinners?

We can see part of the Holy Spirits. Working in this Josephus, this Joseph is a Levite of the country of Cyprus. Now, one other things that the Levites did was that they were in the Old Testament. The ones who'd gathered the collection, the tith that was given for the poor and the widow and and so forth.

And they also not only did they distribute, but they also were ones who lived off of the contributions of Israel. So they were very their role as a Levite and the part that God gave them in his law, made them anticipate. This part of what would come in the church now, not under Moses, but under Christ, and what we'll see in another chapter in the diakonet and the distribution.

But here at the very early stages, the no one has counting any of the things that they possessed as his own. And they all had all things and they had all things in common. Had that in verse 32 from last week and the result was amazing verse 34. Nor was there.

Anyone among them who lacked now, Levites weren't supposed to own property in the land. They weren't eligible to own land in Israel, but this Joseph was a Levite who lived in Cyprus. The fact that he lived in Cyprus or was from Cyprus and not from Israel. Was itself. A reminder that things among that the people of God under Moses had gone wrong.

They had sinned against God that brought upon themselves, the covenant curse that resulted in the exile to Babylon. And even until this day, they were still spread out among the nations as they continue to be today. So he's living in Cyprus and he's owning land, but he's also come to believe in Jesus.

And as he believes in Jesus, and He sees how Jesus is providing for his people. Through this new generosity that he produces in their hearts, He has an opportunity to be as a Christian, something that he had never gotten really to be as a Levite. And so he sells the land that he has and he comes, he lays it as at the apostle's feet and what has happened in the heart of this Levite named Joseph is so encouraging to the Apostles that they actually nickname him.

Barnabas son of encouragement and it's wonderful to be in a church where you are seeing the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in people's lives. And yet, it can also be very dangerous because there are a couple of people who see Joseph and others like him coming and and giving the the proceeds of the sale of their land.

And the fact that he got nicknamed by the Apostles son of encouragement and Ananiasin Sapphira, think? Oh Wouldn't it be wonderful if the church would admire us like they admired this Joseph whom they're now calling Barnabas and perhaps they do to some extent have sympathy for the poor who are among them and want to provide for them.

But the great mistake isn't that they didn't sell their land. We have in our memory verse in verse 4 while it remained, was it not your own And the great mistake wasn't that they didn't give all of the money from the sale because as an after it was sold, was it not in your own control?

The great mistake was they wanted to be admired by men. They wanted the church to think that they were being just like Barnabas and they were being just like these others and that the Holy Spirit was working in. Then just like he had worked in Barnabas. And so they pretended that this was the amount and they had agreed on how much they would say was the amount and they come, they sell it, and they have the money, and he brings just the part and he lays it at the apostle's feet as if it's the whole thing.

Now, One of the things that makes us a dangerous to us is if we are in a church where the Holy Spirit is working and we see how people are rejoicing over the spirit's work and we want them to admire us. We're already failing to recognize that the one who's really being admired as the Holy Spirit.

But then if we want that admiration, The only way to really get the real thing is, from the Holy Spirit, You can't produce it yourself. And so, there is the danger of pretending to be spiritual in ways that you are not pretending to be better than you are putting on a show for other people.

And you might hear that. And think, well, what's the big deal with that? Everybody does that to some extent and who doesn't want other people to admire them. And yet, look at the language and verse 3. Peter said Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and the end of verse 4, you have not lied to men but to God.

And so there's a temptation, danger desiring that people would admire us and pretending to be better than we are. But then there is the danger of who it is. That is trying to get us to lie and the greater danger of who it is that we are aligned to or whom it is to whom we are lying and against him.

We are lying in a Holy Spirit church and a genuine church or the Holy Spirit is at work. We are more directly interacting with God himself. Notice that the Holy Spirit is a person, he's not an impersonal force. He's someone you can lie to. You can't lie to electricity.

Yeah, so the Holy Spirit is not like some kind of divine. Electricity is a person and he's a person whom you sin against if you lie to him. And notice that there is another person and a legion of persons or legions. A persons who want you to lie. And that is Satan.

Jesus said that Satan was the father of lying and so when Peter hears a lie, he knows who's the father of that. So it's not a small thing, is it? When we want other people to think better of us than we are, It's something that if you allow it to happen and you act on it, it's an indication.

That Satan is filling your heart. Isn't that a frightening thing to say or to think or frightening situation to be in Satan filling your heart? Well, the devil who hates God and hates the image of God and hates Christ would like nothing more than to fill our hearts. And so there's a great danger and a spiritual healthy church that we will want to appear better than we are because the Holy Spirit as a person and he is God in in verse two verse three.

He says they lied to the Holy Spirit in verse 4. He says, you have not lied to men, but to God. So, he's not just a person, but he is God. Now, the encouragement is that the Holy Spirit is God and He is a person and He is at work in His church.

So if we read this and we think, oh no, I catch myself thinking, and sometimes even saying things at church out of a desire, that people would think better of me than I am. Is Satan filling my heart. Am I going to die? And go to hell. We know that we don't have to because Jesus really has taken his seat on the throne.

He really has poured out his spirit and his spirit can give us faith in Jesus and repentance from our sin, he is really working in his church, He is with us, he is the one who gives us faith. And so if we're a believer, we know that the Holy Spirit is with us and that He's in us, we're going to hear and verse 32, the Apostles, tell the council who are have put them on trial, we are witnesses to these things.

And so also is the Holy Spirit. Whom God has given to those who obey Him. There's only one way. Faith comes to a person. A person comes to believe in Jesus. And that's by the Holy Spirit, making him believe in Jesus. There's only one way a person comes to obey God and that is by the Holy Spirit So we can take encouragement from the presence of the Holy Spirit and look to him to work in us so that we will so that we will not lie so that we will not try to appear better.

Then we are one last thing on that and that is we need to be genuine and honest in our families. If it's dangerous and it's dangerous enough. That We would, each of us individually. Want others to think that we are better than we than we really are. But notice that this was something that Ananias and Sapphira were in league together with they had agreed together.

So, not only had Satan filled, Ananias art, like Peter said in verse 3, but then when he hears her answer in verse 8, he says in verse 9, how is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord, in our families? We should be those who worship God together.

Walk with God together, help one. Another be honest with God and honest with others, but if we out of pride and wanting people to think that we are good, if we get into the habit as a family of trying to look better than we are to other people and reinforcement, we can actually do the opposite of what we are called to do with one another.

And we can, we can end up hardening one another in sin and encouraging one another, in sin, and aniacin Sapphira had done this to each other hadn't. They shouldn't one of them have said when they were agreeing to do this? No, we can't do this. We would be lying and we would not just be lying to people.

This is a church in which God Himself has is present and God Himself. As it work we would be lying to him. Let's not do this wife or let's not do this husband. Well, let us as a family help. One another not in a spirit of judgmental, not in a judgmental spirit of harshness.

But when we see things that we're not being honest about or not walking with the Lord, like we should, let's be willing to to show one another, the sin. Let us be willing to be shown our sin. Let us help one another so that we don't end up harming one another like Ananias and Sapphira did to one another in this passage Finally when There is pain that comes and here there wasn't just pain but there's death.

Let's notice that God is using it for our good twice. You have in verse 7. Sorry, first in verse 5. So great fear came upon all, those who heard these things and then again in verse 11. So great, fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things, these were actually the death of Ananias and the death of Sapphira were actually moments in which the Holy Spirit wasn't just disciplining or maybe punishing.

We don't know if Ananias or Sapphira work inverted. They weren't just moments in, which he was disciplining your punishing in an eyes. And Sapphira, There are moments in which he was doing good to the rest of the church. He was reminding the rest of the church. That when, when you are in the congregation, you are dealing with God and you must deal with God.

And you must still honestly So he actually produced greater reverence for God and a greater awareness of his own presence by the death of Ananias and the death of Sapphira. So, that's another mark of a church in which the Holy Spirit is working. Even when he brings discipline, even when he brings grief is he produces increased faith and repentance out of those things.

So let's ask God to help us be aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit and interact genuinely with him in our home. And in the congregation, let's pray.

The Holy Spirit, we ask you to help us as We read and think about this passage, as I come to preach it on the Lord's day. Whether you'd help me finish in the sermon preparation. All of these wonderful truths that were a little bit unorganized just now but we thank you that this is from your word.

Even as you describe yourself and your presence to us and the danger of our sin and of Satan in taking you lightly violating the third commandment that way. So we pray that you would that you would bless to us having considered your word now and your worship. Pray that when we come to hear it preached and the Lord's day, that you would help me to preach, you'd help us all to hear.

That we would become more aware of your fellowship with us and your work in us and that we would therefore be more guarded against sinning against you. Whether it's like this in against Ananias and Sapphira. Well, their sin lying to the church and agreeing with one another to lie or when we reinforce the desecration of your day or worshiping, according to our desires or breaking any other parts of your good law.

O Lord, help us to realize that we're not just sitting against one another, but that we sinned against you directly. So help us to see your love for us and to be full of love for you. Help us to rejoice that you are the one who is giving us faith in Christ and who are helping us fight against sin and fight against Satan and help us to count it.

A privilege to be used by you in one another's lives. As we all depend upon you together to fight against sin and to fight against say, help us to worship you and trust in you than to know that you are God among us, not merely a force, not merely a mechanism by which we grow.

But God who loves us and who are with us in wonderful and personal help fellowship, Pray that you would help us Holy Spirit to think of you more correctly to respond to you from the heart to walk with you and by your help to walk with Christ. And to walk with God help us.

We pray In Jesus name. Amen.