

Acts 4:32-5:11
CBBC
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Introduction—The history of the church has always been a mixed bag. The church has done some amazing things that demonstrate the supernatural working of God, and there have been times of great disobedience and hypocrisy. It has always been that way since the beginning. There is no good thing that God is not doing that someone decides to warp and make for their own, but at the same time, God always marks that.

I. Vs.32-37 The good—

It has always been part of the understanding of any community that God would create that no one would do without. If we go back to Deuteronomy 15:1-5, we read that if Israel were obedient, God would bless them in such a way that they would always have enough money. What was one of their responsibilities? In verse 4, it was to make sure that there was no one poor in the nation of Israel. That is, every single Israelite was to have the food they needed, clothing for their back, and a good shelter that would protect and take care of them. God commands the people of Israel to make sure that there would be no poor. This is not income equality, but rather making sure that no one around you goes without what they need. Unfortunately, Israel did not fully keep this, and as you go through some of the prophets, you see that rather than making sure there were no poor, there were many of the wealthy who were victimizing them, even selling them into slavery in some situations.

I bring all of this up because we should not be surprised by what is going on in the church at this point. This is something that God already expected of the previous covenant community that was called by His name. While there were poor, those who God had blessed with resources were to make sure that no one in the community would suffer because of starvation, weather, or danger. They could be damaged by disease, or battle, or injury, but never because they lacked what they needed. This is the norm.

So when you look at the early church, you see that every believer understood that what they owned did not truly belong to them. They saw themselves as stewards and not as owners. They had everything in common, but this was not the sense of liking people just using one another's stuff out of envy. This is how they looked at their property and goods. There were a lot of poor Christians, and a small percentage of wealthy Christians.

Right in the middle of that, Luke wants us to know that the apostles were giving their testimony of Jesus, that He had indeed risen from the dead. This was done through their miracles, and "great grace" was upon them all. God was showing His favor. He gave miracles, confirming their testimonies. He was bringing people into the church. He gave them a great public testimony, as we saw earlier

Everyone's needs were being met. It was not that their comfort preferences were being met when it came to comfort, but rather they did not suffer for want of food, clothing, or shelter. That is so far out of our wheelhouse to believe that it is even possible, but that has been the state of much of the world up until recently. Why were everyone's needs being met?

Landowners would see their property or houses, giving that over to the apostles, laying it at their feet, acknowledging that they had authority over it all. And the apostles would distribute this, making sure it went to Christians who had need. Later on in chapter 7, it looks like the apostles would form the deacons who would end up taking care of that responsibility. How was this happening?

Luke gives an example of Joseph, who was known as Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, who sold a field, took the money, and gave it to the apostles. He put a name to

the action, so that people would know this was going on. He gave a solid example that people could go back and actually check on.

Once we come to Christ and are changed because of the Gospel, there are two perspectives that change. First, we now identify other believers as family. Over in Matthew 12:46-50, Jesus introduces the idea that there is a closer relationship with others that is not defined by blood, but by obedience to Him as Lord and master. So, there is a family connection that draws believers together, that has a longer and more profound impact upon us. That does not absolve us of loving and serving our families, parents, and siblings, but it does mean that the Spirit is far thicker than blood.

This is good. This is what the Gospel does. It creates a community of people who make sure that none of them wants. It creates new relationships binding people together through the Holy Spirit, and then reminds people that they have never really owned anything, but that all of it has always belonged to God, and we are but stewards. We are to use our resources to minister to others and glorify the Lord. That is something that is supernaturally given. **Matthew 19:23-26**. You put a whole group of people together who believe that. Some of them are gifted in giving and teach others to do so; that is beautiful. We encourage one another in that area. That is good and beautiful.

The bad—**5:1-2**. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, bought some property, and they kept back some of the money, and then laid the rest before the apostles. Okay, they gave a percentage, its no big deal. No one was expecting them to give everything. None of this was compelled. It was all voluntary. But we know further on through the passage that they presented it in such a way as to make people believe that they had given all of the sale of the property. Peter says in verse 4, It was yours to dispose of. Bet Ananias,

with the help of his wife, set up this narrative, this story that they had given all of that money away. As Peter will say, they have lied, and they have lied to the Holy Spirit. Why would they do this?

The sin that we struggle with the most is “pride.” From the very beginning of creation, pride has always reared its ugly head. This desire to exalt ourselves is so powerful. It is written into our DNA. It is part of all mankind rejecting God, according to Romans 1. Even after the baptism of the Holy Spirit, pride still runs deep. There are so many NT references to beware of pride. God opposes the proud. Pride always tells us, “People should admire you.” We know that is wrong. But when pride says, “People should admire us for loving God,” then we have taken a dangerous step, because then we start to justify other actions. “I want people to think I’m spiritual, so now I am going to adjust the narrative a little so people think I’m spiritual without me putting much effort into it.”

We are all vulnerable to this line of thinking. Why does God condemn it so often? Why does God tell us in **Matthew 6:1-5** that we are to give in secret? Don’t let the left hand know what the right hand is doing? He goes on to say that we are to hunger for God’s reward rather than man’s reward. In fact, one of the lies that pride tells us is that man’s glory is better than God’s glory. It’s a spiritual version of the marshmallow experiment. Don’t ever underestimate our ability to take something beautiful God has given us, some form of ministry, and to take that ministry and warp it to our glory.

Then we have the ugly. Verse 3-11. This desire to change the narrative comes from Satan. Those times when we meditate on exalting ourselves, it may very well be

coming from Satanic thinking. Satan wants us to lie to the Holy Spirit. I'll get back to that in a moment.

That Satanic thinking causes us to lie in an irrational sense. In this case, Ananias is lying to God. And God strikes Ananias dead. And he is taken out.

Sapphira comes in later, not knowing what is happening, and Peter tests her. Did you sell your property for this amount? This is the amount Ananias gave the church. She said "yes," and Peter told her that she had tested the Spirit, and those who buried your husband are at the door. She dies on the spot, and they carry her out. And she was buried beside her husband.

What does it mean to lie to the Holy Spirit? I think that this is a simple application of what we know has happened. What is new here? All believers have been baptized and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. When we lie about what we are doing, specifically here to other believers, and about what God has been doing with us, we are lying to that person, and the Holy Spirit who indwells them. We are lying about what God is doing in us to someone else, because we want them to think more of us. Deceiving other believers.

Garry, I would never do that. When is the last time you told someone that you were going to pray for them when you had no intention of doing so whatsoever? We are telling them that God moved us to do something that we never intended to do, to comfort them, maybe, but also to make ourselves look spiritual.

God kept Israel pure. Do we not think that He will keep His church pure? Church discipline is part of that. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10 that there are believers who are sick and have died because they dishonored the table in how they took it. People not to

put their gifts on the table unless they were right with others. Hebrews tells us that God chastises us. God is just as committed to keeping His church pure in the age of grace as He was in the age of the Law. We need to take that seriously.

The delight God has in us at the last judgment is greater than any joy we will get right now. The approval from the Creator is far greater than the approval of the created. The creation is temporary and incomplete, and inaccurate many times. The approval of the Creator, we never forget and to be told by Him that He is proud of us. Why would we substitute?

God is and will continue doing wonderful things in the church. Let us not hunger for the approval of man and destroy it. Let us hunger for our Lord's approval. He has given us the grace to find it.