

Acts 4:32-36 & Acts 5:1-11 | Spiritual Hypocrisy |

1/17/16

- The generous giving and sharing of the Christians. | Acts 4:32-35
 - **Read Acts 4:32-35**
 - These early Christians were very generous and had great unity.
 - They viewed their common faith as something that made them part of the same family and they made sure that no one was in need.
 - There were those who sold property and took the proceeds to the apostles (to the church) so that the basic needs could be met.
 - This is providing for basic needs and not redistribution of wealth.
 - This was voluntary giving it wasn't something that was required.
- Barnabas who gave for the right reasons. | Acts 4:36-37
 - **Read Acts 4:36-37**
 - Now we read about a Levite named Barnabas who sold a field that he owned and gave the money to the apostles.
 - At first it might seem strange that this man was singled out since it seems from the verses previously that this was something that was common with the other Christians.
 - However, when we compare what happens here with the beginning of Chapter 5 we can then see why.
 - The actions to sell and give to those in need or to the church was a voluntary action, they didn't have to do it.
 - But those that felt led to do it did so.
 - Barnabas's actions show that not only did he feel called to do this but his heart was in the right place and he was doing it for the right reasons.
 - Barnabas was giving because he wanted to help others and he did so with a clean heart.
 - **He didn't do it for the glory of man or to prop himself up for others to praise his giving.**
 - **He did it out of true charity.**
 - The condition of Joseph's heart was quite different than that of Ananias and his wife Sapphira.
 - Joseph gave for the benefit of others and not for selfish reasons.
- Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and showed spiritual hypocrisy | Acts 5:1-11
 - **Read Acts 5:1-11**
 - Spiritual hypocrisy
 - This couple gives us an example of what spiritual hypocrisy looks like.
 - All Scripture is given to us for a purpose as in this case it is to see the dangers of spiritual hypocrisy.
 - **Spiritual hypocrisy is when one falsely portrays to be righteous and holy by doing good works for God and others, but when in fact in their hearts they are doing it for themselves and for their own glory.**
 - **It is deliberate deception where we wear a mask pretending to be more spiritual than we are.**
 - **One who commits spiritual hypocrisy is in fact lying to God**
 - The sin of Ananias and Sapphira
 - It wasn't that holding money back was bad, it was the condition of their heart.
 - To sell the property and keep some of the money for their own lively hood and then give a portion to the God and the church was not the problem.

- The problem is that they wanted to make it look like they gave 100% of the sale to the church, when in fact that wasn't the case. They wanted to look the part of a righteous and generous giver.
- **Selfishness was the root sin that caused their hypocrisy. They gave in to Satan's lies and the temptation to lie to God and the church.**
 - Their desire to be selfish and lie to God about what they were going to do caused them to keep back some of the proceeds and lie about how much they sold the field for.
 - They likely saw the reaction of the apostles and the other Christians when Barnabas gave to the church.
 - They wanted that same recognition but **without the personal sacrifice.**
 - So Satan gave them the idea of how to have both.
 - They told the church and likely others in public that they were going to make a personal sacrifice for the good of others and give 100% of the proceeds from selling their land.
 - This would have brought them praise from man because of their good works and sacrifice.
 - However, that's a **personal sacrifice** that they didn't want to have to make so how could they receive man's glory without the sacrifice?
 - This was simple Satan gave them the idea to simply proclaim to the Church that they would give it all, but when in fact they would selfishly keep a portion of the proceeds.
 - This way they would receive the glory of man without the sacrifice.
- This act of lying and holding back was planned out in advance.
 - This was not a spur of the moment thing where at the last minute they decided to hold some of the money back because they needed food.
 - Scripture says this was planned in their hearts.
 - They listened to Satan's lies and thought this was a way that they could achieve the recognition and praise of men for giving 100% of the proceeds to God and the church, however when in fact they were selfishly holding back.
- Lying to God
 - The biggest sin and fault in the choices and actions of this couple was not that they lied to men, but it was that they were really lying to God.
 - They had made a commitment and told God one thing but did another.
 - **It is possible to lie to mankind and get away with it. But is it possible to lie to God and expect that He won't find out?**
- Christians must not live out our faith with hypocrisy.
 - All too often we as Christians find ourselves being hypocrites similar to those that Jesus spoke against.
 - Christians can fake their spirituality to impress others.
 - To "fake" being Christian and doing good works may fool those around us but it doesn't fool the Holy Spirit.
 - **It doesn't matter how spiritually impressive we are on the outside, if on the inside our hearts are full of sin instead of the Spirit.**
 - Instead of trying to appear spiritual we must be doers and put our words into action. If our heart is truly in the right place this is what we will do.
 - We can play the part of being a Christian in public by attending church and looking the part.

- But if while we are at church we are simply looking the part and are not truly there in Spirit then we are hypocrites.
 - Perhaps we look holy and we righteous on Sunday, but we live the rest of the week as if we don't even know who Jesus is!
- God does not want our lip service. He wants our hearts.
 - Matthew 15:8
 - “These people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”
 - If our hearts are far from God as was Ananias and Sapphira, it doesn't matter how many “good works” we do it doesn't matter how many praises we sing to Him. They are worthless.
 - **Our relationship with God is of the heart NOT works.**
 - As Christians we must serve God with our hearts and not by a fake exterior that will never fool God.
- **The greatest mistake a Christian can make while doing God's work.**
 - When we show spiritual hypocrisy we miss the real purpose for doing God's work.
 - **When a Christian is obedient to God and we do God's work He is glorified.**
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31
 - “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory”
 - That is the ultimate purpose and reason why we do it.
 - The blessing that are received by the giver and receiver are simply by-products.
 - Our reasoning for doing God's work should not be for the blessings.
 - **But when a Christian does God's works to receive glory from others, then that Christian is taking the glory that was intended for God upon themselves.**
 - **There isn't much greater of a mistake that the Christian can make.**
 - Matthew 5:16
 - “In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
 - **When we give, when we serve, when we give up our time and resources doing God's work glory is given to Him.**
 - **We must NOT seek to take that glory from Him.**
 - Christians must do God's work for the right reasons, we should pray every time we serve or give and ask God to help us be sure that in our hearts we are doing it for the right reasons which is to give God the glory.
- Christians can show hypocrisy in their giving if they do it for the praise of others and for their own glory.
 - To give to others in need is by far the greatest blessing that one can receive.
 - God loves a cheerful giver
 - 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - “Each person should do as he has decided in his heart—not reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
 - There is just something about giving that fills your heart with joy.
 - To give is a spiritual gift that God gives us because He uses us to be a blessing to others.
 - However, all too often we can give so that we can receive praise and glory from others who applaud our good deed, instead of simply doing it because it glorifies God.
 - Jesus give us very clear instructions on how to give
 - Matthew 6:1-4

- **What does giving with the heart of Ananias look like compared to that as Jesus taught? What are some practical modern day examples?**
- Christians can show hypocrisy when we make sure that others see our personal sacrifice so that we will receive their praise and sympathy.
 - To do God’s work and to be obedient can certainly come with personal sacrifices. To do His work is not always easy.
 - However, it is wrong for the Christian to seek the praise or sympathy of others when we do God’s work.
 - Because when we seek the praise and sympathy of others the reasons for doing God’s work turns from giving Him glory to instead seeking glory for ourselves.
 - **This does not mean its wrong to receive praise and sympathy when we do God’s work but we must not seek it.**
 - Jesus gave us the example of the fasting hypocrites.
 - Matthew 6:16
 - “Whenever you fast, don’t be sad-faced like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so their fasting is obvious to people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward!”
 - Instead we are to do God’s work with a joyful heart and solely to glorify Him. Even if no one ever sees the self-sacrifice we had to make.
 - **What are some examples of how a Christian might seek praise and sympathy for their personal sacrifices?**
 - **What can we do to be sure that we are doing God’s work in service for the right reasons?**
- Pride and selfishness can be considered the greatest sins that can take us over.
 - The sin that as at the source of the problems for Ananias and Sapphira is the same sin that causes spiritual hypocrisy in the Christian. That is the sin of pride or selfishness.
 - Pride is the sin that fell the angel Lucifer who became Satan.
 - Isaiah 14:12-15
 - Pride is the sin that fell Adam and Eve
 - Genesis 3
- Sapphira tested the Holy Spirit
 - In addition to lying to the Holy Spirit Sapphira had also tested the Spirit
 - Her actions of lying and holding back the proceeds was testing God to see if perhaps He would even acknowledge the sin that they had committed.
 - To test the Spirit is to test God to see how much one can sin and get away with.
 - It can be to see how far or how much you can sin before God punishes.
 - We think of this as a child would test his parents.
 - The child likes to test the parent to see how far they can go with breaking the rules before the parent puts their foot down.
 - A Christian too can think that hey its just this small sin, God won’t rack me over the coals for this one.
 - Then it happens again and the Christian stretches it out further.
 - Maybe thinking well God perhaps didn’t really punish me for what I did so the Christian stretches it farther again.
 - However Scripture is very clear that we are not to test God.
 - Deuteronomy 6:16
 - “Do not test the LORD your God as you tested Him at Massah.”
 - Matthew 4:7

- “Jesus told him, “It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God.”
 - This was in response to the Devil who told Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God by jumping off the top of the temple.
- **In what ways do Christians test God?**