

## **Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira & Exodus 20:16 – Do not lie or deceive / Do not bear false witness**

### **Read Acts 5:1-11 & Exodus 20: 1-21**

We are all inclined towards prison. That sounds a critical, perhaps judgmental, perhaps a negative place to start. We don't like to realise things about ourselves that are true, let alone be reminded of those things by others. I know I don't at least!

In 1999 Jonathan Aikin, a government minister, lied about his business dealings and friendships and ended up serving 7 months in prison. Through this experience he became a Christian and discovered that freedom is actually discovered within the vast boundaries of the Kingdom of God and under the rule and commandments of King Jesus. The Lord of Truth(fullness).

Most of us won't ever end up in an actual prison but all the time we construct prisons for ourselves in our minds and in the things we surround ourselves with. They are places and things that we believe to be secure. They are places and things that we construct and believe ourselves to be in control of. Often in our prison we are both prisoner and prison guard. One of the prisons that we create is that of deceit or lying. There are so many reasons we do it, sometimes we do it without even realising.

Think right back to the garden of Eden. As God looked for Adam & Eve in the garden they hid – they created a prison for themselves to try to hide from God.

There are many forms of lying or deceit in the Bible which we'll come on to think about but let's grasp this reality to begin with - when we lie and deceive we construct for ourselves a prison, or at least place another brick in the prison wall. I say this stuff to my kids and myself and yet I still mess up – the as yet un-redeemed parts of me always struggles to get back to the prison.

When we lie and deceive we turn our back on freedom and begin to trudge back to Egypt in the false belief that we'll be better off there under slavery and oppression.

The story of Ananias & Sapphira show us how even liberated, redeemed, saved people who have been freed by Jesus Christ from the powers of sin, the world, and self – actually can still end up trudging back to the slavery of sin – to Egypt if you like – and sometimes this can end in really grave consequences.

This story is just part of a lot of other stories within the Bible and lying/deceit.

There's a whole bunch of different lying in the Bible!

- There's Peter's perjury – lying after making an oath (Matt 26)
- There's concealment – Abraham saying Sarah was his sister rather than his wife.
- There's false accusations – Jesus being accused of being a drunk and glutton
- There's conspiracy - Rebekah and Jacob conspire against Esau
- There's False witness – Satan and the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden
- There's hypocrisy – Peter refusing to eat with gentiles (Gal 2:11)
- There's false teaching – teaching a different gospel (Gal 1:6-8, Col 1:4)
- King David, a man the Bible credits with being 'A man after God's own heart' lied and was deceitful – to the point of causing the death of the husband of Bathsheba.

So a whole bunch of examples of people building prisons for themselves while they could have been experiencing the vast freedom with the boundaries of God's commandments and rule.

Ananias and Sapphira weaved for themselves a tangled web of deceit. A web so tangled in fact that they ended up dying within it.

Which kind of begs the question both within the Bible as well as to us ourselves how do we stay living within the boundaries of the Kingdom of Jesus rather than heading back to prison or Egypt? How do we stop from lying and deceiving?

In the OT they had a command – if you want to live well while I lead you to the promised land, amongst other things, don't lie to each other.

In the NT these commands, this command, continues – don't lie ... but we also have the person of Jesus to embody and live out the command. Jesus declares himself to be The truth! and if you look to Jesus you'll see the wholeness and fruitfulness of a life lived without lying – lived within the truth.

As Christian's we're called to pattern our lives after Jesus (Phil 3:17). Who is the truth!

Towards the climax of Jesus' interrogation Pilate, a non believer, asks the question 'What is the truth?' It's a question asked all the time today because 'truth' is a contested concept/idea. This is my truth, what's yours.

The Bible is really clear though – if we want to know the truth – explore the person of Jesus and pattern your life after him. Truth in the Bible is not a contested concept/idea. It's a person of grace and truth who we can come to know intimately and who dwells richly amongst his people by the Holy Spirit.

In the person of Jesus ... we see that Truth willingly ...

- Gives up status and privilege to take the lowliest positions
- Humble itself before others
- Is gentle with others
- Extends patient forbearance towards others
- Bears with one another in love
- Seeks a bond of unity and peace

As we come to know the person of Jesus and give ourselves to patterning our lives after him we become the answer to Jesus' prayer to God himself ... Jn 17:17 'Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth'.

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