

Title: **The Back Alley of the Bible: Making Sense of Ananias and Sapphira (Part 2)**
Text: **Acts 4:32-5:16**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at mercyhillchurch.org.



Big Idea

God intends for this incident with Ananias and Sapphira to awaken us to the reality of his holiness, the wretchedness of our sin, and the beauty of the cross. He brings us back to sanity in the fear of the Lord as we remember again that he is God and we are not. He protects the purity of the church and therein sets her up for exponential growth!

Result #1: Immediate Death

Accent #1: The Holiness of God

Oftentimes, it seems to me, we get this disjointed view of God. We think that God's holiness, and the wrath against sin that often comes along with it, is something primarily emphasized in the OT. But, at least superficially, at first glance, don't we start to feel like things really shift in the NT? Like all of a sudden God's demeanor changes in Jesus? But if that's how you've seen it to this point, you must remember: God is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). The God of the OT is the very same God of the NT. He is still just as holy now as he has always been.

Accent #2: The Wretchedness of Sin

It's the nature of sin to blind its host to itself. So, in other words, ironically, often you are at your worst spiritually when you think you are at your best. When sin is in its most potent form, you will be least aware of its presence. You are most in need of grace when you think you have no need of it. It's as if sin comes with a numbing agent. You don't even notice it while it's killing you. So this story of Ananias and Sapphira is meant to shake us awake! Don't downplay your sin. Don't excuse it away. Don't flatter yourself by comparing your faults to another's. That is not how God's judgment works. He doesn't grade on a curve. Any sin is too much sin before a holy God!

Accent #3: The Wonder of the Cross

The Father, Son, and Spirit had conspired in love from all eternity to make a way for our salvation. And the cross accomplishes that salvation, amazingly, without compromising God's holiness nor minimizing our sinfulness. Jesus gets the judgment, so we can get the mercy.

Result #2: Great Fear

"Great grace" (Acts 4:33) and "great fear" (Acts 5:5, 11). The two are not at odds with each other. They are not contradicting realities. They come together. They go hand in hand. You know there is great grace upon a person when there is also great fear of the Lord in their heart.

Result #3: Exponential Growth

On the one hand, if you water down the holiness of God and his judgment in an effort to get people in through the front door of your church, they will eventually walk right out the back door—because of hypocrisy, because sin is allowed to run rampant and there's no fear of God in the place. But, on the other hand, if you preach the full counsel of God and don't hide from the harder truths, though at first the doctrine of God's judgment might keep people from the front door of your church because it sounds mean or unkind, they will eventually end up coming in through the back door—because they see the holiness of God's people, that they're truly changed and loving, and they sense the power and the wonder and the goodness of God among us!



Reflection Questions

- When you read that both Ananias and Sapphira drop dead for their sin, what do you think God is intending to teach you?
- Which are you more prone to emphasize: "great grace" or "great fear"? Why do you think? What happens when you get lopsided in one direction or the other? What can you do to help cultivate and keep both in your Christian life?
- Have you ever downplayed God's judgement or wrath in an attempt to attract others to Jesus? Why might this strategy be problematic? Why do you think these people in Acts 5 were actually attracted to the church after hearing about Ananias and Sapphira?

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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

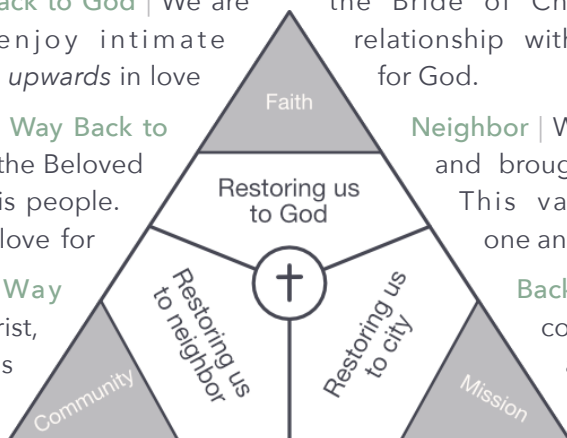
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Mercy Hill Men's Christmas Gathering!

Men of Mercy Hill Church! We will be having our third-annual White Elephant Christmas gift exchange . . . with a twist! Each man will bring an old tool from your home (wrapped—not with pretty paper and bows, of course, but with things like garbage bags and duct tape) to exchange with the other men in the group. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. Bocce ball will be played. Tools will be traded. And a very manly Christmas will be had by all!

- Date: Saturday, December 16th
- Time: 1:00-3:30pm
- Place: The Walton's backyard

Please scan the QR code below to find a link to sign up!

For more information, please contact Paul Walton
at pwwalton@comcast.net.

Holiday Gift Baskets for Allen School Families!

Christmas Eve @ Mercy Hill!

Covenant Membership Class - 12/10/23

End-of-Year Giving

Perspectives on the World Christian Movement

Curious about Baptism?

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our Communications Hub!

Or find it online at mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub.