



Acts 5: Pay with honesty

Acts 5:2 “With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.”

There are those who hate this chapter in the Bible. God seems harsh. Some think that we can give to God, but it’s our money. On the flip side we have those who say God owns it all. They believe that we should spend our days giving it all away, and constantly give thanks to the Lord. I can see both sides. This is tough water to tread. What is our obligation to God? What can we keep? In the end, it comes down to honesty. This story of Ananias and Sapphira is the perfect example.

I would like to take us back to another small story in the old testament. There is a story of Achan. He hid some spoils of war after God told them to leave it. In the end, the Israelites killed Achan and his whole family for being dishonest. That seemed harsh too. The key word here is dishonest. If God asks for a pledge then you should honor it. If we offer a pledge then we should be obligated. Conversely, if God says he will provide, then don’t hide treasure from him. You won’t need too.

What about the consistency of God? God says eye for an eye. He says honor your vow. In various instances God killed those who tried to hide things from him. Why does God not kill everyone who did this? God did not kill Adam and Eve. He did not kill Cain for hiding his brother in the ground. I have no good answer. Yet, in each case God did react. We never just get by with it. Some are killed and others are cursed. which is worse?

Back to acts 5 where we find Ananias and Sapphira. They pledged a parcel of land to the Lord. Upon selling it, they kept some of the profit for themselves. When they were asked to be honest about it, they lied. God dropped them dead in their tracks for being dishonest. I love it that many others were greatly distressed by what had happened. I think it means that they had done the same thing. I personally believe that giving went up that day.

I have often wondered if God had that type of system today, would giving be different. Would we be more honest if God punished sinners on the spot? I am not so sure. People love to cheat. As to why God does not do this type of punishment? Are we so sure he does not? Do criminals usually get caught? Are most murders solved? Are corrupt church leaders exposed eventually? Just because the police arrest someone does not mean God did not help.

I feel it means honesty is dear to God. People can lie and cheat and get away with it. Yet, making a pledge or vow is somehow bigger to God. A promise is a promise. God made promises too. For thousands of years God has kept a promise to grow Abrahams descendants. The middle East is proof of that. He promised to continue the throne of King David. He did that in the lineage of the Lord Jesus. If God expects himself to be honest. Then he may expect us to be honest too.

Is it really about money? Is it about an angry God? Maybe parents don't get angry until were dishonest? Banks don't ruin your credit until you default on a payment. Maybe all God asks is for a little honesty in your pledge or vow. Think about this closing verse in Proverbs 5:21

For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths.