

THE PERIL OF PRETENDING Acts 5:1-16

INTRODUCTION: Ananias and Sapphira Their specific sin

I. THE NATURE OF HYPOCRISY

1. The attempt to seek a higher reputation than one deserves.
2. It usually involves your loved ones closest to you.
3. Its essence is deceit and lying.
4. It is unnecessary in the first place., vs. 4.
5. It is a victory for Satan our Adversary.
6. It is an insult to the H.S. and a denial of His personality & omniscience; and it is a presumption on His forbearance.
7. Like the sin of Achan in the book of Joshua, a deceitful act of retaining for private use property that was supposed to be devoted to God.
8. Ananias wanted to APPEAR a good Christian without BEING one!

II. THE PERIL OF PRETENDING.

- A. Such deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God -- as in the case of Achan, "sin in the camp".
- B. The church must keep herself pure

- C. Judgment was not exercised by Peter, but by the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

1. A comparison of vs 3 & 4 shows that the H.S. is not only regarded as personal, but as God Himself present with his people.
2. Part of the judgment was the CONSCIENCE of the offenders.
3. Peter himself did not call down judgment upon them. It was not Peter's personality that stopped Ananias's heart from beating; it was the sudden realization of the sacrilege that he had committed.

D. There are many ways of pretending.

1. The Dr. Jeckyll & Mr. Hyde type of hypocrite.
2. The pharasaical type who loses spiritual reality in legalistic outward observances.
3. But there is also the frustrated Christian who in the midst of sorrow, really feels that God has dealt harshly with him, and yet pretends to sing of resignation to the will of God; that, too, is hypocrisy.
4. Christ was always patient with the honest doubter and the one who was understandably disturbed-- as in the case of Job and Martha.

III. THE POWER OF SINCERITY.

1. Great fear came upon the whole church.
 - A. There is such a thing as a healthy fear. (deep respect or regard)
 - (1). This is what is meant by the "fear of God" in the Bible.
 - (2). Here, due reverence for the presence and power of the H.S.
 - B. This is the first use of the word "church" in the book of Acts. Notice the significance of the word as used in the OT. & N.T.
Heb. "qahal" or "Edah" / Assembly, congregation.
Aramaic: "kenishta" / work used by Christ in Mt. 18:17 & 16:18
Gr. equivalent is "sunagoge" or "ekklésia".
The Christian "ekklesia" was both old & new.

D. A lie could not live in the atmosphere of the Spirit.

D. FEAR fell upon the community outside, as well as upon the church.

2. The result was not only fear but also POWER, vs. 12-16

- A. It does not say that Peter's shadow healed anyone.
- B. It is an oriental picture showing what these people thought of Peter.
- C. Notice how Dr. Luke describes the healing of multitudes, according to the different kinds of sickness.

- (1). Sick folks: physical diseases
- (2). Those vexed with unclean spirits: mental illness.

D. Prerequisites for this kind of power.

- (1). In the individual life and in the church, there is an absolute necessity for truth, sincerity, holiness, & purity.
- (2). Prerequisite to the Holy Spirit's power is OBEDIENCE, (vs. 32)!

Sometimes it may seem like a rather foolish thing to the minds of men to obey the commands of Christ, But there is no blessing apart from obedience.

AA blind man sat by the roadside
Till the Master should pass by;
He hoped that the Christ might touch him
And heal each sightless eye.
He dared not go to seek Him,
To be lost among the throng,
But patiently stood and waited
Till the Christ should come along.

"At last his ear caught voicing
Of the Man of Galilee,
And he cried, "O blessed Master,
Touch mine eyes that I may see!
For long hours I have waited
Till I scarce could longer stand,
But my heart, dear Master, tells me,
Thou wilt touch me with Thy hand."

Came a touch on the leaden eyelids,
And a call to be obeyed;
"Go and wash in the pool of Siloam,"

Was the command the Master made.
The Christ passed on, and the blind man
Went faltering toward the pool,
In silence learning a lesson,
The hardest in all life's school.

No virtue had been in the water,
But the blind one groped on down,
Praying he might not stumble
And fall, headlong---to drown.

The cooling drops, like crystals,
He dashed with all his might;
They fell on his head like blessings---
And then--a gleam of light!

New forms take shape!--The water!

And that must be a tree!

A shout arose from his puzzled lips:

"I see! Thank God, I see!"

He ran to tell his neighbors,

And they rejoiced to say,

"By faith, he went down to the pool---

By sight, he came away!"

-- Ruby Erwin Livingston.

Cent. Ch. Augsburg 31 May '84