

**Acts #14**  
**Hypocrisy In The Church**  
Acts 4:32-5:11

**Things were going great in the church.** As we have seen in our previous studies there was great power and great grace at work in the church. Satan, always the enemy of God's great plan, had already begun a counter attack of persecution through the civil and religious authorities. **But his tactic had proven ineffective in stopping the advance of the gospel, so the devil tried a different strategy – this time he attacked from within.** It is always tragic when Satan can use Christian to wreck the church.

**So look with me as we look at an age-old problem that has been present in every church – hypocrisy!**

Acts 4 closes with a delightful picture of the Early Church united together as seen in verses 32-37, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

**Understand that these people of the Early Church did not just go out and sell everything they had as a group, and bring all the proceeds back and put them into some kind of fund.** The tenses in the verbs in verses 32 through 35 indicate the continuous action, therefore, the teaching here is that they sold their personal possessions simply to meet the financial need as they arose. This was a temporary custom, as is later seen in the book of Acts.

If we are not careful, we get so bogged down thinking about everyone selling their property, that we miss the real truth that is shown for us in verse 32, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither

said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

There is no richer word in the New Testament than the Greek word “koinonia” which is translated “fellowship.” Since there is no single word in the English that can convey all of the meaning, depth, and richness, it is translated in many ways – “fellowship...communion...partakers...partners.” The root of this word is found in our present verse in “they had all things common.” The Greek word here translated “common” is the root from which “koinonia” comes.

**In other words, the New Testament pattern for the Church is not only that they be born again through their faith in Jesus Christ, but also that they were involved in an unselfish fellowship, where Christian love was the norm.**

With this kind of love and fellowship the Early Church was sweeping the country, and we are told, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

**Realizing that outside attacks only made the disciples stronger and the Church more unified, Satan now unfolds his master plan – he now begins his work, not from without, but from within! I say to you without any reservation that the greatest harm that comes to any church is when we allow Satan to break up our fellowship, because of our hurt feeling, and/or hurt pride, for the next step is utter disaster!**

Therefore, look with me at presence of hypocrisy in Acts 5:1-2, “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it, at the apostles' feet.” **We must, first of all, realize that the problem was not in the fact that they did not give all of the money, but the problem is that they lied about what they were doing.** The sin that Ananias and Sapphira were involved in was the sin of hypocrisy!

There are at least two truths that we need to see as they relate to this sin of hypocrisy.

**First of all, hypocrisy is apparently impressive.** Verse 1 says, “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.” **The thing**

that they sold was of no importance; it was the motive that was behind the selling and the giving.

There is no doubt that their actions were prompted by the actions of this one “Joseph,” who had sold a great parcel of land and had given all of the money to the disciples for the needs of the Early Church. You will notice that the disciples then changed his name from “Joseph” to “Barnabas.”

After seeing the impression that Barnabas had made in the minds of the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira also sought to share in the glory that was so evident, therefore, they sold something of their possessions also. They did what they did, not for the glory of God, but because of their jealousy! Their pride had been hurt. Someone else was getting a little more attention than they were. Someone else was getting a little more praise than they were. Therefore, Satan struck out at this couple in the area of their pride.

Second, hypocrisy is not only impressive it is also deceptive. Verse 2 says, “And kept back part of the price, his wife also knowing it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostle’s feet.” The indication here is that the sin was not done on the spur of the moment. Ananias and his wife had talked about this transaction; they had deliberately planned together and agreed that they would commit this act of fraud.

The awful deception that Ananias and Sapphira were seeking to convey to the others was that of counterfeit consecration. Let me tell you that there is not another time in the day or week that there is any more hypocrisy exhibited, and lies spoken, than on any Sunday morning at Church. We stand to our feet and sing our praise songs that say, “As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after Thee. You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship Thee. You alone are my strength, my shield; to you alone, may my spirit yield. You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship Thee.” But I wonder if we too are not guilty of exhibiting a counterfeit consecration! We come, we look, we listen, and we exhibit a counterfeit holiness and when church is over and we get home all hell breaks loose!

George McDonald once said, “Half of the misery in the world comes from trying to look, instead of trying to be, what one is not.”

We not only see the presence of hypocrisy, look also at the punishment of hypocrisy in Acts 5:3-11, “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and died; and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wrapped him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and died; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.”

**Ananias and Sapphira lied because they wanted to impress the rest of the church.** They wanted the credit and the prestige for sacrificial giving, without the inconvenience of it. Galatians 6:7-9 warns us that there is always destruction when we blindly follow our own deception, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

**The Greek word for hypocrisy simply means, “play acting.”** **There are many that have played the part so long that they have fooled their friends, their pastor, and even their family, but let me assure you of this one fact, you have not fooled God.** 1 Samuel 16:7 gives us this truth, “...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” **My friend, God knows what you are!**

Now the question arises, “Does God kill Christians because of their sin?” **Absolutely not!** **Why not?** Because, as a Christian, your sin has been charged to Jesus, as seen in Romans 4:6-8, “Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness apart from works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man

to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” 1 John 4 reminds us that “the blood of Jesus Christ, (God’s) Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

**The problem with Ananias and Sapphira was that they were not Christians, they were just pretending to be something that they were not. They were just playing a part. They were religious but lost. They were religious liars!**

**So how do you deal with hypocrisy?** You follow the pattern given to us in Acts 5 – you kill it! “But,” you ask, “how can this be done?” By allowing Jesus Christ to take the throne of your life, and say with the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Verse 11 gives us this conclusion, “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.” **In verses 14-16 we see that the end result was that great power was manifested and the church continued to grow.** Listen where there is great unity, great power, and great honesty, the end result is a great church.

If you have never been saved, invite Christ into your heart as your Savior and allow Him to make your life real.

If you are already saved, walk in spirit and in truth!