

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

DISHONEST (ACTS 5:1-11) QUITE A CONTRAST

Immediately following the brief testimony of Barnabas, Luke tells us about 2 other Christians that sold property so they could participate in the church community. We now meet the infamous **Ananias** (God is gracious) and **Sapphira** (beautiful).

SO, WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL?

The story has little to do with money, but with **dishonesty, conspiracy, and selfishness**. This couple **wanted the acclaim and benefits of the community without all of the sacrifice**, and they lied to people and God. The Spirit showed this to Peter because **this sin would cause disunity and hurt credibility**.

HERE COMES THE CRAZY PART

It stuns the reader to hear the result of Ananias' lie is God strikes him dead. Some believe this was cardiac arrest from the exposure of his sin, but even if that is the case, it is no less God ordained. Though we don't always understand, **at times God may choose to remove dangerous people in dramatic ways**.

NOTHING ESCAPES THE EYES OF GOD

God sees what happens in our hearts, and it is only a matter of time until others see it as well. **When hidden sin threatens innocent people, God will deal with it, sometimes severely. Unaddressed sin is cancer to the Christian and Church. God loves His Bride and wants to protect her.**

AND IN WALKS THE ACCOMPLICE

Sapphira comes in and gives the exact story, and then receives the exact same fate. The death of these 2 brought 2 results: fear in the church and fear in the city.

- **We should properly respect the power of God and the destructiveness of a sinful lifestyle.**

IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO IGNORE THIS STORY

This dark story deals with **greed, deceit, and hidden sin – all prevalent problems in the church today**. These sins not only inevitably destroy the individual, but they hurt the progression of the church. **We must talk about the hard truths of sin: God will not tolerate it and there are consequences.**

THE CROWDS (ACTS 5:12-16)

THIS IS WHY THEY WERE SO MAD

The Sadducees were seeing that it wasn't just Peter and John performing miraculous signs in Jesus' name, but all of the apostles.

- **"None of the rest dared to join them"** probably means that people were afraid to antagonize them and that they actually loved what they were doing in the city.

THE CHURCH CONTINUED TO GROW

Instead of meeting in the temple courtyard, people would bring sick out into the streets thinking that even Peter's shadow would heal people. In the ancient world a shadow represented the person. So this was more a superstitious response.

HOW ISN'T AS IMPORTANT AS WHO

God may have healed people with a shadow, but that isn't the point. The point is people were brought to the Christians and they were healed by the power of Jesus.

- The church didn't grow because of shenanigans, but because they **became a healing station for the lost and hurting with the gospel**.

IN & OUT (ACTS 5:17-26)

HERE COMES THE BAD GUYS

One of the Bible's biggest antagonists, Caiaphas the High Priest, returns with the council and has the apostles arrested. But, as they sat in jail, an "angel of the Lord opened the doors and brought them out."

This is the first of 3 "jail door miracles."

THE ANGEL GAVE THEM INSTRUCTIONS

The angel didn't free them for no reason. God wanted them to "Go and stand in the temple complex and tell the people about this life." The miracle had a purpose.

- **Miracles happen for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel.** "Miracles" that don't promote the gospel may not be of God.

BY THE BLOOD AND OUR STORIES

People needed to hear the testimonies of the Believers, and God opened the door for them to "hear about this life." Notice, their lives were difficult, but they were **fulfilled and served a purpose! This is what people are looking for: fulfillment, purpose, and something bigger than them.**

BIGGER THAN EARTHLY FORCE

The temple police were "baffled" by how the apostles got free and made their way back to the complex to speak. They were not just afraid of what God might be doing, but the crowd of Believers had grown and they feared a riot may break out if they took the apostles by force.

THE COUNCIL (ACTS 5:27-39)

"...YOU HAVE FILLED JERUSALEM"

Not only was the Sanhedrin worried about this new belief system's rapid growth, they were worried that the teachings of the apostles made it clear who killed Jesus.

- Ironically, just a couple months prior, the Sanhedrin told Pilate, "Let His blood be on us and our children!" (Matthew 27:25)

"WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MAN"

Peter made it clear that they were not worshipping a new God, but actually obeying the Word and prophecies of the Savior. **Christians do not respond with violence or slanderous resistance** (Luke 22:49-51). **We're to respond with love and truth. We don't have to defend God; He's capable without us.**

PETER OFFERS NO DEFENSE

Instead of vain arguments or getting angry, Peter offers these murderers salvation through Jesus Christ. V30-32 are pure gospel that clearly explain that **we are offered forgiveness of sins and the relief of sin's oppression. We're also promised the Holy Spirit if we obey Him.**

HELP FROM AN UNLIKELY SOURCE

God put into the heart of a Pharisee to call for reason in the middle of this heated moment. **Gamaliel** was a highly respected rabbi that was apparently a good man.

- He was also wise enough to know that killing people to stop a movement that had spread beyond the city did not honor God.

SIMPLE LOGIC THAT WE SHOULD REMEMBER

After Gamaliel reminds the council that cults had come and gone in the past, he makes a simple yet profound statement about the Jesus movement: **"For if this plan or work is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them."**

WE LEARN SEVERAL LESSONS FROM THIS MAN

We should be **calm, sober-minded, and controlled in conflicts**.

- Though we should address heresy and unethical behavior, **we must not attack other Believers about minor issues.**
- **People whose views don't agree with ours should be left to God to deal with.**

FORWARD MOTION (ACTS 5:40-42)

NO EASY CATCH AND RELEASE THIS TIME (V40)

Instead of a warning, some new legislation, or an angelic deliverance; the followers of Jesus were flogged. The standard at this time was 39 lashes.

- **There are times for close calls and supernatural provision, but there are also times when we will extremely suffer for the truth.**

WARNED AGAIN AND RELEASED

As blood still ran down their backs, they were warned not to preach Jesus' name, then they were free to go. It's no wonder that Peter speaks so much about suffering in his epistles. Luke records their response:

"...rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name."

AND THE BALL KEEPS ROLLING FORWARD

Luke writes, "Every day in the temple complex and in various homes, they continued teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah."

- **Jail, intimidation, laws, and even physical beatings did not deter the followers of Christ from teaching and living the Gospel.**

ARE WE BEING HONEST?

- First, do we honestly believe that there are consequences for the choices we make?
- Secondly, do we believe God has a standard by which we're to live? Do we value honor, honesty, sacrifice? Do we think we can escape God's eyes?
- Thirdly, do we understand God wants to protect us, not punish us?

WHAT DETERS US?

- The fear of what others think?
- Laziness and apathy? A lack of urgency?
- The sacrifice Christ calls us to make? Submitting to His desires vs. yours?
- Affiliations with world systems takes precedent over God's system? Idolatry?
- Physical danger? (Not sure we will make it this far)