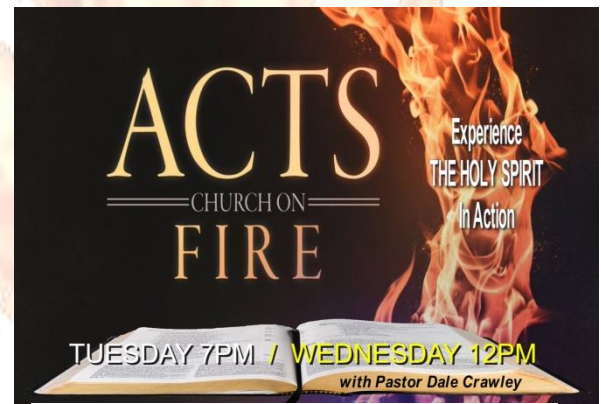


ACTS 5 – Pt. 1 “The Holy Spirit and Internal Conflict”

God is obviously on the move. The church is seeing incredible things happen. The Gospel is spreading rapidly and many people are calling on the Name of Jesus for salvation. There is a radical sharing of resources going on that can only be explained by the Gospel. In fact, a man in the church named Barnabas just gave an incredible gift in order to meet the needs of people in the church (4:36-37). The church is doing what the church is supposed to be doing. And they lived happily ever after, right? **Not exactly ...**



October 22nd – 23rd, 2019

It should come as no surprise to us that God’s work would be opposed by those who have rejected Him and ultimately, by Satan, who hates Him. In the next two chapters, we are going to see how the church faces opposition from both “**the inside and the outside**” in Acts 5-6. Both types of opposition can be incredibly dangerous to the effectiveness of the Church and the movement of the Holy Spirit. **READ ACTS 5:1-16.**

THE ENEMY WITHIN

Up to this point, conflict aimed at stopping the growth of the Lord's church came from without. However, beginning with Acts chapter 5 ... conflict which threatened the peace and unity of the church now came from within!

The recognition given to some simply because of their humility and generosity (Barnabas Acts 4:36) ... is occasionally coveted by others. Some are humble and generous because it is their nature to be so. However, the humility and generosity by those who covet recognition ... is often counterfeit and **merely a guise** to gain attention and praise. **The motive of the one is pure ... while the motive of the other is corrupt and self-serving.**

Such were Ananias and his wife Sapphira. Ananias and his wife Sapphira concocted a plan of deception ... **that would make them appear something they were not***. (cp. Dt. 22:5; 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 11:13-15; Romans 16:18; 2 Tim. 3:1-7)

The story of Ananias and Sapphira shows the danger of lying and the danger of seeking praises of men for our good works. The sin was not that they gave only part of the price. They were not obligated to sell their property, nor to give the full price of the sale (verse 4). The sin was that they lied about the gift (verses 3, 8). They gave just part of the price (verse 2), but agreed to tell people they had received a different price (verses 7-9). **Whatever their motive may have been ... they had lied to God the Holy Spirit and paid with their own lives!**

THE ORIGIN OF LIES

Peter said Ananias lied because Satan had “filled his heart.” Satan cannot force us to sin. Ananias and Sapphira were still accountable for what they did. That is why they were killed. The point is ... that Satan tempted them and, instead of resisting him, they let him come into their hearts and control their conduct. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; John 8:40-44. The same is true of all sin (Matthew 15:1-20; James 1:13-15).

This also shows the danger of doing religious acts for an outward show to make an impression on people. This was a major problem of the Jewish leaders (Matthew 6:1-18; 23:1-12). Acts of worship and service to God ... actually become evil when done for wrong reasons. And such wrong motives also often lead to other forms of outward sin ... such as lying in this case.

This event also shows that some people want the blessings and glory of serving God without accepting the sacrifice involved. Just because we serve the true God does not necessarily mean He will be pleased with our service. **We must offer the service He has authorized in the way He has authorized.** This takes effort and self-denial. Some want the honor of obedience without the effort. So they put on a pretense. God is not fooled!

HOLD UP ... Before we get too quick to judge Ananias and Sapphira ... we ought to consider all the sin in our own lives. Consider all the times we have done good things, not because we love God and people, but so that we can impress others with our piety in order to make them think we are good people. It's sobering, huh?

Acts 5:3-4 also demonstrates that the Holy Spirit possesses Deity. Verse 3 says Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, but verse 4 says he lied to God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit must be God – i.e., He possesses Deity as do the Father and the Son.

This is the first recorded example of discipline or chastisement of members of the early church. The story of Ananias and Sapphira has many parallels with the story of Achan in the Old Testament (Joshua 7). **BOTH OCCUR AT THE FOUNDING AND BEGINNING OF A NEW PEOPLE.** In both we see the severity of God's judgment fall on His people as a warning to His people ... that He is not a God to be trifled with!

THE CONCEPT OF FREE MORAL AGENCY

The passage says ... **Satan filled Ananias' heart to tell the lie.** But v.4 says he conceived this thing in his own heart. This shows, not only that Ananias was responsible for the sin ... **but that man has power to choose** whether or not to cooperate or permit Satan to influence him to sin!

- Satan brings temptation, but he fills our heart only when we allow him to come in. The end result is ... that Ananias is said *to have conceived this in his heart*.

Satan brings ideas to our minds, but we have power to accept or reject. Just as a woman conceives when a cell from her body joins with a cell from the man's body ... so we conceive sin in our minds when our mind cooperates with Satan's efforts to tempt us (James 1:13-15). Thus, sin is a joint action between Satan and the human sinner!

The same is true of good that we do. God may urge us to do right (through His word or circumstances of life), but we must choose to co-operate. Calvinism says we are totally depraved from birth and unable to conceive anything but evil. But passages like this show ... that we are perfectly able to choose to do good or evil. **Both Satan and God work to urge us, but we become good or evil only when we choose which course we will take.** Doing good ... involves both God's influence on us and our choice to submit. (Phil. 2:13; Romans 6:16)

This also helps explain passages such as Romans 9 ... that says God hardened hearts or moved certain men to do wrong, such as Pharaoh, Judas, the Jews who killed Jesus, etc. **None of this occurred arbitrarily or by compulsion apart from the choice of the individuals.** Each of these individuals had already chosen to do evil. **God, knowing their hearts ... appealed to them by His word (or circumstances) to do right. But their evil hearts resisted God's message.**

The message of God is designed to either melt the heart of those who are humbly submissive ... or to harden the hearts of those who are stubbornly resistant. So both God and the individual ... are said to harden the person's heart, because both influences are at work. This is understood better ... when we see how both Satan's influence and the person's choice ... are at work when man sins.

