

Acts 2020 #9 (6.21.20) #20047

Acts 4:32-5:16

The Fear of the Lord

I. **God is at work in this world, redeeming, saving, and planning to return.**

A. The Covid crisis (and all the world wars and devastation) remind us that life fragile, death is inevitable, and hope is available only in God through Christ.

II. **Note three things the Lord does in the early church that we can learn from.**

A. **He creates loving unity. 4:32-37.**

1. The early Christians were spontaneously unified, loving, centered on the voice of Jesus through the apostles (Acts 2:42).
2. The generosity was impressive because it was voluntary.
  - a) They were astoundingly generous, but it was not a commune.
3. There were local heroes in loving action.
  - a) Barnabas (son of encouragement or consolation)

B. **He insists on moral integrity. 5:1-11. What?! The unity wasn't perfect?**

1. **A one-time, severe judgment against hypocrisy. 4 questions help.**

- a) Who does it? God does it, not Peter.
  - (1) Peter may not have known Ananias would die until it happened.
- b) Why? Lying to God. 4
  - (1) Lying to the apostles is lying to the Spirit, which is lying to God.
- c) How often? Once. As a lesson to all.
  - (1) It only happens this way once in church history. Right at the beginning.
- d) Did they go to hell? It doesn't say that. Depends if they were genuine believers.
  - (1) God can and has taken the this-age-life from some of his own people in discipline.
    - (a) Moses. Deut.32:48-52; 34:1-7
      - (i) Yet he is with Jesus at the Transfiguration. (see Mtt.17; Mk.9; Lk.9)
    - (b) Corinthians. 1 Cor.11:30, coming to the Lord's table flippantly and unrepentantly.
  - (2) If so, they did not lose their salvation any more than Moses did.
    - (a) Physical death does not mean spiritual death.
    - (b) People are not saved by their own obedience but by Christ's.

C. **He adds multitudes to himself. 5:12-16. The gospel spread through the apostles.**

1. **Apostolic Miracles:** The Apostolic miracles are crucial, authenticating evidence that the apostles spoke directly for Jesus Christ and either did or authorized actions in His name. (**2 Cor.12:12; Rom.15:19; Heb.2:3**)
  - a) Miracles are associated with Christ more than any other form of spirituality or religion in human history. 2.3 Billion people today claim to be Christian. About 1/3 of the world population. Miracles happen all over the world and always have.
  - b) *Avoid the two ditches regarding miracles. Deism (they don't happen) and Obsession (we need to see them daily to be sure we're doing the right things).*
2. **Many Believers added to the Lord:** 14 Jn.20:30-31.
  - a) Added to the Lord = saving faith means we enter the Trinitarian Life.
3. *The cross did not happen so that we could do miracles. The miracles happened so that we could know that the Gospel is True. Jesus is the resurrected, risen, saving Lord of the entire Creation.*

### III. Up Close on the Discipline. 1-11. Three more things to note. It was...

- A. A satanic strategy to sabotage the church. (Eph.6:10-20)
1. This is not demon possession, but it is real spiritual influence to evil.
    - a) If it had been, Peter would have done an exorcism.
    - b) Instead, Peter puts the blame on Ananias and Sapphira themselves for following through on their own scheme, encouraged in it by Satan.
    - c) NIV, what made you think of doing such a thing?
  2. *Is there anything in us that could be influenced by this sort of temptation? Of course there is. Our old nature.* **Rom. 7:15-21; Eph.4:17-32; Col.3:1-17.**
- B. A synthesis of three basic temptations, (a lethal brew)
1. Garden-variety Greed. **1 Tim 6:9-10.** love of money avarice
    - a) Simple embezzlement, but from God.
  2. Selfish Ambition. **Jas. 3:13-18**
    - a) Competitive, political agitating for position and prestige, acclaim
    - b) Aspiration is wanting to improve. Ambition is insisting on being better than others.
  3. Extreme Deceit. **Col. 3:9.** (Pr.6:16-19)
    - a) Lying to the Spirit is lying to God.
      - (1) Lying to an Apostle was the same as lying to Christ Himself.
      - b) *Lying to God is stupid. He knows your thoughts better than you do.*
  4. *Was this a life-pattern for this couple? Is this the way they did business before and they were just assuming that they could get away with it in the kingdom of God?*
- C. A stunning reminder that we will answer to the Lord. 2 Cor.5:10; Rom. 14:12; Heb.12
1. This produces the fear of the Lord. (Pr.1:7; 9:10)
    - a) The fear of the Lord is a good thing.
  2. *A totally forgiven life is still accountable to the Lord.*
    - a) This is why we live in constant repentance. (1 Jn.1:8-2:2)
  3. *The fact that our salvation is not based on our obedience (but on Christ's obedience for us) does not mean that our Father doesn't care about our disobedience.*

### IV. What do we learn about Life in Christ?

- A. *Unity (love) is meaningless without integrity. Jn.13:34 (1 Cor.13)*
1. Ananias and Sapphira were repudiating love by lying to God (through the apostles) and the Church (through the apostles), which is the Body of Christ.
  2. Christian love is not sentimentalism. In order for the great commandment to function among us, we must be authentically Christ-like. Col.3:9
    - a) Integrity = the quality or condition of being whole, complete, sound
    - b) Authentic = conforming to fact, trustworthy, genuine
  3. God doesn't necessarily take Christians' lives for hypocrisy today, because he wants us to learn from this situation.
- B. *Grace is meaningless without the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 1:7; 9:10*
1. The true fear of the Lord is what makes us appreciate his grace and love.
  2. God is not Mister Rogers.
- C. *Everything is meaningless without the gospel. 14. 1 Jn.1:8-2:2*
1. All of this is being done so that people will take God seriously and come out of religious and secular hypocrisy and darkness and into the Lord. Jn.20:30-31
  2. If we are left to ourselves in this age, death is all, and meaning is conspicuous by its absence.
  3. Sin kills us. This is why God is so serious about not misrepresenting his grace, his integrity, his gospel.