

Deception Uncovered in the Early Church

by Joshua Daniel

The sermon emphasizes the importance of following Jesus' pattern, prioritizing prayer, and living a life of authenticity and genuine faith.

Duration: 49:49

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, Matthew 6:1-4, Acts 5:1-11, Colossians 3:23-24, James 1:22

Topics: "Genuine Faith", "Hypocrisy Exposed"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine faith and authenticity in Christian living, contrasting it with mere outward appearances and hypocrisy. It delves into the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, highlighting the consequences of lying to the Holy Spirit and the need for a humble, sincere heart before God. The speaker challenges listeners to examine their motives, prioritize prayer, and live out their faith in a way that truly glorifies God, emphasizing the significance of being poor in spirit and the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Transcript

You know, if you will please turn with me to the book of Acts, and before we go to the fifth chapter, you know, folks, people have structured their self-invented churches in such a way that, you know, as to accommodate everything to their convenience. Now, as far as I am concerned, I am a follower of Jesus, and I want his pattern. See thou that thou does do all things according to the pattern which was given to you in the mountain, Moses was told.

So, if we try to design in some suitable, comfortable place, you know, as a matter of fact, one pastor told me a lady came in with her family and found that someone had left his coat across the pew which she normally occupied, and she got so annoyed that she turned around and walked out with her family. Did she go to worship the Lord, or did she go to warm her old pew? You see, folks, people have become so proud, you know. One pastor said to me, hey, brother, if anything goes wrong with the sink or toilet, they ring me up.

See, you're paid to do the job, you know, and they expect me at all odd hours. All right, as a humble man, he was doing that, and you know, sometimes they're told, hey, we pay you for this anyway. What arrogance.

So, we preach because we are paid, right? Nobody has been ever been able to tell me that because I never asked anybody for a penny. Now, in the fourth chapter, we saw the sequel to the prayer which they prayed. It will not hurt us to read that again.

Fourth chapter and the 29th verse. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word by stretching forth your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of your holy child, Jesus. So, the prayer of the early church was all for exalting Jesus, notwithstanding all the threatening which they received.

They were not nonplussed or incapacitated by that. They had recourse to prayer. Now, for instance, if you go into a Hindu house or a Chinese house, you see a little shrine, and Hindus will set aside a room in their houses for their prayers and for their worship of their idols.

Now, of course, we don't think of any such thing, you know, and people do not even know what is happening in the bedrooms of their children. Isn't that shocking? No. So, priority is never given to prayer.

But in the early church, it was prayer. And we have a system today by which we think we are so busy, you know, it's very flattering in a sense to be much in demand in your office. But do you know that the test of a real manager is this? How well does that place run in the absence of the manager? You see, I have never been stuck to any place.

My business is to commit the same to faithful men who shall teach others also. Now, I find it's very difficult to get such people on this continent. How so? Pride, an individualistic attitude.

You see, folks, it's not an attitude of saying, not I but Christ, not my comfort zone, but Christ's glory. Now, listen, you and I can't design Christianity. It's here.

It's clear as daylight in black and white, and neither we submit and humble ourselves. You know, have I studied the word of God to humble myself and to see in how many things I am remiss and wanting? You know, my dear friends, Bible study is so skimpy. You know, as a sports person, most of my Saturdays were spent out in the games field, and cricket is a game which demands a lot of outlay of hours and hours and hours and days.

I was willing to do that, but Saturday nights became a time of prayer, and just the two or three of us would gather, young students, all four, and of course, slowly it got bigger, and hours would chime away when we prayed purposefully. It was not a gamble. Call on me, and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which thou knowest not.

You see, folks, today, you know, prayer meeting means first we don't think about joining the prayer, the conference prayer that many of you have. You don't see the very great need for it. I have always said how much I have been strengthened by the prayers of my brethren.

You know, many of them were young fellows whom I had brought to the Lord, but some of them exceeded me in zeal and faithfulness. I could learn from them. You see, it is all that learning heart, my dear people, that humble broken spirit.

When you don't have it, you can't hammer it into your head, you know. You become so comfortable because you have a big pay packet, or you have bought this and bought that. What rubbish.

You know, folks, there are the essential things, and there are the non-essential things. One of the essential things when you go and acquire a house is it electrified. Is the meter working? You're not happy in any house which is not electrified.

Now, your soul needs to be electrified. Now, the early church knew the place of prayer, and my father and mother knew the place of prayer, and how to keep it free from clutter. Absolutely useless clutter.

You know, if you want to have company, you have Friday night. It's not Saturday night. Saturday night, you're closing the week and beginning another.

How well you spend the Lord's Day will be reflected in the course of the productivity in the following week. You see, so many people are tired on the Lord's Day. They are--they have spent themselves, or--I used to find that being a student who would just mug things up for the examination time, I used to sit late into the night and study, but on Saturday night, my whole system used to come to a halt because God has made us for six days, and then the Lord rested on the seventh day.

The Lord rested, but we have made Sunday Sundays the days of entertainment, of eating and playing and whatnot. We have destroyed the foundations to a prayer life. So, superficial praying is going to produce superficial living.

You cannot escape from superficial living, and life passes so quickly to think that I started preaching almost 70 years ago. My, I fault myself. I say, Lord, by now, so much more should have been done.

Some of you, let me tell you, are living as though you have 20 lives to live. Don't you blame me that I didn't warn you. Life passes very quickly.

Nobody cares how much fruit you bring forth in your life. Your employer doesn't care. He only wants to see your productivity in the office, but the family is suffering.

The whole country is suffering. Where do you get strength to overcome temptation? In prayer, and these people had so many temptations. Now, 33rd verse says, and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

You see, the sequel to their prayer meeting was that they all had one heart. You know, geographically, we have spread across the continents, and wherever the word of God has gone, and is currently going over the telecast from Australia to South America, you know, there is an impact. The word of God is impacting people.

Strangers, total strangers are being touched, and orthodox idolaters are casting aside their idols. You see, but behind it all is prayer. Now, the apostles gave witness with great power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

You see, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus threw these dark forces into disarray. It was such a victory. Now, in the early church, 34th verse, neither was there among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold it, and brought the prizes of the things that were sold.

Now, did anybody force them to do this? They said, look, I have got far too much, much more than I need. I certainly can't see my brother in need. You know, sometimes I've had to go to the rescue of people who are so deeply in debt that the money lenders were upon them like hawks.

You don't ask me their names, those whom I rescued in that fashion. I can't remember their addresses, their names, or anything. I had to do it for my own comfort.

How can I see my brother in need and turn away? You know, sometimes I recall a medical student said, now that I have turned to Christ, my family has cut me off. They will pay nothing for me. So, I don't know the boy.

I don't know him. Perhaps I may have met him once. I can't recall that.

But I said, no, we won't let you stop in the middle of your course. God will provide. Yes, my dear people, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, it is sin.

More to you. Today, you know, I was speaking in Paris last, before coming over, and I said to the people, many of them had lost everything. They had fled as refugees when they were threatened, and they had to choose between death and joining the terrorists who were called tigers in Sri Lanka.

And now, to start their lives afresh in Europe, it's not easy. Many of them are very poor, cleaners in restaurants and so on. But I said to them, God must save you from that immigrant mind.

What shall I get out of it? God must give you the disciple's heart. How to get you out of the immigrant's mind? You see, there is a lot of immigration in many parts of the world today. And we often hear of the great calamities overtaking the immigrants that would sail into Australia and so on.

But, you know, the immigrant mind is the opposite of the Christian disciple's mind. The Christian disciple says, hey, I am responsible for my neighbor. You know, we have said today, the government is our keeper.

The government is responsible for giving me my welfare checks or whatever. Now, my dear friends, we have relegated what the early church did themselves to the government today. I don't believe that the government has the expertise nor the right kind of system by which they can discern and help people.

What they are producing today is a lazy bunch, in most cases, an irresponsible bunch. As a matter of fact, some of the statistics show a dismal decline in the kind of responsibility that black people, you know, it says statistics of black people, not that we have anything against the black people, and shows that the numbers have greatly increased since the time when the government stepped in and said, oh, this poor unwed mother, and there have been, there has been an escalation of that process. All right, but when you do it with love, you rescue a soul, and that soul will go rescue another.

That's how I have seen the gospel spreading, my dear people. So, what I see in the early church, neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prizes of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. Now, that's the scenario.

That's the background to the fifth chapter. How does Satan enter? Thou shalt not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. You know, just sizing up a person by the car he drives, the shoes he wears, and the undergarments which he buys is a bunch of rubbish.

That shows where your mind is. You see, folks, I asked a boy at a university, but why do you talk about the undergarments? Why does the IRS have to check on the undergarments of this poor preacher? You see,

oh, he said, the undergarments can be very expensive, and you see, they speak of your status, and they impress, you know who. What rubbish, what calculations are these? Look at the early church.

They said, my brother has need, and I am going to step in. How wonderful. You know, folks, when my granddad died, and the ancestral property, there was my father and his elder brother who had many, many children, around 11, I think.

My father said to him, now, brother, you have got so many children. Here, you take it off. The end of story.

I'm glad my father did it. You see, my dear friends, today we are just running right past everything that is noble, and we have acquired dirty minds, money-ridden minds. The early church were not so.

They wanted the gospel to go out at all costs. You know, it's amazing to me. I don't have one rich friend, and some of the poor people with whom I spend hours counseling and helping them, you know, they are just hand-to-mouth livers.

Now, that doesn't disqualify them so that they can't get my attention. I would rather go to the poor than to the rich, and I am glad that I didn't get into the circuit of the big preachers, you know, celebrated for doing this and doing that. No, no, no, no.

There's no need for any celebration. As a matter of fact, I doubt if God will give me past marks for my poor labors. Now, my friends, against this backdrop, we have the fifth chapter, but a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession, and notice this.

There was no compulsion. He was under no pressure, but you see, sometimes a spirit of imitation takes hold of people. You know, everybody seems to be doing it.

Maybe I had better do it too. Now, that's not the attitude at all. Gratitude and praise and the recognition that Jesus died in our place comes not by imitation.

You see, some people's religion is pure imitation. Oh, this is expected of me. Let me just do this.

Otherwise, you know, I might be classified as a backslider. You know, the Bible has a phrase, backsliders in heart. You see, outward backsliding is not the thing at issue.

What we need is an inward condition and an awareness of that. You see, friends, you must examine your heart. If you have been a backslider in heart, I can see from the pleasures that are around us and upon us that everything seems to tend towards, oh, go slow, go slow.

This is no urgent matter. Oh, you can repent tomorrow. You know, a bridle for your tongue, what does the Bible say? He that appeareth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.

You know, if you fly off the handle and get into a big huff, what is that? You know, in a moment's time, you can destroy the testimony of a lifetime. You see, what kind of words come out of your mouth? Out of the same mouth, you can't have bitter water and good water. Now, this is the mouth with which we communicate with God.

One of the things that God taught me very early was to put a clamp over my much talking. You see, folks, but Ananias and Sapphira decided, hey, you know, we can't be expected to do what these people around us are doing. Oh, we like our property far too much, and so we will just toe the line, appear to toe the line,

and we too will play the act.

So, what happened? The second verse, and kept back part of the prize, his wife also being privy to it in the secret, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. They went through the motions. You know, Christianity today is just go through the motions, put up the big show.

You see, godly people are expected to sit around like this with a frown on their faces. You too can do that, can't you? You see, just the motions, just the name. It's shocking.

You know, I was traveling one day, and there was the plane. I was flying over Europe and developed a windscreen crack. Oh, which is quite an alarming thing.

It can depressurize the whole cabin. That means you're dead in a very short time. So, the pilot had to make an emergency landing, and lo and behold, we landed at Athens, an airport which I recognized because I had been earlier there, and we were put up for the night while they were fixing this windscreen, where I and I had for a roommate an engineer from the Punjab, and I shared with him what I had experienced of Christ, and what he said to me shocked me.

We don't have Christians like this in the Punjab. Punjab is a vast, prosperous area. We don't have Christians like this in the Punjab.

Why say what nonsense? A man interviewing me in London for a television station, the interviewer said to me, Mr. Daniel, we can see that your work is authentic. I said, what? You're interviewing so many well-known people, and you say our, my work is authentic.

It shocked me, but you see, my dear folks, people can sense whether we are a bunch of pretenders or whether we are real, and how can Calvary produce impostors? I can't think of Calvary producing impostors, and people who just put up the show and the motion. I've never known Christianity that way. I saw Christianity and Christ in action from my childhood.

I do hope your children will be able to say that to you. Now, Peter, now if Peter was just a normal preacher, what would he have said? Hallelujah, brother Ananias. Hallelujah.

You have brought a tidy sum, but Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? And to keep back part of the prize of the land. Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? My dear people, you know, soon after Ananias fell dead, Peter said, this is, this is yours. The property was yours.

Nobody asked you. Whilst it remained, was it not your own? After it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why has thou conceived this thing in your heart? Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God. Lied unto men, but unto God.

My dear friends, this can be a very disastrous thing. You and I have to render an account to God. We can't lie to God.

Lord, Lord, you ought to know that I'm a pretty good Christian. Don't you know that? No. My dear friends, it's a beautiful thing.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. The whole kingdom is behind you when you are poor in spirit. Lord, surely on Calvary, at Calvary, when you said it is finished, you didn't intend an

incomplete kind of work to be wrought in me.

It cannot be. You said it is finished. I want to see the finished product.

I want to be the person purchased by Calvary. Let us pray. Let us tell God, Lord, help me to be real.

I cannot lie to you, dear Lord. Oh, my father, I don't want any part of my life to be a lie. Father, with your own blood, you purchased her.

Lord Jesus, and the finished product surely should reflect that amazing love, that very heart of the cross. Please, Lord, draw near to us and visit us, that we might live lives that glorify you. In Jesus' holy name, amen.

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