

014 - Acts 4:36-5:16

Scripture Reading: Joshua 7:1-26

Confession of Sin: from Hebrews 4:12-16

The word of God judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. And everything is laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, Who was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin, let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace.

Sermon: Barnabas, Ananias, and Sapphira Acts 4:36-5:16

Benediction: 1 John 1:7

I. You see people apparently devoted to Christ and His church (4:36-37)

A. OF COURSE there are people truly devoted to Christ

1. God demonstrated His own love for us in this: when we were still sinners, Christ died for us!
2. the salvation from wrath that Christ has brought us causes us to be devoted to Him
3. we want to act out that devotion in obedience to Christ

B. OF COURSE there are people truly devoted to Christ's church

1. it is His church, and so we love it
2. it is His temple, His very body; so if we love Him, we love His church

C. So you see people in the church apparently devoted to Christ and the church

1. they do things that seem very loving and self-sacrificing (37)
  - a. in this case Barnabas encouraged the brothers, and sold a field and donated all the money; others were doing similar things
  - b. in our times, people show devotion to Christ's church in many ways
2. they are recognized by the leadership (36)
  - a. this is right, although leaders must be cautious here  
*1 Corinthians 16:17-18 I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. (18) For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.*

II. You are tempted to pretend their devotion to Christ and His church

A. Everyone likes to have a good reputation, to be spoken well of

B. Having a good reputation in the church is something wholesome, something to be desired

C. But, being sinners, you often are tempted to gain this good reputation by deceit

1. pretending to what the leading Christians are doing, but not really doing it
  - a. this is what Ananias and Sapphira were doing
  - b. there are many ways of doing this, giving the impression that you are doing something, when you are not doing it; or giving the impression that you are doing something to a high degree, when really you are only doing it to a low degree
  - c. the area raised here is that of giving money into the church's offering
    - this is one where many people go astray
    - they give the impression they are generous Christians
    - but they actually do not give much if any money into the church's

offering

2. actually doing what the leading Christians are doing, but being motivated not by love, but by desire for recognition
  - a. we are a somewhat radical group here, and as such I think we are very susceptible to this
    - i. maybe I observe the Sabbath more scrupulously than you do, and I do it so that I can be seen as the most holy
    - ii. maybe I abstain from TV, internet, movies, etc., but I do it so I can be seen as the most holy
  - b. again, the area that snagged Ananias and Sapphira was giving money
    - i. many times people give money in the church's offering
    - ii. but it is not out of love; they desire to be seen as a leading member of the church; they desire to be taken seriously in the church, so they give money

III. You must understand what is going on at such times

- A. You think you are acting independently, but really you are in league with Satan
  1. Satan is seeking entry, so as to fill your heart (3)
  2. If you allow it, you are then doing his bidding (4)
  3. ironically, you are still culpable; that is, you are still to blame
- B. You think you are lying to men, but really you are lying to God's Holy Spirit
  1. when you try to deceive men, you may well get away with it in their eyes
  2. but when you lie to men, you really are lying to God; this is most obvious when you lie to the people of Christ's church, especially those acting on behalf of the church officially
    - a. do you think He won't find out?
    - b. do you think He won't hold you accountable for it?
    - c. do you think there will be no consequences?
    - d. do you really think yourself secure in Christ if this is how you live?

IV. You must consider the consequences of such actions

- A. God will expose your hypocrisy sooner or later
  1. sometimes, as here and as with Achan, it is sooner
  2. sometimes, it is later in life
    - a. a child grows up in such a home, and at 18 or 21 says, "I don't want anything to do with my parents or their church, they are such hypocrites."
    - b. after 20 years in ministry, a pastor is caught in adultery or some other sin
- B. Eventually, your name will become a byword in the church
  1. think of how their names sound to us
    - a. we name our girls Ruth, Abigail, Mary---but not Jezebel or Sapphira
    - b. we name our boys Aaron, Andrew, even Adam---but not Achan or Ananias
  2. just think of that happening to your name
    - a. you deceive the church as to your devotion

- b. your deception is exposed
    - c. your names become synonymous with hypocrisy
  - C. The church will have to prosper in spite of you rather than because of you
    - 1. God caused this church in Jerusalem to flourish after this, which I hope to study with you next time
    - 2. but it wasn't because of what Ananias and Sapphira did, but in spite of it
  - D. You will bring people you love down with you (10); the bible teaches this repeatedly
    - 1. When Ham dishonored his father, his son Canaan was cursed
    - 2. When Abram lied to the king, Isaac learned to do the same
    - 3. When Aaron worshiped in ways God had not commanded, his sons did the same, and died a fiery death
    - 4. When Achan sinned, his whole family was killed with him
    - 5. When David committed sexual sin and violent sin, his sons did the same, and were killed as a result
    - 6. Here, when Ananias sinned, he took his wife with him, and she died as he did
    - 7. Is this what you want for your loved ones? See them there?
- V. Repent of this sin
  - A. Admit to God that this is what you have been doing
  - B. Seek His forgiveness
  - C. Leave the deception
  - D. Strive for the real thing

Consider these two sayings together:

“why has Satan filled your heart to lie”

“Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?”

What was the sin?

- 1. Allowing Satan an opening to fill your heart
- 2. Conceiving this thing in your heart
- 3. Lying to the Holy Spirit
- 4. Testing the Holy Spirit
  - “I know this is wrong, but I don't think God will do anything about it, so I don't care.”

which reveals that you don't obey out of love but out of fear of getting caught

JRY

To whatever degree we are NOT like A and S, we owe in part to God's providing this event and record of it to the church at the beginning.

The same accountability will come on everyone. This is just one instance where it came out in this life, publicly.

Pugh:

The word for "kept back" is the same word used in the LXX for Achan's action.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Luke 12:1-3 In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (2) For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. (3) Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.