

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth**  
**Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026**  
**Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**A Holy God and an Honest Faith**  
**Proper 10**  
**Acts 4:32-5:11**

**Welcome**

**Announcements**

**Call to Worship**

Come, let us worship the Lord, who is holy and gracious.  
**We come with reverence, joy, and thanksgiving.**

He is our Maker, Redeemer, and King.  
**His mercy is great, and His faithfulness endures forever.**

Let us lift our hearts to Him.  
**Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.**

**Prayer of Adoration and Invocation**

Holy and gracious God,  
we adore You as the One who is perfect in holiness and abounding in steadfast love.  
You have called us out of darkness into Your marvelous light  
and united us as one body in Christ.  
We praise You for Your transforming grace that changes hearts  
and draws us together in love.

Come now, O Lord, by the power of Your Holy Spirit.  
Open our eyes to behold Your glory,  
soften our hearts to receive Your Word,  
and fill this place with Your presence.  
May all we do bring honor to Your name.  
In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

**Call to Confession**

Beloved in Christ, our God is holy and calls us to walk in truth and purity. Let us humbly confess  
our sins before Him, trusting in His mercy to cleanse and restore us.

**Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed.

We have allowed pride and selfish ambition to take root in our hearts.  
 We have sought the approval of others more than Your glory.  
 We have hidden our failures while appearing righteous on the outside.

Forgive us for the ways we have compromised our devotion and divided what You have joined together.

Cleanse us from all unrighteousness and renew a right spirit within us,  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear this good news:

all who come to Christ in repentance and faith are received by mercy, cleansed by His blood, and clothed in His righteousness.

In Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name  
 Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven  
 Give us this day our daily bread  
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one  
 For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
 Forever and ever, Amen.**

### **Hymn #350: "To God Be the Glory"**

To God be the glory, great things He hath done,  
 so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,  
 who yielded His life an atonement for sin,  
 and opened the lifegate that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
 let the earth hear His voice!

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,  
 let the people rejoice!

Oh come to the Father through Jesus the Son,  
 and give Him the glory, great things He hath done.

Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
 to every believer the promise of God;

the vilest offender who truly believes,  
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. [Refrain]

Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done,  
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
but purer, and higher, and greater will be  
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see. [Refrain]

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Psalm 51:1-6**

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup> **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin!**

<sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup> **Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you may be justified in your words  
and blameless in your judgment.**

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

<sup>6</sup> **Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,  
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.**

### **Anthem (Music Ministry)**

#### **Prayer for Illumination**

#### **Scripture**

##### **Acts 4:32-5:11**

<sup>32</sup> **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.**

<sup>33</sup> **And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.** <sup>34</sup> **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** <sup>35</sup> **and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.**

<sup>36</sup> **Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,** <sup>37</sup> **sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.**

### **Ananias and Sapphira**

**5 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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? <sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. <sup>6</sup> The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.**

**<sup>7</sup> After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.**

**<sup>8</sup> And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.**

### **Sermon**

Today, we come to one of the most standout passages in the book of Acts.

It starts with a window into one of the most beautiful pictures of the early church that we find anywhere in the New Testament. A picture of believers who have been so transformed by the grace of God that they love one another deeply, serve one another sacrificially, and are united in Christ in a way that the world simply cannot understand or explain.

Then almost without warning, that beautiful scene gives way to one of the most sobering and startling accounts in all of Scripture. We move from the encouragement of Barnabas for his extraordinary generosity which brings a joyful unity among the believers to the deception of Ananias and Sapphira and their divine judgment and sudden death.

At first glance these two scenes may seem completely unrelated, but Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intentionally places them side by side. We are meant to see something that every generation of Christians must remember.

The greatest danger to the church does not always come from outside. Very often it comes from within.

Many Christians assume that the greatest threats to the faith are hostile governments, an increasingly secular culture, false religions, or open persecution. Those dangers are very real, and the early church knew them well. We have just studied how they were arrested and hauled before the Sanhedrin; threatened, commanded to stop preaching Christ, and warned of the

consequences if they continued. Satan was clearly attacking through opposition and intimidation.

Yet immediately after recording those events, the scripture does not tell us about another arrest or another wave of persecution. Instead, it records something much more subtle. The enemy changes his tactics. Unable to silence the church from the outside, he attempts to corrupt it from the inside.

That should not surprise us. Satan has always worked this way. If he cannot destroy the church through persecution, he will try to weaken it through compromise. If he cannot silence the preaching of the Gospel, he will try to corrupt the people who proclaim it.

Throughout Scripture we see this same pattern repeated again and again. God's people often face their greatest dangers, not when the enemy stands outside the gates, but when sin quietly finds its way inside.

That is why this passage deserves our careful attention. It is a story about two people who told a lie. It is a passage that forces us to search our own hearts.

It reminds us that Christ is not focused on building a large church; He is building a holy church. He is not only concerned with outward growth but instead inward purity. Numbers matter yes, but holiness matters even more.

As we work through these verses this morning, the Lord is calling on each of us to examine ourselves.

It is easy to ask ourselves, 'Am I part of the church?'  
It is far more difficult to ask, 'What kind of Christian am I becoming?'

Am I becoming more like Christ? Is my faith genuine? Am I living before God with an honest heart, or am I more concerned with my personal comfort and what people think of me than what God? Do I refuse to give up sin, or even acknowledge it because I value myself more than Jesus Christ?

Acts 4:32 begins with these wonderful words:

**Acts 4:32**

**<sup>32</sup> 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.**

Those few words tell us something extraordinary. The church had already grown into thousands. This was no longer a small gathering of disciples where unity was easy to maintain. It was a large and incredibly diverse congregation.

Some had grown up in Judea, while others had travelled hundreds of miles from throughout the Roman Empire to celebrate Pentecost. Some were fishermen, some were craftsmen, some were wealthy landowners, while others possessed very little. There were educated people and uneducated people. There were priests who had come to faith in Christ and ordinary laborers who had done the same.

Humanly speaking, they had very little in common.

Yet the book of Acts tells us they were one.

That kind of unity cannot be manufactured. It cannot be created by leadership, programs, or opinions. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures says they were of one heart and one soul. The Greek expression used literally translates as 'one soul' (*mia psychē*). This means that hearts beat together because they shared the same life in Christ. Their unity was spiritual. They had one Lord, one Gospel, one Spirit, one hope, and one mission.

That is exactly what Jesus prayed for on the night before His crucifixion. In John 17 He prayed that His people would be one, just as He and the Father are one, so that the world would know that the Father had sent Him. Christian unity has always been one of the church's greatest witnesses. When people from completely different backgrounds genuinely love one another because of Christ, the world sees something it cannot explain.

And that is still true today.

Our culture is increasingly divided. In fact, this is Satan's favorite form of attack it seems. He has found a way to have people separate themselves over politics, economics, race, age, education, personalities, and countless other differences.

Traditional news and social media encourage us to argue with one another and hate one another. Communities fracture over the smallest of disagreements. Yet the church of Jesus Christ gathers people who would probably never have met anywhere else and makes them brothers and sisters in one family.

That is one of the miracles of the Gospel.

True Christian unity does not mean that we all think exactly alike on every secondary or minor issue. It does not mean that every Christian has the same personality, background, or preferences.

Biblical unity is not uniformity. Rather, it is a clear shared devotion to Jesus Christ that is greater than all the things that might naturally divide us.

When Christ becomes our greatest treasure, many of our lesser differences begin to lose their power.

And that grace did not remain merely sentimental in the early church. It became visible in the way they held their possessions.

These verses have often been misunderstood. Some have claimed that the early church practiced a form of communism or government-controlled redistribution of wealth. That is not what Acts is describing at all.

In fact, Peter himself settles that question clearly when he confronts Ananias, he plainly says, 'While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?' The property belonged to Ananias and to him alone. The money belonged to Ananias. No one forced him to sell it, and no one dictated what percentage he had to give to the church.

What we are seeing here in the final verses of chapter 4 is not government coercion. It is Gospel transformation.

The beautiful Greek word that describes this fellowship is *koinōnia*. It speaks of a deep sharing of life together, a generosity that flowed from willing hearts that had first been changed by the grace of God.

That is an important principle for us to remember. Christianity never begins by demanding generosity. It begins by transforming the heart. Then after the heart is changed, generosity follows naturally.

When we truly give ourselves to God there is a freeing realization, none of us truly owns anything.

Psalm 24 reminds us,

**Psalm 24:1**

**The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein,**

Everything we possess ultimately belongs to Him. Our homes, our bank accounts, our abilities, our time, our health, and every blessing we enjoy has been entrusted to us by God. We are not owners, we are stewards.

Once we begin to see our possessions that way, it becomes much easier to hold them with open hands.

We also need to remember the unique situation facing the early church in Jerusalem.

Thousands of pilgrims had travelled to Jerusalem for Pentecost. After hearing Peter preach, many remained in the city to continue learning from the apostles. They were far from home, away from employment, separated from family support, and suddenly found themselves part of a rapidly growing Christian community.

So, needs naturally arose.

This is why believers sold property as those needs appeared. Acts does not say everyone sold everything at once. Rather, people sold lands or houses from time to time as circumstances required, with the result that 'there was not a needy person among them.'

What a wonderful testimony to the transforming power of the Gospel.

However, this remarkable generosity was not the center of the church's life. It was the fruit, not the root.

The very center of the church's life was the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke tells us in verse 33

**Acts 4:33**

**<sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.**

That is the heartbeat of Acts, this is the heartbeat of every true Christian and every church that belongs to God.

The apostles were not primarily social reformers. They were not motivational speakers. They were not political activists. Above everything else, they were witnesses to the resurrected Christ.

Everything else! Everything flowed from that message. Jesus was always first and foremost!

The resurrection changed everything. Because Christ lives, sinners can be forgiven. Because Christ reigns, His church cannot be defeated. Because Christ has conquered death, believers have an eternal hope that no earthly hardship can destroy.

You cannot be a Christian without placing Christ and obedience to Him first in your life.

Augustine once stated that if you remove the resurrection, Christianity itself collapses. He was right. Every blessing we enjoy rests upon the fact that Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead.

Then we read these wonderful words: 'And great grace was upon them all.'

The word translated 'great' is the Greek word *mega*. The Scripture literally says that 'mega grace' rested upon the church. It was the great grace of God that produced great boldness, great generosity, great unity, and great joy.

Grace was visible everywhere.

It could be seen in their preaching, in their fellowship, in the way they cared for one another and in their willingness to sacrifice for the good of the church.

And to make that grace concrete, the Scripture gives us one living example.

His name was Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus. But the apostles rarely called him Joseph. They gave him a nickname Barnabas, which means 'Son of Encouragement.' A nickname that suited him perfectly.

If you know your Old Testament, you might be curious how a Levite could own land, since the Levites were not given a tribal inheritance in Israel. By the first century, however, many Levites living throughout the Jewish dispersion owned property outside Jerusalem. Cyprus had become an important center of Jewish life, and Barnabas likely possessed some land there.

Barnabas quietly sold a field and brought all the proceeds to the apostles. Luke records no speech, no announcement, no recognition, and no attempt to draw attention to himself. He simply laid the money at the apostles' feet because he loved Christ and wanted to serve His people.

That simple act tells us much about the man.

As we continue through the book of Acts, Barnabas consistently lives up to his name. When everyone else fears Saul of Tarsus, Barnabas welcomes him. When John Mark fails and others were ready to give up on him, Barnabas believes that God's grace could restore him. He became an encourager because he himself had first been transformed by the grace of God.

And for a moment, we are left with a beautiful picture of the church.

Everything is beautiful.  
Everything is healthy.  
Everything seems to be flourishing.

Then chapter 5 begins with one small word that changes everything:  
**'But...'**

That single word reminds us that wherever God is powerfully at work, Satan will seek to oppose Him.

This time, however, the attack will not come from the Sanhedrin. It will come from within.

**Acts 5:1-2**

**5 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup>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**

The contrast could hardly be stronger.

Barnabas has just shown us generosity without performance. Now Ananias and Sapphira show us religion with a mask. Both gifts looked similar from the outside, but before God they could not have been more different.

That is exactly what happens here.

Even their names are filled with irony. The name Ananias means 'The Lord is gracious,' while Sapphira comes from a word meaning 'beautiful.' Yet there is nothing gracious or beautiful about what follows. Instead of reflecting God's grace, they attempt to deceive God's people.

Like Barnabas, they sold a piece of property. On the surface, everything appears identical.

They bring money to the apostles just as Barnabas had done. If someone had been watching from a distance, they would have seen nothing unusual. It looked like another generous gift offered for the care of the church.

But God always sees what man cannot.

The Scripture tells us that Ananias, 'with his wife's knowledge, kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.'

I want to be very clear here, their sin was not that they kept part of the money.

Peter himself makes that abundantly clear.

Later he asks Ananias,

**Acts 5:4**

**<sup>4</sup>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."**

In other words, no one had forced him to sell the property. No one had demanded that he give every dollar to the church. He was completely free to keep it all if he wished. He could have given ten percent, fifty percent, or any other amount, provided he was honest about it.

The issue was never the size of the gift.

The issue was the deception behind the gift!!

Ananias wanted the reputation of complete sacrifice without actually making the sacrifice.

He wanted people to admire him in the same way they admired Barnabas. He wanted others to think, 'Here is another man completely devoted to Christ.' He desired the honor that belonged to genuine generosity while secretly keeping back part of the proceeds for himself.

That is what made his sin so serious.

Luke uses a very interesting Greek word when he says Ananias 'kept back' part of the money. The word is *nosphizomai*, and it means to misappropriate or secretly hold back something that has been devoted to another purpose.

It is not a common word in the New Testament, but it appears in one very significant place in the Greek Old Testament.

It is the same word used to describe the sin of Achan in Joshua 7.

After Israel had conquered Jericho, God had commanded that everything devoted to destruction belonged to Him. Yet Achan secretly kept part of what God had forbidden. His hidden sin brought defeat upon the whole nation.

The Holy Spirit intentionally wants us to think about that event.

Just as Achan endangered Israel at the beginning of their life in the Promised Land, Ananias endangered the church at the beginning of its worldwide mission.

In both cases, hidden sin threatened the people of God.

And that brings the warning closer to us.

Sin rarely begins with dramatic acts of rebellion. It usually begins quietly.

Before Ananias ever told a lie, pride had already taken root in his heart. He saw Barnabas being respected. He saw the appreciation others expressed. He noticed the honor that followed genuine generosity.

Instead of rejoicing in God's grace at work in another believer, he wanted that recognition for himself.

How often does that happen in our own hearts?

Someone else is praised for faithful service, and instead of thanking God, we quietly wish the attention had come to us.

Someone is recognized for generosity, humility, or spiritual maturity, and we begin comparing ourselves.

Comparison easily becomes jealousy, and jealousy easily gives birth to pride.

Sin almost always grows beneath the surface long before it appears in public.

John Calvin observed that Ananias' deception contained many sins wrapped together. It was not merely one careless lie. Calvin pointed to pride, ambition, unbelief, contempt for God, hypocrisy, and the corruption of something holy. One outward act exposed a heart that had already drifted far from the Lord.

That is why we must never treat sin lightly.

What appears to be a small compromise in our lives to accommodate our own personal sin often reveals a much deeper spiritual problem.

The Puritan John Owen famously wrote, 'Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.'

Those words still ring true today.

Very few Christians wake up one morning intending to not walk with God.

Instead, compromise usually begins with small decisions.

A little pride. A little dishonesty. A little envy. A little desire to impress others. A desire to remain comfortable rather than confronting a sin in our lives.

If left unconfessed, those small compromises slowly harden the heart.

That is why this passage speaks so directly to us.

Most of us are unlikely to sell property and lie about the selling price.

Instead it may appear in one of many forms.

It is possible to know all the right theological answers while neglecting private prayer.

It is possible to sing loudly on Sunday while participating in our own personal sin throughout the week.

It is possible to appear joyful while refusing to forgive someone who has wronged us.

It is possible to carefully maintain the appearance of spiritual health while privately drifting further and further from Christ.

We can easily become more concerned with protecting our reputation, careers and comfort than pursuing genuine holiness.

And social media has only made that temptation stronger.

Our culture encourages us to carefully manage our public image. We choose what people see and hide what we do not want them to know. That temptation can quietly find its way into the church. We begin presenting a version of ourselves that looks spiritually mature while hiding the struggles that only God sees.

Brothers and sisters, God is never fooled by outward appearances. He sees the truth behind every smile, every outward act of service. He sees every motive, every hidden thought, and every secret desire.

Jesus Himself warned us about this very danger.

In Matthew 6:

**Matthew 6:1**

**6 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.**

The Pharisees prayed publicly, gave publicly, and fasted publicly—not because they loved God, but because they loved the praise of men.

That danger has never disappeared.

We may not wear the robes of the Pharisees, but we can still long for the same applause.

The Gospel calls us to something entirely different. God is not impressed by carefully maintained appearances. He delights in humble hearts that come honestly before Him.

The remarkable thing about grace is that God already knows everything about us. He knows every weakness, every failure, every mixed motive, and every hidden struggle. Yet He still invites us to come to Him through Christ.

There is great freedom in that truth. We do not have to pretend before God. We do not have to perform. We do not have to manufacture a reputation for holiness.

Instead, we are called to walk honestly before the Lord, confessing our sins, depending upon His grace, and allowing His Spirit to continue transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

And that is what Ananias failed to see. He cared more about looking spiritual than actually becoming spiritual. And that is a danger every one of us must guard against.

But Luke will not let us stop with the hypocrisy of Ananias. He now shows us the holiness of God.

**Acts 5:3**

**<sup>3</sup>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?”**

Peter’s words show why this moment is so serious. He does not treat Ananias’ sin as a private mistake or a mere failure in bookkeeping

That is one of the clearest testimonies in Acts to the deity of the Holy Spirit. To lie to the Spirit is to lie to God. The church is not merely a voluntary association of religious people; it is the temple of the living God, indwelt by the Spirit of Christ.

This means that hidden sin in the church is never hidden from the Lord of the church.

When Ananias falls dead, and later Sapphira also falls under judgment, the scene is meant to make us tremble. This is not because God is harsh or unjust. It is because He is holy. At the beginning of the church’s mission, the Lord makes plain that His people cannot preserve Gospel witness by tolerating fake faith or hidden hypocrisy

Yet even this severe judgment serves the mercy of God toward His church.

**Acts 5:5**

**<sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.**

That fear was not the terror of slaves running from a cruel master; it was the reverent fear of children learning again that their Father is holy, truthful, and not to be mocked.

This is why church discipline, rightly performed, is not contrary to grace. It is one of the ways Christ guards His people. He exposes sin not to destroy repentant sinners, but to call His people out of darkness and into the light. He protects the purity of His church because He loves the church for which He shed His blood.

Acts 5 does not move us away from the Gospel, instead it drives us toward the Gospel. It teaches us to stop hiding, stop pretending, and come honestly to the Saviour whose blood cleanses all who repent and believe.

And it leaves us with a difficult question: Are we living honestly before the Lord?

It presses past outward appearances and asks what is really happening in our hearts. God is not impressed by religious performance. He desires truth in the inward being.

Perhaps you are sitting there wondering, ‘Where is the good news in a passage like this?’

That is a fair question. The Scripture has shown us the seriousness of sin, the holiness of God, and the certainty of judgment.

But the good news is not absent. It shines all the more brightly against that dark background.

Acts 5 reminds us of something that we are often forget.

Ananias and Sapphira are not wicked people who deserve a punishment reserved only for the worst of sinners. They are a mirror held up before every one of us. Their sin may have taken a particular form, but the roots of that sin are found in every human heart.

Who among us has never cared too much about what others think? Who among us has never tried to appear better than we really are? Who has never struggled with pride, selfish ambition, or mixed motives? Who has never hidden a sin, excused a compromise, or sought the approval of people more than the approval of God?

If we are honest, we all see something of ourselves in Ananias and Sapphira.

And this is why this passage should humbles us.

It reminds us that the line separating righteousness from unrighteousness is not a comparison between us and other people. It is in every human heart.

The prophet Jeremiah said,

**Jeremiah 17:9**

**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?**

We are experts at convincing ourselves that our motives are purer than they really are. We often minimize our own sins while noticing the failures of others. We are far better at defending ourselves than examining ourselves.

That is why we need the Word of God.

Hebrews tells us that the Word of God is

**Hebrews 4:12-13**

**<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. <sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

It pierces beneath the surface. It exposes what we would rather leave hidden. It reveals the thoughts and intentions of the heart. That is exactly what this passage has been doing.

But thanks be to God, it does not leave us there. The Gospel always tells us the truth about ourselves, but it never leaves us without hope.

When we stand before Acts 5, we are reminded that God's holiness is absolute. Sin is never a small thing in His sight. Every lie, every proud thought, every selfish ambition, every act of hypocrisy, every hidden sin deserves His righteous judgment.

I know that may be uncomfortable to hear.

But unless we first understand the seriousness of our sin, we will never truly appreciate the greatness of God's grace.

The amazing truth of the Gospel is that the judgment that rightly belonged to each of us does not ultimately fall upon us if we belong to Christ.

At the cross, the perfectly truthful One died for our lies.

The perfectly humble One died for our pride.

The perfectly generous One gave Himself for our selfishness.

The perfectly holy Son of God bore the judgment that our sins deserved so that everyone who trusts and obeys Him might receive a forgiveness they could never earn.

Think about the contrast.

Ananias fell down under the judgment of God because of his own sin.

Jesus willingly laid down His life under the judgment of God because of our sin.

That is the heart of the Gospel.

Paul writes in

**2 Corinthians 5:21**

**<sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

There is our hope.

Not in our sincerity.

Not in our generosity.

Not in our consistency.

Not in our ability to maintain a respectable image.

Our hope rests entirely upon Jesus Christ alone.

That means the answer to hypocrisy is not trying harder to look like better Christians, not polishing our reputation, not becoming better at hiding our failures. The answer is bringing our failures honestly to Christ.

One of the most comforting truths in all of Scripture is that Jesus already knows everything about us.

He knows every sinful thought, hidden motive, private struggle, temptation. He knows every failure that no one else knows.

And yet He still says,

**Matthew 11:28-29**

**<sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."**

What an invitation that is.

Jesus never once has turned away a broken sinner who came to Him in repentance. He welcomed tax collectors, showed mercy to sinners burdened with guilt and shame, restored Peter after his denial, called Saul the persecutor to become Paul the apostle.

His grace is greater than our sin.  
His mercy is deeper than our failures.  
His blood is sufficient to cleanse every repentant heart.

The only people who left His presence unchanged were those who insisted on pretending they needed no grace.

That is why this passage calls us to be honest before God.  
The Lord is not asking us to impress Him.  
He is asking us to trust in Him. To humble ourselves and confess, repent and depend daily upon the grace of Christ.

The truth is this  
Despite all our weaknesses, all our failures, all our remaining sin...  
Christ is still building His church and the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

His Gospel will continue to save sinners.  
His Spirit will continue to sanctify His people.  
His grace will continue to sustain His church until the day He returns in glory.

So let us leave here today with humble hearts and honest faith.

Let us be quick to confess our sins, quick to forgive one another, generous because we have first received God's generosity, and united because we have been united to Christ.

And when we stumble, which we all will do, let us not run to excuses or to self-defense.

Instead, let us run to the cross.

For there we find the mercy that Ananias rejected, the grace that Barnabas understood, and the Saviour who is still receiving all who come to Him by faith.

And may we all be known as a people who love Christ, who walk humbly before our God, who love one another sincerely, who pursue holiness without hypocrisy, and who live every day in the joy and freedom of His amazing grace.

For the church is not built upon perfect people.

It is built upon a perfect Saviour.

Now, go forth as the Salt and Light of His Word and live a life that shows the world that you belong to Him alone.

Let us pray,

Grant, Almighty God, that Your Word may not fall upon hard hearts, but may take root within us. Teach us to yield ourselves wholly to You, to seek Your glory above our own, and to walk in faithful obedience by the power of Your Spirit.

Keep us near to Christ, our only hope and righteousness, until we are brought safely into the fullness of Your kingdom.

Amen.

*Adapted from John Calvin*

### **Invitation to Offering**

### **Offering Prayer**

### **Closing Hymn #64: "Be Still and Know that I Am God"**

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that healeth thee.

I am the Lord that healeth thee.

I am the Lord that healeth thee.

In thee, O Lord, I put mu tryst.  
 In thee, O Lord, I put mu tryst.  
 In thee, O Lord, I put mu tryst.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Gracious Father,  
 we thank You for the privilege of gathering together as Your people.  
 We praise You for Your unfailing love, Your faithful care, and the countless mercies You show us each day.  
 Strengthen us now to live as faithful disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
 Give us wisdom in our decisions,  
 courage in our witness,  
 patience in our trials,  
 and compassion toward those around us.  
 Comfort those who are suffering,  
 encourage those who are discouraged,  
 provide for those who are in need,  
 and draw those who are wandering back to Yourself.

Bless the ministries of this congregation,  
 our families,  
 our community,  
 and all who faithfully proclaim Your gospel throughout the world.

As we now enjoy fellowship together,  
 may our conversations be filled with kindness, encouragement, and love.  
 Deepen the unity we share in Christ,  
 strengthen the bonds of Christian friendship among us,  
 and may all we say and do continue to honor Your holy name.

We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **Benediction**

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling  
 and to present you blameless  
 before the presence of His glory with great joy,  
 to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
 be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority,  
 before all time and now and forevermore.  
**Amen.**