

## Small Group Guide - 3/20/22

### Sin in the Church - Acts 5:1–11

#### Sermon Outline/Notes

\*Part of membership covenant is a commitment from pastors to you. This passage is an example of us preaching/teaching the whole counsel of God's Word to you. It is a difficult passage, a tragic passage, a sobering passage, but a necessary passage.

\*Acts 3–4: Threats and Danger Outside the Church - Satan attacks from outside

\*"But" - in contrast to the previous story

\*Acts 5: Threats and Danger Inside the Church - Satan attacks from inside

\*Series of firsts:

\*First mention of a named woman since 1:14

\*First mention of a named married couple in the book

\*First mention of "ekklesia" in the book

\*First sin mentioned in the life of the church

Ananias - "The Lord has been gracious", Sapphira - "Beautiful"

"Their actions were anything but gracious, anything but beautiful." (John MacArthur)

#### **1. Ananias and Sapphira's Deceitful Plan (5:1-2)**

"Revival does not guarantee the absence of sin in a community ... When many people are converted and genuinely transformed, when many are renewed and truly learn to hate sin, others find it more attractive to be thought holy than to be holy." (DA Carson)

**\*They wanted recognition and praise.** (John 12:43, Matthew 6:1–4)

**\*The practiced spiritual hypocrisy.**

- Hypocrisy is putting forward the impression in public of someone that you are really not in private; attempting to deceive others that you are something that in reality you are not.
- Two types of hypocrisy
  - public confession; public contradiction (everyone knows)
  - life confession; heart contradiction (no one but God knows)
- In our struggles and sins, sometimes to avoid hypocrisy, we quit attempting to pursue holiness and are ok with our sin. We must never be this way! Being open about our struggles should also inspire us to be more like Jesus. relying on the grace of God more.

#### **2. Peter's Bold Confrontation (5:3–4, 7–9)**

The Lord sovereignly and supernaturally revealed to Peter the sham of it all. We don't claim this type of revelation, but God does sometimes grant discernment towards others. Sometimes they give it away and wear their sin on their sleeve. One can tell. Sometimes the Lord allows providential circumstances for us to see that others are in sin. Sometimes God just grants us perception where we know something is wrong but maybe not what is wrong. We can intentionally seek them out and ask.

**\*Peter confronted the specific sin.** - sin was two-fold, LIE/TEST and KEEP BACK  
“keep back” - embezzle; only used 3 times in the NT; this same word was used in the Septuagint to describe the sin of Achan in Joshua 7; Luke uses this word to tie the stories together with intentional, secret sin and the divine judgment that followed.

Lying to the Spirit was promising all and only giving some. Testing the Spirit was seeing how much they could get away with. Better to not vow than vow and not pay (Ecc. 5:1–5)

**\*Peter confronted the Satanic influence.** - “pleroo” - to fill, control; Hypocrisy is satanic! - THE DEVIL DIDN'T MAKE THEM DO IT

**\*Peter confronted the magnitude of their sin.** - all sin is first & foremost against God.

Peter confronted their sin. The sin wasn't in the keeping back some. The sin wasn't in not giving all. The sin was lying about it. The sin was making it out to be something it wasn't. Peter was bold to confront it. “Maybe we should we overlook it? They gave money!” BUT no pragmatism here! Peter doesn't be a hypocrite along with them! Peter cared more for God's character and the church's purity than Ananias and Sapphira's reputation at this moment. Sometimes the moment calls for holy confrontation!

### 3. God's Immediate Judgment (5:5–6, 10)

MacArthur: Is there hypocrisy in the church? Yes. We are given this story not to show us that hypocrisy exists in the church, but we are to see how God feels and acts toward hypocrisy in the church. (God's attitude)

**\*Ananias fell down dead.** - shocked, struck,

**\*Sapphira ignored repentance and also died.**

- Peter gives Sapphira the opportunity to repent - he asks her!

WOULD GOD REALLY DO THIS? Absolutely. And not only here.

- 1 Cor. 11:30–32, Heb. 10:26–31 - fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I would ask, “If churches are so filled with hypocrites, why aren't more dead?” Perhaps because churches are filled with lost people, and God is giving time for repentance?

This is why we are called to hold each other accountable; this is why we are called to all practice church discipline! God will have a pure bride. His ultimate aim is our holiness, not our happiness.

A father without discipline isn't a father. A father who does not discipline his children isn't a good father. Ultimately, an undisciplined child is a reflection of the father's character. (Prov. 13:24, 23:13, Heb. 12:5–11)

**\*God will not be mocked, especially by His own. (Gal. 6:6–10)**

#### 4. The Church's Fearful Response (Acts 5:5, 11)

“In times of genuine revival, judgment may be more immediate than in times of decay. **When God walks away from the church and lets the multiplying sin take its course, that is the worst judgment of all**; it will inevitably end in irretrievable disaster. But when God responds to sin with prompt severity, lessons are learned, and the church is spared a worse drift. In this case, great fear fell not only on the church but also on all who heard of these events.” (Carson)

**\*Reverent fear came upon the church.**

**\*Reverent fear came upon the community.**

#### Application:

**\*God hates and exposes hypocrisy in His people.**

**\*God desires that we give sincerely and honestly.**

**\*Belonging to the church of God is amazing, serious, and humbling.**

**\*\*“Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.” (John Owen)**

#### **Small Group Questions**

1. How does the story of Ananias and Sapphira tie into the story of Joseph (Barnabas) from the end of Acts 4? What were Ananias and Sapphira's motivations?
2. What was the sin(s) of the couple? How did they embezzle their own money? What does it mean to lie to the Holy Spirit and test Him?
3. Discuss Peter's confrontation. How did Peter know? Discuss God's attitude toward spiritual hypocrisy and how Peter did not go along with Ananias and Sapphira's sin. Discuss how the Spirit grants us discernment concerning a brother/sister's sin. What should we do?
4. What did God do to Ananias and Sapphira? What caused this action from God? Also read 1 Corinthians 11:27–32 and Hebrews 10:26–31 about the premature death of believers.
5. How did the the church and community respond to this event? How and why should God's character elicit reverent fear from our lives? Discuss this quote from D.A. Carson:

“In times of genuine revival, judgment may be more immediate than in times of decay. **When God walks away from the church and lets the multiplying sin take its course, that is the worst judgment of all**; it will inevitably end in irretrievable disaster. But when God responds to sin with prompt severity, lessons are learned, and the church is spared a worse drift. In this case, great fear fell not only on the church but also on all who heard of these events.”