

11-9-25

"HYPOCRISY KILLS!" - ACTS 5:1-11

INTRO: (PIC - Oliver Cromwell)

TAKE HOME: I want to live a life of authenticity before the Lord.

LIVING THE LIE: scene 1 (5:1-6)

1-2) within the church is this couple (**Ananias** = "God is gracious" & **Sapphira** = "a sapphire gem; beautiful"). They might have come in as a real blessing, a true gem, a beautiful couple...but they don't end that way! They come up with this plan together to sell their land (v.3) & give a part to the church (but claim it was the whole amount)

Why even try to pull off this stunt? What led to this? 2 things:

1) They saw the people's REACTION: praising God for how He was providing for the needs (4:35)...they thought "doesn't the end justifies the means"?...what harm can there be if God gets the glory in the end?

That's Not God's way! He wants purity, integrity, honesty, truth - that's who He is & what His people should reflect!

2) They noted the personal ATTRACTION: Barnabas' name is noted as someone who gave a large amount - 4:36...I'm sure he's getting unsolicited attention

to Barnabas it is all innocent thank you's as he turns people back to the LORD...but for this couple watching from afar it's getting twisted in their heart... quite inviting, tempting..."How do we get that too?"

NOTE: Self always wants the praises & promotions.... No longer looked over, just one in the crowd... I want my name on the "wall of givers" for all to see - I want to be appreciated & esteemed in the eyes of men!

- people's Reaction & personal Attraction...is that what's moving me to give? Hope not.

Giving is not what I can get out of it, nor what people will do because of it; it's for God's glory alone!

(2) he "**kept back**" (to embezzle) (dishonesty, deceit, steal)

NOTE: Their sin was not in how much they gave or not gave (v.4), but lying about it.

4 key traits of hypocrisy in a Christian:

1) Hypocrisy always carries a lie with it (v.3)

a lie goes 2 ways: Lie to men to cover tracks...lie to God - thinking He doesn't really care. It's a deception at heart.

"hypocrisy is a deliberate deception" (Sunday is one act...Monday - Saturday another)

2) Hypocrisy presents a greater degree of devotion to God than is actually possessed.

danger: we can go through the religious motions without a true heart of worship...we can say "I'm all Yours Lord, but in reality we are still holding back...keeping back the truth. We're afraid that if we're truly honest about things, that people won't value me the same! ...LIE from the pit, trick of the enemy to kill & steal & destroy the life with God.

Your value is not determined by the eyes of men, but the eyes of God. In Jesus you are priceless and valued by God. Your security is in Him, not in what you make. You don't have to put on the show to impress others.

3) Hypocrisy can take fleshly selfish motives and mask them in a religious cloak! (ex. **Judas** – woman's ointment poured out to Jesus...this could be sold and given to poor...John notes: he didn't care for the poor but took money from the account - thief & embezzler!)

I may fool others with my pious ideas or actions, but I can't fool the LORD - He sees through it all, He sees the heart!

** Ananias & Sapphira cared not to relieve the poor, but to fatten their ego (self).*

4) Hypocrisy kills the life that God intended. Jesus called the Pharisees "hypocrites" and gave 8 "woe's" to their lifestyle (Matt. 23) Even Peter, church leader, fell into hypocrisy at one time (Gal. 2 - Paul confronted him with it - inconsistent practice)

NOTE: God intends for you & I to walk in newness of life in Christ...in sweet fellowship with God & others. The beauty of the body of Christ is not that we are perfect, but that we are real with each other & God. That when we fail we confess our sin & find mercy in Jesus.

When we only "play the part" we rip off ourselves & others of the life that God intends.

3-4) Peter was given the gift of discernment by the Spirit in this situation, "something wasn't right", something's off about this offering ...and he spoke up. Peter detected here the hand of the enemy..."Satan filled your heart to lie"** (great temptation of deception...they took it! **"You conceived this thing in your heart"**)**

James 1:14-16 (cycle of sin) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

they were enticed with a lie, took it to heart, now were living a lie, speaking a lie to others & to the Holy Spirit. (v.4 – God)

(4) Peter Confronts them with the reality of things:

1) giving was voluntary – didn't have to sell it...no mandate given.

2) once sold – didn't have to give it all (no one pressured you, it was under your own control).

This couple thought God didn't care, it will be different for me, end justifies means, they thought they could "pull one off"...little did they know it would cost them more than they bargained for!

NOTE: God sees secret sin (actions/motives) and He will expose it...fake, fraud, false. How? we don't know always...but in truth He will!

World "no big deal". As believers we have a higher standard, a different format in our operation.

Clarification: "You have not lied to men, but to God" (Spirit of v. 3 is God in v. 4 - support for the trinity of God) He is not a "force" or "essence", the Spirit is God.

NOTE: It wasn't just the Church they wronged, but ultimately, primarily it was God.

Ps. 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-- That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

If we could only remember the gravity and effect of our sin against God, we would think twice before acting.

5-6) God struck Ananias dead, not Peter.

*Why would God do such a radical thing when things were going so good? To set an example from the beginning: His Church must be holy (actions, motives) because He is a holy God. Sin is a serious mar against holiness.

great **fear came upon all those who heard these things...** (church went from great power & great grace - 4:33 - to now great fear!)...they realized the weight of this issue...sin is offensive to God, costly to us, He can judge quickly...He is not someone to be dealt lightly with.

(6) young men would do the proper burial of older ones... wrapped in linen, carried him outside the city walls, and buried him.

LIVING THE LIE: scene 2 (5:7-11)

7-8) Sapphira hasn't heard from her husband in 3 hours and so she goes looking for him...starting with the last place he told her he was going with the money - the church.

Peter confronts the issue with her, **"Tell me..."** (opportunity to come clean, own up to falsehood, come out of the lie & live in the truth...would she have found grace?)

...Peter could have ignored the issue (it already was costly and painful...point was already made in some sense)...but leadership doesn't skirt issues, or excuse them... but deals with it head on!

Unfortunately, she stands her ground & "gives the line", **"Yes, for so much"**

NOTE: God loves us & provides us with opportunity to confess our sin and come clean.

Isaiah 1:18-20 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. (19) If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; (20) But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

He gives the opportunities...take them! Confess now!... but if we refuse to own up, then know that He will expose it ...judgment chastening, brokenness, pain & shame.

9) Peter notes their cooperation in this deceitful plan (agreed together)...**"testing the Spirit of the Lord"** (trying to get away with deception) He pronounces the same judgment upon her as her husband faced.

Can God take the life of someone (even his kids) for their sin? YES! Israel sinned in the wilderness and all of that generation died out...3,000 died at the golden cow idolatry incident (Ex. 32)...23,000 were killed when they committed sexual immorality & idolatry (Num. 31)...even in NT people were eating communion wrongly and some died! (1 Cor. 11:30-31)

Sin always leads to death. It's only by God's grace and long suffering that we are not dead already! 1 John 1:9 becomes a treasure - confess it, He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us.

10-11) Immediately she died...buried beside her husband out of respect. Again fear grips the heart... don't mess with God's holiness.

NOTE: It is foolish to put God to the test...to see if He really cares about sin in my life. HE DOES & HE DIED FOR IT! We can think His delay in judgment means that He is accepting of our sin... **WRONG!** Kindness leads to repentance!

Few closing take home lessons:

Lessons: #1 - Falsehood ruins fellowship (with others & God)...hypocrisy is ugly on anyone! If we don't deal with our sin, God will. And it won't be pretty!

Lesson #2 - Take sin seriously. God does. Note the necessity of discipline from God toward sin...Ananias & Sapphira were believers that made a blunder...How He dealt then, He could do the same today. Only because of His mercy are we not consumed! Keep short accounts of sin & walk in the fear of the LORD.

PRAY