

Ephesians 15-02-08a

This is Sunday, the 8th of February, 2015. We continue and conclude this morning our special looking at the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5. Let's take a moment as we prepare for this portion of our worship to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank You for Your many blessings and provisions, the ones that we recognize and are aware of, and those that You bless us with that we don't perceive that are Your invisible hand of guidance, of watch care, of preventive and effective grace.

We thank You for the fellowship that enables us to share our enthusiasm and our challenges with one another, to lift each other up in prayer, to be supportive and encouraging, to be patient and long-suffering, to exhibit amongst ourselves those characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ that He so evidently manifested when He walked among us, when He journeyed with His disciples and taught them and gave us the example of what it is like to live a human life in the presence and power of Your Holy Spirit with the sole intent of accomplishing Your will and purpose on this earth. We thank You for Him. We thank You for His incredible work on the cross, for His willingness to leave the realms of glory and live in our midst as one of us, to become one of us now and forever.

We thank You for the privilege of representing Him on this earth and preparing ourselves for presence and service with You in the ages that are to come. We pray for those who worship with us at a distance especially. We pray that You will grant a special fellowship and a sense of the presence of Your Holy Spirit, that the unity that we enjoy in the faith and in the Lord Jesus will be a motivation and an encouragement for them as it is for us.

We pray that as we all together seek to grow closer to the example of the Lord Jesus that the study we engage in this morning and the fellowship we enjoy, the words we speak to one another, the time we spend in worship and in instruction and fellowship will be beneficial and edifying to each one, that we will be drawn closer to You through the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in His name, Amen. Acts chapter 5, we saw the context last time.

The account begins, "...but a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and expired." Echnumad, his soul exited, stage up.

"...and the young man arose, and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later, when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? She said, Yes, for so much.

Then Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. Then immediately she fell down at his feet, and Echnumad, breathed her last, expired. And the young man came in, and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

So great fear came upon all the church, and upon all who heard these things." It is our goal, as we proceed through Paul's letter to the Laodicean church, which was copied to Colossae, and the Colossian letter copied to Laodicea, that this episode instill and inspire great fear as we hear these things, because the subject is the same, the topic is the same. This is the archetype illustration of the truths that Paul is emphasizing in Ephesians. Well, we saw last time that there are essentials in this story that we want to pay attention to.

The first is, there is an emphasis from the very beginning on freedom of action. Nobody said to the congregation in Jerusalem, I want each of you to go out and sell some stuff, bring in the entire sales proceeds, and give it to the church. Nobody gave that instruction.

This was voluntary. And you think, how can you get in such hot water for something that was optional? And if you do an optional thing, maybe you don't do it totally well, but look, you didn't have to do it at all. Isn't a part of the price better than none? And why would you get on to somebody for opting to do a thing in what might be a half-baked way? See, half-baked should have a whole new meaning now that we've been in Hosea.

You know what half-baked is, right? The unturned cake, burnt on one side and raw on the other. Well why is this such a big deal? I mean, it seems harsh, and it has stood as a harsh and somewhat troubling episode ever since it happened. From the day it happened until now, believers have been troubled by it, and that's the purpose.

That's the point. We're supposed to be troubled. We're supposed to stop and take a closer look, and that's what we're doing.

So the first thing we noticed last time is that there are two elements in this action by Ananias and his wife Sapphira that define it and are pertinent for understanding it. The first is that the offering they bring is partial. It's emphasized.

He kept back a part in verse 2. He kept back some of it. He brought a certain part in verse 2 and laid it at the apostles' feet. And Peter says, why has Satan filled your heart to keep back from the price of the land for yourself, to divide it and bring a partial offering? And then all of verse 4 talks about the fact that this division, this partial offering was entirely optional and voluntary, and in bringing a part, there is an element of deception.

Well, this is what we want. We've talked about the part in great detail. It is as though you brought a defective animal to the altar in ancient Israel.

It's an all or nothing thing. The offerings in Israel, many of them were voluntary. You could bring the whole burnt offering whenever you wanted to.

You could bring the fellowship offering whenever you wanted to. There are formal offerings that are designated, first fruits and so on. But there are others that are completely voluntary.

But if you are going to bring that voluntary offering, it must follow the prescribed criteria. This is the kind of animal. This is the nature of the animal.

This is the nature of the offering. This is how the offering is performed. And once you decide to do this, then it's an all or nothing proposition.

So we covered that last time, and we saw that by an admixture, it is as though you have leavened the grain offering that was to be offered with no leaven. It is as though you have brought a spotted or a damaged or a defective animal before God. If you're not going to do it right, don't do it at all.

I own and I'm very proud of a wonderful rifle. It's a 22 caliber rifle, and it's made by Henry, Henry Rifle Company. Henry Rifles have been famous for over 150 years, and if I had shekels just raining down on me from an inexhaustible source, they actually make now an exact replica of the original Henry Rifle, the one that you see.

I think they made a whole movie about Tom Selleck carrying around a Henry Rifle and flipping up that back sight and shooting stuff at, you know, miles away. They make that exact rifle. It is part for part, millimeter for millimeter, the same rifle.

The only difference is they have made it centerfire instead of rimfire so that you can reload, among other things. But other than that, it is an exact, it is the same rifle. But these are wonderful rifles.

But the motto of the Henry Rifle Company is made in America or not made at all. Every part, every detail of the process, it's in America. And the guy who is the president of that company now, he's got like a Greek name or an Italian name or something, but he's a really great guy, and he is absolutely dedicated.

They will make Henry Rifles in the United States of America down to the last spring and screw, or they will not make them at all. And people who buy Henry Rifles, many times when you see their reviews or there's a lot of videos where the guys are holding up their Henry and saying, you can't believe what I've been able to do with this rifle. And one of the things I like about it is it's made in America by Americans for Americans.

We like this. And that's the ethos. But it's entire.

It's not like, well, you know, we can get these springs a lot cheaper from Taiwan, so we'll make

most of it in America. But the spring is actually from Taiwan. No, of course, they don't call it Taiwan anymore.

Entire, whole, complete, no admixture. That's a big part of what's going on here. And Peter emphasizes it over and over.

The account from Luke emphasizes it over and over, and it's often overlooked. Well, the second thing is, what does this mean? Peter says in verse 3, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? And the word from which we get pseudo, pseudo, P-S-E-U-D with all of its endings is the verb here. What exactly does it mean to lie? How can you lie to the Holy Spirit? Well, we need to understand this because it is essential, and it's a little bit misleading the way it is in here, in my opinion.

It isn't as though the Holy Spirit walked into the room, and Ananias said, Hi there, Holy Spirit. Here's the entire price of the land. I mean, He's God.

And by the way, just as a quick aside, I don't think we need for ourselves any proof that the Holy Spirit is co-equal and co-eternal as a member of the Trinity. He is, in fact, God. He is, in fact, personal.

But this account is one of the proofs of that, one of the demonstrations of that in the Word of God. So if anybody tries to argue in your presence that the Holy Spirit isn't it, or He's just kind of an attitude, or He's kind of an ethos, notice that the Holy Spirit is someone who can be lied to in this sense. This, at least, is the popular defense.

And it says to lie to the Holy Spirit in verse 3, and then at the end of verse 4, it says you have not lied to men but to God. And those are in parallel. Whatever the pseudo action that has taken place to the Holy Spirit in verse 3 is to God in verse 4, which equates the Holy Spirit with God and makes Him personal.

That's the formal, you know, you get this on a test in seminary. What's a passage that proves the Holy Spirit is personal in God? Acts 5 is the place. However, what I'm going to present to you this morning is of a slightly different character.

Because as you look at the Word that is given in the chapter here, it is a bit more persuasive than that. The root of the word here is pseudomai, P-E-U-D-O-M-A-I, and the O-M-A-I group, the O-M-I, this always has kind of a middle idea. We have active and passive.

I hit the ball, that's active. I was hit by the rubber band, that's passive, right? But in Greek, there is a middle where I do the action, but it is in my interest or has an effect on me that is almost of a passive. I've done a thing in the active sense, but it has passive consequences that involve me, myself, and I. I do it in my interest.

I do it for my benefit. And the middle is a formal class in Greek that we just don't have in English.

We have to do it with prepositional phrases and a lot of talk.

They can just sum it up in the form of the word. So pseudomai means that even as you are falsifying a thing to someone or at something, you're personally involved. It creates a connection between the subject and the object that isn't present in even the passive or the active.

So it's pseudomai. Well, we only find this in the Gospels really at one place. And this is in Matthew 5, verse 11.

As soon as you hear Matthew 5, what do you think? You know, Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter. First Corinthians, we get your love chapter. But when you hear Matthew 5, you should immediately think beatitudes.

Attitudes that should be. Blessed are they that do this because they shall receive that. The beatitudes.

This is Matthew 5, 11. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. I wish we had, you know, anytime you look at these and you think about the context, you think, boy, I wish I had time to just extemporize on that.

Let me just tell you quickly that one of the interesting things about that particular verse in the beatitudes is Jesus has been talking in the third person there. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Do you notice anything about this one that is different? Blessed are you. He switches to the second person here.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my name's sake. And that's Jesus' use of this pseudomai. And what does this really mean? When someone is speaking evil against you falsely on account of the name of the Lord Jesus, it's one thing to say, I saw him break the window and steal the flat screen TV out of the store, right? But for Christ's sake, when someone speaks falsely and makes these accusations and speaks this evil, what are they doing? They're attacking more than an action.

They're attacking you as a representative of the Lord Jesus. They're saying, well, they're just doing it for money. He's not what he seems to be.

He's a hypocrite. He's a bigot. He's a racist.

He's a hater. They are representing us as something that is false. You say that God is love and you're God's people, but you're not.

And so there is a misrepresentation of the truth that talks about our actual nature and motivation. And notice there are times when they can say all manner of evil and it's true. Jesus says you're

blessed when they revile and speak evil against you and it's false.

There are believers who need to be reviled and spoken against because they are evil and it's just tragic. They're enemies of the cross, cut off from Christ, fallen from grace and prominently so. And you just grieve and groan in your heart when our own brothers and sisters in Christ do despot to the spirit of grace, trample the son of God underfoot and do it publicly.

And we don't need enemies when we've got people in the household of faith that are doing these things. But this is falsely now back to why has Satan filled your heart to sue sauce? I, this is the aorist middle, infinitive, aorist middle, infinitive to sue to my, to lie, to deceive, to do a false thing. Here's where we're going to expand our translation here a little bit because it's one thing to tell a lie.

George, did you chop down that cherry tree? I cannot tell a lie, father. I did it. The story itself is a lie, which makes it sort of a doubly ironic thing.

George Washington never chopped down a cherry tree. His dad never asked him the question. He never said, I cannot tell a lie.

He did chuck a dollar across the Potomac, but he did not chop down the cherry tree. And, and, uh, he, he, George Washington, as those of you know, that had read his Bible was an incredibly strong man, freakishly. So he was freakishly strong.

And there are several episodes beyond throwing things across the river in his life that demonstrate that just, just a, a phenomenon in his physical strength, but he never did that. I cannot tell a lie thing, but we tend to think that, that if you lie to the Holy spirit, that Ananias said something, he must have spoken and said, Peter, here's all the loot from this property that I sold. And it's not what it means.

How could you speak a lie to the Holy spirit? You say, well, it's the Holy spirit in the group. He spoke to the group and speaking to the group is speaking to the Holy spirit. It's speaking to Peter and Peter has the Holy spirit from Jesus.

And so it's all kind of transmits upward. That's not what's going on here. And we find this out as we look at what Pseudomy means.

And we have many examples, especially in the works of the apostle Paul in several cases. And this is really sort of unusual when you hit it, as you read through, if you, if you read Paul's epistles and you hit one of these verses and you say, why is he even saying that? For example, Romans chapter nine, verse one. Now remember Romans starts in chapter one.

What may be known of God is manifest. They suppress the truth and unrighteousness. When they knew him as God, they don't glorify him.

They're not thankful. You, oh man, are doing the same thing. You believer are as bad as an unbeliever when you deny God in the way you live.

And it goes on through three and four and five and six. And he talks about, uh, I was alive once apart from the law. When the law came, sin revived and I died who will deliver me from the body of this death.

There's therefore now no condemnation of those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8, 28, all things work together for good for the called, right? Then you get to chapter nine and nine, 10 and 11. He says, what about Israel? Because we're, these are the saints at Rome and, and the gospel has moved beyond the Jerusalem church and beyond those who are in Judea and Jerusalem and Samaria, uh, it, it's gone to the Gentiles.

So what about Israel? So he begins this section where he is going to address the branches that have been broken out of God's plan and purpose tree, not the salvation tree, the plan and purpose tree, the bear fruit and display the glory of God tree. They can't do that. It's not talking about their salvation.

It's talking about their visible bearing of fruit unto God. They're broken out of that tree by faithlessness and you Gentiles have now been grafted in. You can bear fruit that glorifies God.

You can be a part of God's tree of life on this earth unless you also by faithlessness qualify yourself to be pruned off and, and broken off. And those branches that have been broken off, Paul says can be grafted back in when they return to faith, not a salvation issue. It is a functional righteousness issue.

It is a bearing fruit that glorifies God issue, right? Well, he's going to begin that section in Romans chapter nine and he says in Romans chapter nine, verse one, I tell the truth in Christ. I am not pseudomyming my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit. I am telling the truth.

I am not being deceptive. My conscience bears witness in the Holy Spirit. You've got the whole concept of truth lying in the Holy Spirit right here in this same verse.

He says, let me tell you truly my conscience is clear as I tell you these things in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Do you, does it make sense? Do you see the type of thinking that Paul is engaging here? He is about to say some things that people might find difficult to believe about his attitude toward Israel because these are the people that have hounded Paul out of town, after town, after town. They have stoned him and left him for dead.

I'm not speaking chronologically here, but you think about the overall treatment that Paul has received at the hands of the Jews, the Judaizers. And he says, look, I need to affirm when I tell you this, that I am telling you from my heart, my conscience is clear in the presence of the Holy Spirit. I would give up all of my rewards in heaven for the sake of my brethren in Israel.

That's the first part of chapter nine. He loves them. He grieves for them, even though they are spitefully using him and persecuting him and bringing up all kinds of false accusations against him, physically abusing him, getting him arrested, getting him whipped, and so on.

But he says, look, and so this needs a little bit of affirmation. And he says, look, I am telling the truth. I'm not prevaricating.

I'm not deceiving. My conscience is clear as I stand in the presence of the Holy Spirit. I am true as He witnesses me speaking to you, as He enables me to speak to you.

You see the connection between truth and the Holy Spirit and the believer who is performing his spiritual gift function here. He does the same thing in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 31. And I won't go into the context here, but he says, The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How many times do we see that in Paul? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows I am not pseudomyming. Paul is aware as he communicates to the believers in Corinth that there is a sense in which he is constantly standing before God the Father. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows as He looks at me and as I communicate these things to you from the heart, I am not of mixed motives.

There is no partiality. There is no falsehood. There's no admixture.

I am telling you this purely and truly from the heart. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows this. Galatians chapter 1, verse 20.

Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I am not pseudomyming. What I do, I do with the awareness that I am in the direct observation of God and I speak purely. I don't have an ulterior motive.

I'm not preaching at some of you because I've got a personal grievance. I'm not surreptitiously trying to manipulate or motivate or otherwise tamper with your life. I stand before God and I am not in any way deceiving or deceitful.

I view myself in the presence of God, God the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father, and they know as I speak these things to you that it is pure, unadulterated truth from my heart, right? This is the nature of truth. Truth and life in Scripture are linked. Can you quote John 14, 6? When Jesus is talking to the disciples in the upper room, what does he say? I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Truth and life. Truth and life. In the same way that falsehood and death are linked.

As we'll see when we continue our study after the break, it's no accident that Satan is mentioned in this context and the Lord Jesus talks about Satan. Paul the Apostle talks about Satan and his influence. But remember this, pseudomai is a lot more than speaking.

It is being. Paul doesn't say, as I speak, God is listening and monitoring to make sure I don't say something deceptive. He is standing in the presence of God as a truthful person.

As someone who isn't being false. I am going to suggest that in Acts chapter 5, we translate in verse 3, Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to be false to the Holy Spirit? Which is in contrast to being true to the Holy Spirit. There are people who under the influence of the Holy Spirit see a need in the congregation and they go and sell their land and they bring those proceeds in to meet that need.

They lay it at the Apostles feet like an offering was laid at the Lord's feet, the Shekinah in the tabernacle and in the temple. The train of God of God's robe fills the temple that that's God's footstool. That's God's presence and offerings are brought to his feet.

These offerings are brought and they are done being true to the prompting and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There was a need and the Holy Spirit prompts Ananias and his wife Sapphira with the means, motive and opportunity to help meet this need, but they are not true to the Holy Spirit. Satan gets in and fills his heart to do it for a different reason and he pollutes the offering.

He divides the sacrifice. It's not a matter of speaking a lie to the Holy Spirit near so much as it is being false to the Holy Spirit, not being true to the Holy Spirit. There is a prompting and there is the awareness of an opportunity to bear fruit of righteousness and it's corrupted with falsehood.

It's corrupted with division. It's corrupted with self-interest. That's what is at issue here.

Pseudomai is to play false. It's in the lexicon Pseudomai to deceive, to play false, to speak a lie. All of those things are in there.

This is not so much the speaking, I think, as the doing the being false, the Holy Spirit. What does Jesus name the Holy Spirit? What does he call him? I go away, but I will send you the spirit of truth. That's one of his names, the spirit of truth.

So as we look at ourselves, what do we think? Am I being true to what I know? Am I being true to the word of God that the Holy Spirit circulates in my soul? I can keep silent and not tell a lie to the people around me. That's not what this is really getting at. Am I being true? Not am I just speaking true.

Jesus says, if you are not a hypocrite, then what is inside reflects through your eye to the outside. If your eye is light, your whole being is full of light. We want to be true, and we will naturally, speaking the truth is just one manifestation.

But you can't work backwards and say, well, if I'm speaking the truth and I never tell a lie, then I am being true. Being true, one of its manifestations is speaking the truth to one another in love. But it is the being that Ananias and Sapphira forsake and betray.

That is the nature of the sin. Now, it's a voluntary thing. They entered into it voluntary.

Nobody made them do it. Nobody held a gun to their head. But when they chose to do it, and they chose to play false to the Holy Spirit, look at the penalty.

Why so harsh? Well, we'll look at that when we come back.