

ACTS

Part 12: Authentic Community

Acts 5:1-11

Main Idea

God has called His people to be an authentic community full of great power, great grace, and great fear. To that end, He will remove sin and falsehood from our midst. As you see the contrast of the Barnabas and Ananias/Sapphira accounts, what qualities would God want instilled in His people? Which ones would He want removed?

Authentic Community

1. Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and His people (v. 3, 4b, 9). They belittled God in their lying to Him. They belittled the weight of their sin. They belittled the authority of the apostles. And they belittled the integrity of this new community. A community built on pretense or falsehood cannot stand.
 - a. Proverbs 16:28, “*...the Lord hates...a lying tongue, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in a community.*”
 - b. Galatians 6:7-8, “*Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*” Hebrews 12:29, “*...our God is a consuming fire...*”
 - c. Illustration—the insult in being lied to about what you clearly saw.
 - d. Application—How are you currently lying to God? In keeping a sinful secret life? In passivity toward your neighbor? In the white lies/impressions given to elevate your image?
2. Ananias and Sapphira sought the approval of man more than the approval of God. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not in their giving. They gave. Their sin was in their lying about their giving. They wanted to be seen as heavy hitters and big givers, to be seen as a part of that group that was giving their all for this new community even if they had to lie to gain this status. They valued reputation with man more than honesty before God. We are called to authentic community. Authenticity is built on truth.
 - a. Romans 12:9-10, “*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*”
 - b. Not authenticity as a replacement for holiness. Not authenticity instead of integrity. According to Romans 12 it is both “genuine” and “good.”
 - c. Application—How do we lie to one another in our posing and posturing before men, rather than honest and authentic living before God? How has the AnaSapphira-virus sickened your commitment to this (church) community?

3. Ananias and Sapphira loved their possessions more than people. Verse 2 says, “*...and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it...*”

- a. They were under no obligation or compulsion, “*...did it not remain your own...was it not as your disposal?*” (v. 14). They saw others giving freely and fully, but something kept them from doing the same.
- b. So Ananias and Sapphira “kept back” some of the proceeds. “Kept back” is the same word used in the Septuagint in Achan’s taking of the devoted things (Joshua 7:1), and in Titus 2:10 translated as “pilfering”. They had committed these resources to God and His people, and they were now robbing from God.
- c. There were real needs of real people in this community, why did they keep some back? They loved their stuff more than they loved the saints. They loved their comfort, security, and pleasure more than they loved the Kingdom of God.
- d. As God makes a people new, He also gives them a new orientation—an orientation to love others above self. (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5:1-2; Philippians 2:1-4) John Piper writes, “*Now this authentic believing in Jesus has two effects: ‘Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul’—there you see the first effect: believing in Jesus tightens the heart’s relationship to people—especially other Christians. When you become united to Jesus by faith, you become united to people by love. Then comes the other effect as we read on: ‘Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.’ So there is the second effect of trusting in Jesus: the heart is loosened in its relationship to things. Faith in Christ creates a bond of love to people, and cuts the bond of love to things.*”
- e. Example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)—Love moved him to action. Two others were there who did nothing.
- f. Application—Do you love possessions more than people? Do you hold things back because you love comfort, security, and pleasure more than you love the Kingdom of God?

Conclusion

1. Does this story shock you? Does God’s response to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira seem a bit harsh? Could it be that we react this way because we think so little of God’s holiness, justice and might? Dennis Johnson writes, “*If the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira shock us, we ourselves may have fallen into their sin.*” Derek Thomas writes, “*In today’s church, where the holiness of God is not viewed as seriously as it should be, it is all too possible to be offended by this incident.*”
2. The “great” trifecta—this story ends with “great fear” coming upon the whole church. Acts 4:32 tells us they were filled with “great power” and “great grace”. May God fill us with great fear, great grace and great power to be His authentic community.