

Sunday, February 15, 2026

Deadly Sins

Acts 4:32-5:16

- When me and my brothers were teenagers, we did what all teenage boys do. We made our mother late for things all of the time.
 - Especially whenever dad would be deployed, my poor mom was tasked on Sunday mornings, with getting 3 teenage boys up and moving and ready for church.
 - Then if by some miracle she got us out of the house in decent time, we still had about a 20-25 minute drive to the military base, we would have to go through the security checks, hope that we don't get picked for random inspection, then get to the other side of the base where the chapel was.
 - And more often than not, the service had already started by the time that we got there
- However, my mom, especially as the Chaplain's wife, didn't want to be seen walking in late. Coming from the generation she did in the deep south, she did not want to make that march of shame down to the 3rd or 4th pew with all of the eyes watching, while the chaplain giving announcements and trying not be distracted
- So, to avoid this shame, this is what my mom would do. She would send us in, to make that shameful march.
 - Then she would say, "I need to stop by the powder room"
 - More often than not, she would hand one of us her coat and purse!
 - And we would go in to the 3rd or 4th row, and you know what? Nobody cared!
 - But she would hide out for a while and it would just so happen that she would emerge into the room, right in the middle of the meet and greet, fellowship, handshaking time!

- Then as it ended, she would sit down in her spot with us, as if she had been there the whole time.
- Now, no human being like to be embarrassed, but that fear of embarrassment a lot of times is heightened whenever it comes to being at church.
- There is something in us that makes us feel that we need to hide our flaws and shortcomings whenever we are here.
 - You see, the enemy loves to whisper into the ears of the church goers and say things like, “Oof, don’t let them find out about that.” “Don’t let them see you in that light.” “You think the church would really accept you, if they knew...”
 - And in turn we feel like we need to “save face” so to speak in church, more so than in other settings
 - So we come to church and we carry ourselves a little bit better, we act a little nicer, we dress a little nicer
 - I only wear these shoes on Sunday mornings, ok, never any time else!
- Now, there are levels of that which are healthy ok..
 - We want to give God our best, there’s nothing wrong with dressing up for church on Sunday mornings
 - We want to be the best, the nicest, and the most encouraging we can be to the people of God in the house of God
 - Those are good things!
- However, what can be deadly in the church, is when in our attempt to save face, we become deceitful
 - When we allow our pride to cause us to deceive our brothers and sisters in Christ
 - When we allow greed to cause us to try and elevate ourselves, above others

- God will not condone deceit in His church, whether it happens in the pulpit or the parking lot.
 - And as we will see in our passage today, an attempt to deceive the people of God is an attempt to deceive God Himself.
- We pick up in our study at the end of Acts chapter 4: ***"Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold"- Acts 4:32-35 (ESV)***
- Now, there are some out there that try to take passages like this in order to promote a socialist or a communist agenda.
 - They say "See! Even in the early church, they took the money from the richer and gave it to the poorer! There were no social or financial classes among them!"
 - However, nothing was taken from anyone in this community
 - People were giving at an incredible rate, but nothing was forced upon them
- You see this was common-ism, not communism
 - In common-ism, people give voluntarily out of the goodness of their cheerful hearts
 - In communism, it is forced upon them
 - Also, we have to understand that this church was learning and growing, they had no plan or budget

- These guys were just fishermen, zealots, and blue collar guys
- Matthew, who had experience as a tax collector was probably trying his best to manage all of these donations coming in, but he's overwhelmed
- And also, we see that this strategy wasn't the best, because they didn't have a budget or a plan, and because the more well off, sold off their possessions so quickly, this actually lead the church of Jerusalem to be in such a bad spot that Paul would have to go on a fundraising tour to try and support them
- But all of this was done out of the right heart. The needy were being taken care of
 - At this time the temple was the largest employer in Jerusalem, and many who worked at the Temple were coming to faith in Jesus, and then the Sadducees, who ran the temple, would fire them.
 - Many of them were cut off from their families because of their faith
- So as these thousands were coming to faith, many were now, jobless, family-less, and now homeless
 - So the more fortunate were doing everything they could to help support the body, and advance the kingdom work
 - So if they had extra land and properties, they were selling them off and giving them to the leaders to distribute as needed
- And one of these generous individuals really stood out, we see in verse 36: ***“Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.” -Acts 4:36-37 (ESV)***
- Now Luke is very intentional about giving us the information that he was a Levite

- Because Levites were the ones that were in charge of all of the religious and worship education among the people of Israel
- So when the people would pay their tithes to the Temple, the tithes would go toward supporting the levites and their work.
- But now, we see a Levite, the one who used to receive the tithes, being the one giving the tithes.
- And really he goes above and beyond a tithe, which means a 10th...he sees a need, he sees the way that the Lord is working through this ministry, he wants to be a part of it
 - So he sells a field that he owns, and donates the money to the ministry
- And he has been such an influential part of the ministry that the apostles even gave him a nickname
 - Just like Jesus used to do!
 - Jesus gave Cephus the name Peter
- Gave Levi the name Matthew
- James and John, he called “The Son’s of Thunder”
- And the apostles carry on the tradition, and give this guy the name Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement”
- Barnabas is a guy that’s always lifting up the people around him. He also knows what it is like to be a religious leader, and he can truly encourage the apostles in the work that they are doing whenever the weight of the ministry starts to bear down on them.
 - They love Barnabas, everyone loves Barnabas!
- ...expect one couple in the church. Ananias and Sapphira. They weren’t going to let Barnabas be the only one that gives up real estate generously.
- In Chapter 5, it begins with: **“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 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.” -Acts 5:1-2 (ESV)

- Now, Ananias and Sapphira didn't need nicknames or name changes. They already had meaningful names
 - Ananias means: “Yahweh is Gracious”
 - Sapphira means: “Beautiful”
- It could have been that Ananias and Sapphira were used to being the “It couple”
 - They were the couple with the charisma, the talent, the notoriety
 - They are used to being in the spot light, the ones that everyone looked up to and admired
- Until this Barnabas comes in from Cyprus...
 - Now the people are starting to like him a little too much, the apostles are giving him a little too much attention for their liking

- So they devise a plan... “Oh he wants to sell off some land and get all this attention, well we have land too. He's not the only one that has property to sell.”
 - So they pick a plot of land that they own, the sell it off for a good chunk of change
- One of them asks, “Are we going to give all of it to the ministry?”...
 - “All of it? No way!”
 - “They have no idea how much we sold it for! I mean, we're already giving a ton of money here...we can just let them think that its all of it.”
 - “Chances are this is still a larger amount than what that Barnabas gave anyway”
 - And as we are going to see, this was not a good tactic....
- Lets keep reading in verse 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? 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.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you 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? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” 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. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.” -Acts 5: 3-11 (ESV)

- You know, a lot of people talk about how they wish we would see miracles today the same was we saw in the book of Acts
 - Then I read passages like this and think, “Do you really?”
 - Because this is technically the 3rd miracle we see so far in the book of acts. The Ascension, the Lame Man Walking, and Now the supernatural death of Ananias and Sapphira
 - So I don’t know about you, but I’m not pressing for these kinds of miracles in our church today!
- But from this passage, I want us to talk about 3 deadly sins that the church has to be on guard from.

- Because if we allow them to creep into the church we could let them kill the ministry and the work that God is wanting to do in and through us
- And the first one is the one that we talked about at the beginning:
 - **DEADLY SINS: DECEIT**
 - Now, we have to be clear, Ananias and Sapphira's sin was not holding back some of the proceeds for themselves
 - Peter said, "Look, you didn't have to sell the land, you didn't have to bring any of the money here! None of this was required by anyone!"
 - But their sin, was trying to deceive the church
 - And what made this deceptive was the fact that it was premeditated
 - This wasn't just a bad decision that they made in the moment, they intentionally had the conversation together, to plan to deceive
- And this is where a Godly couple is supposed to help protect each other.
 - The husband is supposed to never lead his wife into sin
 - And the wife, is supposed to help keep her husband from making stupid decisions
 - Because Lord knows we need help with that, don't we fellas?!
- Now, we don't know exactly who's idea this originally was, we don't know if it was Ananias making his wife go along with it, or if it was Sapphira making him go along with her
 - We don't know, but it doesn't matter, because either way it was a team effort
- Just as it was with Adam and Eve
- In Genesis 3, satan in the form of a serpent deceived Eve into thinking it was a good idea to disobey the commands of God and eat the fruit

- Deception is always a work of the devil. The Father of Lies
- That's why Peter says "Why has satan filled your heart?"
- But you see, the first sin committed was not Eve eating the fruit...because it says: "**she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.**" -Genesis 3:6 (ESV)
- So Adam was just standing by letting it happen!
- The first and original sin, was actually the passivity of the husband not leading his wife spiritually the way that he was supposed to do, and in doing so he led her into sin that has affected every human being that has been born since
- Their sin was a premeditated team effort, just as we see happening here in Acts chapter 5

- And if they would have taken their roles in their marriage seriously they could have kept each other from falling into this deception
- The husband should have led his wife well and he didn't
 - However, as husbands we are still weak and flawed, which is why we need Godly wives that can help us discern these bad ideas we have every once in a while
- In Proverbs 31, it says: "**An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.**" Proverbs 31:10-12 (ESV)
- The proverb says that the excellent wife is one that her husband can trust in. And many times you will find out just how much you can trust your wife whenever you're about to make a bad decision, and your wife can remind you of

the truth and remind you, “Uh-uh honey, that’s not who you are! You’re better than that!”

- And help you remain living in a God-honoring fashion
- Both Ananias and Sapphira both failed in their roles, and they decided together to deceive the believers
 - And as this deception killed them physically, deception in the church can kill the ministry, influence, and works that God wants to do through the church.
- Christians should never feel the need to have to be secretive or hide things from each other.
 - This is supposed to be a place full of authentic, burden bearing Christians
 - One of the things that breaks my heart the most, is whenever I hear those who have worked or served in a church say things like “Man, it’s really eye opening whenever you get behind the curtain and see how things really run and how people really are.”

• THAT HAS NO PLACE IN THE KINGDOM WORK OF GOD!

- We should be the same, no matter where we are or who we are around!
- We are all sinners saved by grace, who are in desperate need of His mercies that are new every morning! What faces do we need to put on?!
 - What fear do we need to have of people finding out??
 - Whenever we as individuals understand our own need for grace, we will be much more apt to extend grace to others.
 - And we won’t feel the need to put on a face or hide things from each other
- But whenever deception spreads into the church, grace become suffocated among the believers and we’ll always be trying to make people think that we’re better than we really are

- Now, this doesn't mean that we don't try. This doesn't mean that we don't attempt to die to ourselves...but we do so in order to count others more significant than ourselves, not for personal gain
 - There's a big difference between putting your best foot forward and pretending to be something that we aren't
 - And you may deceive the people for a time, but you'll never be able to deceive the Holy Spirit
- And more often than not, our propensity to be deceitful is rooted in an epidemic that has plagued all of us at one point or another, and that is the second deadly sin:
 - **DEADLY SINS: PRIDE**
 - Most of the time we are not deceitful because we're trying to hide something per-se, but rather it's because we are in competition with others
- We want to be seen as higher, better, more holy...we don't want anyone to think that they are better than us
- Which is exactly what I believe was the driving force behind Ananias and Sappira's deceit.
- Now, you might ask, "Kenny, based on the wording of this passage, what would lead you to that conclusion."
 - Well it's exactly the wording that leads me there.
 - Because, Luke tells us about Barnabas selling a piece of land and bringing the proceeds to the feet of the Apostles.
 - Then afterwards the first word he uses is "BUT"
 - Showing a stark contrast between the two
 - Luke says, "Here's a man who gave generously out of the goodness of his heart.....BUT then, here's this other couple who had different motives."

- Ananias and Sappira's deception was born out of their pride to be glorified
 - You see pride seeks self-glory, not God's glory
 - Pride seeks the praise of other people, rather than the praise of God
- This is what I would call the "Look at me" syndrome, that if you think that you have never struggled with, you're lying to yourself
- Over and over again in scripture, we are warned of the deadly nature of Pride.
 - In the book of Proverbs alone we see:
 - ***"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom."***
-Proverbs 11:2 (ESV)
 - ***"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud."*** **-Proverbs 16:18-19 (ESV)**
- ***"One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor."***
-Proverbs 29:23 (ESV)
- James reminds us that : ***"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."***
-James 4:6 (ESV)
- You see, if we can kill pride among the church, we can eliminate all forms of these petty competitions that we have a tendency to make with each other
- Paul tells us that there is only one competition that we are to have in the church, he tells us to: ***"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."***
-Romans 12:10 (ESV)
- The church is supposed to be the place where we can feel the most safe around other human beings
 - Safe to be genuine, honest, transparent

- A place where we are encouraged, built up, have others bear the burdens of this broken world with us
- And that will be impossible in a place that is rampant with pride.
- So we have seen the deadly sin of deceit, the deadly sin of pride, and thirdly, we have the deadly sin of:
- **DEADLY SINS: GREED**
 - You see, generosity is the antidote to greed
 - Which is exactly why the Lord set up the practice of the tithe, to protect us from falling to greed.
- Now, the argument is that “Tithing,” was an Old Covenant Command and since we are in the New Covenant, we are not expected to tithe anymore
 - Well. Yes and No.
- You see, the tithe was not just an Old Covenant Command, it was a scriptural

principal that preceded the law (as seen in Abraham and Jacob) and continued to exist after the law

- However, the truth is, we do not see a specific command in the New Testament to give a tithe of 10%...but we are called to give, we are called to be generous people
- And the percentage is not the point because we aren't called to give a certain percentage we are called to give from a certain heart.
- In reality, a lack of generosity is not a financial problem, it's a heart problem.
 - The heart is very fickle —(Jer. 17:9) The heart is deceitful
 - (Prov. 4:23) Guard your heart
- The heart is not something we follow but rather something we guard and direct
- **“For where your treasure is, there your heart WILL BE also” -Matthew 6:21 (ESV)**

- Which is to say: Your money doesn't follow your heart, your heart actually follows your money
- Don't put your money where your mouth is, put your money where you want your heart to be
 - *Do you want to have a heart for the Church? Be generous to the church*
 - *Do you want to have a heart for missions? Be generous to missionaries*
 - *Do you want to have a heart for the unborn? Be generous to the Pregnancy Care Center!*
 - *Because where you treasure is, there your heart WILL BE*
- God isn't after your money, He is after your heart
- He doesn't want what you have, He wants you!
 - He wants to protect us from greed!
 - He doesn't want us to be possessed by our possessions
 - He doesn't want cash to be our king
- And whenever we live open handed lives, we are confident and content that everything we have comes from God, He will supply our every need, and He can effectively give to us, so that He can give through us
- That's what we saw in this community in chapter 4: No one counted any of their possessions as their own...they didn't see what they had as the property of the collective community. No they saw everything that they had as God's
 - And that is why they were able to be so generous.
- Giving is still very much a requirement of the Christian life.
- Now, you might say, wait a minute Kenny... Ananias and Sapphira did give. They gave money....and still died!
 - What you give is not as important as how you give.

- Paul says in 2 Corinthians: ***“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” -2 Corinthians 9:7 (ESV)***
- You see, Ananias and Sapphira did not give cheerfully out of the goodness of their hearts, they gave reluctantly and under compulsion
 - Not all giving is generous giving, some give out of greed.
 - They were under the compulsion to compete...they gave out of the greed for recognition, for attention, for the praise of other people and that was not God-glorifying
 - It was deceptive, it was prideful, it was greedy.
- Again, What you give is not as important as how you give.
- Now Paul says, each one “Must give”...He doesn’t say how much.
- He just says we must give as we as have “decided” in our hearts
 - More accurately, what we have “Purposed in our hearts”
- This word is so unique, and it is the only time that this greek word is used in scripture.
 - And I’m not even going to try and pronounce the word, but it literally means: “To bring forward”
- So Paul is saying, Each one must give what they bringing forward from their heart.
- You can see in these instructions how our giving is supposed to be so intentional. It is to be a careful, thoughtful process from the heart.
- So much so that we’re told how: NOT TO GIVE
- DON’T GIVE IF YOU ARE RELUCTANT
 - If you have a hesitation or a reluctance about giving, especially giving to our church. Don’t give!

- Instead you should take the time to go through some prayerful consideration as to why you have a hesitancy, why you are reluctant
- Are you discerning something from the Holy Spirit, is He leading you to give elsewhere? Or are you afraid, and just don't want to let go of some of your finances? Take the time to allow the Lord to help you search your heart before you give
- DO NOT GIVE UNDER COMPULSION
 - If you feel any sort of pressure or manipulation, don't give!
 - God is the only One that should compel you to give. Not peer pressure from Christians, not guilt trips from Pastors...because your giving is between you and God, because you give your first and your best back to Him!
- And why are we to be so careful and considerate about our giving, because GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER
 - Giving is supposed to be a joyful experience for us
 - That's why He blesses it so much
 - That's why Jesus says it is more blessed to Give than to Receive
 - And whenever we give from the joy of our hearts, God's original design for giving is brought back.
- ***“He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.” -1 Corinthians 9:10-12 (ESV)***
 - It's God's design for giving!
 - He blesses the people

- We stand in awe of His blessings
 - We give the first and best back to Him out of a place of thankfulness for His blessings
 - We celebrate the blessings of God together, “overflowing in many thanksgivings to God”
 - God blesses again
- Now I want to be very clear. The purpose of talking about this is not to try and get more tithers for our church.
- If you have any bit of hesitancy about giving to this specific church, please don't give
 - If you don't want to give, please don't give
 - I don't anyone giving if they feel reluctant or under compulsion
- But I will encourage you, to find somewhere to give. Find some sort of kingdom work that you can sow your first and your best back to God through
- Because if you do not, you will be missing out on some incredible blessings of the Lord,
- Giving, being generous, tithing is the only thing He gives us permission to test Him in, to see how extravagantly He will bless us for it.
 - And if we don't we will be so much more susceptible to greed.
- Because if the three deadly sins that we see today are Deceit, Pride, and Greed....the three Life Giving Attributes to counteract them are Authenticity, Humility, and Generosity!
- That's what we see from the Acts 4 community:
- With Great Power they authentically preached the Gospel
 - With Great Grace they humbly and generously took care of each other.
- And God protected that.
- God has a number of ways of growing His church. He adds to His church, we see in chapters 2 and 4.

- Later in the chapter as we'll see He multiplies His church.
- And here in our passage, He even subtracts from His church to protect it's health so that the deceit, pride, and greed will not lead to the one aspect of God's math that He will never condone in His church which is division.
- Because I am telling you...Church health must always be prioritized over church growth
 - Because I am a firm believer that Healthy things grow
 - And it will grow the way and at the pace that God intends
 - Unhealthy things grow too, they're called weeds, or as Jesus says, Chaff...and they will be sifted.
 - And sometimes there are things, people, programs, or ideas that need to be subtracted from the church to help it to be enabled to grow healthier
- As harsh at that may sound.
- Do you think the Holy Spirit killing Ananias and Sapphira was a good church growth tactic??
 - I didn't read or hear anything about them in any of my church planting books or conferences!
- But it's here in God word for us for a reason:
 - To Encourage us to continue to be the church that God has called us to be
 - To Convict us of where these sins may be creeping up in our lives
 - And to Equip us to live the life of authentic, humble, generous Christians that we are called to be.
- These are hard passages to teach. I didn't want to preach on Ananias and Sapphira, I don't like talking about money.
 - If you don't like hearing about money in a sermon, just imagine how much I don't like preaching about money in a sermon

- I promise that it is more uncomfortable for me to say than for you to hear
 - But you know why I struggle with it? Because of my pride.
 - The deceiver trying to get me to believe that people will not like me as much or question my heart and motives.
 - And my fear in talking about money is really rooted in my own selfishness....but I must fear the Lord more
- You know I've hear it said, that people hate hearing you talk about money because they hate hearing you talk about their god
- I have to be faithful to remind you who your God really is.
- But I'm just talking about it, Peter actually lived this scene out
 - Whenever I read his interactions with Ananias and Sapphira I hear nothing but heartbreak in him.
- He didn't want to see them drop dead.
- And then it verse 11 it says, ***“And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.” -Acts 5:11 (ESV)***
 - And if this is all that we know about the story we would probably be lead to conclude that the church would then fall apart.
 - The people heard and saw things that they didn't want to, and they stopped coming!
- This term Great Fear, meaning Mega Fear is the same exact language that Luke used when great fear came upon the Shepherds who the angels appeared to announce the birth of Jesus
 - This term literally means *“a healthy sense of awe at the supernatural and reverence for God”*
 - So what's really happening here, is everyone is getting a heart check.
- And the result was beyond anyone's expectation:

- We see in verse 14: ***“And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” -Acts 5:14 (ESV)***
- The health of the church was protected. Deceit, Pride, and Greed were nipped in the bud and the Lord multiplied the church in a way that only He could.
- This is what we pray for. A healthy church that we do not manipulate, but that He multiplies in His way.
 - As we submit to the Spirit of the Living God and authentically, humbly, and generously love and serve Him and each other.