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A Deadly Game we Play
Acts 4:32 – 5:11

Kids love to play pretend. Girls like to play mommy and take care of their baby doll and fix dinner and arrange the house. Boy...boys tend to like to play cowboys and Indians and war type games that involve shooting things, at least throwing things at each other...anything with a bit of danger and risk sounds pretty cool. "hey mom I killed him and he is not staying dead." When I was a kid I liked to put on magic shows for my family. I loved to disappear the rabbit, change the coin, make it look like my finger was being chopped off or my thumb ripped off. Its all about deception and fooling the other person mind to appear to be that which it really is not. It's about distracting someone's attention while you manipulate subtly the trick underneath the silk.

One time when I when I was about 12, my friend John and I decided play a trick on the elders of our church. Sunday morning as they were coming out of my dads office after morning prayer, we were on our hands and knees with a moistened finger and looking. They of course were concerned and quickly surmised that I had lost my contact lens several of them passed by swinging wide of the area so as not to step on the lens, but most of them got down on their knees and began to help us in our search for the missing contact. I knew my father would be shortly coming out of the office too so with all the elders on their knees looking for my lens we slowly extracted ourselves and moved on down the hall, just as dad came out in a hurry wondering what the elders were all doing on the floor. "Why we are looking for Normans contact lens" I'll never forget the baffled look on his face as he walked through the men, "Norman? Norman doesn't wear contact lens..." John and I could not hold it in any longer and burst out in gales of laughter.

Children love to play deceptive practical jokes. They love to play pretend. But they aren't the only ones. Adults play these games too and it is no laughing matter...especially when it happens in the church. Especially when it involves religious deception. How often do we ask a deep question in Sunday School or LIFE group just to appear intellectual or so that folks will see that we are biblical scholars? How often do we come to church and laugh and appear to be fun loving when really we are in a rotten mood and just had a fight with our husband. Have we been real high on a charity auction just to appear to others that we are more generous than we really are? Have we gone to expose other people's sins so that we can appear more holy? How about our prayers in public? Do we really believe and live out the words we say? Do we really believe the words we sing about? When someone asks you in the church foyer "So how's it going...you reply fine, great, God is so good" I am guessing that most all of us come to church at times when and put on our smiling mask of adequacy but inside we know how inadequate we really are. We are struggling inside with a terrible pain and hurt. We are struggling with problems in our homes, but we don't want to tell anyone about it. We can't get along with our children, but we will never admit it to anyone. The pride that doesn't want anyone to know what's going on in our inner life that nobody sees, keeps us from sharing real pain. So we come to service and put on that mask that says everything is fine, just fine. Somebody asks how things are going. Great just great. How's everything at home? Wonderful we're having a wonderful time. And the minute we say that and it's not true we die. Death sets in. Lies bring death and reject any healing that could take place. Death set in on you and that same death pervades our whole church. I think this spiritual deception is one of the most crippling things to our church and it's not a laughing matter. We are playing a deadly game of deception and it's slowly killing us.

This is a spiritual matter and we desperately need God's help to move, not in someone else. We need God to move in our own heart...right now. PRAY

Turn with me in your Bibles this morning to the book of Acts. We are studying the end of the 4th chapter. The early church is experiencing its first salvo of attacks from the evil one. The first was an external attacks by persecution from the Jewish religious leaders, priests and elders that tried to intimidate and threaten them to stop preaching and teaching that Jesus came from God and died for sins and was rejected and killed, but that all of this was part of God's Sovereign plan and God raised him up again into new life and that same resurrection power can be ours as well as in Jesus He offers the freedom from sin, freedom from self. Freedom to live life the way God designed it. Satan's first attack on the early church came from the outside...now the attack in coming from the inside. Know this that the enemy never gives up, he simply will change his strategies. One of his most effective means is to take something that is good and twist and pervert it into something that is evil. He has done that quite effectively with the beautiful expression of marital love and here in our lesson this morning Satan does it with the giving of money to the church. Lets read our passage ACTS 4:32-5:11.

At the end of chapter 4 we read of a church that is going great and even thriving in the face of persecution. We see it's a church that is filled with the spirit because it is unified v.32 "of one heart and soul." There was a pervasive spirit of unity. Not uniformity but all who were there were bound together, not by race or financial position or social status..+.but by belief in Jesus that he died and rose again and that by faith in that Jesus they could experience freedom in life. There common bond was forged in the blood of Jesus Christ.

When we come to faith and believe in Jesus we see in this passage it has two effects on a person. First it tightens our hearts to each other. We become united in love. Secondly, it loosens our grip on things. It frees us

up from the love of things as it firms up our love for people. As we grow in Christ we will love people more and more and love things less and less. As we grow in Christ we will see things only have value as they are a means of loving people. We will value people above our possessions. Why because we realize how much we have been given in Christ and that God owns it all anyway and we are simply stewards entrusted to manage His accounts.

We read at the end of v.32 that “not one of them claimed anything belonging to him was his own. But all things were of common property. V.34 If there was a needy person from time to time people would sell homes and real-estate and bring the proceeds to the church leadership to wisely distribute to those in need. This is not communism as the giving here was all voluntary. Communism says what is your is everyone’s. Christianity says, “what is mine is yours”. Here we see this generous life giving spirit of the early church. There was an atmosphere of care for each other. Not all the lands and homes were sold as is clear from Acts 12, but as people were prompted they sacrificially gave.

Do you want to be a new testament Christian? Here is a very practical test of Christian love. How much are you willing to sacrifice financially to help a brother in need? James asks the question; “If a brother or sister is without clothes and in need of daily food and one of you says, “Go in peace be warmed and be filled, but you do not give them what is necessary for there body, what use it that?” We need to take a lesson from the early church and stop clinging to things. Stop thinking that we someone deserve a certain standard of living. What are you clinging to? A position? A status? Stop clinging to things and be more open to each other. Belief in Jesus ought to affectively tighten up our relationships with each other and loosen up our grip on things as we begin to value people more then things.

Here we see that God blessed them with seeing great power and great grace...soon they would experience the refining purity of great fear.

The author of Acts, Luke provides us with an example of a guy that really caught the spirit of what was happening in the early church. This was a guy named Joseph from the island of Cyprus. He lived in such a way that he was always encouraging and helping out other people that he was given a nickname, Barnabus which means son of encouragement. He valued people far more than his possessions and proved that by selling a piece of land that he owned and gave it to the church to help out those in need. Barnabus will become an important character later on in Acts, the story of the early church.

There is a sharp contrast between the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5. If you were to stop reading at the end of chapter 4, you may think “Ahh... there is the perfect church.” That is the one I want to be a part of. “Great Unity, great power, great grace and great care for each other...” That’s the one I want to join.

Someone once told Spurgeon that they were leaving his church because they were going to go find a perfect church. Spurgeon who had a great deal of wit said, “Well, when you find it, please don’t join it, because then you will ruin it.” We discover in chapter 5 the early church is not the perfect church. Yacolt EV Free is not a perfect church...at least as long as I’m the pastor of it. But some of you when you find our church, hear that it is a healthy church, that the word of God is preached and a place to minister and heal and people love each other you say, “I’ve found it” here it is...I get worried because I know it just a matter of weeks, months when all that enthusiasm will wane. I will offend you someone will step on your toes. You will see a wart or two that isn’t quite right. Disappointments are here to be found. There is no perfect church. Pray for our church. Pray that God would help us do better and pray that we would remain faithful to what God has called us to.

If our church is ineffective, then Satan will probably leave it alone, but if we have people who are witnessing. If you have a strong missions

program. If you are trying to meet the needs of people and showing them the love of Christ. If you are drawing people to worship God and preaching powerfully from His word, then Satan will attack and if he can't make any dents from the outside, he will start to shoot at you from the inside. And that is what happened in this church. Lets take a look at chapter 5. READ 5:1-11

Annaias and Sapphira were probably riding the spiritual tide that was sweeping down through Jerusalem. The holy spirit had come just like Jesus had promised. Incredible miracles were taking place. People were boldly speaking his name and the church was enjoying an uncommon unity, the koinonia fellowship and love and care for each other. People were selling things to help each other out and then here in chapter 5 the wind shift to expose the selfishness of a couple in the early church. One of the truthfully refreshing things I like when I read the Bible is its brutal honesty. If I were trying to fabricate a religion I would coat it in such a way that the heroes at least all looked great. It would be a Disney movie, at least the old Disney movies where the bad guys are always bad and the good guys are always good. But the Bible doesn't candy coat the truth in recording its redemptive history. It record Moses defiance of the Pharaoh of Egypt but it also records his unrighteous defiance of God that barred him from entering the promised land. It tells of David's brave victories and also his slobbering cowardice in from of the king of Gath when he faked insanity to save his neck. It tells of David slaying giants but also includes him slaying his friend to steal his wife. Here in chapter 5 we see that no church is perfect.

We are not told why it was that they sold their land but we might assume that they envied the approval of the church when Barnabus and others like him did so and the church rose up and praised God for the blessing. They wanted to appear spiritual and generous just like Barnabus. They wanted to hear the applause too. But there hearts were not all there. There was some ugly sin lurking down under. Outwardly,

they wanted people to view them with committed spiritual character, but inside they were different. I'm not sure why they thought they could pull off this deception. Maybe they received far more than was the normal expected price of the land and they thought, Hey we can get the glory points by acting like we are giving the full amount and yet keep a pretty decent chunk for ourselves. It could be they even needed that extra money for some extra expenses that had just hit them. Who knows what tempted them to do it, but they did. They were poser Christians who wanted to appear far more spiritual than they really were. They valued possessions over people. Appearance over substance and reputation over truth.

Gordon McDonald said, "Half the misery in the world comes from trying to look instead of trying to be what one is not." Hypocrisy is deadly to the life of the Christian and lethal to the life of the church. If we fail to live up to our ideals...that's not hypocrisy because no believer this side of heaven will ever live up to God's righteous standard. But hypocrisy is the deliberate deception of trying to make people think we are far more spiritual than we really are.

Annaias and Sapphiras story expose for us the sin of putting up the façade, putting on the Sunday suit of religious looks in order to conceal the shabby sin wallowing in our lives. That sin in fact cost them their lives. While the name Annanias means, "God is gracious", he learned that God is also holy and just. The name Sapphira means beautiful, but inside her heart had some ugly sin inside.

V.2 Peter said "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Peter discernment exposed Annaias sin. What does it mean to lie to the holy Spirit? I'm really not sure....but possibly they didn't take the Spirit very seriously. Possibly they thought they could do whatever and get away with it. Possibly they thought that they could pull the wool over the Spirit's eyes. The point here is that God does take sin very seriously. Integrity does in fact matter to God.

Peter said v.3 why did you sell the land and then claim give the whole price to God and yet hold back a portion for yourself? Annaias there aren't any church rules that say you had to sell your land. There aren't any rules that say you can't keep part of the sale price for yourself...you could have kept it all. It was yours and if your heart didn't tell you to give it to God then don't bring it here. But don't lie to God saying you are going to give it all...wanting everyone to believe you are going to give it all and then keep back part for yourself. Tell the truth for you are lying to God, robbing Him of glory and rubbing His name in the mud by seeking the applause of men.

The result was swift and shocking. He dropped dead right at the apostles feet...the very place where he had just placed the money lie to purchase a façade of spiritual commitment, it cost him his life. So men picked him up, carried him out and buried him. Tragic wasn't it that the first recorded burial in the early church was that of a hypocrite? If you are like me you might be asking, "man was this necessary? Sounds pretty harsh. If we are all killed because of a lie would any of us be here this morning? "I sure wouldn't and neither would Peter as he was the one who at the trial of Jesus three times in a row lied, " I don't know the man". Was this swift judgment too harsh? I've notice that God tends to judge severely at the beginning of a new period of his salvation history. In Leviticus 20 just after the tabernacle was built, God killed Nadab and Abihu for trying to present a false fire on the alter to the Lord. When the Israelites entered the promised land, god killed a man named Achan because he disobeyed orders and hid some of the defeated cities spoils of war for himself. Donald Barnhouse would never let his congregation sing the third stanza to the song "At Calvary" because he refused to make liars out of his entire church, "Now I have given to Jesus everything now I gladly own him as my king." He explained by saying, "you see, if God acted in the same way today that he did in the 5th chapter of acts you'd have to have a morgue in the basement of every church and a mortician

on the pastoral staff. God's judgment here in the early first church was severe to protect the integrity and purity of the church. God was letting everybody know that He would not tolerate deception in His church. God wanted everyone to know that truth and integrity really does matter to God.

Annaias drops dead at the feet of Peter and is taken out and buried. It seems like a pretty quick burial, but due to the hot Palestinian climate it was customary to bury someone on the same day and especially so if the person had died under the judgment of God. Even Sapphira didn't know about it.

Three hours later, verse 7 tells us Sapphira is missing her husband. She knew that he had gone down to where the apostles were hanging out to drop off their sizable donation....but he hadn't returned yet. She was wondering what happened and so went looking for him. She didn't even know her husband was dead and buried. Side note here. Satan wants to keep us in the dark regarding the consequences of sin. He wants to keep the results of where our sin take us hidden from us. The consequences of a hard truth are far less than the consequences of an easy sin and Sapphira learns that lesson the hard way.

She goes to where the apostles are gathered. Now you would think that a pastor's first word to one who didn't know she was a widow would be words of condolence to ease the pain of her loss, but he starts immediately by giving her the chance to repent. He's direct. She must have known something had gone wrong by the look on his face and the first question he asked, but she went right along with the premeditated deception. V. 8 did you folks sell the land for this price. Yep that was it. Thump she's on the floor dead as her husband again at the feet of the apostle.

The sin of Sapphira is instructive for us because she bore the full consequences of her sin. It would be easy for her to pass the blame onto Annaias. It wasn't my idea...I just went along with it. I didn't take the

money down there...that was him. We tend to want to avoid responsibility so we will blame whatever to get ourselves off the hook. We will say we were forced by our circumstances. Our parent raised me that way. There were my friends staring right at me...I couldn't say no. The guy was really coming on to me and I couldn't just say no. That's the way I am...you'll have to live with it. Ultimately we start to pass the blame onto the Creator who made us. That's just the way Gdo made me.

A little boy observed to his mother, "mother why is it whenever I do something wrong, I'm a bad little boy, but whenever you do something wrong its just a lack of sleep or nerves?" Mom got it right about the little boy, he was bad, but forgot that she was also bad. Sin in sin and we see it correctly when we see our sin as against God.

V.11 a great fear fell upon the church. First use of the word church in the book of Acts. Imagine the effect of this event if it happened here in our church. I'm sure many people knew this couple Annaias and Sapphira who had sinned. No doubt they had friends, enjoyed meals together, maybe went on trips or fishing together. What if this had happened here at Yacolt EV Free instead of the first church of Jerusalem? I am pretty sure there would be some soul searching going on. V. 11 says a great fear came upon the whole church as they honestly assessed where they were with God. I bet there would be some repentance and coming clean. I bet people were very careful about what they promised before God. I bet they took a very close look at purity and holiness and especially truth. For they learned a very powerful lesson that playing the dangerous game of deception is deadly.

This couples story is a call to confront ourselves. Do I practice deceit. Do I attempt to make others think I am more spiritual, more committed then I really am? Do I exaggerate a story to make it sound just a little more exciting or make me look just a little better then I really am? Am I promoting myself to appear more spiritual then I really am? Do I fear rejection of other people if they found out what I was really like

more than I fear the righteous Almighty God? When our church is filled with the spirit its people will be honest with themselves and with others. We need to take an honest look inside folks..am I a truthful person? Ask yours spouse she'll tell you. Hell let you know. If your single ask your close friend. Take a look inside this week and ask God to reveal the areas where you have made a bad habit of religious deception. Lay all the results out before God and ask Him to help you remove the fear that keeps us from being honest real people with others. Ask God to help us make truth not deception a habit of our life. I want us to have the freedom and faith in God to be able to say for once I our church lobby, "no I'm really not fine...I'm not able to talk about it right now, but pray for me will you.. I need it today." Galatians 6:2 tells us to "bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone think he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Folks only when we stop playing the religious game of deception and take off our masks of adequacy will God step in and move in power in our lives and church body. May He begin to move in me.

Acts 4:32-5:11 “A Holy Fear...a Deadly game we play”

Swindall p.85 Children love to play pretend..but they aren't the only ones adult play games as well. How often do we laugh and appear to be fun loving when we are in a rotten mood? Do we ask a deep question to appear intellectual? Have we bid real high on a charity auction to appear generous to all? Have we exposed others sins to appear holy? All these games of pretend describe us as hypocrites.

Satans first attack came from the outside with the persecution from the chief priests. Now the attack is coming from the inside. The enemy never gives up simply changes his strategies. Satan loves to take something that is good and twist and pervert it to his own uses. He can do that with sex, and here he does it with money.

One of the truthfully refreshing things about the bible that lends towards its authenticity is that it is brutally honest in recording its redemptive history. I records Moses defiance of Pharoah but it also records his unrighteous defiance of God that barred him from entering the promised land. It tells of David's victories and his slobbering cowardice before the king of Gath. It tells of him slaying giants and also confront the adulterer and murderer of his good friend. Here we see that no church is perfect.

A spirit filled church is unified. “one accord” with a spirit given unity. Certainly it needs to organized, but if the organization starts to hinder the spiritual life and ministry of the church, then the church will just become another religious institution that cranks along existing just to keep itself going. God spare us from that lifeless pain. The spirit filled church magnifies God and the whole community can see it and look on with favor. The sprit filled church will be growing and multiplying.

Anaaias and Sapphira were riding the spiritual tide that was sweeping down through Jerusalem. The Holy spirit had come just like Jesus had promised. Incredible miracles were taking place. People were boldly speaking His name and the church was enjoying an uncommon unity the koinania fellowship. People selling things when needed. Then the winds shift to expose the selfishness of Anaaias. We are not told why they sold the land but can assume they envied the approval of the church and

wanted to appear spiritual like Barnabus. They wanted to hear the applause to. Selling the land wasn't wrong. Even giving part wasn't wrong. The sin was in pretending to give it all.

v.32 The congregations of those who believed
were of **one heart** (unity, one accord)
and soul
and **not** one of them **claimed** that anything
belonging to him
was his own;
but all things
were common property to them.

(Affirmation that God owns it all...it all comes from Him. 2:45. Not political communism as giving was all voluntary. Communism says, what's yours is everyone's. Christianity says what's mine is yours. This was a generous life giving spirit of the early church. . There was an atmosphere of care for one another. Not all sold all their lands and goods as v.34 seems to indicate members sold "from time to time" and donated as needed. This spirit of sacrificial giving is worth emulating. Principles of giving in II Cor 8,9 but nowhere there are we instructed to come bring out money at the feet of the pastor as though they were an apostle.

Since it all belonged to God when one was in need, they sacrificed to meet that need. It's a very practical test of Christian love is how much he or she is willing to sacrifice financially. James asks "If a brother or sister is without clothes and in need of daily food, and one of you says, Go in peace be warmed and be filled, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body what use is that?"

v.33 And with great **power**
the Apostles
were **giving witness**
to the **resurrection** of the Lord Jesus
and **abundant grace** was upon them all.

v.34 For there was not a needy person among them,
For all who were owners of land or houses
Would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales,
And lay them at the **apostles feet;**
And they would be distributed to each
As had need.

(do you want to be a New Testament Christian? We know that all of those who sold land didn't sell all of their lands and houses because there were still more lands sold later in Acts. Why lay at the apostles feet? Why

not in a collection box? Showy displays of giving against what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the mount? Prone to pride and misuse.

*God gets disgusted at us when we do the right thing in the wrong way, with wrong motives. To obey is better than sacrifice?? Sacrificial service that is distorted by pride, wanting to look spiritual, (what Jesus was so upset about with the Pharisees. Religious hypocrisy. Wanting everyone to think you are really better person than you really are. More generous. Pray out loud in church. More Bible reading. (retreats and camps everyone suddenly develops a great devotional Bibles reading time. Ask yourself. WHY am I doing this? Aspect of modeling for our kids.

v.36 And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth,
 who was also called Barnabas by the Apostles
 which translated means, son of Encouragement
and who owned a tract of land,
 sold it
 and laid it at the **apostles feet**. (“suggests some legal kind of transfer. A trust for the community rather than a personal gift to the apostles. Acts 12:12 shows that not every Christian in Jerusalem sold all of his property)

Introduction of Barnabus into the story, fit with one who was wholly dedicated to the early church life. Early on noted as an encourager. Luke shows him as an excellent example of attitudes as he introduces a character that will become important later on in the story.

There is a sharp contrast between chapters four of unity and community and sharing and love and witness and then chapter 5. Read v.32 and you may think All there is the perfect church. That is the one I want to be a part of. “all believers of one heart and mind...” Someone once told Spurgeon that they were leaving his church because they were going to go find a perfect church. Spurgeon who had a great deal of wit said, “When you find it, please don’t join it, because then you will ruin it.” This is not a perfect church...at least as long as I’m the pastor of it and several of you will continue to remind me of that fact as well. But some of you when you find our church, hear that it is a healthy church, that the word of God is preached and a place to minister and heal and people love each other you say, “I’ve found it” here it is...I get worried because I know it just a matter of weeks, months when all that enthusiasm will wane. I will offend you someone will step on your toes. You will see a wart or two that isn’t quite right. Disappointments are here to be found. There is no perfect church. Pray for our church. Pray that God would help us do better and pray that we would remain faithful to what God has called us to.

If your church is ineffective Satan will probably leave it alone, but if you have people who are witnessing. If you have a strong missions program. If you are trying to meet the needs of people and showing them the love of Christ. If you are drawing people to worship God and preaching powerfully from His word, then Satan will attack and if he can't make any dents from the outside, he will start to shoot at you from the inside.

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias
with his wife Sapphira

sold a piece of **property**,
and **kept back some** of the price for himself
with his wife's full knowledge,
and bringing a portion of it,
he laid it at the **apostles feet**.

(assumption was that Ananias wanted to be viewed by others just as dedicated as this Barnabus guy. Outwardly they looked like Barnabus but not on the inside they were of different character. They wanted people to say look at that couple they are just like Barnabus. Was this done out of envy for the noble act of Barnabus? He wanted people to think that they had given it all to God. Maybe he got a great price for the land and knew that he could give only a part and still make it appear to everyone that he had given it all. Maybe he was thinking in his head that he hoped to get about one amount, but when the sale came through so much higher than he had ever guessed, he became tempted to give what he had been thinking in his mind and keep the over and beyond blessing amount. God wants us to share the over and beyond amount. But word gets out how much was paid for the land and how much was donated to God.

Gordan mac Donald "Half the misery in the world comes from trying to look instead of trying to be, what one is not."

Failure to live up to our ideals is not hypocrisy because no believer this side of heaven can do that. Hypocrisy is deliberate deception, trying to make people think we are far more spiritual than we really are.

(any one need to come out of the closet today?? Pastor are experts at this. People expect it of us to be...or at least to look spiritual.)

the sin of the Façade; putting on a front in order to conceal the shabby sin in their lives. That sin cost them their lives. (building façade to make it appear more expensive, stylish than it really is.)

Ananias name means "God is gracious", but he learned that God is also holy. Sapphira means beautiful, but her heart had some ugly sin inside.

The Lord tends to judge sin severely at the beginning of a new period in salvation history. Lev.20 Just after the tabernacle was built, God killed Nadab and Abihu for trying to present false fire to the Lord. When the Israelites entered the land, God killed Achan for disobeying orders hiding some of the spoils of wars under his tent.

Barnhouse. Who would never let his congregation sing the third stanza to the hymn "At Calvary" Now I have given to Jesus everything; now I gladly own him as my king." You see if God acted in the same way today that he did in the 5th chapter of Acts, you'd have to have a morgue in the basement of every church and a mortician on the pastoral staff."

Their sin was energized by Satan. That's serious. Keep on the armor of God to withstand the enemy attacks. He is the father of lies. God was letting everybody know that he would not tolerate deception in his church.

Their sin was motivated by pride. I'm sure the church was praising God for Barnabus's generous offering. These two wanted to bask in that same kind of glory

v.2 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart
to **lie to the Holy Spirit**
to keep back some of the price of the land?

v.3 While it remained unsold,
did it not remain your own?
And after it was sold,
Was it not under your control?
(They weren't required to give any portion of the gift to God.
you could have kept it all, or said to give a portion...why lie???)

Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart?
You have **not lied to men, but to God.**

v.4 And as he heard these words
Ananias fell down and breathed his last
...And **great fear came upon all** who heard of it.
And the young men arose and covered him up
And after carrying him out, they buried him.

(quick burial? Without his wife being notified??? Tragic the first recorded burial in the Christian community was that of a hypocrite. Due to the hot climate in Palestine, it was customary to bury someone on the same day. Especially true for someone who had died because of divine judgment)

v.7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours,

and his wife came in,
not knowing what had happened.

(you might think that pastors first words would offer condolence of her husband who died. Not the case, he wanted to know if she too was culpable in the sin.)

She begins to wonder what is taking her husband so long to deliver the money to the apostles. Why is he taking so long? So she goes to where the apostles were gathered. Her husband was dead and buried and she didn't even know it. Satan likes to keep the consequences of sin hidden from us. He wants to keep us in the dark, while God guides us into the light. Peter accuses her of deliberately tempting God to see how far she could go and get away with it. God moves in swiftness, severity and finality.

Their sin was not in robbing God of some money. God was far more concerned with lying to him and robbing him of glory. No one was praising God for their gift.

We share in this sin not when others think we are more spiritual than we are, but when we try to make others think we are more spiritual than we really are. Hughes p77 When a preacher urges people to a deeper devotion to God, implying that in his life he has it all together when in actuality he knows he doesn't. When an evangelist calls people to holy living but is secretly having an affair with his secretary.

The sin of Saphira is important because she bore the full measure of guilt and consequences. We tend to avoid responsibility when we do wrong or our culture does wrong things. We say that someone else made us do them, we say we were forced by our circumstance to do that wrong. That is how my parents raised me. I was hungry so I stole. There was 5 boys in a group looking at me...what else could I do but that. It was intellect or lack of it. Anything we can blame as long as its not directed to us. That's the way God made me.

A little boy observed to his mother, "Mother why is it whenever I do something wrong it is because I'm a bad boy, but whenever you do something wrong its your nerves?" She blamed her bad behavior on her genes. And then we ultimately are blaming God for our sin. After all he created us didn't he? Sin is sin and God is not the cause of our sin.

And Peter responded to her

"Tell me, whether you sold the land for such and such a price?

And she said, "Yes that was the price."

Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together

To put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?

Behold, the **feet** of those who have buried your husband are at the door. And they shall carry you out as well. (woah...that's a prophet)

v.10 And she fell immediately **at his feet** and breathed his last and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

v.11 And **great fear** came upon the whole **church** (see v.4 first time Luke uses the word church ekklesia. Falsehood ruins fellowship) and upon all who heard these things.

Imagine the affect this would have had on the church. Many people knew the couple that sinned. No doubt were friends. Ate at each others home. Their kids played together. I am sure there was some pretty strong soul searching going on and long times of prayer. What if it happened today? I have heard an instance of a man I admired for teaching men. Affair. Pride. Refusal to go along with any sort of restoration. Drop dead and drive his car off the road. They found him in a field his car still running, but he was dead. If it happened here, we would surely begin to think about our own integrity or lack of it. Hagens p.78.

The harshness of God takes our breath away.

- 1) The sin was premeditated. They had planned together to deceive
- 2) Their desire wasn't to make a donation but to grab for some glory for themselves.

We need to be careful to cater to this glory. We can set people up on a pedestal that is not helping them any. Look at Joe Smith gave 150 acres to this ministry. If it wasn't for this guy then we wouldn't be here today. Thanks so much Joe...When Joe wasn't happy and "properly" thanked,

Should modern Christians sell their property and give all the proceeds to the church? Should some of us still do this?

Luke 12:32-34

II Corinthians 8:1-15, 9:1-15

II Thess 3:6-15

I Timothy 5:3-16

Should modern church take responsibility to care for all church members who cannot support themselves and whose family cannot support them?

What was God trying to teach the early believers by striking down Ananias? The fear of the Lord. Don't try to outfox God.

Why do you think God doesn't continue to strike down people dead who lie to him now?

How can we know that this passage doesn't apply to us today? What kind of church would it produce if God did still do this today?

Do we ourselves back up our words with practice? Do we really mean everything we pray about in public? Do we sing the songs with sincerity or routinely? “Matthew 15:8 “These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.” If God killed off all the religious deceivers today, how many church members would be left?

We have a responsibility to ourselves. Integrity. Are we facing the truth honest about why we teach or give? (One of the reasons I waited to get into ministry for so long.)

Responsibility to God (Swindall p89) They lied not just to the church, they lied to the HS.

Responsibility to the body of believers. They always suffer when truth exposes our hypocrisy. Its often easy to pretend we love others, say things we really don't mean, make promises we really can't keep. Its more difficult to drop the masks and truly love each other

Hypocrisy is the desire to look better than you are. The hiding of thing you do because you would not be supposed to do do them, because you would be ashamed to have them known where you are known. The doing of them is foul the doing of them in order to appear better that you are is fouler still. Gordan MacDonald.

Spurgeon

Coals of fire cannot be concealed beneath the most sumptuous apparel, they will betray themselves with smoke and flames. Neither can pet sins be long hidden beneath the most ostentatious profession of faith. They will sooner or later discover themselves and burn sad holes in a person's reputation. Sin need quenching in the Saviors blood, not concealing under the garb of religion.

Their story is a call to confront ourselves. Do I practice spiritual deceit? Do I attempt to make others think I am more committed than I am?

Nathan to David “You're the man”

Great fear seized the group as they began t honestly assess what God wanted of them. When our church is great its people will be honest with themselves. Do we exaggerate? Do we add a little color to make the story more interesting? Story at family life conference. Leadership retreat at royal ridges. Take an honest look are we truthful people? Are we promoting ourselves to be more spiritual people then we really are? To gain objectivity ask your spouse. She'll tell you. He'll tell you. If your single ask a close friend or roommate. Take a look inside and then lay out all the results before God and ask him to help you remove the habits of deception so that truth becomes a habit instead.