

The Cure for Selfishness

Ananias and Sapphira

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, **2** and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. **3** But 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? **4** While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." **5** When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. **6** The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." **9** But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." **10** Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **11** And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Many Signs and Wonders Done

12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. **13** None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. **14** And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, **15** so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. **16** The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Sermon Outline:

I. Gospel Judgment (1-10):

Because selfishness is such a deeply imbedded sin, our gracious Father knows that radical therapy is needed. In Acts 5:1-10 He openly displays what will happen to one's soul if selfishness goes unchecked.

A. Departure from New Identity

Selfishness is first a departure from the new and beautiful people grace makes us.

B. Departure from God

Selfishness is also a departure from God Himself.

C. Departure from Reason

When we sin as believers with new natures, it is because we choose to do so.

D. Restoration of Order

God's Gospel judgment was not an end in itself. His judgments are always intended to drive to repentance. He loves us at all times, even when we sin.

II. Gospel Healing (11-16)

The account following Ananias and Sapphira's story shows where the threat of Gospel judgment is to lead us. It must lead us to the point of coming to Christ in helplessness. And when we do the result will be healing and life.

A. Re-creates Disciples

First, the Gospel re-creates us as disciples and heals the breach we have in our relationship with the God who made us.

B. Restores the Body

The Gospel heals the body, if not in this life certainly at the resurrection.

C. Rescues the Soul

The Gospel also heals the wounds of our souls.

D. Renews Dignity

Luke is demonstrating that the Gospel restores the dignity of classes of people previously scorned by their culture, like women in Luke's day.

Discussion Questions:

1. "Selfishness is the root of all sin." Do you agree or disagree? What are some ways you notice selfishness manifesting itself in broken relationships?
2. How might we "put on a mask" around others to portray the person we want others to see? How does the Gospel free us from this dishonesty and self-focus?
3. How is selfishness a departure from the new identity Christ has given us?
4. How is God's judgment restorative?
5. The first question of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "What is your only comfort in life and death?" The answer states, in part, "That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." How do we know that God cares for both our body and our soul? (*Hint: notice how the first part of our passage speaks to the spiritual and the second part of the passage speaks to the physical*).
6. Discuss the comfort we might find in knowing that God is concerned with our whole person — body and soul — rather than just our spiritual lives.

7. How might selfishness in your own life be keeping you from living in the new identity you've been given in Christ? How might it be affecting others?

Going Deeper

1. In the sermon, three "departures" were noted when we allow selfishness to control us: a departure from our new identity, a departure from God, and a departure from reason. Reflect on specific sins of selfishness in your own life and how they might be a departure in these three specific ways.
 - A. Read Philippians 2:1-11 and take note of Christ's unselfishness. What was His end goal? While Christ's example is one we should strive to follow, we know that focusing solely on it will be crushing to us. How does the Gospel free us from a legalistic mindset, which is again a turn to self focus, and free us to shift our focus to Him and to others?
2. What are some specific opportunities in your life where you can be an agent of Gospel healing for others? How might you do this in a Gospel-centered way?
 - B. Take time to pray about these opportunities, acknowledging your own inability to change others and asking for God's Spirit to both guide you and work in others' hearts.