

Removing The Mask

Masks -

You hide who you are.

You pretend to be someone you aren't.

You look like someone/thing else.

Who am I?

Who am I created to be?

Let's look at a couple of people who wore a mask to become something they weren't.

Acts 5:1-11 (NKJV)

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 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? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

9 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 are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Ananias and Sapphira were wearing masks. They were trying to appear to be something they were not. They wanted everyone to see what they wanted them to see. But Peter saw through the masks. He saw who they really were. He saw the truth. It was not hidden from him and it was not hidden from God!

If you came into this place wearing a mask this morning...it's time to take it off...show who the real You is...Be Real. Be You.

I know for most people, the reason you wear a mask is because you are afraid that people won't like the real you. There is a fear of what they will think if they know what you are really like.

I get it. You know as a pastor I even feel this pressure. I can tell you that the same person you see here preaching is the same person you will see if you come to my home or I come to yours. But there's still a pressure to suppress parts of my personality around most people because of what they might think...

I'm goofy. I'm sarcastic. I'm a little sassy. Sometimes I worry what people will think...

Here's the thing for me and for you...We are not perfect. And we never will be perfect this side of heaven.

And if we step beyond stuff like our personality traits, we are sinners. We will sin. And we know we shouldn't. It'll make us look stupid or like a failure....So we not only don't take the risk of being vulnerable before others...we won't even take the risk of being ourselves!

But what if I say something they don't like?
Or something funny and they don't laugh?
What if I say something that I don't realize is not ok to say?

Then we try to hide behind a mask and not be ourselves. And we try to hide our sin and shortcomings like we don't have any.

Sin is like a stain on your shirt that you don't want anyone to see...so you try to cover it up. You try to hide it. But listen...it's still there and eventually somebody is gonna see it.

We're all a bit of a mess, some more than others...but no one here is perfect. Take off that mask of perfection.

When we look at Ananias and Sapphira, who else has thought that their punishment was a little extreme? Anyone besides me?

I for real have thought...you die for that? I've heard it preached before that this was to set the tone for the rest of the church so they knew how serious it was to lie in the house of God!

But I'm sure someone in here has lied in church and didn't die for it! So what was the big deal with Ananias and Sapphira?

Acts 5:1-3 (NKJV)

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 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?"

Why has satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?

When we read this it can be easy to blame the devil. Mean old devil filled his heart! Poor Ananias!

But think about it this way, Ananias was a part of the church. He heard the gospel and we assume accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. He and his wife are just selling some land. And at some point they agreed to give all the proceeds to the church.

Acts 4:32-35 (NKJV)

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

Ananias and Sapphira were a part of this group. This is the chapter right before their story. No one said that anything they possessed was their own. They had decided this together. So people start selling stuff and bringing the proceeds and giving it to the church to decide where there was need.

But Ananias let satan fill his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. When it says satan filled his heart. The heart is speaking of the soul (mind, will, emotions).

Who is satan? The adversary. These people believed with one heart, one soul. They were in unity and the adversary, who opposes the people of God began to work on Ananias...

Ananias began to doubt this plan...he became unsure...he started to think of a way out...he was no longer in unity...but his pride prevented him from going to the leadership. He didn't want to be seen as the doubter that was not on board...

As satan began to work on him...his heart became **filled** up with selfish desire, thinking of this way out without appearing differently. Ananias put on a mask.

The mask to hide who he is and not be seen the way he really was.

So he sells the land, and brings the proceeds to the church, probably with a big smile, and says here are all of the proceeds I got from the land! He and his wife clearly had a plan to say this was all of the proceeds. And look at what Peter says:

Acts 5:4 (NKJV)

While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

No one was forcing them to sell this land and give 100% to the church. They didn't even have to sell it. Then even after they did, it was still their money. They could decide what to do with it. They could decide to give part of it.

But deception is the tactic of the enemy. It began to fill their hearts...how can we give part and make it look like we gave all. There are no signs of need...only of greed...

So they devised this plan...to conceal their greed...and present these proceeds as though it was the full amount they received.

Did you catch the part of where they, both husband and wife, agreed to this plan? Husbands...wives...you are accountable to one another. You are to help each other. You are to challenge each other when it comes to right living!

I don't know how many times my wife asks me if I asked God what He thinks. Or if He would agree with my decision. Some of you have NO idea what a blessing this is and how many times it saves me from making a poor decision!

Ananias wore the mask to try and hide who he really was. To show this false perception as this overly generous person. When he really could have just been like “here's 75%, we decided to keep a part of it” and likely would have been just fine!

But he lied to God. He committed to God to give it all to the church and then had the guts to lie and present it as though he did exactly that.

He literally died. And so did his wife when she came in with the same story 3 hours later.

So why did they risk it all? Was it JUST to hide their greed? Or was it something more?

Acts 4:35-37 (NKJV)

And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas has just sold some land, and gave all the money from the land to the church.

They saw how much praise and attention Barnabas was receiving...and they wanted what he was getting!!! So they invented this scheme to look like Barnabas.

So they wore this mask not only to conceal who they really were, but they also wanted to look like something else...Barnabas.

Isn't this one of our problems in life that leads to us wearing a mask? Sometimes we're not hiding anything...we just want to look like someone else...

And when we get consumed with looking like someone or something else...we become untrue to who we really are. We try to act like that person we want to look like. But it's just a mask...you're still YOU behind the mask.

Remember how they died for their lies and deception? I see this as a sign of what happens to the plans and purpose for our lives when we refuse to remove the mask and hide who we are or try to look like something we are not.

It kills our purpose. Because God created you in His image...your personality, your characteristics...He put those in you...you don't have to be someone else....

Use what you are working with...follow Jesus...let the Spirit conform you into HIS image and use what He has put in you to serve Him!

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Be who you are...God wants you as you are...people want you as you are

Prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, mercy

Wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues.

One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

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