

“A Glorious Church”
Acts 5:1-11

Introduction:

1. Have You Ever Experienced:
 - What You Might Consider To Be:
 - A “Mountain-Top Experience” In Your Life?
 - A Time When It Seemed Like:
 - Everything Was Right - With You, With The Lord, & Even With The World?
 - I Think This Is A Bit Like:
 - What The Early Church:
 - Experienced At The End Of Acts 4:
 - Where We Were Last Week - When:
 - There Was Such A Great Union & Communion With Each Other!
2. We Are Told Back In 4:32:
 - That - “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 The Unity They Experienced Continued:
 - Through Their Persecution!
 - Through Their Prayers!
 - Through The Truth!
 - And Through The Powerful Work Of The Holy Spirit Of God!
 - The Christians Genuinely Saw Each Other:
 - As A Family - And Sought To Provide:
 - For Each Other’s Needs - No Matter What It Cost Them!
3. And At The End Of Acts 4:
 - We Are Introduced To A Man:
 - Named Barnabas - Who Is Given To Us:
 - As An Example Of The Kind Of Selfless & Sacrificial Love:
 - The Early Church Had Toward Each Other!
 - 4:36-37 - “And Joses, 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!”
 - And - It Is Clear - That Many Others:
 - Followed The Example Of Barnabas:
 - And This Became The “Mountain-Top Experience” For That Early Church!
 - And If We Didn’t Already Know:
 - What Happens Next - In Chapter 5:
 - We Might Even Think To Ourselves:
 - Everything Is Right In The Church!
 - In Their Relationship:
 - With The Lord - And:
 - In Their Relationship:
 - With Each Other!
 - What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
4. Well - Just Like Our Own “Mountain-Top Experiences” - There Was:
 - A Valley Just Around The Corner:
 - And It Is Recorded For Us As A Warning:
 - So That - As Paul Tells Us In 1 Corinthians 10:12 - “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!”
 - We Must **Always** Be On Guard To The Devices Of The Devil:
 - To Bring About The Decline Of Our Own Christian Lives & Our Church!
 - Because - In Acts 5:
 - We Are Introduced To Another Man & His Wife:
 - Named Ananias & Sapphira - Who Are Set In Stark Contrast To The Sincere Service Of Barnabas!
5. And So We Read:

- 5:1 - “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession!”
 - Of Course - This Too Is What Many In The Church:
 - Were Doing - Including Barnabas!
 - And The Motive For Doing So Was To Help Meet The Needs Of The Other Members Of The Church!
 - So - Ananias & Sapphira:
 - At First Seem To Want To Participate In This As Well:
 - As We Read Back In 4:34-35 - “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!”
 - But There Was Something Different:
 - About Their Offering!
 - It Was The Motive Behind The Offering As Well As The Manner Of Their Offering:
 - That Is - Why They Gave & How They Gave!
- 5:2 - Tells Us That They - “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!”
 - Now - There Was Nothing Wrong With Them:
 - Wanting To Contribute To The Needs Of The Church:
 - By Selling Their Possession!
 - And - There Would Have Been Nothing Wrong With Them:
 - Offering Just A “Part Of The Price” If That Is What Was Clearly Conveyed To The Apostles & To The Church!
 - But Instead - It Was Wrong:
 - Because Of What We Read In:
- 5:3-4 - Where - “Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? / Whiles 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!”
 - There Was Deception In The Hearts:
 - Of Ananias & Sapphira!
 - And So - They Didn’t Just “Keep Back Part Of The Price” - They Also:
 - Kept Back Part Of The Truth!
 - Which - If You Remember:
 - Was One Of The Key Things:
 - That Unified Them Together As A Church!
 - Without The Truth:
 - And Without Transparency:
 - The “Mountain-Top” Experience Of Unity Could Come Crashing Down Into The Valley!
 - But Why Would Ananias & Sapphira:
 - “Conceive This Thing” In Their Hearts?
 - Why Would They Want To Hide The Complete Truth About Their Offering:
 - Which - They Didn’t Even *Have* To Offer?
 - Well - Before We Consider That In A Moment:
 - The Very Next Think We Read Is The Severe Consequence To Their Deception In:
- 5:5-6 - “And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. / And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him!”
 - This Sin Of Deception:
 - Was No Small Thing!
 - Peter Emphasizes This In 5:4 - When He Tells Ananias That - “Thou Had Not Lied Unto Men, But Unto God!”
 - And Even Though:
 - The Lie To Peter & The Church Was Bad Enough:
 - It Was Made Worse - Because They Formulated The Lie Within Their Hearts:
 - And Before God Himself - Who Was There!
 - God The Holy Spirit - Who Was With Them & In Them:
 - Saw & Heard & Knew:
 - Everything That Was Going On:

- In Their Heart:
- And Was Grieved!

- And So - God Chose:
 - To Judge Ananias With Death!
 - And I Believe That One Of The Reasons Why God Judged Him So Severely Was To Bring About The Result We Just Read About In 5:5:
 - “And Great Fear Came On All Them That Heard These Things!”

6. So Now - It Wasn't Just The Power:

- Of God On Display Through The Church:
 - It Was The Purity Of God:
 - As Well!
- And It Is A Reminder To Us:
 - Of Why Jesus Christ Came & Sacrificed Himself:
 - For Us - Which Is Clearly Stated In:
 - Ephesians 5:25-27 - Where Paul Writes - “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; / WHY / That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, / That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish!”
- Jesus Christ Came:
 - Not Only To **Save** Us From Our Sin:
 - But Also - To **Sanctify** Us From Our Sin:
 - So That There Might Be **No** Spot, **No** Wrinkle, **No** Blemish:
 - And So That We Might Be “A **Glorious** Church” Before Him & Before The World!
 - This Is Why The Sin Of Ananias & Sapphira:
 - Was So Serious!
 - It Was A Spot, A Wrinkle, A Blemish:
 - To The Glorious Nature Of The Church!
 - And God, In His Great Wisdom, Wanted To Show Everyone:
 - Both Inside The Church & Outside The Church - The Purpose Of His Church!
 - But - Even Though:
 - We Might Not See This Same Kind Of:
 - Judgment For Our Own Sins:
 - As Christians & As A Church:
 - It Doesn't Make Them Any Less Serious!
 - And So - This Remains:
 - A Warning For Us:
 - To Pursue After The Purity Of Our Savior & To “Grieve Not The Holy Spirit Of God!”

7. Well - It Is Clear From 5:7 - That It Was Ananias:

- Who Brought Part Of The Proceeds To Peter:
 - By Himself - Even Though He Had:
 - “Colluded” With His Wife About It - And So:
- 5:7 - “And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in!”
 - Now - There Are A Lot Of Questions:
 - That Are Left Unanswered Here!
 - Like - Where Was Sapphira For Those Three Hours? And If Her Husband Was Already Dead, How Would She Not Learn About It In Those Three Hours? Well, We Just Have No Way Of Knowing!
 - But - In God's Grace - He Gave Sapphira An Opportunity To Repent & Confess Of **Her Own** Deceit, Which He Did Not Provide To Her Husband! And This Is Why:
- In 5:8 - “And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?”
 - If We Stop There - We Can See An Opportunity!
 - An Opportunity For Sapphira To:
 - Answer Truthfully & Honestly & Transparently!
 - A Chance To Repent & Confess Her Sin & Seek Forgiveness!

- But - Instead - She Seals Her Own Judgment With Her Words!

- “And she said, Yea, for so much!”

- And The Moment Of Grace:

- Was Driven Away By Her Stubbornness & Sin!

- And Then - Peter Reveals All That He Knows!

- 5:9-10 - “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 yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband!”

- Once Again - God’s Judgment:

- Was Swift & Severe:

- Because Of Her Sin - Not Just Against The Church - But Against The Spirit Of The God Himself!

- And The Result Of Her Judgment & Death Is The Same!

- 5:11 - “And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things!”

8. There Still Needs To Be:

- This Kind Of “Great Fear” Within The Church:

- When It Comes To The Spots & Wrinkles & Blemishes:

- That Our Own Sin Brings Upon:

- The Church & To The Cause Of Christ!

- Because Our Sin Is Still Just As Serious As The Sin Of Ananias & Sapphira!

- And So - We Must Be Aware:

- Of The Devil’s Devices:

- To Tempt *Us* To Sin!

9. Because, I Believe, That The Reason:

- Why Ananias & Sapphira Chose To Deceive The Church:

- Was Nothing New!

- It Is The Way The Devil:

- Tempted Adam & Eve:

- In The Garden!

- It Is The Way The Devil:

- Tempted Jesus:

- In The Wilderness!

- And It Is The Way The Devil:

- Tempts Us To Sin As Well!

- It Was Through:

- The Three Temptations To Sin:

- That We Read About In:

- 1 John 2:16 - “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world!”

- It Was Through These Three Temptations:

- That “Satan Filled” Their Heart To “Lie To The Holy Ghost!” (5:3)

1. ***The Lust Of The Flesh:***

- Is A Craving For Something:

- That You Believe Will Satisfy You:

- Apart From God’s Plan!

- And It Seems Clear:

- That Ananias & Sapphira:

- Believed That Whatever Amount They Chose To “Keep Back” Would Satisfy What They Wanted In Their Life:

- Even As They Tried To Satisfy Some Of The Needs Of Others In The Church!

- And - They ***Could*** Have Done This:

- Without Trying To Deceive The Lord & His Church!

- But Instead - They Wanted The Best Of Both Worlds!

- And So - They Were Also Tempted By:

2. ***The Lust Of The Eyes:***

- Which Is Coveting:
 - Something That Someone Else Has!
 - And When Ananias & Sapphira Saw:
 - The Reaction Barnabas Got When He Gave His Offering:
 - They Wanted What He Had!
- And So - When Their Lust Conceived:
 - It Brought Forth Sin! But Even More:
 - They Were Tempted By:

3. ***The Pride Of Life:***

- Which Is The Desire For Glory & Credit:
 - That Only Belongs To The Lord!
 - It Is A Transgression Of The First Commandment:
 - Which Says - “Thou shalt have no other gods before me!” (Exodus 20:3)
- Instead Of Submitting Themselves:
 - And Surrendering All They Had:
 - To The Lord:
 - They Saw ***Themselves*** As Supreme:
 - And That The Church & The Lord Himself Needed To Bow To Their Desires!
- And - In Effect - This Is What:
 - All Sin Is!
 - It Is A Defiant Proclamation:
 - That My Way:
 - Is Better Than God’s Way!

Conclusion:

1. And So - The Lord Used The Lives Of Ananias & Sapphira:
 - To Illustrate Once Again The Truth That:
 - “Sin, When It Is Finished, Bringeth Forth Death!” (James 1:15)
2. Sin In The Camp & Sin In Our Hearts:
 - Is Still A Serious Thing!
 - And We Must Heed This Warning:
 - From The Lives & Deaths Of:
 - Ananias & Sapphira!
 - Because The Devil Still Knows:
 - How To Use Our Own Lusts & Our Own Pride:
 - To Tempt Us To Sin!
3. So - What Can We Do?
 - Remember 1 John 4:4:
 - 1 John 4:4 - “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world!”
 - So - Instead Of Running Away From The Truth:
 - Run To The One Who Is:
 - The Way & The Truth & The Life!
 - And Live Truthfully & Transparently Before The Lord, The Church, And The World!

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