

Church is not normal

Walls

Week 2

Walls keep the roof up. Well not actually, the frame does. But what are the construction elements that make our church, a church?

What are the walls?

It has been said that: One of the building bricks of the Christian church is integrity. In this passage we see that wall put up.

Let's look at it.

1. Acts 5:11

And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

Again we need to look at the context of this verse.

That was the passage that was read to us before. That story about Annanias and Saphira

What is it we fear could happen to the church?

What is it we fear could happen in this church?

1. God could see through us!

We fear our inadequacies could be seen

2. Our efforts could not be recognised

The effort we put in to be noticed may not be identified.

3. Our efforts could actually be holding church back.

It may be recognised we are the cause of stagnation in church life.

Are we more scared of church than Jesus?

It has been said that this passage about a simple lie is part of the building of a solid church structure.

Why?

God wants honesty and integrity in His church. He wants us to be transparent.

Yet look at the motives of Annanias and Saphira.

Act 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,

Act 5:2 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.

Act 5:3 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?"

Act 5:4 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."

There is no problem with using money for their own devices. Look at v4.

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It wasn't a hassle them keeping the money, it was a hassle not being honest. Where does that leave us. Well as a church it needs to be part of who we are. Honest with each other, honest with decisions, honest with how we conduct our services and meetings. Basically **Living with integrity.**

And who is this integrity towards? Not only each other but primarily GOD.

Here is an example. I will use the money issue to keep it continuous.

We say we tithe. But the word tithe has stopped meaning 10% and started to mean any gift given to God so we give and we assume that is right. But if we say we tithe that actually means 10%. Are we selling it short? I have to be honest, I don't always give 10%.

We say we are regular at church services when in fact most people only came to church 2.13 times a month in 2019. (We have statistical support on this!) Of course this year our statistics are all over the place.

Are we selling it short?

The NCLS says that a large proportion of people in the congregation are involved in ministry in some form. We struggle to get people involved in ministry and leadership.

Did we sell that short when we filled it in?

See where the rubber hits the road. This is a pretty in your face kind of passage.

Now, the tragedy is, the story goes on.

Act 5:8 And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much."

Act 5:9 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."

Act 5:10 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.

So, here we have a situation where the Husband and wife together tried to pull the wool over the church leadership. The thought processing here is that there was collusion. And that Collusion was to mislead.

Now, why is this passage in the bible?

To scare the hell out of us? Yes, but also to teach.

Husbands and wives working together to hoodwink the leadership.

There is a political agenda here.

As an aside, I have done some training as a Church Consultant over the past few years. And some of the things I have learnt about is that all organisations, including churches have political structures.

Within churches these political structures can be aggravated by a number of things:

1. Agenda
2. Advancement
3. Ambition
4. Alignment

(Note: as a good Baptist preacher I have alliterated these

points!)

Now each of these points are about people's personal desires. We see some of this in the passage. There is a high possibility that Annanias and Saphira had an agenda (probably to look good), they had the desire for advancement (Better standing in the church) They had ambition to be important and the aligned themselves with each other to achieve this.

What about us? Where do we fit into the political structure of church?

Having said that let's see what Peter's reaction to church politics is!

Act 5:9 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."

Peter's is basically saying "Don't politicize." Because it is testing the Holy Spirit.

And notice the consequence!!! You lied, you died!

Pretty radical hey. Peter is saying "This is not how the Church is to be".

Logically, it affected the church's reaction to this type of behavior.

Act 5:11 And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

It scared the something out of them.

Do we have that same respect of the Holy Spirit?

Are we scared to do the wrong thing?

That's something to think about.