Sermon Highlights

The Seriousness of Sin in God's Church: Lessons from Ananias and Sapphira

Sermon Summary:

This sermon examines the account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, emphasizing God's severe judgment against hypocrisy and sin within the church. The preacher draws parallels between this New Testament event and similar instances of divine judgment in the Old Testament, such as Aaron's sons offering strange fire and Achan's sin at Ai. The central message is that God takes sin within His church more seriously than sin in the world because the church is called to be His witness. The sermon challenges modern church practices that prioritize numbers and entertainment over holiness and genuine discipleship. It calls believers to take church membership seriously, live with integrity, and understand that God sees the intentions of the heart. The dramatic deaths of Ananias and Sapphira served as a warning that produced holy fear in the early church, which paradoxically led to explosive growth as multitudes were saved and miracles occurred. The preacher argues that contemporary churches need to return to biblical standards of holiness and commitment rather than compromising to attract crowds.

Key Points:

- God judges sin within His church more severely than sin in the world, especially during crucial foundational moments

- Ananias and Sapphira's sin was not in keeping some proceeds but in lying to the Holy Spirit about their gift

- Hypocrisy—pretending to give everything while holding back—is at the root of much evil in the church

- The Holy Spirit is identified as God Himself, as lying to the Holy Spirit is equated with lying to God

- True church membership should be reserved for genuine believers who demonstrate commitment to godly living

- Modern churches have wrongly prioritized entertainment, numbers, and attracting crowds over discipleship and holiness

- The primary purposes of church are community among believers, discipleship, worship, and mutual confession of sin

- Regular church attendance and commitment demonstrate the seriousness of one's faith

- When the early church dealt severely with sin, it resulted in holy fear that led to genuine growth and miracles

- Believers must live with integrity knowing that God sees the intentions of their hearts

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 5:1-16 (primary passage)

- Leviticus (reference to Aaron's sons offering strange fire)

- Joshua 7 (Achan's sin at Ai)

- 1 Corinthians (warning about partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily)

Stories:

- The account of Ananias and Sapphira selling property, keeping back part of the proceeds while claiming to give all, and being struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit

- Aaron's sons (Nadab and Abihu) being killed for offering strange fire on God's altar at the beginning of the Levitical priesthood

- Achan taking forbidden spoils from Jericho, hiding them in his tent, leading to Israel's defeat at Ai and the destruction of his entire family

- Barnabas (Joseph) selling property and laying the proceeds at the apostles' feet as a positive example of generosity

- Paul preaching until midnight, with a young man falling asleep in the loft and falling down (illustrating the length of early church services)

- Contemporary examples of people wanting to join the church while living in unrepentant sin and being turned away