

015 - Acts 5:11-16 Great Fear Upon the Church

Scripture Reading: Joshua 24:14-24

Confession of Sin: Psalm 130:2-5

Sermon: Great Fear Upon the Church Acts 5:11-16

Benediction: Revelation 19:5-6

Last time, we read the painful account of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, who tried to live as hypocrites in God's church, lying to the church and to the Holy Spirit, pretending a devotion to Christ and His church that they really did not have.

What happened then? Did such severe discipline within God's church ruin the unity of the church and inhibit its growth? Did such judgment of sin within the church harm its testimony to the unbelievers around it?

Read the text: Acts 5:11-16 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. (12) And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. (13) Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. (14) And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, (15) so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. (16) Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

I. The Lord Jesus Christ Instilled Great Fear In His Church v.11

A. The Lord had killed instantly a man and woman acting hypocritically

B. This brought great fear upon all the church

1. The bible teaches us to fear the Lord

a. In the OT:

Many places it says this, including the Proverbs, which say that fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom.

b. In the NT:

Also many places, including 1 Peter 2:17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

c. Here in Acts more than once:

Acts 9:31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

2. What is meant by fear of the Lord? This seems to have been understood in previous centuries of God's church. All the classic writers say about the same thing. I will quote from Matthew Henry, but his words ring very similar to all the most respected teachers

"we must always have in our minds a reverence of God's majesty, a dread of his displeasure, and an obedient regard to his sovereign authority over us"

C. APPLICATION: So, let us not take our freedom in Christ as a license to sin. But

let us live according to the great fear of the Lord that Christ instilled in His church.

II. The Lord Jesus Christ Worked Miraculous Signs Through His Apostles v. 12a, 15

A. These signs demonstrated the nature of the gospel

1. the origin of it---that it is from God, not from men
2. the radical nature of it---making drastic change to people unable to change themselves
3. the truth of it---that the messengers are neither deceitful nor mistaken
4. the goodness of it---that it is opposed to the devil and the demons v. 16
5. the scope of it---that it is for all who would believe v. 16

B. These signs were wrought by the hands of the apostles

1. this is an important point which will help us if we take a moment to consider it
2. you see the uniqueness of the apostles here; it was by the hands of the apostles that these signs were wrought
3. the people today who claim to be apostles in the sense that these men were, or that claim to be able to do miraculous signs like they did, are either delusional or deceitful
4. APPLICATION: We do not expect the Holy Spirit to enable individuals to do miraculous signs today; we rely on the preaching of these incidents to have the desired effect.

III. The Lord Jesus Christ Maintained a Loving Unity Within His Body v. 12b

A. The believers kept meeting together in a public place of worship 12b

1. This is what the church did in its primitive purity
2. This is what the church does whenever it is able
3. Meeting in secret sometimes is necessary
4. Meeting in private homes is sometimes necessary, because there is no more public place to meet
5. But what the church desires is to meet publicly, with its meetings accessible to the public
6. In the Reformed Baptist movement, we have many who have rejected the use of the public school system, on the grounds that either
 - a. the culture of the students is a horrible environment
 - b. the curriculum and some of the teachers are anti-Christian
 - c. the level of education is dumbed-down
 - d. or all of the above
7. This is a valid option, because whether or not we participate in some certain education system is not a moral imperative in the bible
8. But many in the home school movement are also rejecting meeting publicly with God's churches, in favor of staying at home with just their own families.
9. This is perfectly understandable, but wrong.
10. The record in Acts is that the church met publicly, and privately in homes. Let us follow that model with a clear conscience.

B. Notice how the author keeps mentioning that the believers were all together in one accord; it is a major theme in the NT

C. APPLICATION: Oh, let us keep working toward this!

IV. The Lord Jesus Christ Established a Serious Respect Toward His Church v. 13

A. What Jesus Christ did in eliminating hypocritical members brought the fear of the Lord not only to the church, but to those around who heard about it 11b

- B. So the people who did not actually believe in Christ did not dare join the church
13a
- C. But they had a good opinion of the people of the church 13b
- D. APPLICATION: We do not expect the Holy Spirit to strike dead any hypocrites in today's church; to produce that effect, we must:
 1. preach about such things from the bible
 2. exercise discipline to maintain a purity in the church

V. The Lord Jesus Christ Produced a Remarkable Growth In His Church v. 14

- A. The author keeps saying this, how the Lord kept adding many people to His church
- B. Here the author notes that the additions were both men and women
- C. APPLICATION: Should we expect, then, that the best way to see God-given growth in numbers is to declare what is written here?

What is meant in v.13 by "none of the rest"?

JFB: "of the unconverted"

VWS: "Unbelievers, deterred . . . from uniting themselves to the church under false pretenses."

RWP: "The outsiders (the rest) preferred, many of them, to remain outside for the present, especially the rulers."

Poole: "such who were not of the common sort of people . . . OR . . . who had not joined themselves to the church"

Clarke: the various sects

Gill: the other ministers of the word regarding the apostles

Barnes: "the rich men, or the people of authority and influence among the Jews"

MacArthur:

all those Christians up there in Solomon's porch, and nobody else went up there. Nobody dared get up there and get mingled around with those Christians.

What is meant in v. 12 by "fear"?

Henry:

we must always have in our minds a reverence of God's majesty, a dread of his displeasure, and an obedient regard to his sovereign authority over us: this fear will quicken us to our duty and make us circumspect in our walking.

Gill:

not a slavish fear of death, of wrath, and damnation, before dehorted from; but a reverence of the divine Majesty, an awe of his greatness and glory, a serious regard to his commands, delivered in so grand a manner, and a carefulness to offend him by disobeying them:

Clarke:

do not fear with such a fear as brings consternation into the soul, and produces nothing but terror and confusion; but fear with that fear which reverence and filial affection inspire, that ye sin not - that, through the love and reverence ye feel to your Maker and Sovereign, ye may abstain from every appearance of evil, lest you should forfeit that love which is to you better than life.

Watson?:

"a reverence for the divine Being, an awareness of the divine presence, and a regard for the divine will" (quoted by Silversides)

Doner:

This is a major theme in the Bible, and is, in fact, the "crowning Christian virtue."
Terror and dread with reverential awe.
"I will please Him."

Webster:

a holy awe or reverence of God and his laws, which springs from a just view and real love of the divine character, leading the subjects of it to hate and shun every thing that can offend such a holy being, and inclining them to aim at perfect obedience. This is filial fear.

Slavish fear is the effect or consequence of guilt; it is the painful apprehension of merited punishment. Rom 8.

Bridges (quoted by Doner):

that affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law; His wrath is so bitter and His love is so sweet that from this springs an earnest desire to please Him; and because of the danger of coming short from his own weakness and temptation, he has a holy watching in fear that he might not sin against Him

Jason Walter

This is the third summary. Each summarizes what went before and introduces the next section.

Mark Chanski

Note men and women together in the court of Israel or court of women
5:12 "at the hands of the apostles" shows whether or not such signs were for always

Arlen Hodgins:

"Keeping the church pure was always more important than keeping the church big."
Proportionately, the fear of the Lord is more prominent in the NT than the OT.
Fear includes reverence, but we should not immediately soften the concept of fear by presenting it as merely reverence.

Exodus 20:20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

Acts 9:31 Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.