

Contrasting Humility with Hypocrisy (Acts 4:32-5:11)

Introduction:

1. I have often said that I am so glad that my life with all of its good points and more so its bad ones has not been put on display for everyone to read!
 - If my good deeds or habits (even though they are few) were displayed for all to read, I would only assume that pride would soon become an issue.
 - If my bad deeds or habits were displayed for all to read I suppose I would be too embarrassed to be seen in public so thank the Lord I lived after the Bible was written!
2. The Bible does record some extreme high's and lows of various Old Testament saints:
 - Moses
 - 1) On one hand he righteously defies Pharaoh and leads the Israelites into the promised land
 - 2) Not long after that in an unrighteous manner he defies God by striking the rock instead of speaking to it as God instructed him. For that act of disobedience he is judged severely.

- David
 - 1) The scriptures tell of various victories over his enemies and an immense faith and trust in God.
 - 2) In other instances we learn of his act of adultery and murder. In addition he lived at time in fear of other men even though he served an all powerful God.
 - Solomon
 - 1) Proverbs records the height of his wisdom
 - 2) Ecclesiastes records the depth of his folly
3. These people mentioned above (Moses, David, Solomon) are examples of our total and complete dependence on God for left to ourselves we will pursue unrighteous acts.....it is in our nature! Although at times they erred; they understood, believed and had faith in God as the One who would redeem them from their acts of unrighteousness.
- 1) Something changes after Christ comes to the earth, is born of a virgin, lives a sinless life, dies for the sins of mankind and is raised to life. (II Corinthians 5:17-21)
 - 2) The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit releases us from the bondage of sin and empowers us to live holy lives and as followers of Christ we are “declared holy” by God.....not because of ourselves but because of Christ’s righteousness. (Romans 8:1-4, Ephesians 2:8-9)
4. In this lesson we will see two very stark contrasts that the early church faced:
- An example of humility displayed through _____.
 - An example of hypocrisy displayed through _____ behavior.

Humility Displayed Through Sharing (Acts 4:32-37)

1. We are reminded once again that the early church was of _____ mind (Acts 4:32)
 - A literal rendering might say; “And the multitude of those who did believe the heart and soul was one” (Acts 4:32A – YLT)
 - This idea of “oneness” that is characterized by sharing is a fulfillment of what Christ taught the disciples during His earthly ministry (John 13:35). Such was accomplished through a proper focus:
 - 1) Ministering to those in need within their own group or congregation. (Acts 4:32B)
 - 2) Ministering to those outside their group which were the lost and unsaved by sharing Christ’s love and grace. (Acts 4:33)
2. The practical act of sharing (Acts 4:34-35)
 - One way in which sharing can occur is when we realize that what we have actually belongs to _____ and not to us.
 - 1) What Biblical lessons do we have that support this idea? (Job 1:21)
 - 2) Even Solomon who had everything recognized the futility of the acquisition of wealth without a proper perspective. (Ecclesiastes 3:11-14, 5:10, 15, 12:12)
 - The early church recognized that one way in which they could outwardly display what has changed inwardly was through the outward act of sharing. (Acts 4:34, James 2:15-16, I John 3:17)

- The result of this demonstration of love (the act of sharing) was that “there was no a needy person among them” (Acts 4:34)
 - 1) They didn’t just share portions of their income....they actually sold (liquidated) their assets (houses and lands) which meant they were relinquishing the security of their future.
 - 2) This outward act reveals a very important truth that we don’t want to miss.....read (Mathew 6:19-21, 24-34) and describe how their actions (the early church) matched up to what Jesus taught?
 - 3) The act was strictly voluntary (for some still owned houses – Acts 12:12), they didn’t pool there possessions (it was not communal or communistic living) but gave to those in need, and finally there isn’t a mandate or requirement for all churches to follow this pattern for we have no other record in Acts where this took place. It was simply a selfless act of Christian love demonstrated from a pure heart with pure motives.
- The lessons learned here are simple:
 - 1) When we see someone in need (especially a brother or sister in the Lord) and we have the means to help.....we should help them. (James 2:15-16, I John 3:17)
 - 2) Giving should be out of a heart of love which sometimes requires sacrifice.
 - 3) Giving should be selfless expecting nothing in return (Matthew 6:3-4)

3. An example of true humility (Acts 4:36-37)

- A fella by the name of _____ who is better known to us as Barnabas is singled out by Luke to simply show how those in the congregation were donating their property.
 - 1) It is important to note that nothing was made of this other than Luke pointing it out in order to help serve as a contrast between the act of humility by Barnabas verses that of hypocrisy by Ananias and Sapphira.
 - 2) The fact that Barnabas even had land to begin with being he was a Levite makes the selling of the property all the more sacrificial.
 - 3) One of the things we learn about Barnabas is that he was a man of _____ and his name (Barnabas) was actually given to him by the apostles and the name meant “Son of Encouragement”. We will learn more about him as we study further in the Book of Acts.
- Barnabas (although singled out by Luke) was representative of the humility expressed by the act of giving that not only the others within the early church performed but also serves as an example for us to follow!

5. Questions/Comments on this section of Scripture?

Hypocrisy Displayed Through Sinful Behavior (Acts 5:1-11)

1. Webster defines hypocrisy as; “The feigning (to pretend) of beliefs, feelings, or virtues one does not hold”
2. In my humble opinion; Luke is not giving us this example of hypocrisy as a means of being a tattle tale but to offer a contrast to what and who we should be as Christians which is honest and humble before God and man. Notice the contrast as we proceed.
3. Take note of the _____ of “**being spiritual**” (Acts 5:1-2)
 - They sold their property as others (like Barnabas) did; but what are we told that they did which was different? Was this act accidental or intentional?
 - Why was this act considered hypocritical or sinful by Peter? (the answer is actually in Acts 5:3-4)
 - It appears that Ananias and Sapphira were attempting to make a public display of their spirituality while inwardly scheming to control some of their assets under the pretense they had given everything like Barnabas. Thus this act of sin will be severely judged perhaps to serve as an example to others in the congregation at that time.
 - Hypocrisy drew serious rebuke from Jesus during His earthly ministry and it was often aimed at the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18, also read Matthew 23:1-36).
 - Though we don’t know Ananias and Sapphira’s true spiritual condition it is probably best to see them as “sinning saints” who attempted to “act spiritual”.
 - Why did they face such a severe judgment?

4. How did Peter describe their action? (Acts 5:3-4)
- It is clear that Peter saw through their actions and perceived this as an act of hypocrisy.
 - Take note of two important little nuggets that you don't want to miss here (**I actually pulled this from John MacArthur's Commentary on Acts page 154**) about the Holy Spirit:
 - 1) "First it affirms that He (The Holy Spirit) is a person, not an influence or impersonal force, since He can be lied to"
 - 2) "Second verse 3 says Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit while verse 4 says he lied to God, a clear affirmation to the deity of the Holy Spirit."
5. Take note of the act of hypocrisy was swiftly judged and the punishment was severe. (Acts 5:5-10)
- Peter will write later in his Epistle (I Peter 4:17); "For it is time to begin with the household of God, and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" A good reminder that we need to continue to be disciplined in our spiritual pursuits (Hebrews 12:1-17).
 - This is a sobering reminder that "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away" (Job 1:21)
 - The fact that Ananias' and Sapphira's lives were taken by the Lord in this instance shows the importance that God places on His church (The called out ones) to be pure and holy. (Ephesians 5:27, II Corinthians 11:2)
6. What effect did this judgment against Ananias and Sapphira have on the other saints? (Acts 5:11)

Concluding Thoughts

1. Why does this act by Ananias and Sapphira receive so much attention?
2. If hypocrisy can and does exist among believers and it appears to receive pretty severe judgment.....shouldn't we determine in our own hearts to flee from it?
3. Since we (believers) still sin (I am guilty too); what are we doing to refrain from hypocrisy and pursue righteousness?
4. Does my pursuit of sin or my pursuit of righteousness affect the entire body of Christ (The Church)?
5. What are you and I doing to protect the purity of the Church?

