

Ephesians 15-02-08b

In Acts chapter 5, we have seen that this entire rather shocking episode revolves around a voluntary action by a couple, a husband who makes a decision, a wife who supports and follows him in it. And this decision, this action has two parts. It is both false and self-interested.

And most of the time, these two things are linked. Occasionally, somebody will lie to protect someone else. This has been the stuff of many a TV plot.

You know, the father confesses to the crime because their child actually did it. And he's going to take the fall to shield them, which is too little too late in terms of parenting, in my view. But it is self-interest and falsehood.

This is linked to Satan by Peter. Peter says, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to be false to, to not be true to the Holy Spirit? What did we have in Ephesians chapter 4? Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. Don't be filled with something else.

Why do people get drunk? This is separate and distinct from why do people drink? Why do people get drunk? It's self-interest. I want to feel better. I want to have a good time.

I'm going to drown my sorrows. I'm going to change the landscape in my mind. I'm going to numb myself.

I'm going to make myself hilarious in the life of the party, which, of course, is almost always a falsehood in itself. But it is a false promise. It's a false solution to problems.

It compounds problems. It creates problems. It is itself a problem.

Drunkenness is one of the biggest problems and has been historically. Be not overcome in self-interest. Be filled with the Spirit.

Why has Satan filled your heart? Well, why has Satan filled his heart? What is the nature of Satan? How is Satan even involved in this? Well, the Bible tells us quite a lot about Satan, interestingly enough. Going all the way back to Genesis 3, verse 15, when he filled the serpent. What does the serpent do? What happens when Satan inspires the serpent? Does the serpent say, hello Eve, let me deliver some real truth to you.

Why is the woman to be obedient to the husband? Adam was formed first, then Eve. Eve was what? Deceived. Deceived.

Her problem happened when she was deceived. Satan deceives the woman. That's what happened in the garden.

That's how sin entered the world and death by sin. And death passed upon all men, all sinned.

When? It begins with deception.

God knows that if you eat this fruit, you will become as wise as He is. Which is a lie. But she was deceived.

Genesis 3, verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. Why? He deceived you, woman. John 12, when God speaks out of heaven, Jesus says, This voice did not come because of me, but for your sake.

The voice of God, the voice of truth, the voice of the Father confirming the identity and ministry of the Son. And then right after that, when Jesus says, This voice did not come because of me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world.

Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. Jesus says that He is the truth. And with the affirmation of His identity as the truth, the ruler of this world is cast out.

Truth casts out the lie. Truth replaces and shoves aside the lie. They cannot coexist.

It's either truth or it's deception. It is either aletheia or it is pseudase, pseudomai. In John 14, verse 30, Jesus says, I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

The ruler of this world is coming. What form does that take? Who actually comes and has nothing in Jesus? No part, no meros, no inheritance. Who is the son of perdition? Satan fills the heart of Judas.

Tells us specifically, Satan entered into him and he left the upper room and went out to guide the arresting party to the garden and show them where Jesus is. The betrayal, the falsehood, Jesus basically calls Judas, Satan. The ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in Me.

And he comes inhabiting, filling the heart of Judas. What's the other time that Jesus links Satan and a disciple? Jesus says, I've got to go to Jerusalem and suffer and die. Peter says, oh no, Lord, that doesn't need to happen.

And Jesus says, get thee behind Me, Satan. It is in Peter's interest that things continue as they are, that he be associated with this popular rabbi, that an arrest and a crucifixion, this is going to end badly for everyone. And when Peter speaks and says that the mission for which the Lord Jesus came isn't going to happen, Jesus says, that's false.

Get behind Me, your eyes are on the things of this world and not on the things of God. Falsehood. Hebrews 2, verse 14, just as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, the Lord Jesus Himself likewise shared in the same.

The Lord Jesus shared in flesh and blood, why? Again, Hebrews 2, verse 14, in order that

through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Truth and life are linked in Scripture. Deceit, falsehood and death are linked in Scripture.

1 John 3, verse 8, He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. What beginning is that? Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, these words that are formally addressed to the king of Tyre but actually speak of the career of Lucifer, the son of darkness. Again, 1 John 3, verse 8, He who sins is of the devil.

Remember Jesus telling the Pharisees, you are of your father the devil? Actually, it's interesting because the word your is not there in the Greek text. And they've had all kinds of debate because technically when you read the Greek text it says you are of the father of the devil. And so who is Satan's father? And they've just got all twisted around the axis of rotation there.

It's clear in the context. He says that he is a liar and the father of it. And the father idea, Satan is himself the father.

It's just you are of the father of lies, you are of the devil. It's a parallel construction. But it's amazing, even in Greek people can just hoist themselves on strange petards.

He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. He who sins is of the devil. And it is the purpose of the Son of God, 1 John 3, verse 8, for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.

And part of that is overcoming both sin and death. Revelation 20, verse 10, And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. That is the ultimate destination.

Acts 26, 18, To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. To turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. Life and death, truth and deceit, inheritance, no inheritance.

2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4, one of our memory verses, you can say it with me. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. It is a deceit.

One of the things about deceit is it's persuasive. You get this wrinkle cream, here's a before and here's an after. Wrinkles around your eyes before, no wrinkles around your eyes after.

This cream will take your wrinkles away. No, it won't. There is no wrinkle cream that will take your wrinkles away.

There is stuff that will temporarily distort your skin and make it look like your wrinkles have gone,

but they're not gone. You know what happens in wrinkling? I've researched this. I have delved into the mysteries of wrinkledom.

And this is the way it works. Your skin continues to grow throughout your life and your body does not. Do you ever notice how big old people's ears are? Their ears keep growing.

Earlobes keep growing. Have you ever noticed old people have just got these earlobes? And now with photography, and you can see people when they're young, see people when they're... They say, what happened to your ears? Your ears are just gigantic. Well, they keep growing.

That's skin and it just keeps on growing. And so I'm one of the fortunate ones that has the attached earlobe. If you have detached earlobes, just stand by.

Why you would wear heavy earrings, I don't know, because those things are just going to distend. It's like the Africans, you know, and people now here in America that stick stuff in their ears. You know what their ears are going to look like without cosmetic surgery after they do that? It keeps growing.

So here's the thing. If you actually wanted to get rid of wrinkles, because the skin on your face keeps on growing. My head's not getting any bigger, but my face skin is.

So what's it going to do? Well, it's just going to droop, and it's going to sag, and it's going to wrinkle up. And it's by repeated smiling and squinting and whatnot, these extra folds, it loses its snap. It loses its flexibility, and it just sags and droops, and it's too much skin.

What they will eventually do, if God permits time and technology to continue, is, and I've told you before, I had the idea for eBay. I had the idea for a lot of these things. I could have been insanely rich, but instead I stayed here to be your pastor.

So that's my self-sacrifice. I will tell you this. The cosmetic procedure that is going to revolutionize youth and beauty in terms of making old people not look so old, they're going to devise a laser technique that will, like the stars of heaven, selectively, microscopically assassinate cells and shrink the skin in a uniform manner all over your face.

They'll map it in a computer. There will be pinpoint laser that will not slice out a chunk and stretch it over and stitch it together. You've got to shrink the entire skin.

It's too big. There's too much of it. So you microscopically, with a laser or something similar, kill off 10 out of every 137 cells, and without damaging nerves, without hitting blood vessels, you make the skin smaller, uniformly so.

And then you've got to stimulate collagen and the rest of it so that it gets its elasticity back. Because what that's going to do is just give you like a leather face, and you're going to smile, and it's just going to split. Well, there will be some learning curves in this whole idea.

This is why I haven't gone forward with it. I'm afraid of the lawsuits. But truth is I've earned these lines.

I've earned these wrinkles. There is an inevitability to the process of death that comes with sin. So as we talk about the God of this world blinding the minds of those who do not believe, otherwise the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ would shine unto them.

It is a substitution. It is the promise of something that doesn't happen. It's as old as the first lie in the garden.

It's a false promise. You can't be young again. You can't truly look young.

Have you ever seen people? Even the best, I think probably the best example of plastic surgery I've seen recently is Marie Osmond. That gal looks fantastic. She's my age, but she looks great.

But she doesn't look like herself. She doesn't look like she did when she was young. She looks especially in repose.

They look great as long as it's a still shot. When people start talking and their face starts moving, the mobility is all different. There's injections and chin implants, and I don't know what all they do.

But what they're basically trying to do is puff out the stuff under the skin because there's too much skin. So you get cheek implants and chin implants, and you get stuff in your lip and all that. What's it doing? Women hate to get those little wrinkles right on your upper lip.

So they inject that stuff in there to pooch them out. Well, you won't have wrinkles, but your lip sure looks funny, and you don't look like yourself. So it's a false promise.

And you're going to do all of that, and then your kidneys are going to fail, and you're going to go out, and you'll have a really great looking open casket funeral. But it's a false promise. What's really scary is you could imagine an archaeologist a thousand years from now opening one of these up and finding blobs of silicon and pieces of plastic and stuff affixed to the skull, and they think, what kind of weird religious ritual was this where they implanted all kinds of things in this person and then sacrificed them to their god? But it's a false promise.

There is always, it isn't just not accepting the truth, it is replaced with a falsehood, and falsehoods are persuasive. They appeal. It's appealing.

We want to believe it. We want to think it's true. And this is the nature of advertising.

This is the nature of getting people to spend all kinds of money. There is an advertisement I just saw, they're given a coupon, and instead of the \$3,700 that this thing costs, this week only for \$999, you can go to a spa here in Plano and they'll do deep thermotherapy on your skin, and for a few weeks it'll tighten your face. \$999.

But it's temporary. And laying there for three hours and people laying hot rocks on your face and doing deep, I don't know what all they do, but they get your money, you get a temporary effect, it is a false promise. It's as old as Satan's first lie.

Satan tried to make a false promise to the angels in heaven, that's why he was cast out, and a third of the angels believed his lie and went with him. So 2 Corinthians 4, 3 and 4 is pertinent. In 2 Thessalonians 2, the coming of the lawless one, the coming of the Antichrist, and lawless doesn't mean he has no laws, it means he's outside God's law.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with power, signs, and deceitful wonders. Deceitful wonders. Did you ever see Criss Angel and some of these other magicians, they're allegedly street musicians, and they're just walking along, and they say, oh look, there's a dead bird laying under that tree in the park, and he goes over and he kind of plays with the bird a little bit, and all of a sudden it wakes up and flies away.

And people say, it's truly magic. How did he do that? He was just walking along as though there wasn't a dead bird planted there. He's walking along a street, and he's doing a card trick, and everybody knows the trick, you know, pick a card, pick a card, you put it in, and it's the 7th card down, you flip it over, there's your card.

Well Criss Angel and these other magicians, it's a common trick. They'll know what the card is in advance, they force it, and anybody with reasonable card skill can force a card, get you to pick the one they already know what it is. Well, if you already know what it is, or if half the deck is the 7 of hearts, and you could pick any one in the middle of the deck, well then, what does he do? He's just walking along the street, and he says, well, you know, I'm not sure where your card is, and so he throws it at the store window, and the person's card is stuck to the inside of the glass.

How did he do it? Well, he's got a stooge inside, he already knew what the card was going to be, and while everybody's looking at him shuffling cards, they just lick it and stick it to the inside of the deal, and he throws the cards, nobody's looking at the window until he throws them, they all fall away, and there's magically the card, and it seems like magic, it went through the glass and stuck on the... Seriously, you know, people know that there's a trick, they just don't know what it is, but it's a deceitful wonder, it looks like one thing happened and it was really something else, and this is the way Satan works. Well, Ananias and Sapphira, this is Satan filling his heart to play false to. What did Eve do in the garden? She was false to God, she was false to her husband, she went and represented, boy, don't I feel great, I ate this grapefruit or whatever the fruit that was on the tree, and this is wonderful, the snake talks, I feel super, take a bite, and he partakes of the deception, and he is similarly, but he's more responsible.

The coming of the lawless one is going to be with lying wonders. Hebrews 2.14, as we read before, Inasmuch as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, the Lord Jesus shares in the same, so that He can destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil. Satan

slanders Job, you remember that? It was allowed to inflict disease on him, in Zechariah 3, you have Satan accusing Joshua the high priest, he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him, Zechariah 3.1, why? Well, what's his name? Yeshua, Yeshua the high priest, you have Joshua that led the people into the land, you've got Yeshua the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and you have this Yeshua, another Joshua standing there, and we're going to be getting to Zechariah before long, it's a fascinating book, and this is one of the visions.

But Satan is a murderer from the beginning, he is a liar, he is a murderer, and these things are linked. Jesus tells the religious leadership in Israel in John 8.44, You are of your father the devil, and I told you the word your is not in there, you are of your father, of the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning and stayed not in the truth.

Murderer, not in the truth. Death and deceit, life and truth, they are linked. It begins to shed a lot of light on the Ananias and Sapphira episode because these are the days of the early church, these people have been filled twice now with the Holy Spirit.

Once on the day of Pentecost, once again when they heard the testimony of Peter and John, it says they were all filled with the Spirit. This is an ongoing manifestation of the overt presence and power of the Holy Spirit in these people. Here is Satan filling someone's heart in the congregation, and instead of truth, instead of glory to God, there is deceit and glory to man.

Self-interest, presenting as whole what is in fact partial, presenting as true what is in fact false. And God comes down with both feet on this. Back to Acts 5, it was voluntary, and in verse 4, Make a little more sense? You haven't been false to us.

You haven't shorted us. You haven't hurt us. God will provide our needs.

He's got the riches in glory. You haven't hurt us. You haven't been false to us.

You have been false to God. Now, what did Jesus say about the little ones? Blessed are you if you give a cup of water to one of these little ones. If you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me.

Truth. I do what I do without, as the old military oath says, without reservation or purpose of evasion. I am true.

I tell the truth. I am a witness of the truth. I live to the truth.

The Lord Jesus Christ is my truth. And I am true to Him. I am true to what I know.

I don't divide it. I don't pollute it. I don't corrupt it.

I don't amalgamate it. It is all integral. That's what integrity is.

It's all one thing. Structural integrity means none of it's falling off or coming apart. You have not been false to men.

You have been false to God. Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and his soul went out. He died.

Now, you think, from a human point of view, okay, this guy kind of wanted to be viewed as generous and as good as Barnabas and these other guys, but he really wanted the money for himself, so he represented a partial thing as true. He only made a partial gift instead of the whole thing. It was his option, as Peter says.

Why don't they just give him a rap on the knuckles? Why isn't he exposed and given the chance to repent in front of the congregation and say, yes, I did. I'm sorry. I apologize to you.

I apologize to God. I'll be a new man from now on. I won't do this anymore.

Peter, as a pope figure, could have just excommunicated him and said, Ananias, you're out of the church. We're giving you the big boot. Don't let the door hit you on the way out.

You're gone. Peter doesn't do anything. God stops Ananias' heart and he drops in place.

He is executed by God. This is like a sin unto death here, right? Why? Why so severe? Why so harsh? We talked about last time, this is the beginning. This is the inception.

And what has been created by God, what has been instituted and ordained by God and has been authenticated by God through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, this is the first instance of corruption. This is the first disobedience. This is the first untruth that has entered the group.

And as the archetype, it is harshly judged. Now, if you're the fifth guy to do this kind of thing and you don't drop dead, does it mean that God has relaxed His attitude? Is God any less unhappy with me when I play false, when I'm not true to the witness and the prompting and the work of the Holy Spirit in my soul? Is He any less put out with me than He is with Ananias and Sapphira? What do you think? Yes or no? He's just as unhappy with us. And by the way, the penalty and the judgment is just as severe for us as it is for them.

What is the penalty? I haven't dropped dead and I'm sure I've done far worse than Ananias. How come I didn't drop dead at the point of being false? That proactive, symbolic penalty, that execution of judgment, is a picture of what is going to happen to everybody who plays false against the Holy Spirit. What is it a picture of? You remember pictures and metaphors and parables and examples in the Bible are literal physical things that speak of spiritual realities, right? So we're not all going to walk up to the judgment seat and fall over dead like Ananias because we've all committed these sins.

Think about the association. Truth is associated with life. Falsehood is associated with death.

Fire is a picture of judgment, being thrown into the fire, the lake of fire. This is the second death. What is eternal life? Is it just I'm never going to die? What have we seen over and over again in Scripture? I give to them eternal life.

This is life that partakes of all of the potentials, all of the glories, all of the blessings, all of the opportunities, all of the privileges, all of the wonderful, fulfilling, exciting things that are beyond what we can even ask and think. It hasn't even entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. So what is death in the judgment sense for a believer pictured by the death of Ananias and Sapphira? What's going to happen at the judgment? I have an access card at our building downtown, and they can program that thing to do anything, to open any door or to only open a few doors.

My particular card is programmed and it will open two doors. It will open the elevator doors in the parking garage to get me up and down, and it will open the elevator at the ninth floor where our office is, and it'll open the break room door on the ninth floor. So I have a ninth floor key, and I have a garage elevator key programmed into my card.

There are lawyers who live up on the 16th floor, and they also have offices on the 13th floor, and they can program their card. And, of course, the security people, their card opens any door. They can get into where the restaurant is.

They can get into any floor, any office. Their card opens all doors. We have the potential to have an unlimited card, to go where the Lord Jesus goes, to walk with Him in white, to sit with Him on His throne, to partake of manna that He Himself girds Himself and serves.

But as we live in falsehood, as we divide our sacrifices, we pollute our offerings, as we partake of deceit instead of truth, those privileges start to disappear. The life, the eternal life that is our privilege and our inheritance in Christ, Ephesians 1, Ephesians 2, in Him we are heirs of all things. But we kill those.

We kill those potentials. We kill those opportunities because ultimately and finally the truth reflects the glory of God. Jesus Christ is the truth.

We are Him on this earth. We are His body, and we represent Him, and we reflect His glory. And when we don't do that, when we are false instead of true, there is death in the pot.

There is death at the judgment. And we will be saved, yet so as by fire. But we diminish, we forfeit our inheritance.

Why? We have a mess of pottage of self-interest that we want to eat now, and we think it's going to satisfy. How long did that pottage satisfy the hunger of Esau? A few hours, and he gave away his eternal name, his eternal inheritance, his eternal role in the life and plan and purpose of God. He gave it away in self-interest.

He didn't treat it with the value and the respect that it deserves. This is what we do when we are not true to the Holy Spirit. So what is the application of all of this? And we are going to be back in the application section of the letter to Laodicea, the book of Ephesians in chapter 5. This is how wives should be with their husbands.

This is how children should be with their parents. This is how slaves should be with their masters. And masters to slaves, and husbands to wives, and parents to children.

The interactions that we have to one another, it's not just speaking the truth, it is being true. Recognizing that like Paul, we stand in the presence of God at all times. And playing false to one another, not being true to the witness and the prompting and the ministry of the Word that God the Holy Spirit exercises in our souls, is death.

We kill pieces of relationship. We kill pieces of fellowship. We kill pieces of reflecting the glory of God and being able to win others even without a word.

The wife who is going to win her husband without a word isn't going to do it if she is playing false. We cannot be good witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot be His body on this earth when we are untrue to the Holy Spirit.

We don't do what we know we should do. We ignore the prompting. We explain it away.

We rationalize. We buy into the lie. Truth and deceit are tied inextricably in God's plan and purpose to life and death.

Experiential death. Inheritance death. We saw it in Hosea.

You start with what you try to gather being scattered. In the intensive phase, you are no longer receiving God's mercy, which is the privilege of a child of God, but we've run out from under that mercy stream. We have departed from the river of grace.

And in the final, lo ami, you're indistinguishable from the nations of the world. You're indistinguishable from the Philistines and the Amorites and those who are destroyed out from the presence of the Lord. Indistinguishable.

Not my people. I don't see any identifying feature on you. There is no truth that marks you as one of mine.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And as we look at ourselves, we want to look for truth. Am I honestly and fully responding to the grace of God, the promptings and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit as He brings to our minds and circulates the word of God in our souls.

It goes far beyond speaking the truth. It is being the truth. And we are warned in a shocking and

memorable way that God takes His truth seriously.

God's word is truth. He magnifies His word above His name. We may bear His name, but if we're not living for the truth, death will follow.

Satan and those who followed him have a destination in the lake of fire. Our inheritance will end up in the lake of fire to the extent that we follow the father of lies. He was a murderer from the beginning.

How is he a murderer? He perpetrated deceit and got eved by into it. And death followed. Well, it's a powerful, powerful signpost, a warning bell.

In the earliest days of the church, and it has stood as a warning ever since, the gravestone of Ananias and Sapphira is a reminder to us of how important the truth is, not just in what we say, but in who we are. Well, we'll close here in a word of prayer, and we'll return to Ephesians 5 next time. Father, thank You for this portion of Your word.

We are sobered and we are chastened as we recognize how serious these issues are, and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate our own circumstance, our own hearts, so that we can not only understand what has been presented to us, but we can see its pertinence and how we should decide and act in its light. We pray that in all things, our personal lives, our lives as a group will reflect Your glory and bring credit to the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His name.

Amen.