

PART TWO of last week's Msg

Real Unity last week - - - **Keepin it Real** this week

Today's Msg - is a Msg of **CONTRAST**

Sometimes we can only see how **HIGH** - or how **LOW** - something is -
IF we **CONTRAST** it with it's **OPPOSITE**

& we have the **OPPORTUNITY** to do that today

Today's Msg is a contrast of **Motives** - & **Intentions**

It's a contrast of the **Real** vs's the **Pretend**

It's a **contrast** of one person who **GAVE** his all to the Lord

& one who **PRETENDED** to give his all

Historically - it's a Contrast of **Barnabus** & **Ananias**

But **for us** - it's a contrast of

"Keepin' it Real" vs's **PRETENDING**

Guys - God **loves** us - **JUST** as we are

& He **wants** us to come to Him - **JUST** as we are

& all thru the **BIBLE** are **illustrations** & **examples**

of the **DANGERS** of **FAKING** our **Spirituality**

Today we see very **Strong Encouragement**

for **Keepin it Real** - before **God**, & before His **People**

Let's Pray

Our contrast today starts - in **Acts 4:36**

With the **introduction** of one of my **FAVORITE** **N.T. Characters**

He's one of my **Favorite** Characters for **TWO Reasons**;

#1) **I LOVE Encouragement** - *In fact, if you're familiar with the "Love Languages" - My #1 Love language is "Encouraging Words"*

#2) I love this guy because he **Served** his **Whole Life**
in the **Shadows** - **Helping** & **Encouraging** other people

He **never** sought a "**Position**" - **never** sought to "**Be Somebody**"
He **gave** his **ALL**, to serve others, **behind** the scenes

& **THAT** makes him - One of **EVERY** Pastor's
FAVORITE Bible Characters

His name is **Barnabus** - & he **Poured his life** into others so much -
his name was changed to "**Son of Encouragement**"

Last week was the **FIRST HALF** of this Msg;

We taught just **FOUR Vs's**
& we tried to **make TWO points** Very **CLEAR**

#1) the **NT church** had a **Deep UNITY** of **heart & soul**,
that **bound** them together

#2) the **NT church** **Sacrificially GAVE** - out of **everything** they had

After Luke describes the **Deep Unity** the church had,
AND their desire to **GIVE sacrificially** to one another

In the **next vs** he **introduces us** to possibly the **BEST example**
the church had - of a person who **DID** these two things

Acts 4:36-37 (esv)

36 Thus Joseph, (NLT = “For instance” - connecting word) *who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,*
37 *sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.*

Cyprus was famous for its **wine** and it’s **expensive** farm produce

to own land in Cyprus you had to be a **Wealthy** & **Influential** man
& we know **Barnabus** was **both**

& **knowing** a little bit about **Barnabus** helps us **understand**
the **STARK CONTRAST** between him & **Ananias**

Alexander Whyte - a Great Scottish **Theologian**
wrote **Biographies** on the famous **Characters** in the Bible

Here’s what Alexander Whyte said about Barnabus
Many men who possessed houses and land sold them . . . But Barnabus stood at the head of them all, such was his great wealth, such was his great generosity, such was his high character, and such were his splendid services in this and in many other ways to the apostolic church.

As we **continue** in Acts - **Whenever** we see Barnabus
he’s **helping**, **encouraging**, & **strengthening** the believers

& **NEVER** for his own **Benefit** - **NEVER** to gain “**Position**”

It was **Barnabus** that God used to **strengthen** & **support**
the previous “**Christian-Hater**” named **SAUL** of Tarsus

When the rest of the Disciples didn't want anything to do with SAUL the persecutor

It was Barnabus who came alongside him - & supported him until Saul became the Greatest Apostle of the New Testament

When the Jerusalem church heard about the growth of the Gospel in Antioch

. . .they sent Barnabus to take care of the New Church

Antioch would become the "Mother Church" for the Gentiles

& reading about HOW Barnabus handled the church in Antioch we get a really good picture of this "son of encouragement"

Acts 11:22–26 (esv)

22 The report of this (growth in Antioch) came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted (encouraged) them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,

24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,

26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

That is a HUGE picture - of WHO Barnabus was;

how BIG his role was in the NT church -

AND - how HUMBLE he was about it

The leaders in Jerusalem DIDN'T send Paul to Antioch - they sent Barnabus

& when Barnabus got there - he strengthened & encouraged the believers - & THEN he WENT & GOT Paul from Tarsus

& brought him back to Antioch - to teach the people there

& guys - Tarsus was 200 MILES from Antioch

& Barnabus couldn't just jump in his ESCALADE . . .
cause he had SOLD it with the land

& so he had to WALK - a total of 400 MILES
to get the new church the very BEST teacher he could get them

Barnabus was ALL IN - He was Definitely "KEEPIN IT REAL"

He wasn't Holding anything back for himself

He wasn't Promoting himself

He had no "Hidden Agenda" - No Ulterior Motive

He was Living for the Lord with ALL he had

. . . he was "Keepin it Real"

BUT NOW - we meet THE CONTRAST

His name, is Ananias, & he has a wife named Sapphira

There really shouldn't be a CH Break here

because the First Word of Ch 5 is a CONTRAST word - - BUT

It's used here to Contrast what's gone before it

& so now we are going to CONTRAST;

"Keepin it Real" - BARNABUS

with - "Pretend Spirituality" ANANIAS

Acts 5:1- (esv)

1 *But* (meaning in contrast to Barnabus) ***a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,***
2 *and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

THIS - is a **teaching** of **CONTRAST**

On **one hand** you have **Barnabus** - **Keepin it Real**
Doing all that he can for the church - with **no ulterior motives**

& **now** - in **contrast** to that - we meet **Ananias**

& we **need** to read **V.2** - out of the **NLT**
to **begin** to **see** Ananias' **REAL** Problem

Acts 5:2 (NLT)

2 *He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest.*

Remember from **last week's** msg
there was **NO requirement** for the people to do this

This was being done **By CHOICE** - as the Holy Spirit led

AND - there was **no Requirement** to bring the **FULL AMOUNT**

It **would've** been "**More than FINE**" for Ananias to say
"We sold a piece of property & we're giving 10% of it."

Great - Praise the Lord - **No Problem !!**

But the NLT does a great job of capturing the intention here;

2 He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount . . .

The judgment that's coming on these two
is NOT about giving only a portion of their money

The Judgment - is about SPIRITUAL DECEPTION

It's about CLAIMING it was the full amount
in order to LOOK spiritual !!

It was about wanting to LOOK like Barnabus
when they really weren't like Barnabus

What do you think would've happened if Ananias would've said;

"You know, we'd like to do what Barnabus has done, but we just don't feel like we can . . . We'd like to have that level of faith, but we just don't have it yet."

Do you think God would have judged them ?? NO !!

The judgment we're about to see
is for HYPOCRISY - PHARISEE-ISM

Which is being more concerned about
HOW we LOOK, than WHO we ARE

There's ONE THING we can absolutely COUNT ON with God

The WHO - comes before - the DO

WHO you ARE (Honestly before God)
is WAY more important - than what you DO in His Name

& we're about to see some very "Strong Encouragement" to that end

So Ananias brings part of the money (*Which would've been OK*)
But he CLAIMS it's ALL the money - in order to LOOK Spiritual

Acts 5:3 (esv)

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?"

Alright - First difficult lesson here (& a small tangent)

We can Assume - Ananias was a Christian
most scholars believe he definitely was

& Peter (who knows by personal experience) says to Ananias;
"Why has Satan FILLED your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit"

Maybe all too quickly Peter remembers that day at Caesarea Philippi -
when Jesus said to Peter **"Get behind me Satan"**

& now - Peter says that Satan has FILLED Ananias' heart
to lie to the Holy Spirit

The GREEK word for FILLED here means LIT:
"to exercise control over thought and action"

This is the **EXACT SAME** word used in **Eph 5:18**
“Be FILLED with the Holy Spirit”

Meaning - ***“Allow the Holy Spirit to exercise control
over your thoughts & actions”***

& **NOTICE** how the **NLT** brings out the concept
of **“ALLOWING”** Satan to **fill** your heart

Acts 5:3 (NLT)

3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? . . .

Ananias is a **CHRISTIAN** - who has **ALLOWED** Satan
to **exercise control** over his **thoughts** & his **actions**

Is this something **we** should be **AFRAID** of ??

YES - We absolutely should !!

It happened to **PETER** in Mat 16

It happened to **ANANIAS** here

& it can happen to **US**

Can a Christian be **“Possessed”** ? - **NO**, we **don’t believe** we can be

Can a Christian **ALLOW Satan** to **exercise control**
over their **thoughts** & **actions** ?? **YES** - that is **Absolutely Possible**

If we are **“Walking in the Spirit”** - (**Gal 5:16**)
we have **nothing** to **worry** about

But if we are **“Walking in the Flesh”** - we need know

We **RISK** allowing **Satan** to **exercise control**
over our **thoughts** & **actions**

Guys - this Battle is very REAL & very DANGEROUS

1 Peter 5:8–9 - Speaking to Christians (NLT)

8 Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

9 Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith . . .

We have a Very Real Enemy - Who ABSOLUTELY WILL influence our thoughts & actions - IF we LET him

Alright - that's a bit of a SIDE LESSON

To get back on track with Ananias

& to show what's really going on here

let me read Vs's 3 & 4 from the NLT

Acts 5:3–4 (NLT)

3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.

4 The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

Ananias - You could've sold it - or not sold it

You could've given it all - or given a portion

But what you SHOULDN'T HAVE done

is to PRETEND to be something that you were not

Instead of Allowing the Spirit to control your religious action you are actually Allowing Satan to control it

& You're **NOT** Lying to **US** - You're Lying to **GOD**
& *that's NOT going to work out so well for you*

Acts 5:5-6 (esv)

5 When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.

6 The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

This was **Quick & Serious** Judgment
meant to make a very **Serious Point**

Ananias & Sapphira were attempting to **LOOK**
far **more spiritual** than they were

Jesus had already **PROVEN** - that He **LOVED** Honest **Sinners**
& **that** He **DESPISED** Religious **FAKES**

But **Ananias & Sapphira** hadn't gotten the message
they **thought** they could still **FOOL GOD** - by **ACTING** Religious

& so God **made it clear** - - - He **didn't appreciate** it

God <u>LOVES you</u> as an <u>Honest Sinner</u> But He <u>DOES NOT</u> accept <u>SPIRITUAL DECEPTION</u>

& **HERE** in Acts 5 - He's **getting** His **point across** - Very Clearly

Remember back in the **Garden of Eden**

Where **some people** think **Adam** kind of "***Took the Fall***" for **Eve** ??

Well, Now - **Sapphira** is going to "***Take the Fall***" for her **Husband**

Acts 5:7-8 (esv)

7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.”

EHHHH - Wrong Answer !!!

Have you **ever felt** those **two** little **guys** on your **shoulders**
Angel on one side - **Demon** on the other

“Tell the truth - No Lie

Tell the Truth - No Lie OK I’ll . . . Lie”

EHHHH !! - Wrong answer !!!

So - Sapphira **commits** the **same lie** as her husband
& **God’s Response** is **CONSISTENT**

Acts 5:9-10 (esv)

9 But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.”

10 Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

What’s **so shocking** here is - **Ananias & Sapphira**
DON’T get a “**Do Over**” - they don’t get a “**Warning**”

But they **DO** get to **be** a very **clear example**
of what **NOT** to **do** - when **dealing** with **Spiritual Matters**

The lesson (in case it isn't clear) - is this:

DON'T Lie to God - by FAKING your true Spiritual Condition

It's NOT about them NOT GIVING all their money

It's about them PRETENDING to be - what they weren't

Ananias & Sapphira had witnessed Barnabas' TRUE sacrificial act
& they saw the respect he received from the other believers

So they announced they too would sell their property
& give ALL the money to the church

But Secretly they agreed to JUST SAY they were giving ALL
the money - - but actually hold some back

making everyone think they had sacrificed like Barnabus

Ananias would have waited till all the right people were watching,
maybe even when the TV cameras were rolling

. . . waited till the worship team was singing "I SURRENDER ALL"

. . . walked up, FULL of false humility, & laid his check on the altar

This was premeditated deception - - It was;

a Religious Sham

Fake Holiness

Spiritual Fraud

When we are **working hard** to make Christians **think**

we are **walking** with the **Lord**
when we're really **running** with the **Devil** . . .

We're **doing** the **EXACT same** thing

When we **care more** about what **people** in the church **think** about us -
than we **do** about being **Honest** with **God**

Then we are **doing** the **EXACT** same thing

& **IF** that's us - then we would **do well** - to **RECEIVE** the Lesson
seen in our **last verse** today

Acts 5:11 (esv)

11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Look at the Phrase - **GREAT FEAR** . . .

Sometimes - the word **FEAR** translates a **GREEK Word**
that really **means** Great **Reverence** or **Awe**

& I was **pretty sure** **THAT** was the **GREEK word** I'd find here

Unfortunately - this is **NOT** a **GREEK word**
that can be **easily** translated **Reverence** or **Awe**

This word is best translated - **BE AFRAID**

Be Afraid - of **Spiritual Deception**

Be Afraid of **Hypocrisy**

The Damage caused by spiritual Deception & Hypocrisy is far more damaging that we want to admit

It has poisoned the life of the Church throughout history

We need to Be AFRAID - of being CAUGHT in it's TRAP

God CALLED Ananias & Sapphira on their Spiritual Deception
Their story is to CALL us - for US confront ourselves

Are we Keepin it REAL ?

Or are we ACTING a certain way - at a certain time
to make someone THINK a certain thing about us

Barnabus may be the best example in the NT of Keepin it Real

He Served, & Encouraged, & Sacrificed, & GAVE
with NO REGARD to his "Position" or his "Image"

Are we doing that?

Or is the example of Ananias & Sapphira a little closer to home ?

Are we more concerned about people THINKING we're spiritual
than actually BEING spiritual

If so - Let's REPENT of that - right now - TODAY

Let's ask God to Forgive us for our Spiritual Deception
& Commit to Him to FORSAKE that sin - For GOOD

Let's Pray