

Generosity and Deceptive Greed 2

Acts 5:1-11 “

5 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it 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 to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.” ⁵ When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶ The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. ⁷ After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” ⁹ But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” ¹⁰ Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

❖ Outline

- 1) A Unified Body
- 2) Empowered by Grace
- 3) Generous Believers
- 4) A Heart of Generosity
- 5) A Heart of Deceptive Greed

❖ 1) A Unified Body

- ³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

➤ They were Unified

- **The Church functioned together...**
 - They were united in love for each other.
 - They were united under the teachings of the apostles...
 - They were united in fellowship with each other...
 - They thought highly of their brothers and sisters...
 - They were humble
- **They were so unified...**
 - That they no longer considered their possessions their own...
 - Rather, they shared with those around them
- **In Peter’s 1st Letter we see his instructions to us on unity**
 - And I think it is a glimpse into that unity the early church had
 - What a great guide for you and me today... to work toward unity
- **1 Peter 3:8-10⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.**
- **1) Get together and be unified in your minds... have the same type of thinking**
 - ◆ **One Forgotten Aspect of Unity**
 - Is the Holy Spirit... He is our teacher...
 - And HE can bring us together on our understanding of the Word...
 - But the church today, much like Ananias... has forgotten the Holy Spirit of God...

- 2) **Sympathy** –
- 3) **Brotherly Love**
- 4) **Tender Heart** –
- 5) **Humble Mind**
- 6) **Do not Repay Evil** for Evil, but instead bless
- **If We follow these things today....**
 - We will find ourselves much like the early church: Unified

❖ 2) Empowered by Grace

- ³³ **And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.**
- **The Apostles Continued to Give their Testimony**
- **The Preached about the Resurrection of Jesus**
- **Great Grace Was Upon Them All**
- **Grace:**
 - God was so good to them even though they did not deserve it...
 - And I think they wanted to share God's graciousness with others...
- **We Need To Be Much More Evangelistic...**
 - We need to be purposeful about sharing Jesus with others...
 - We do not do it because we are fearful...
 - We do not do it because we worry more about what man thinks than God thinks...
- **The early church grew because they loved Jesus...**
 - And this bubbled over into their lives so much that they could not help but speak of Him
 - We need to be a part of growing the Kingdom of God
 - When they begin to get off track

❖ 3) Generous Believers

- ³⁴ **There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.**
- **Lets Look at the Details of their Generosity first:**
 - 1) Not a needy person among them
 - 2) Owners of lands and houses sold them
 - 3) They brought the proceeds to the leaders of the church
 - 4) And it was given out as any had need....
- **Notice:**
 - In the same way that their Salvation led them to think more of others...
 - It led them to think less of their possessions...
 - When the person became a believer:
 - His strong ties to his worldly goods were cut...
 - He thought less of this world, and more of the world to come...
- **Giving Was Great in the Early Church:**
 - Consider this... Our starting point when it comes to giving is the Tithe...
 - A Tithe is a Tenth of what we gain right?
 - So a person can not be a tither, unless they give a tenth...
- **If a person did not tithe and give, it was considered that they were robbing God...**
 - **Malachi 3:8-10 ⁸ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.**

- And in all honestly, they were not giving, so much as paying what they owed God...
- They understood that all their goods had been given to them from God...

➤ **A Principle in the Bible:**

- When you give, God blesses you...
- The principle is throughout the Bible...
- God blesses those who give generously...
- And even today people can tell countless stories
 - of how God has done just that when they gave and gave extra..

➤ **2 Cor 9:6-7 ⁶The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

- **Now, there does seem to be a lot of room for us to give as we purpose in our heart**
 - God let's us be as generous as we want to be...
 - So much so, that we should not even give if it is not in our heart to give...
 - Because God does not want, nor does He need your money...
 - ◆ **On the contrary... you need to give... it is for yourself more than for God...**
 - ◆ He owns all things...!

➤ **But... Giving Generously Means:**

- We must Trust God...
- If we do not trust Him to handle our finances and meet our needs... then we will never start...
- And we will never be blessed by God...

➤ **We do not give because we do not trust God...**

- We think... If I can just pay this bill or that bill and get caught up I can give...
- We fail to realize God will provide for those who trust in Him

➤ **Let Me Make A Blanket Statement to Us All**

- If you have not prayerfully asked God to lead you in what to Give: You are in Sin
- If you have not looked Biblically at what God asks of You in conjunction with your prayers
 - You are in Sin
- If you have not given what God has led you to give in your heart: You are in Sin...

❖ **4) A Heart of Generosity**

- ³⁶Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷ sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

➤ **Barnabas... Son of Encouragement...**

- The apostles changed His name because He was so known for being an Encourager...

➤ **We see Barnabas as a great example for the church in his day as well as ours...**

- He is the advocate of the new convert Paul (9:27)
 - Acts 9:27 ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.
- The shepherd of the new Gentile converts in Antioch (11:22),
 - Acts 11:22 ²² The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.
- The one trusted with relief for the poor (11:30),
 - Acts 11:30 ³⁰ And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.
- The first partner of Paul on his missionary journeys (13:2),

- Acts 13:2 ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

- The advocate for giving John Mark a second chance (15:37)

- Acts 15:37 ³⁷ Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

➤ **John Piper says of Barnabas:**

- *“He is one of the most mature, reliable, loveable leaders of the early church. And right here in Acts 4:36–37 Luke shows us how Barnabas’ trusted ministry began—it began with a demonstrated freedom from the love of things, and a heart of love for the poor. He sold his field and gave all the proceeds to the apostles. In this story he stands for the way true faith in Christ creates a bond of love for people and cuts a bond of love for things.”*

❖ **5) A Heart of Deceptive Greed**

- But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

➤ **Their Hearts Were Filled With Deceit and Greed**

- First Question we have: Were they Christians? Maybe
- **The Context is within the church... We see Luke writing about the church being unified**
 - We see him give an example of a very generous man within the church: Barnabas
- **And then He says, “But a man named Ananias, with his wife Saphira**
 - So, they could have been believers...
 - Believers can certainly fall into grave sin when they are not walking in the Spirit daily
 - And I certainly assume that He was...
- **But, it is unclear isn’t it...**
 - Luke never tells us that He was a true believer, and He never tells us that He was a false convert
 - And I think that may be on purpose...
 - Because it does not really matter here does it... The point is not if He was saved or not...
- **The Point is that He was within the Church...**
 - And He lied and stole from God... And God judged him
 - There are many in the church today... and we can not tell if they are true or false believers...
 - They blend in well... But God knows...
 - They may even think themselves believers...
- **But we should always consider what Jesus said right before He was arrested...**
 - John 8:31 ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,

➤ **If He was Saved, He died and went to Heaven... if Not, then He died and went to Hell...**

- And that should be at the forefront of all our minds... because life is but a vapor, right?

➤ **So, Ananias was Stealing from God**

- The little phrase “he kept back for himself”
- Is the greek word “nosphizo”
 - **It is not used very often, but it means:**
 - ◆ To embezzle.....To misappropriate Fund... To steal or to rob....
- **He had misappropriated the Funds...**
 - I think that definition best suits what He had done...
 - That English word means, He took the money and He purposely put it in the wrong place...
 - **That is called embezzlement... and it is a very serious crime even in our country**
 - ◆ We hear about it often in the news when some rich guy took a bunch of peoples money
 - ◆ Promises to invest it for them, but lines His own pockets with it...

- **Or Some Accountant or high up in a company**
 - ◆ Siphons money out of the business into his own account
- **? How Often Have We Misappropriated Funds or Embezzled from God?**
 - How many times did we know God was leading us to give and we did not do it?
 - If a person does not tithe then, they are certainly misappropriating Funds...
 - Funds that they think are their own, but even there they are deceived...
 - **In Annanais Case, He Embezzled what God had given Him...**
 - ◆ Took some and gave it to God
 - ◆ But took part of what was supposed to be God's, and lined His own pocket...
- **When we look at it like that, it is very sobering**

➤ 1) Satan Filled His Heart to Lie

- **³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?"**
- **Satan had filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit**
 - How can Satan do this if He was a believer?
 - Aren't believers protected from being possessed by Satan
 - ◆ Sure they are...
 - But, Believers are not immune to Satan's Temptations
 - ◆ Especially when they open themselves up to sin...
- **His Sin Was Grave:**
 - His Sin was not just that He was greedy... that He wanted some money
 - He was deceptive...
 - And He was deceptive so that His reputation as a generous person would grow...
 - He was a hypocrite...
- **He not only stole from God, but He lied to God...**
 - He did not lie to His fellow man...
 - He came in to give money to God, and lied to God...
 - **"to lie to the Holy Spirit"**
 - ◆ **He was Like Achan**

➤ A Similar Action from Achan and the O.T.

- **You remember from the Book of Joshua about the defeat of Jericho**
 - Or maybe you remember them walking around the city 7 times and blowing trumpets
 - From the Bible Mini Series...
 - ◆ Hopefully you have read it for yourselves though...
- **God commanded the people of Israel to take nothing from Jericho after they destroyed the city**
 - But Achan saw some stuff he wanted and buried it under his tent
- **When Israel goes in to fight the next people in Ai**
 - This small little town defeated them... and it was not pretty
- **When it was all said and done...**
 - We see the death of all those people was on this man named Achan
 - Because of His sin, God was not protecting and fighting for the people...
- **He was given a chance to come forward, but He did not...**
 - And God exposed his sin and He was put to death...
 - He did not fear the Lord...

➤ 2) He Did Not Have to Give

- ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”
- **God had given them this land to do as he wished to do.**
 - Even after it was sold He could do what He wanted to do with it.
 - He Contrived to Lie in his Heart...
 - ◆ He lied to God
 - **God had blessed him with the land to do as He pleased...**
 - ◆ But instead of thanking God and being grateful...
 - ◆ He wanted more...
 - ◆ More than the money for the land...
 - He wanted a Name for Himself...
- **Why was His Sin So Grave? 3 reasons**
 - **1) He wanted a Name for Himself**
 - ◆ It did not seem important to Him, to exalt the name of Jesus...
 - ◆ Rather He wanted to exalt the name of Annanais...
 - ◆ When we look at Barnabas... He exalted the name of Jesus...
 - And in turn, God exalted the name of Barnabas...
 - ◆ **What a great principle to know and understand...**
 - When we put God first, He takes care of everything we could ever need or want
 - **2) The community was unified...**
 - ◆ Much of Their unification came from the fact that they considered
 - ◆ everything they had to be shared...
 - ◆ Each person shared everything they had...
 - **Ananais was Worldly... One foot in the church and One foot in the world...**
 - ◆ **Romans 12:2 ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**
 - **Ananais listened to the prince of this worldly world...**
 - He conformed to the ideas the world gave Him
 - To look after Himself... to think about Himself and His wife
 - He had plans for this money that involved Himself and His Wife...
 - **Had He been renewing His mind by walking closely with the Lord...**
 - He would have been able to discern God’s will in this situation...
 - What would have been acceptable and perfect...
 - Rather, He did the opposite...
 - **3) The Spirit Was moving and filling the church**
 - ◆ Ananais simply did not fear or understand the Holy Spirit...
 - Because He thought He could sneak this by God Himself...
 - ◆ He did not have an appropriate view of God... or He did not care...
 - ◆ **We Must do our best to understand God**
 - He has given us His Word so that we may know Him
 - God’s character... His attributes are seen clearly throughout scripture
 - Had Ananais spent more time under the teachings of the apostles...
 - Than He did scheming up a plan to get Him noticed...
 - He would have understood God better...
 - There is a lesson for us there!
- **What A Great Picture of Our God Being With Us in the Church**

- Annanais came in to give money... and in his mind he thinks he is giving it to some men
- The apostles... to the church and the people of the church...
- But what He found out, was that his gift was to the Lord...
- And the Lord God of all heaven was dwelling with His people through the Holy Spirit

▪ **God Is With us here today...**

- He has chosen to make a dwelling place within His Children
- In Revelation 1 and 2 John has a vision a dream of Jesus ...
- John sees Jesus walking in the midst of some Golden Lampstands...
 - ◆ And it is explained to John that these lampstands represent the churches...
- **Right after this Jesus gives some instructions through letters to each of those churches...**
 - ◆ Telling them what they are doing right, and where they need to repent...
- **God is here today!**

➤ **3) They Sinned Together**

- ⁷ After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." ⁹ But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?"

▪ **They Tested the Spirit of the Lord**

- Whoever started this did not matter... They did it together...
- This is why it is so important that both spouses in a relationship be walking with the Lord
- So, they can help keep each other from sin...

▪ **We are not to follow our spouse into sinning against God...**

- Men and women both have a relationship with God
- God does not prefer men over women or vice versa
- He does not talk to only one of them...

▪ **He has given them both differing roles for His own purpose...**

- And we do not have to fully understand it
- But we must trust Him that He knows what is best for us...

▪ **So both people in the marriage need to be walking together with the Lord**

- So they do not find themselves walking together with Satan

➤ **4) God's Judgment Brought Great Fear**

- ⁵ When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶ The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him... Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.... ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

▪ **God Took Away Their Earthly Life**

- They Breathed their last breath

▪ **Great Fear Came Upon the Church**

- The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom
 - ◆ Psalm 111:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

➤ **Great Fear Came Upon the Whole Church:**

- They feared because they saw the hand of God move against hypocrisy

- The Fact that the Holy Spirit was among them became very obvious to the church...
- **If We Think We Can Hide Our Hypocrisy**
 - And I say this to myself first and foremost...
 - We are fools... and our end may very well be like Ananais and Saphira...
 - It may not be as dramatic... But let us not forget that God is here with us...
 - He walks in the midst of the churches...
- **The Deaths of Annanais and Saphira Teach us**
 - God is concerned with the Holiness of His church...
 - And He will expose our sin... And God does not care about our reputation...
 - He will ruin it in the blink of an eye...
- **We must Repent...**
 - If we were all exposed in here today for who we really are, it would be a shocker...
 - Let us go to the Lord again in repentance...
 - Asking Him for His help in overcoming our weaknesses,
 - And let us listen to the instructions He has already given us...
- **We Must Fear**
 - The Holy Spirit of God... Because He knows all our thoughts and ways...
 - We must fear trying to make a name for ourselves when God is to be exalted
 - We must fear taking what is God's and using it for ourselves...
 - We must fear being so haphazard within the church, and with the commands of God...
- **God is not a man...**
 - He is the creator and sustainer of all the universe...
 - When He allows Himself to be partially seen...
 - The greatest and Godliest of men in history have fallen on their faces as if they were dead...
 - Considering themselves to be most unholy and weak...
- **Therefore:**
 - The better option is to repent... and Trust God...
 - Trust God with you possessions
 - Trust God with your name and your fame
 - Trust God with your family
 - Trust God with your reputation
 - Trust God to take you through persecutions for His glory and your good...
- **Invitation**
 - **The thing about this story is that:**
 - Ananais likely had many great qualities...
 - And He may have ever been sort of a Leader in the church...
 - **We focused only on the bad about him...**
 - But I am sure there was much good...
 - **Many of us are this way...**
 - But we must be careful that greed and deception
 - And a disregard for the power of the Holy Spirit are not found within us...
 - **And it is a battle...**
 - I know how easy it is to lie to yourself when you know better...
 - To do things you know God would not be happy with....
 - **Let us all repent and turn toward God today!**