

Series: Peter: The Transformed Life
Text: Acts 5:1-11; 8:9-25
Title: Listen Carefully and Take Notes

Acts 5:1-11

¹ But 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. 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? ⁴ While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." 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.

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

- Acts 4
 - They were praying for boldness
 - They were meeting regularly at Solomon's Portico
- This story is linked to the previous verses found in chapter four.

Acts 4:36-37

³⁶ Joseph, 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.

- Selling all and sharing all – is this a proof text for communism or socialism? Many Christ followers think so.
- Communism and Socialism
 - Chapter five states otherwise - While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?
 - Not lived out throughout the rest of the NT
- What is this story truly about?

- Lying to the Holy Spirit

The Cause of Ananias Deception

- Comparisons that drive your decisions
- Why would he lie?
 - Looking to seem better than you are
 - They must have coveted the prestige of giving such a gift to the church but not the sacrifice.
- Why do we lie?
 - Dr. Phil
 - 1. To take what is not rightfully theirs
 - 2. To escape accountability
 - 3. To create a fantasy, a false self-esteem to escape their own mundane life
 - 4. To avoid punishment
 - 5. To inflict pain, i.e., spreading gossip
 - 6. To feel better in the moment, “steal” admiration
 - 7. To gain an advantage to exploit others

The Claim of Ananias Deception

- I sold it all and I gave it all.
- The ultimate problem was that he lied to God.
- What might that look like for you and me?
- When we say that a sin in our life is ok? Giving it a pass.
- “Giving to the church was always a free-will offering.
 - They might have truthfully said that they sold their land and wanted to give a portion of the money, or they could have kept it all for themselves.
 - But when they lied, they lied to the Holy Spirit – to God Himself - and they paid the penalty of death.
 - Sapphira and Ananias put their own greed first - their greed for money and their greed for notoriety.
 - They tried to deceive God and His people.

The Consequence of Ananias Deception

- Death to them
- Power of God shown
- The seriousness of how we approach God is revealed
- The church was young then and the deaths of Sapphira and Ananias served as an example of how seriously God regarded dishonesty in His church.
 - Aren't we lucky that God doesn't strike down every person who lies to Him today?

- Our churches might be very small. But there is a kind of death that comes as a result of deceit.
- “It is the death of the bond of fellowship between believers and the death of the intimate relationship we should have with our Lord.” Lynn Chapman writer for Bella Online
- Fear and reverence were established in the Church.

Communion

Pass the Bread and Cup

The members of the church were behaving badly toward each other.

Taking advantage of others and pressing themselves forward to have greater portions in the Agape meal - even getting drunk.

Paul asks,

*Do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?
What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*

1 Cor 11:27-32

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Examine – confess- do not lie, make things right and true that you might be restored.

Or do not take it for your sake and for the church’s sake.

1 Cor 11:23-26

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often

as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Take the Bread and Cup

There is another person I would like to bring attention to today.

The ministry of the Disciples continues and we see the persecution of the Church taking place.

Stephen is killed and the followers of Christ are scattering

Philip is preaching in Samaria – these are the first converts outside of Judea.

- Witnesses in Jerusalem – Check
- Witnesses in Judea – Check
- Witnesses in Samaria – check
- Witnesses in the uttermost parts of the world – the entire book of Acts and the history of the church

But they are here in Samaria

Acts 8:9-25

*⁹ Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great,¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.”¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.¹² But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.¹³ **Simon himself believed and was baptized.** And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.*

¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money¹⁹ and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, **because you thought** you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in this ministry, because **your heart is not right** before God. ²² Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ **For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”**

²⁴ Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.”

²⁵ After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

The Cause of Simon’s Request

- Comparison to the works of the Apostles
- His bread and butter was tricks and magic.
- Josephus and other 1st century documents say that Simon performed before kings and even the emperor in Rome.
- He witnessed something and saw it as another tool in his kit in order to make a living
- What caused him to do this?
 - Simon’s **basic misconception about the gifts of God** which are **inward** in their nature (“the gall of bitterness” [8:23] and “the bond of iniquity” are both OT echoes, from Deut 29:18 and Isa 58:6 respectively).
 - His heart was not right.
 - His thoughts were not right.
 - He was full of bitterness.
 - He was captive to his sin.

The Claim of Simon’s Request

- He offered money
 - The **externality** of Simon’s faith seems indicated by his bold attempt to bribe the apostles into imparting their “power.”
- Give me this ability...
- So that everyone I touch...
- Let me add to my book of magic tricks.
- He accepted Christ.
- He was baptized.
- But the Holy Spirit was seen as a trick or as magic.
- Some see that power and are afraid and reject the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Others have a desire for power and supernatural abilities and long to WIELD that power.
- Acts, the Church and magic – principalities and powers (spiritual warfare)

The Consequence of Simon's Request

- He had no part of the ministry.
- He asked to pray for Peter for him.
- Peter calls him to repent.
 - Yet there remained the possibility of his seeking in penitence the forgiveness of God.
 - Simon's final plea (Acts 8:24) does not make it clear whether he had penetrated beyond the "signs" and the fear of retribution to any real faith.
 - His subsequent heretical reputation and the doubts raised by Luke himself make it safer to regard him as a nominal convert only.
- He never did have a part in the ministry
 - The story closes with a reference to a preaching tour which may have been partly designed to counter the cult of Simon.
- Church history says that Simon went his own way and started a separate religion with himself at the head. Even claiming that he was the son of God.
 - There are as many accounts about Simon the sorcerer in the early church fathers as any disciple Jesus had.
 - Gnosticism, Simonianism
- Some stories state that he was in Rome doing magic while Peter was also there. Simon had a platform built and levitated high above the forum. Peter then prayed and Simon fell to his death.... Thus bringing about the death of Peter
- **An External belief without Internal Transformation**

These three individuals took the Holy Spirit lightly.

These three individuals considered appearances over truth.

These three individuals had money on their minds.

Peter stands strong and speaks strongly about the Lord and about the Holy Spirit.

Challenge and closing Prayer

- Let go of all temptation to walk in comparisons.
- Do not take lightly the work and person of the Holy Spirit.
- Live your life in God's Truth and not lies.
 - You can lie to others and lie to yourself, but you cannot lie to God.
- Be sure that there is an internal transformation and not simply an external statement or external following.