

PP Acts: To the End of the Earth

Part 10-Acts 4:36-5:11

1/9-10/2020

We are returning to our series in Acts called *To the End of the Earth*

Luke follows the explosion of the church like an embedded reporter, in the midst of the action

Jesus had given His disciples a mission saying, **PP “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” Acts 1:8**

Filled with the Holy Spirit, these early Christians were empowered to share the good news that Jesus Christ had made a way of salvation through His life, death and resurrection

This is good news

All creation was intended to be at peace with God, but an angelic being, Lucifer, once an Archangel, wanted to be like God and led a rebellion in heaven, but was struck down by God and now lives to infect and affect as much of creation as he can with defiance

That defiance is called sin and it lives in each of us, making peace with God impossible

The bible, from Genesis to Revelation is the story of God’s perfect creation, broken by sin, rescued by the Son of God Himself, and ultimately and finally restored to intended peace

The rescue began when Jesus the Son of God stepped out of heaven took on human flesh, lived perfectly obediently to the Heavenly Father, was crucified for our sin, raised to life and offering forgiveness and peace and life to all who will submit to Him in faith

Yet Lucifer, Satan, seethes with hatred, and is unleashed all of his effort to blind the minds of unbelievers keeping them in darkness and to destroy the church, the means of God to carry the good news of salvation to the world

Yet Jesus, the King of His kingdom promised, **PP “*I will build my church, and the gates [powers] of hell shall not prevail against it.*” Matthew 16:18**

The church is unconquerable, and here for the first time in Acts, the group of early believers were called by that very name...the church

In **Acts 5**, we will see the devil come against the church, but fail because of God’s intervention

PP 1-The Problem...Hypocrisy

“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 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. 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?’” 5:1-3

The very first word in verse **‘But’** tells us that Luke just offered a contrast

At the end of chapter 4, Luke had introduced us to a levitical priest named Joseph, who would later go by Barnabas, who would become a powerful preacher and effective missionary

He had sold a field he owned, and since Levites weren’t allowed to own land in Israel, it was likely land from his native country Cyprus which is why Luke supplies that information

Many people were doing this (4:34), bringing all the money to the Apostles laying it at their feet, who would then distribute it to the needy in the church, so all had everything in common

‘But’ a husband and wife by the names Ananias and Sapphira who also sold a property, only

brought part of it to the Apostles pretending they were bringing the entire amount
 They didn't have to bring any of it, and they could have brought only part of
 God wants each of us to give ***“as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7***

Their problem was that they wanted the recognition Barnabas had received without the sacrifice
 Perhaps they thought of the bills coming due, or what they needed to get for their home or
 business, or the incredibly high Roman taxes they were already paying
 They were pretenders pandering for recognition and living a lie
 Peter, filled with the Spirit, saw behind the curtain and called out the problem in the heart of
 Ananias: *Satan has filled your heart*
 But Satan didn't force him to do this, he only tempted him to do this, finding a way to leverage
 his influence in their hearts

Christian, demonic forces are wrestling with us, looking for openings, spotting our weaknesses
 Are you well acquainted with your own weaknesses, potential gateways of the enemy?
 For many of us that opening is a love of money, just like this couple
 For many others it is fear, a heart that clamors for control to protect yourself and loved ones
 For some it is vanity, their looks, driving them to be self-consumed with their bodies
 For many it is pleasure which takes many forms, fed by nearly unlimited resources in the world
 For many it is escape, which music apps, books, and video games are ready to provide us
 For young parents it is often children, who have become the center of their love and affections
 It could be fame, power, security, shame, unrelenting guilt, anger, irritability, self-love
 The possibilities are nearly endless for our hearts are factories for idols, and our enemies are
 experts at leveraging their personal plans to destroy us through the means of temptations

For this couple, it wasn't just a love of money, it was a love of glory and reputation
 They wanted adoration, recognition for what was in reality, a charade, a pretended life
 Friend, are you living a lie?
 And if so, it is **PP** *hypocrisy*, the pretending to be on the outside, what you are not on the inside
 It is the hiding of who you truly are, in order to present a different you
 Take note that hypocrisy is not living worse than you profess-that's every one of us
 Hypocrisy is not being honest about it, and hiding it from God and others
 Jesus warned, **PP** ***“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Luke 12:1***
 Hypocrisy spreads, puffs us up in pride like leaven in bread, until it leaves us self-deceived, no
 longer able to separate reality from lies, fact from fiction

Hypocrisy mutes the power of a Christian's witness and it will do the same for a church...*You go to Cornerstone? I know someone who goes there and you wouldn't believe how he lives.*
 The message of a hypocrite is not trusted, is not believed, and is discarded as irrelevant
 It is the number one charge the world makes against the church, and it will destroy our testimony
 The solution is clear, and we will see it tragically unfold in the rest of the story

PP 2-The Solution...Holiness

“When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him

out and buried him.” 5:5-6

Most, if they are honest, feel this is an extreme reaction of God, maybe an overreaction
If you are secretly thinking that, then it betrays your lack of horror at sinning against God
For Peter said to Ananias, ***‘You have not lied to man, but to God’ 5:4***

Sapphira, who came in 3 hours later, repeated the same lie and she also died immediately, but
before she did, Peter said to her, ***“How is it that you have agreed together to test the
Spirit of the Lord?” 5:9***

They were so self-deceived they thought God wouldn’t be at all bothered with their scheme
It’s no big deal, it’s just a little deception and no one will ever know

God will be okay with this, He is merciful, and we are giving money to help the needy

Whenever God begins a new work, He responds strongly with the spreading, corrupting,
community-destroying sins of His people... ***‘Immediately she fell down at his feet and
breathed her last’ 5:10***

His church had just begun, and He will not allow sin to be trivialized, nor hypocrisy to spread
Now look at the response in the church and community: ***“And great fear came upon the whole
church and upon all who heard of these things.” 5:11***

‘Great fear’ is not terror fear that if you get out of line, you will be struck dead by God

It is respect, and a seriousness that He demands and deserves to be held in the highest regard

Whenever we minimize our sin, we prove we lack the fear of God, but a repentant people
evidences a sober and serious understanding that God will not tolerate sin in us

PP ***“Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not
knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” Romans 2:4***

PP How can we make sure to not live the life of Ananias and Sapphira?

PP i. Confess

Confession is the act of agreeing with God and casting your sin on Him

The Elder Statesman of England in the 17th century, Oliver Cromwell had a portrait painted, and
the painter did not include the warts of Cromwell’s face

Cromwell looked at the painting and said, *‘Take it away, and paint me warts and all.’*

PP ***“So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.” Acts 24:16***

There are times when our outside doesn’t match our inside, the way we look not matching reality

The humble person comes clean before God, confessing that which was held in secret

Friend, be humble, be honest, confess before God disciplines you

PP ii. Repent

Confession takes out the trash, getting rid of the stink that others can smell but you cannot

But without sincere repentance, there can be no fellowship with God, for an unrepentant heart is
proud, cold, and self-satisfied

There are two questions we should be asking ourselves every day of our lives:

PP ***What does God see in my life that is displeasing to Him?***

PP ***How is God persuading my heart of His love and mercy toward me?***

You see, God will never show you your sin without persuading you of His loving mercy

And when He does, it must result in one more action

PP iii. *Worship*

Holiness is when our outside matches our inside, but it also when we set God above and greater than all creation

PP *“The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.” Proverbs 8:13*, especially our own
 What keeps those idols from reforming in our hearts is the fear of God, it is worship
 Unless we return to Christ, loving Him more than sin, our repentance turns in a circle back to sin
 Worship is the act of a sinner who comes back to the One who lovingly welcomes you home
 Worship comes from a heart that has been restored to sanity, alive with the presence and power of God, one that regards God as greater, more wonderful than anyone or anything else

Friends, a church full of confessing, repenting, worship believers is a church that will powerfully take the good news of Jesus Christ to the end of the earth!

I would invite you to begin this even right now

Let's pray!