

# 7/31/22 - Acts 5:1-16 - "A Church Built on Holy Ground"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Up until this point in the book of Acts, Luke has bound together various instances of opposition to the church.

We've started to get a glimpse of that with the arrests and the charges of Peter and John against the Sanhedrin. And that opposition up until this point has been from outside the walls of the church, if we want to speak metaphorically speaking, the walls of the church, even though you didn't have real church walls at this time.

And we understand something through that, that when opposition comes against the church, that this could very well, at these instances of opposition, that has the power of changing the course of everything that we read following.

It has the power of kind of taking the narrative down a whole different rabbit trail that could very well change the mission of God unfolding in the book of Acts as we read today.

I want us to consider the series in Acts called the Unstoppable Word of God. And so we often forget, and I'm not saying that, you know, God isn't sovereign and things are happening outside of his control.

[ 1 : 41 ] That's not what I'm saying. But I'm talking about the real life situation that according to his sovereignty, according to his plans, that when the church faces opposition, it has the power to change the originally directed course.

Obviously, we could say, well, it's all in God's plan, right? And we could kind of be fatalistic in that and undermine our responsibility to act according to how God desires us to act and respond how he desires to respond.

And what happens here is a opposition that has serious consequences if handled poorly. It's kind of like watching a movie or reading a book.

You see that once upon a time, the story is taken off the tarmac and it's just flying through the air. And, you know, the guy's chasing the girl and all of this.

And, you know, there's intense parts of it that everything could have deviated from that original plan and the narrative. But, you know, at the end, they all live happily ever after.

[ 2 : 52 ] I would argue for a Christian book to come out or a Christian movie where they don't live happily ever after and everything is just terrible. That would cut against the grain of what's status quo within the Christian genre, wouldn't it?

And so within this type of thinking of those moments of opposition where things could get a little shaky, many of us can read the book of Acts from cover to cover and be blown away of the surety.

Like, it is so sure that, you know, things are going to increase. Yep, people are going to die. But the word of God is going to increase. And all the way back until this final book called Revelation, not Revelations, Revelation.

And we see that God, who has called all in creation to go, calls them to come. And he begins his new creation.

And so we often forget, though, the frailty of these oppositions. We see the sort of like the end in mind and everything. And we lose sight of this situation that was just read on the screen and within your word today and lose sight of the very reality that this could have changed the course of everything.

[ 4 : 17 ] And today, Luke is clarifying for the first time in his book that opposition did not only come from outside of the church, but opposition also came within the walls of the church.

You see, Christ has built a church that exists for the glory of God. If anybody asks you what the local church is, that would be a good answer. We exist for the glory of God as a summary statement.

And anything that might prohibit and inhibit that glory from being known and displayed is a threat to the holiness of God's name.

And so specifically speaking, unaddressed internal sin is a toxin. And God has dealt with it in a variety of ways.

He's instructed us as a New Testament church to deal with it in a variety of ways. But in the variety of ways we see today being one of the most immediate and swift dealings of sin.

[ 5 : 33 ] Let's see as the text unfolds and allow the nature of this text to align ourselves, to be a church that God desires. May we allow this text to also serve as a warning for us of the serious reality of playing games in the church using God's name.

So we see three sections today. I think I have, yep, three sections and a sermon titled, A Church Built on Holy Ground. And I believe by the end of our time we'll understand a sermon title in this manner.

And I want to break this into three sections. And the first section is sort of laying out the scenes. We see the conspiracy. The conspiracy of a moral sin.

We see in verse one through two, this conspiracy sort of develop. The narrative begins. We see something important here before we get too far in.

We see a contextual marker that is significant. And this isn't going to turn into a lecture hall, but it's important. We see, but.

[ 7 : 04 ] What's that there for? Might Luke be contrasting the actions of Barnabas, but there was a woman.

There was a man and a woman in this text. We see the but in context, verse 37, just a little bit before, that there was great power in the proclamation and the work of the apostles.

This was stirring up the great grace among the people that was evidence in their great generosity as a mark of that unity. And as an illustration, a real-life illustration, we meet Barnabas.

He was a man who modeled this culture well and laid his sail at the apostles' feet. But a certain man and woman sold a piece of property.

There's a moral dilemma introduced here in that they are co-conspirators into what would appear in this day and age, real history, real life, that they were Barnabas-level givers, that, yeah, Barnabas did this.

[ 8 : 19 ] And take a look at this. We could do that, too. We see a moral dilemma developing of co-conspiring to appear as if they were Barnabas-level givers.

Imagine the prompting as Ananias brings his gift. Knowing full well what he's doing.

Imagine approaching Peter, standing there, you know, going through the donation line, laying at his feet. Imagine the prompting of the Holy Spirit with Peter, saying, we got a red flag here.

There's something not right. There's a toxin among you. Now, this isn't saying that because he laid a portion of the money down, that if we don't give everything that we own to the church, leading to religious communism, that's in another church's pulpit today, not ours.

This is not saying that everything that you own, if you sell your car, you have to give all those proceeds to the church, or else you will be, your life will be threatened and God's judgment will weigh upon you.

[ 9 : 36 ] No. It's not leading to religious communism. But verse 8 introduces us to that moral dilemma. And for the sake of context, we'll understand what Ananias is doing here if we look at verse 8.

We see that the sin was that they were claiming to give all of their money from that sale and deceiving all around into thinking that they did and trying to dupe the apostle as well.

Let's think about this for a moment. What in the world would compel anyone to do something like this? What would compel somebody to do this?

I would say spiritual pride. Spiritual pride is a dangerous sin. It's a sin that masks itself in the welfare and the concern of others while only looking out for self-interests and self-glory.

And you can probably, you probably have a recollection of churches who struggled with spiritual pride in their midst of it devastating, causing deep issues in a church.

[ 10 : 56 ] and it's a toxin that has to be confronted as soon as possible. We see that Proverbs has a lot to say about this type of heart.

Proverbs 16, 5 says, everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Be assured, he will not go unpunished. Or verse 18 of chapter 16, pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before the fall.

And many other verses that indicates this is a very serious thing. Think about the frailty of the early church right now, that it's kind of all hanging out in the balance.

It can go left or it can go right. Peter has a moment that it can either devastate or distort that momentum. We could be filled with a bunch of incidents that were direct response of handling this situation poorly.

And thinking of the fragility of this time in church history, Satan had infiltrated the church by those who acted and looked like they were part of the church.

[ 12 : 14 ] This brought to mind like when we were in the first Thessalonians series. Paul's concern, his anxiety and worry for the church in Thessalonica.

That he sent Timothy out so that he would be able to help them in his absence and he was eager to see them because he didn't want them to fall away.

And these types of situations is exactly how this happens to congregations. isn't this how Satan works? Think about it in military fashion.

We're talking about movies. I want to talk about military movies and by golly we're going to talk about them. Think about the best way of attacking, the best angle that you can have against your opponent or the enemy.

You have to breach the walls. You have to get inside. Right? And we see that happening right now.

[ 13 : 13 ] And what the Bible coins this as wolves within the church. Kosti Hinn once said wolves in the church are not always the laughable obvious ones.

We want to think that when a wolf comes into the church those people who are acting and looking like Christians but they're really not. They're in it for themselves. That you want to have this sign like heretic or something like that.

He says it's not always laughably obvious. but rather it's the innocent looking ones who in turn through their pride create private factions.

They undermine leaders. They make railing judgments based on preference and assign motives to others without proof. And Kosti concludes we need Jesus to grant discernments and purify his bride.

imagine what the narrative what chapter 6 and maybe what chapter 7 might say if this sin had gone unaddressed. If Peter was a little off his game or something like that and this sin just allowed to take root all of a sudden Ananias and Sapphira are highly esteemed over Barnabas whose heart is corrupt.

[ 14 : 28 ] Imagine the leaders and the influence that they would have in the church then. Imagine all those that would be deceived into their little group of big givers and all of a sudden changing the means and the expression of giving not being a generosity act of generosity compelled by the gospel but a generosity concerned for self and self-interests.

You see they saw Barnabas' generosity. They saw great power among the apostles. They saw great grace and generosity being shared and they saw the unity in the church and they wanted to get in on it but their hearts were detached.

John Stott says it perfectly. They wanted credit for sacrificial generosity without the inconvenience of it. Wolves desire to ravage the church by competing to receive God's glory.

They ravaged the church by competing to receive God's glory. And church if we can see something developing in this as we go as we read this morning the most unloving thing the most unloving thing that we can do for one another is to allow spiritual pride to walk in our midst to go unaddressed.

Right? Churches have dissolved due to it. Gossip rings have birthed from it. Elitist factions in the church form by it.

[ 16 : 13 ] And the witness of the gospel suffers greatly for it. And guess what? God has little to no tolerance of it. It must be confronted.

And this is precisely what the apostles do with Ananias and Sapphira as we see the depths of what this sin reveals. And so the conspiracy begins and we see a couple other things develop.

The second section is the confrontation. the confrontation of a moral of the moral sin. So to Ananias Peter said Ananias why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land.

Sapphira was similar to that. Peter was a little more gracious I would say in giving her a chance to repent but he says tell me whether you have sold the land for so much.

And she said yes for so much. But Peter said to her how is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord. In other words the spirit of truth that has filled the hearts of this church back then has compelled Christ centered apostolically rooted generosity of the grace that they have received they bestow and liking that to Barnabas' act of charity but you Ananias and Sapphira you are not not filled with the spirit of truth you are you are filled with the spirit of Satan your heart is full of it to lie in self centered generosity you Ananias and Sapphira are a fraud a wolf and the thrust of the deception is found in a superficial deed that appeared to all around as a deep concern for others imagine the show that they put on compared to

[ 18 : 30 ] Barnabas you know Barnabas is getting all the attention here comes Ananias and Sapphira oh we have we've made this sacrificial gift and can somebody help me with this bag of money it's all the proceeds that we just sold a piece of land don't worry about us we'll be okay and we have this offering for you and we care about the poor imagine the show right but underneath that deception was actually a deed that was concerned only for self financially that's they were caring for the welfare of others and socially look at me we cannot separate the reality of individual sin from corporate expression of being co-conspirators of sin this is something that is rooted this is why it's so important and so emphasized in the text that it's not just individual sin this becomes corporate sin if it goes unaddressed ananias and sapphires actions affect the entire witness of the church and god's mission of the church we can't forget the same terminology that's used here of lying is also used in what happened with aiken in joshua 7 that after the defeat of jericho and the call for israel to devote all things of the city to destruction verse 1 it says aiken took some of the devoted things and the anger of the lord burned against israel the anger of the lord burned against not aiken or his family but israel which led to their defeat in ai and verse 1 verse 11 chapter 7 god says to joshua israel as sin through aiken's sin they have transgressed my covenants taken devoted things they have stolen and lied and collected them ananias and sapphira as compared with aiken are illustrations of a toxin that corrupts the whole witness of the mission of god's work a toxin that dishonors god and robs the lord of his glory you see the church is where the confrontation of sin should be desired should be expected what do we want this within our christian lives for someone to hold us accountable to keep us from doing that right why is this something that we shrink away from or try to hide from confrontation of sin should be desired and expected or have we lost sight of the holiness of god if we have individually lost sight of the holiness of god as all of us gathered within our our perspectives woe to us as the church body the church doesn't assemble on a playground the assembly of the church occurs on holy grounds we often look at the new testament scripture like this and say well you know the old testament god you know is different from the new testament god and here we see that that simply is just not

true god is never changing he is immutable and nor has he ever and luke doesn't let us forget that in the new testament church to forget the righteous anger of god and the holiness as due to his name we see the consequence in here to Ananias when Ananias heard these words he fell down and breathed his last and look verse five great fear came upon all who heard they came in took him out and about three hours later guess what consequence for Sapphira verse 10 immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last when the young men came in and took her body carried her out later beside her husband and guess what 11 and great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things great fear great fear is informed of who god is and who we are who god is what he saved us from and what he's continuing to purify us from and relinquishing our grip of sin in our lives we got to see in this let's take a moment here for the calvary is coming let's have a word of prayer for the first responders father we come to you today and we know that those within the fire trucks see horrific things being first responders many false calls and things of that nature but father we come to you and we just pray that you guide them and you strengthen them by the power of your hand to do a very difficult job give them strength and confidence in doing this so that they will return to their families after this incident we pray in

Jesus name amen I want us to think about that great fear for a moment what drives that great fear this great fear is informed of who God is and who we are and the thing about it is is sometimes we think too little of God into much of ourselves which lead to things like this right we might even approach a text like this and say man Brent I mean you gotta be you gotta say the obvious this is the elephant in the room I think that's too harsh I mean all he did was keep back we don't even know maybe it was a dollar even a penny that we contrive as a lie against God and try to deceive others is worthy of death Romans 6 23 makes that sure that the wages of sin is death yes even a penny we have all sins and because of that we deserve immediate death don't we we're all at

God's disposal church this life as we know it will leave we will breathe no more our chest will not be filled with any air it's coming we will experience the effects in real time of our sin and God makes sure that we know where that comes from the wages of sin is death and we know one thing that that's half half of the arguments but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ that yeah this is the bad news but the bad news does come with great news the best news and so we can live our lives as a warning for others or a witness to others a warning to say okay if we continue in our sin we will eventually die in that sin and we will experience eternal judgment we are on a road to hell and the only thing that can save us from the road to hell is God coming in saying come right we can serve as a warning or a witness to others we see

Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira they hold great indications of how to care well for the church Barnabas being that of generosity how to be a generous giver with the right heart in mind concerning the welfare of the church but Ananias and Sapphira I believe that they can promote and support the welfare of the church too but that and a warning that if we want to be well in this church we want to be aligned to God's will we have to look at Ananias and Sapphira and say whoa I don't want to be found in that type of situation because before us today Ananias and Sapphira are still laying at the apostles feet within God's word they're still if I wanted to be a reverend and drop the Bible I would but they're still on the floor as a warning today for his church and what a warning what a reminder of the holiness of God and our responsibility to never forget his holiness that we can play games and deceive men all we want but we will never be able to deceive

[ 28 : 33 ] God may we be found alive at the apostles feet instead jumping up from our sinful conviction as the lame man at the gates and leap for joy in the great power and grace that has come and if you're not in Christ today what are you waiting for there is something to live for that all of our lives we're living for ourselves we're looking for hope on our own terms we're living for me and the culture promotes you to live and continue to live for you but God's call to you in your sinful state is to die to your sin as he raises you to new life come by your faith and Luke finishes the section by calling us to look around if you could imagine being sort of the in Luke's position of recording interviewing people throughout this time for Theophilus and creating this orderly account can't you imagine him looking around of whoa like what's going on well I can you can be assured that that donation line probably shrunk that

Betty and Sue back there that were trying to pull the same fast move neighbors of Ananias and Sapphira yeah they're starting to question if they're going to be playing games anymore in the church that donation line surely did shrink we see the consequence in this last section we'll call it quits today and there was great fear that came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things and it says that now many signs and wonders were done regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles and they were all together in Solomon's portico none of the rest dared to join them I can imagine I mean these religious leaders this is what they live for they've been pulling this Ananias and Sapphira stuff for a long time none of the rest dared to join them the righteous judgment of God propels our reverence fear towards his holiness and our unrighteousness the early church lived under great power great grace great fear and now they also lived under great esteem as we see as this verse comes to a close great esteem of the apostolic body our translation says high esteem that if the crippled man at the gates illustrated

God's restorative nature in salvation for us Ananias and Sapphira illustrate God's holiness to be central in light of that salvation right and we see something kind of at play that verse 13 verses 14 none of the rest dared to join them but look more than ever believers were added to the Lord Luke provides the summary statement of the purity of the church going forth that this moment of uncertainty where you're on the edge of your seat where Peter you better handle this right and surely because he handled it and addressed it and confronted it and God judged it this church continued in purity purged of religious piety we see in verse 15 that great esteem in action this esteem of the apostles it was like people were being laid in the streets so that their shadow might heal them it doesn't actually say that that ever happened but that was the illustration of esteem that they had for the apostles that man if I could just be in your shadow think about that esteem this is the consequence of God's judgment through the apostles and we see the promise look in verse 16 look at what's happening when you're talking about the structure and this movement of the book of

Acts the people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem this should trigger Acts 18 that you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem in all Judea Samaria it's the ends of the earth well guess what gathered from the towns around that not even confrontation not only this pressure and opposition from outside the walls can thwart the movement of God not even the sin within the walls can thwart the movement of God this is great news for us today church because we rest in God's power to work in our midst to compel us to be a church that acknowledges the holiness of God and the unrighteousness of man this is the unstoppable word of God that we have even in our midst today so as we kind of come to a close at this time

I want us to understand that a proper fear of God will have a refining effect upon our lives even today this has a refining effect in our lives today that we want to say you know the government you know is the greatest threat against the church or whatever you might want to say but the greatest threat against the church's mission doesn't sit outside the walls but sits within all of humanity's chest regarding the condition of our hearts and Satan even pulls the heart strings of Christians to make poor decisions and when this happens our hearts being the wellspring of life just as they were of one heart and one mind reflective of the Shema to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and we see that the heart determines our thoughts it is the wellspring of life our hearts dictate our words our hearts direct our affections and we see something that

[ 35 : 18 ] Proverbs 8 13 says the fear of the Lord is hatred of evil pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate says the Lord Psalm 111 verse 10 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom all those who practice it have a good understanding his praise endures forever the fear of the Lord when we remember this and hold each other accountable the consequence of this in our midst today is holy fear holy living truthfulness integrity and humility to be aware of making more of ourselves than we ought humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God oh the devastating power that we have in the capacity to allow spiritual pride to ravage our church through our lives but oh the refining power of

God and his holiness to remind us that he is all seeing he is all knowing he is all powerful through it all in this even our internal sin when addressed expediently we'll never have the power to thwart God's mission even in this church and that is the good news so may we be aware and attentive to the condition of our hearts may we consider the seriousness of the corporate nature of our individual sins and may we hold the apostolic message similarly with great esteem I pray we're all encouraged to be given to God's holiness to be given to God's integrity to his honesty as we live in community in pursuit of those righteous attributes that only God possesses perfectly that we strive together we have a couple bumps and bruises along the way couple conflicts couple disagreements but at the end of the day we see that

Christ has built his church to exist for the glory of God and anything that might inhibit that glory from being known and displayed is a threat to the holiness of his name this is something to align our hearts and also to warn us and to keep us in the love of God in our lives let's pray as we come to a close and we're gonna have a new song today that speaks of examining our hearts and of God knowing our hearts and so let's pray our