

Early Hypocrisy Uncovered

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[0:00] Take your copy of the scriptures, turn to the book of Acts. In the New Testament, the book of Acts chapter 4. And we'll be reading Acts 4, verse 32 through chapter 5 and verse 11.

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

There were no needy persons among them, for from time to time, those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge, he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

[1:22] Then Peter said, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?

Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men, but to God.

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died, and great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened, and Peter asked her, Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land? Yes, she said, that is the price.

And Peter said to her, How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.

[2:31] And at that moment, she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in, and finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

And great fear seized the whole church, and all who heard about these events. Let's hear the preaching of God's Word. God's Word gives us a realistic view of things, not a look through rose-colored glasses that only sees the virtues and the praises of men.

Some biographies and written histories are of that type. Men almost seem to be more like angels than real men.

But the book of Acts records not only the bright side of the church, but also her dark chapters, because we need to learn from both. So after giving us four chapters of the glorious triumphs of the church, Luke now records the dark deed of two of the members of the church at Jerusalem, Ananias and Sapphira.

One commentator said both of their names were too good for them. Ananias means the Lord's favor, and Sapphira hardly was the beautiful jewel that she was named after, a sapphire.

[4:02] Luke's recording of their sin was under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In other words, God wants us to know this. And therefore, Grace Fellowship, these things were written to teach us, to rebuke and correct and train us in righteousness.

May God help us this morning to not miss the reason this portion is in our Bibles. We want to see four things about the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.

Its background, its nature, its judgment, and its result. First, its background, the situation in which it arose.

Now, every sin has a context, and so does this one. In other words, sin doesn't just happen. There are reasons people sin. And if you would understand the sin, consider the context, the soil out of which it grows.

We're going to see first the broader context, then the more immediate context. Now, the broader context, or the big picture, throughout the book of Acts, is something that I don't want us to lose sight of.

[5 : 14] What's happening in the book of Acts? The ascended, the risen, ascended Lord Jesus Christ is in heaven, and he is building his church on earth by his Holy Spirit, by his apostles, and his people.

Satan and his hellish crew are opposing the church at every turn, trying to tear down what Christ is building up. Now, so far, we've seen Satan's strategy of persecution.

He stirred up threats against the church to silence their witness about Christ. But you remember how that tactic backfired, because the threat only sent the church in corporate prayer, asking God to give them great boldness in speaking the word, and God filled them with his spirit and gave them great boldness.

Now, Luke is telling us that Satan has more than one weapon in his arsenal against the church. Having tried persecution, and he's not done with that, by the way, but having tried that from without, outside the church, he now tries to spread hypocrisy from within the church, and all with the same hellish hatred for Christ and his church.

So that's the big picture behind this sin. Satan is wanting to tear down this early church of Jesus Christ that he's building. But then there's a more immediate context, and that's found in verses 32 to 37, the last verses of chapter 4.

[6 : 51] They tell us what was happening right then, and it's a summary statement about the health of the church. It's like a doctor's report, a checkup, and this is how the church is doing.

We saw the same thing at the end of chapter 2. We learned there that they were devoted to the preaching, the fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and to corporate prayer, and the Lord was saving and adding to his church every day.

That was the summary then. Well, how is she doing now? And here at the end of chapter 4, we're told that all the believers, verse 32, were one in heart and mind.

The many were one. Now, this is true unity, a wholehearted affection for one another, and a mindset of oneness that said, we're in this together.

It was a revival of true religion. Which is summarized by love, that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, and we love our neighbor as ourself, and especially our neighbor in the family of God.

[7 : 59] And that's what was happening. This unity and love for one another extended to their possessions. And that's one way you can know that true revival has come, when it affects your pocketbook.

It's natural to say, mine, like your two-year-old shows you. It is supernatural to say, yours.

And that's what the Spirit of God was doing in the church at Jerusalem. Now, this was not communism. It was not the elimination of private property, where everyone owns everything. And no, they continued to own their own houses and lands, as this text will show us. But it was a mindset of fellowship, of shared life, so that they did not regard their possessions as their own. They did not see this money coming to them as something that's just to be spent for themselves. But they thought of their brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

[9 : 04] And so they shared everything they had. And from time to time, you see, this shows it wasn't communism. Because from time to time, occasionally, those who owned land and owned houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles to have it distributed to anyone as he had need, so that there was no ongoing need in the church at Jerusalem.

Now, that's like this compassion fund that our deacons oversee, that we're going to replenish over Thanksgiving. That sort of thing was going on in the church at Jerusalem.

It was nothing forced upon the church. It was the voluntary giving of a heart touched by the grace of God. So that's what was going on. And one specific example is then given to us of a man who did this.

And the guy's name was Joseph. And he sold a field that he owned, and he brought the money to the apostles to have them share it with needy people in the church. Now, the apostles had nicknamed him Barnabas, which means son of encouragement.

And it was no wonder, because wherever he went, he spread good cheer. He always left behind, encouraged brothers and sisters in Christ. So they called him son of encouragement.

[10:19] That marks this man, encouragement. He did it not only with his money, but he did it with his mouth, as we'll see later on, and his standing up for brethren, as we'll see in this book of Acts.

But his view was, I exist, and my gifts exist, and my possessions exist, not just for myself, but for the greater good of the body of Christ.

I wonder if you are encouraging anyone with your money and your words and your visits and your calls and your cards. Happy the church that has some Barnabases who use what they have to encourage others.

They are extremely valuable to the church. And for that reason, Barnabas is here mentioned. And so this love, this unity, along with a powerful witness to the resurrection of Jesus, gives us a beautiful snapshot of the health of the church.

What Jesus was doing at that point, saving people from being turned in on themselves, and rather turning them outside to sacrificially love, to spend and be spent to help others.

[11:37] It was a revival culture that was the immediate background to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. So that's the backdrop to this sin. We come to the sin itself, its nature.

What exactly was their sin? Well, I must say that it's far worse than it may look on the surface. Many have asked, what's the big deal here? It doesn't seem so severe.

Well, there are many aspects to their sin. And when we view them all together, we see its seriousness. And in the first place, they were companions in sin.

And the text is at pains to tell us this. Verses 1 and 2, notice their companionship in this sin. Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property, just as Barnabas had.

And with his wife's full knowledge, he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at his apostles' feet. Verse 9 goes on to say that they agreed together to do this.

[12:50] So they were clearly partners in crime. They were companions in this sin. Now think with me. Why does God bring together a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage?

Well, it's that they might help one another. Why is it, young people, that if you are a professing Christian, you are only free to marry another professing Christian?

Because God wants you together, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. God wants you like Priscilla and Aquila, being co-laborers together to forward the cause of Christ in the earth.

He wants you to help one another onto God, so that one falls, the other might lift them up. So that when one is weak and says, as Job's wife said to her husband, are you still holding on to your integrity?

Curse God and die. So that the other might correct them and say, you speak as a foolish woman without the wisdom of God.

[14:06] Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord and not trouble? He was a helper to his helpmate. He helped her in the temptation to resist the devil and to submit to God.

That's why God brings two people together in marriage. But these two married partners are helping each other to sin against God.

They're covering for each other. They're greasing the slide for each other, violating the very purpose of their marriage union, to be a companion in serving God together.

Husbands, are you leading your wives closer to the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you washing her with the word?

Wives, are you helping your husband on to God? Are you encouraging him to obey? That's the purpose of the marriage union, and they violated it by coming together as companions in sin.

[15:14] Secondly, their sin was not the slip-up of a moment, but was the premeditated plot to deceive. Psalm 36 and verse 4 speaks of the sinfulness of the wicked in this way.

Even on his bed, he plots evil. He commits himself to a sinful course and does not reject what is wrong. Ananias and Sapphira cooked up this evil plan together.

Perhaps they were in bed together one Sunday night after church and Ananias spoke into the darkness. Sapphira, you still awake?

Yes, dear. What is it? Did you notice today at church the way that everyone was praising Barnabas for selling a field and donating the money to the church?

I sure did. It was the talk of all the ladies, too. Some of the poor widows were saying that this gift went to pay off their rent for the entire winter months. They couldn't say enough about Barnabas. [16 : 24] After some further thought, Ananias breaks the silence again. You know, we've got that piece of land across the city just sitting there.

And old Ebenezer offered me \$10,000 the other day for it. What if we sold it to him? We wouldn't have to give it all to the church. We could give just \$8,000 and tell them that that was the full price for the land.

And then you and I could keep the \$2,000 for ourselves. And no one would know the difference. And they'd soon be singing our praises. Hmm. I like that idea.

Do you think it'll work? Sure. We just have to agree that if anyone asks us the price that we tell them it was \$8,000. Agreed. And with that, they dozed off to sleep.

Well, we don't know. That's my imagination. But in some way, they hatched this plan together and agreed to it. And in the morning light, they did not reject what was evil, but rather rose to carry it out. [17 : 37] He sells the land for \$10,000. He takes \$8,000 to the apostles and says, This is the price of the land. keeping the \$2,000 for himself.

It was a premeditated, deliberate plot to deceive. It was meant to pull the wool over the eyes of the church. And their sticking to the plan revealed the depth of their commitment to evil.

Whereas the noble man makes noble plans and by noble deeds he stands. What kind of plans are you making?

They reveal our character. It was a deliberate plan, a premeditated plan to deceive. Thirdly, their sin revealed the idols of their heart.

Behind every outward lie is an inward idol. Like an onion, as you peel it back, you'll find those idols. And Ananias and Sapphira's lie reveals that the love of money had a grip upon their hearts.

[18 : 49] They wanted a good reputation, but they were not willing to pay \$10,000 to get it. And I'm just using these numbers as an example. We don't know what the numbers were.

But they wanted a good reputation with the church, but they weren't willing to pay \$10,000 to get it. They loved money too much for that. And so they're willing to lie in order to keep the \$2,000 or whatever the part was that they kept back.

They loved money more than a clear conscience. They loved money more than pleasing and obeying God. Beware, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, even what we're seeing this morning.

But beside this idol of the love of money was another. It was the love of the praise of men. More than the praise of God. They couldn't help but see how the folks at church thought highly of Barnabas and the others who had sold some property and donated it to the church.

And they wanted in on that praise. They wanted to be the topic of discussion at church, and for that they're willing to lie. Now, if you ever want something bad enough that you have to lie to get it, that is an idol in your life.

[20 : 15] It has become an idolatrous desire. And so their sin revealed the idols of their hearts, something that was more important to them than God himself.

And your heart, as you come into this world, as an idol factory, are you identifying them and rejecting them every day as they come off the assembly line of your heart?

Their sin revealed the idols of their heart. God replacements. Fourthly, their sin was gross hypocrisy.

Gross hypocrisy. This chapter division sometimes don't help us, but what we see as we read the portion at the end of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 is that the sin of Ananias and Sapphira is contrasted with the good deed of Joseph, or Barnabas, as he was called.

And though those deeds looked much the same, they both sold a piece of property and donated it to the church. Yet God who searches the heart said they were vastly different deeds.

[21 : 34] What appears to be a virtue may be in fact a gross sin. Sin can even take the garb of holiness. And that's the way it was in the church at Jerusalem.

Their sin was not that they kept back part of the money for themselves. Peter tells Ananias that. He could do that. He could keep back part of the money.

In fact, he could have kept it all, he tells them. You didn't even have to sell the piece of property. It was yours, and you had the right to keep it. No, their sin was not holding it back.

Their sin was pretending to be something that they weren't. Though they didn't give the full price, they wanted to appear as if they had given their all, just like Barnabas and the others. So they lied to give the impression that they were more generous than they really were. That they were more holy than they really were. More loving.

[22:33] More selfless. And now I'm being searched. Have you ever said things? Dropped little hints for the purpose of wanting people to think more highly of you than what you deserve to be thought as?

To make people think that you pray more than you do? Witness more than you do? They lied to gain a better reputation than they deserved. That is rank hypocrisy.

And that was the prevailing sin of the Pharisees that prompted our Lord's warning to his disciples. Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees.

You see, they did many good things. They fasted and prayed and gave money to the poor, but they did it all for the wrong reasons that they might be seen and praised by men. And it's this yeast of hypocrisy that had found its way into Ananias and Sapphira's heart.

What had the outward look of selfless charity was in reality an act of self-promoting pride. Look at me. It was self-worship in the very sanctuary of God.

[23:48] His church. Christ, our Passover lamb, has been slain, so let's get rid of all the yeast of pretending to be something that we're not.

We see why only God is qualified to be judge of any act that is ever done. He's the only one qualified to judge and to reward any deed because he alone knows the motives of the heart.

He knows the why. We do what we do. And that can be the difference between a sweet-smelling aroma and a stench in his nostrils.

This was a stench. And so Ananias lays the bag of gold at the apostles' feet thinking he's pulled off the deception. Only to be shocked by Peter's words, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your hearts that you've lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you receive for the land?

Be sure your sins will find you out regardless of how you scheme to cover them. But we ask, how was it that Peter knew? I don't believe that he had talked to Ebenezer, the buyer, and found out the true price.

[25:08] No, rather, it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit in a direct revelation. It's one more of the miraculous signs and wonders that were being done by the apostles here at the outset of the Christian church.

And from it, we learn the fifth thing about this sin. And it's this, that their sin was lying, which is doing the work of Satan. How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied?

Now, we're not surprised to find Satan in the church. We shouldn't be surprised to find that Satan is involved in this sin. Indeed, he's always present where Christ is building his church.

He's always wanting to tear down what Christ is building up. And so he fills their hearts to lie, not only planting the thought or suggesting the plan, but following it up with reasons and powerful persuasions that match their own fleshly desires.

Kids, Satan is a liar. Jesus said of him, there's no truth in him. When he lies, he's speaking his native language. For he is a liar and the father of lies, the one that gives birth to lies, the source of lies.

[26:27] So when you lie, you are doing Satan's work in the world. And if lying characterizes you, Jesus says in John 8, 44, that it shows that you belong to Satan because you want to do what Satan does and lie.

Where Christ is at work in revival, Satan is not far behind with his counterfeit holiness. Where there's a true work of God, there's the counterfeit work.

And Satan is at the bottom of such things, sowing his tares right among the wheat, his lies among the truth. There's a lesson here for us.

It's possible to be a part of a good church under the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit and yet to be marching to the beat of Satan's drum. This is Ananias and Sapphira.

Wouldn't you enjoy being a part of the Jerusalem church where the Spirit was flowing in such power and people's love and unity and people were being saved every day?

[27:36] But it's possible to belong to that church and still have Satan fill your heart. That word fill your heart, it's the same word used for the rest of the Jerusalem church that was described as

being filled with the Spirit so that they would bear witness to the truth.

And now an unresisted Satan so fills Ananias and Sapphira's heart that they bear witness false witness and lie. It's the work of Satan.

Don't rest in belonging to a good church. There's no wave effect as if the holiness of the group just carries you along with it.

That doesn't happen in Christian homes, it doesn't happen in Christian church. You must personally pursue godliness along with others who are pursuing godliness.

So their sin was lying when Satan's fingerprints were all over it as he's out to destroy what Jesus is building up. Sixth, their sin was lying to the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 46] Whether Ananias and Sapphira realized it or not, that's what they were doing. For in lying to the church they were lying to the Holy Spirit who indwells the church.

Peter repeats it in verse 4, you have not lied to men but to God. And if ever you need two verses to prove that the Holy Spirit of God, verse 3 and 4 does that, they lied to the Holy Spirit and they lied to God because the Holy Spirit is God.

And just as God's presence filled the Old Testament temple, so his spirit now fills the New Testament church. Not a building, but his people in any one locale, his church, his spirit dwells there even as the spirit dwelt in the most holy place in the Old Testament.

You see, the church is far more than a human institution. It is the temple of the living God. Now all we see is the human side. I see you and you see me and we see the human side but we must never forget that the unseen Holy Spirit is here living among us.

He's made the church his people, his temple. So be very careful what you do with and in the church. 1 Corinthians 3, 16 and 17.

[30 : 14] Don't you know that you yourselves and all the you's here are plural, speaking to the church at Corinth. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you.

and if anyone destroys God's temple God will destroy him for God's temple is sacred and you are that temple. Notice it's the Holy Spirit who indwells his sacred church and he indwells them to make them holy.

Be holy for I am holy and it was no small thing to bring an unholy lie right into the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit.

They thought they could pull one over on the church but forgot that the all-knowing spirit lives in it. And seventh, their sin was testing the spirit of the Lord.

Verse 9, how could you agree to test the spirit of the Lord? It's serious business to test the Lord. That's what brought judgment upon Old Testament Israel as you remember.

[31 : 28] They were tempted to test the Lord. Jesus was tempted by the devil to test the Lord and he said you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. And so Ananias and Sapphira are testing the Lord.

They're presuming upon the Lord's patience and forbearance and so they deliberately plan to sin testing the Lord seeing how far they could go on in their sin without suffering for it.

Don't think he'll know. Don't think he'll do anything. They were testing. They agreed to test the Lord. So this sin of Ananias and Sapphira is grievous on many fronts far more than may first meet the eye.

We must go quickly. It's judgment. It's judgment. Well when Ananias heard Peter's words of rebuke he fell down and died. And the young men came and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife came in not knowing what had happened and Peter asked her tell me is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?

[32 : 34] He's giving her an opportunity to reconsider and to repent of her evil plan and to declare the truth. Little does she know it will be her last opportunity.

She hardens her heart she sticks to the script as planned and she lies through her teeth. Yes that is the price. And in one sentence she learns from Peter both what had happened to her husband and what is about to happen to her look the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door and they will carry you out also.

At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. So the judgment on both of them is swift and severe. Some again complain what's the big deal here?

Indeed there are many churches who would be glad to have the gift of 8,000 and just let the rest slide but God is far more holy than that. He's far more holy than we know and the holiness of his people is serious business.

Believe it or not there are some commentators who blame Peter for their death. But if anybody has a problem with the judgment of this sin their problem is with God not with Peter.

[33:52] Peter has no power to speak and have two people just die immediately on the spot. No it was an act of judgment on God's part. He struck them dead.

It's Jesus Christ purging his church protecting her lest hypocrisy gain a foothold early on that would have eaten the heart out of true religion. I don't know of any other sin that our Lord Jesus during his three years of ministry spoke harder things about than hypocrisy.

You read Matthew 23 that list of woe to you hypocrites. Judgment curses upon you hypocrites. We heard the threat of 1 Corinthians 3:17 that if anyone destroys defiles God's temple God will destroy him for God's temple is sacred and you are that temple.

And so our Lord Jesus takes immediate action lest his church be shot through at the very beginning with the rot of hypocrisy.

whatever you think about the judgment at the end of the day we must put a hand over our mouths and just bow before the sovereignty of God.

[35:08] Daniel 4:35 says that he answers to no one. No one can stop his hand and no one can say to him what have you done?

Kids maybe you've had mom walk in on you in a big mess and those words came out of her mouth. What have you done? Maybe a father has spoken them to his son when he gets a call late at night from the police and they say come down to the jail and pick up your son and those are the words out of his mouth what have you done?

It's a word of accountability that is being demanded and no one can say to God what have you done? No one can call him to account. Why not?

Because he's judge of all he's lord of all he's sovereign over his universe and the judge of all the earth does right because all that he does is right and just.

And so the judgment yes it's swift yes it's severe but it was right. It was the judgment of God. And lastly it's resolved.

[36:15] What was the result of this whole episode of their sin and God's judgment? We're told twice so that we don't miss it. Once at the death of Ananias and again at the death of his wife.

Verse 5 and great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Verse 11 great fear seized the church and all who heard about these events. Lenski says there was awe for their faith and fright for their flesh.

Awe for their faith and fright for their flesh. And Jesus knows that we need both. A sense of awe for their faith to see just how jealous this holy God, this holy Jesus is for his church, his bride.

And fright for flesh that would dally with sin and take God's holiness lightly. And anyone who has outgrown the fear of God has outgrown the very heart of true religion.

This was God's purpose in the event. This is what he desired, what he aimed at in his judgment, to put the fear of God into his church so that anyone who even thought about doing as Ananias and Sapphira would think twice before doing so.

[37:32] This was the good thing that God brought out of the evil that Satan was seeking to sow in the church. A proper reverence and fear of God. It's a sign of a healthy church.

We'll see that later in chapter 9 and verse 31 in another summary of the church they were walking in the fear of the Lord. And that's a good healthy thing when any church walks in the fear of the Lord.

That's what Ananias and Sapphira were lacking. They did not fear the Lord and that's why they did as they did. And so the church learned what Peter would later write in his epistle that judgment is to begin at the house of God.

And the church and all outsiders who heard learned that it is a dangerous thing to claim to be a follower of Christ unless you're serious about keeping his ways. Sometimes church growth takes place by subtraction, by pruning, as the chaff is removed.

And the result was a purified church with more and more added to them as Christ smiled upon their witness and owned it with saving power. and so Satan's plot, his plan to fill God's temple early on with hypocrisy and self promotion was thwarted.

[38:50] He would have used even charitable giving as his snare, perverting the very heart of love, which is other-centered and turning it into self-centeredness. And oh, what harm would have come to the witness of the gospel if it came from a church full of hypocrites flourishing within.

The holy witness would have been greatly tarnished from the outset. Its powerful voice would have been muffled and ignored, gutted from power. They're just like us.

There's no difference. It's all form and no power. So the saving message of the gospel would have been undermined. But Satan's attack from within is met by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And results in what? The church walking in the fear of the Lord. And Satan has made an instrument to bring that about. Such is the sovereignty of our Christ.

The \$64,000 question raised by some is well, what about Ananias and Sapphira? Are they in heaven or are they in hell? Were they saved or were they lost? Well, I believe they were lost.

[40:02] I believe they were hypocrites, false professors without the root of the matter in them. I think I've shown that in my exegesis of the passage. But having said that, I cannot prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The text does not tell us. It was severe death on the spot, but God does say in 1 Corinthians 11 that God sometimes removes his very dear children from this life due to their sin.

sin. And it's clear that they were not acting like true believers here. But true believers sometimes act like unbelievers as Peter when he said with curses that he did not even know who Jesus was.

But Peter, we know his previous life and we know the consequent repentance and subsequent life of Peter.

but all we know about Ananias and Sapphira is found in these 11 verses. And so we're left with the question, is this what characterized their life?

[41:05] Or was this just one bad page in an otherwise good book filled with godly fruits of the spirit? So we only have this one snapshot of their life.

And that's why I say I cannot say with absolute certainty that they were full-blown hypocrites. and that they're in hell. But at the end of the day, what is important is not where they are, but where you are.

And that's why this is recorded. That's why these things that were done are still being heard. And where they're being heard, there is a result that God is seeking.

And the result is that great fear would seize our hearts. to walk before the Lord with reverence and awe. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

At the end of the day, the lesson is that we not think lightly of his holiness or of his judgment, that we not trifle with God or his church, that we order our lives according to his word, careful not to grieve his indwelling Holy Spirit, that we be done with lying in any form of hypocrisy and pretending to be what we know we are not.

[42:30] Brethren, if we are anything, let us be real Christians. Sincere. Love must be sincere. As Jesus said of Nathanael, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile, no deceit.

What you see is what you get. No pretense, no hypocrisy. And if you've been playing the hypocrite, tremble and repent.

We have a savior for hypocrites. We're going to meet one in chapter nine and see how Jesus' blood cleansed him from his sin. Maybe you're a hypocrite and people think more highly of you than you know what you are and you've been trying to maintain that image.

Come to Jesus. He saves hypocrites. He'll cover your sin with blood that will hide it forever. And he'll give you his righteousness.

You see, at the end of the day, it's not where are Ananias and Sapphira, but where are you? That question will be answered one day. You all will find out one day which was it with Ananias and Sapphira.

[43:46] God's love. If you're in heaven and they're not, you'll know. If you're in hell and they're not, you'll know. But this passage has been written down, preserved for us this day, that we might fear the Lord and run into the saving arms of Jesus.

Let's pray. We thank you, Lord, for this passage of Scripture. Thank you for not painting your church with rose-colored paintbrush that would hide their sins from us.

We confess the sin of hypocrisy. Every single one of us has played the hypocrite at times. Some are full-blooded hypocrites.

That's all they are. And we ask, whichever it is, that you would seek us and search us and try us and know our hearts and reveal any offensive way in us and lead us to Jesus, the way everlasting. Do it, Lord Jesus, for the purity of your church, that her witness might be untainted and untarnished, filled with the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus Christ would be praised.
[45 : 09] We ask it in his name. Amen. Amen.