"BE SINCERE!"

ACTS 4:31-5:11

4-26-2026

Intro.

"**BE SINCERE**" (Be a true, real, genuine person; without duplicity)

How? By taking heed to 4 Warnings:

I. BEWARE OF WHO YOU YIELD TO!
(A Contrast of Control)

A. SPIRIT (4:31)

B. SATAN (5:3)

II. BEWARE OF WHERE YOUR HEART IS!
(A Contrast of Hearts)

A. UNSELFISH UNITY (4:32)

B. SELFISH HYPOCRISY (5:2, 3)

III. BEWARE OF WHAT YOUR MOTIVES ARE!
(A Contrast of Motives)

A. A LOVE THAT MEETS NEEDS (4:34-37)

B. A PRIDE THAT DESIRES ATTENTION (5:2, 4, 8, 9)

IV. BEWARE OF WHAT YOU WILL REAP IN THE END!
(A Contrast of Outcomes [results])

A. GRACE (4:33)

B. DEATH (5:5-6, 10-11)

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INTRODUCTION:

Half of the misery in the world comes from people trying to look like something they are not, instead of trying to be what they should be.

ILLUS: How a book's cover is many times much more promising than the book itself.

Don't put on a lovely "front" in order to hide the ugly sin in your life. Get rid of the sin!

Even in the early Church, there were imperfect Christians.

One thing about the Bible is that it refuses to present an idealized picture of anything.

If man had authored this book, he would not have told of the sins of its heroes (EX: David, Moses), nor would he have included the sinful, selfish, dishonest behavior of two people in a context of a Holy Spirit revival. The Bible tells it like it is.

ILLUS: Once a artist painted a portrait of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell was disfigured by warts upon his face. The painter, thinking to please the great man, omitted the disfiguring warts. When Cromwell saw the picture, he said, "Take it away, and paint me warts and all." One great virtue of the Bible is that it shows us its heroes, warts and all. (Barclay, p. 45)

NOTE: God in 4:31-5:11 sets up a contrast. He shows us the difference between:

1) The grace of selfless sincerity (4:31-37), and
2) The curse of selfish insincerity (5:1-11)

NOTE: 5:1 begins with "But" ( ), which sets up the contrast.

Be sincere (be a true, real genuine person, without duplicity).

How? By taking heed to four warnings:

I. BEWARE OF WHO YOU YIELD TO!
(A Contrast of Control)

A. SPIRIT (4:31)

V. 4:31

Unity is a result of being Spirit-filled.

And the fruit of unity is a willingness to share.

When the Holy Spirit is at work, giving is a blessing and not a burden.

B. SATAN (5:3)

When Satan fails in one attack (strategy), he always turns to another.

NOTE: In chap. 4, he tried to silence the church from an attack from the outside. When that failed, Satan decided to attack the Church from the inside, and use people who were part of the fellowship.

If he fails as the "devouring lion" (I Pet. 5:8), he then attacks as the "deceiving serpent" or an "angel of light" (II Cor. 11:3, 13-14).

He is both a murderer and a liar (Jn. 8:44), and we must be prepared for both attacks (Wiersbe, p. 59)

V. 5:3

The context seems to imply that Ananias and Sapphira were believers. "The fact that they were able to lie to the Spirit (5:3) and tempt the Spirit (5:9) would indicate that they had the Spirit of God living within." (Wiersbe, p. 64)

Satan cannot possess a Christian, but he can provoke wicked thoughts in their heart.

EX: David - I Chron. 21:1 - "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

EX: Peter - Mt. 16:21-23 - "Get thee behind me, Satan."

"Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all." (O.W. Holmes)

Satan lied to and through this couple. He is the "Father of lies."

His lying to Adam and Even led to their sin and spiritual death. His lying to Ananias and Sapphira also led to their sin and physical death.

Satan's goal is to get us to sin against God. He hates God and His program.

II. BEWARE OF WHERE YOUR HEART IS!

(A Contrast of Hearts)

A. UNSELFISH UNITY (4:32)

Our union with Christ (I Cor. 12:13) via the Holy Spirit should produce a union with each other (I Jn. 1:3; Jn. 17:21).

Only God can cause unity.

Church organization can encourage us toward unity, but only God can produce it.

When the Spirit is in control, materialism (the love for things) disappears.

V. 4:32
In this church they said, "What's mine is yours." Today most people would say, "What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine."

These believers had an intense sense of responsibility for each other. We are our "brother's keeper."

B. SELFISH HYPOCRISY (5:2, 3)

V. 5:2
"Hypocrisy" = one who is a play actor; wears a mask.

Hypocrisy is not a failure to live up to all that we should be, rather it is a deliberate deception. (trying to make people think we are more spiritual than we really are).

Ananias no doubt whispered to his wife, "Sapphira, if anyone asks you how much we sold the property for, say 5,000 shekels. Don't tell them the full price (which was 10,000). We want them to think we gave all we earned like Barnabas did."

Never agree (side) even with your spouse when he/she is doing something sinful! (5:2 - Sapphira was "privy to it" - she shared the same thinking, mind set.)

How did Peter know what they did? As an apostle, he received direct revelation from God. God revealed to Peter this man's heart.

The instigator of selfishness is Satan, but the source of selfishness is a selfish "heart" (cp. 5:4b - "You have conceived this thing in your heart."

Sin against man is sin against God (cp. Ps. 51). (NOTE: The Holy Spirit is God!)

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." (Mt. 6:21)

III. BEWARE OF WHAT YOUR MOTIVES ARE!

(A Contrast of Motives)

A. A LOVE THAT MEETS NEEDS (4:34-37)

This giving was completely voluntary (spontaneous) and motivated by love (not by fear or force).

V. 4:34

"Lacked" = needy

This verse if not saying that the believers sold everything they had, all at once, so that they themselves would become poverty-stricken. But "from time to time" (Imperfect tense) they would sell property and donate to meet the needs of others.

God uses people (His people) to meet the needs of His people.

The church is to care for its own (Acts 11:28, 29; I Tim. 5:3, 16).

V. 4:36

Barnabas lived up to his name. By his unselfish giving he was an encouragement.

Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus. Levites in Palestine were not permitted byGod to own land (Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9).

B. A PRIDE THAT DESIRES ATTENTION (5:2, 4, 8, 9)

V. 5:2

No doubt the church was praising God for the generous offering that Barnabas had brought when Satan whispered to the couple, "You can also enjoy this kind of glory! You can make others think that you are as spiritual as Barnabas!" (Wiersbe, p. 64).

Doing good does not necessarily indicate pure motives (sincerity)

Sacrifice is not always a sign of selflessness.

Some love the praise from doing right, rather than just doing right for God's sake.

V. 5:4

God didn't require them to sell their property; nor to give the money. They chose to do so on their own, but out of a desire for self-recognition.

V. 5:4b

David said: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." (Ps. 51)

V. 5:9

Pride says, "**I** can do it and get away with it." Ananias and Sapphira tempted God's Spirit. They thought they could defy God, dare him to act.

God commands, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Mt. 4:7; Ex. 17:2; Dt. 6:16).

To lie (sin) is to put God to a test. You are thinking, I can sin and get away with it. You can't play with sin (ILLUS: of man who put his head in the lion's mouth until one day the lion chomped)

You are in a sense daring God to do something about it.

Don't give (serve, help, etc.) to be seen of men (like the Pharisees, who "had their reward").

Don't do things to make yourself "look good." This is pride.

Be more concerned about your character than your reputation.
Be more concerned about pleasing God than men.

IV. BEWARE OF WHAT YOU WILL REAP IN THE END!

(A Contrast of Outcomes [results])

A. GRACE (4:33)

V. 4:33

When the saints are right with God, God's man has power in his preaching. (EX: When Jesus could do no miracles in certain places because of their unbelief).

God gives abundant grace to those who give and those who receive. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

B. DEATH (5:5-6, 10-11)

"Gave up the ghost" = to expire, to breath out (your last breath)

"Wound him up" = wrapped him up

Peter did not strike him dead, nor call upon God to do so. God Himself said, "Ananias, your time is up, come home to Heaven."

The Bible teaches about a "sin unto death" (I Jn. 5:16 - "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.").

EX: to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (I Cor. 11:30).

"The wages of sin is death" (Ro. 6:23).

"Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23).

God knows all about your sin (Ananias and Sapphira thought nobody would ever know).

God is holy! We don't treat God lightly!

Ananias means "God is gracious", but he learned that God is also holy.

Why did God judge this sin so severely?

To teach a very important lesson and warning about His holiness.

God wanted this lesson to be learned right from the start of the church, just as He wanted Israel to learn it right after the Tabernacle was constructed (Nadab & Abihu - "false fire" - Lev. 10), and right after Israel entered the promised land (Achan - Josh. 7).

God was letting everyone know that He does not tolerate deception in the church.

"If we would judge ourselves we would not be judged" (I Cor. 11:31).

If we dealt with our sin, God wouldn't have to Ananias and Sapphira both agreed to lie, then they hid their sin - so God had to uncover it sot hat the newly formed church would not have leaven in it.

When you sin (fall), you never sin (fall) alone (His wife sinned with him, and she died with him).

CONCLUSION:

It's easy for us to sit back and condemn Ananias and Sapphira.

But:

Are we really sincere in all we do?

Do you give sincerely?

Do you sing hymns sincerely or routinely?

Do you honor God with your lips while your heart is far from Him?

Everything about us should be sincere!

--Our smiles, handshakes, words, acts of kindness, etc.

If God killed "religious deceivers" today, how many church members would be left??