

Hypocrites In The Church

Acts 4:32-5:16

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We haven't been in Acts for a few weeks, so let me kind of give you an update on where we find ourselves in the book of Acts. Back in chapter 3, Peter and John had gone into the temple at the hour of prayer and encountered a lame man. They prayed for this lame man, and he was healed. As a result, it drew a crowd and Peter was preaching. The religious authorities—the Jewish authorities—because of that called them in front of the Sanhedrin. It was the first real persecution and opposition that you find in the book of Acts to the Church. After they were threatened and told to no longer preach in the name of Jesus, they gathered together in chapter 4 and prayed. They didn't pray to escape the trouble or the persecution, but that God would give them strength and boldness to be able to continue to go out and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to preach the resurrection. I think it's cool that they didn't pray, "God, smite our enemies and protect us." They just said, "Embolden us. Empower us. Help us not to be intimidated by their threats." That's where we find ourselves beginning in Acts 4:32. They had healed the man lame at the gate Beautiful. They had been questioned and threatened to no longer preach, and then we find this record (verses 32-37) of the unity and the power that came into the Church as a result of their prayer. They prayed, and the Bible says the house where they were gathered was shaken. God just shook the house. It was kind of like a second Pentecost, and they were all filled again with the Holy Spirit.

We pick it up in verse 32. It says, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," they were of a kindred spirit, "neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." The word is *koinonia*. They were sharing in their material possessions and in the things of the Lord. It says, "And with great power," the word "great" is where we get our word "mega," that powerful manifestation of God through their lives, "gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." They had "mega" power and "mega" grace—what a cool thought—God's power and God's grace was upon them. This is kind of an ideal picture of the unity, harmony, power, and grace that was manifested 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 prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses," or actually a reference to Joseph, "who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas," we know him mostly by his name Barnabas, "(which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus," the island out on the Mediterranean Sea. "Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." There was unity. There was great power. There was great grace, and there was great care, love, and unity among the believers in Jerusalem. This is what we call the ideal picture of the early Church.

You know, you commonly hear people say, "Well, we need to get back to the early Church. We need to get back to the Church of the book of Acts," or "back to the Church of the New

Testament.” I don’t disagree with that, but not every picture of the Church in the New Testament or in the book of Acts was ideal. They were just as human as we are today. Wherever you have human beings, you have problems. They were redeemed, but they were still human beings. They were still sinners saved by grace. It doesn’t mean that they were practicing sin anymore, but we’re going to see that this ideal picture is going to be disrupted in chapter 5 with Ananias and Sapphira’s hypocrisy and deceit. There is really no such thing as a perfect church. It was Charles Spurgeon that actually said that one fella in his church once said, “I’m leaving your church to find the perfect church.” Spurgeon said, “Well, do me a favor. If you find it, don’t join it because it won’t be perfect anymore.” Wherever there are people, there are problems. Right? If you have people in your home, you have problems in your home. If you have people on the job, you have problems on the job. If you have people in the church, we have problems in the church; but it’s a beautiful picture of the unity, love, and harmony they had. They’re one heart (verse 32), one soul, and they had all things in common.

This communism was not forced. It wasn’t an obligation. It was the prompting of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and was all voluntary. To sell their property and give what they sold from the property to the apostles wasn’t mandatory or required of them. It was just something they did as they were prompted by the Holy Spirit. I don’t think that it’s mandatory or required of us today. I don’t think that we should be giving to God unless we are doing it with the joy of our hearts. The Bible actually says that when we give, we should be joyful givers. The idea is that we do it with hilarity. We do it with liberty. We do it gratefully as unto the Lord. We should never give out of obligation or that we feel we have to. It should be prompted by our willing heart and our love for the Lord and others. God blessed them. There was great power. There was the testimony of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They had care and none of them lacked. You say, “Wow, this is just such a beautiful picture.” Would to God that we were prompted this way, that we would love one another, that we would have unity and harmony. If we found out that there was a brother or sister that has need, that we would give to them and share with them, that we would work together to provide for one another. This is a picture of the early Church—the harmony, the blessing, and the spiritual care that they had.

It’s really intended to be a transition into chapter 5. Luke, the historian, doesn’t just write haphazardly. I believe that he writes purposely, and he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He actually comes to the end of this fourth chapter, gives us this ideal picture, and closes with an individual that we’re going to get to know pretty well through the book of Acts. We know him by his nickname given to him in verse 36, Barnabas, which means “the son of consolation” or encouragement. What a great name to be given—the son of encouragement.

Do you ever know people that when you’re around them they discourage you? They’re always saying negative things or things that are bad. Eventually, you kind of like don’t want to be around them anymore. Barnabas was just the opposite. He was one who was always encouraging, always comforting, always welcoming. He becomes the symbol in the Bible of a person who is encouraging others. When John Mark failed in his missionary journeys with Paul, Barnabas, who was related to John Mark, gave him a second chance. He reached out to him and encouraged him. John Mark redeemed himself, and later on he again became a

traveling companion of Paul. He wrote the gospel of Mark and God used him.

There are a lot of people that if we'd just put our arm around them and let them know that we care and God cares, and God is the God of second chances, that they should not give up and be discouraged. If we would just learn to try to encourage others...I've found in my own life, the more I battle sometimes with discouragement or disappointment and God uses something to encourage me, I find that I want to be an encourager to someone else. If I know what it's like to be discouraged or what it's like to fight battles (not really being excited or I'm discouraged or whatever it might be) and God encourages me, then I want to bless and be an encouragement to others. I want my life to help them. I want to be a wing not a weight. You know people like that. That's why Paul wrote to the Philippians and said, "I thank my God every time I think about you." Every time I read that verse, I think about that. I wonder what people say when they think about me. "Wow, that John Miller, he really just drives me crazy," or when they hear your name they roll their eyes, "Yeah," or when they think about you they say, "Wow! What a blessing she is! What joy she brings to my heart! What encouragement and how they lift my spirit." God has brought into my life those Barnabas', those sons of consolation. When I'm down and discouraged, they just have the right word at the right time to kind of keep you going. What a blessing those people are!

Specifically, he tells us that this Barnabas, by the way, was a Levite. Levites weren't supposed to own property. Bible students are a little puzzled by this, and I've read different commentaries that kind of wrestle with how that worked. The best idea is that maybe his property wasn't in the land of Israel but on the island of Cyprus. Cyprus is an island (I've been to the island of Cyprus) out in the Mediterranean, but a Levite didn't really own property in the land of Israel because the Lord was their inheritance. They were the priestly tribe. Evidently, this Barnabas owned some property, maybe on the island of Cyprus and outside the land. There was no prohibition to owning property there. He sold this property and gave it to the apostles, and the apostles would distribute it as everyone had need.

So, having sold the land, verse 37, "Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." I've taken the time to emphasize the closing of this fourth chapter because I believe there is an intended contrast and connection with Acts 5:1. "But," this is a disjunctive conjunction. We have this beautiful picture of the unity, harmony, grace, the sacrifice, and the son of encouragement and sold property and gave it to the Church, and isn't this wonderful... but. Now we have the fly in the ointment. "But," Acts 5:1, "a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy," or in agreement, "to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet." Now, if you've read your Bible, you've read this story and know why I'm kind of chuckling a little bit. The unity and the harmony and the peace is broken because of the sin and hypocrisy of this couple in the church. Barnabas was probably lauded, praised or, "Wow! Isn't he awesome!" I say it jokingly. I'm sure it wasn't the case, but they might have actually just given him some kind of recognition, "Barnabas, this is awesome! Thank you for your donation," and things like that which I think the Church really needs to be careful of doing.

I believe that when you give to God, you should give anonymously. I realize that for tax purposes you have to kind of make a note on the cash that you put in your tithe or your giving (that's the reason for those envelopes); but if you write a check or you give online, we kind of know who you are and you get a receipt that you can use for tax purposes. We don't broadcast to the other members of the church when any individual ever gives. We don't have your picture in the foyer: Giver of the Month, kind of a thing. If we receive money from you and use it to buy a new drinking fountain, we don't put a plaque on there: Living water donated by the Joneses. In some churches every tree, every pew, every hymnal has someone's name on it because they paid for it. The Crystal Cathedral (Robert Schuller was pastor of years ago) built their Crystal Cathedral with glass, and you could have your name on it. You could get binoculars out and look up and see your name high up in the Crystal Cathedral, and everyone would know what a wonderful person you are.

Jesus actually said that when you give let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Now, He wasn't literally saying that when you give you've gotta fake out your hand, you know. What He was saying was don't put on a show. Don't give an ostentatious kind of show like, "Look what I'm doing! Look how wonderful I am! I want you to know how much I'm donating to the Lord." As a policy, I've done this for over 40 years and continue to do it, I have no idea what anyone gives to this church. I don't know, I don't want to know, and I never do want to know because I don't want to view people as givers. I just view you as members of this church, and that's what's important. I don't cater to any individuals because, "Wow, they really give a lot of money to this church." I have no idea. I have no idea who gives what, but when we do give and when we do pray and when we do fast, we're not to do it to be seen of men.

The transition would indicate that Ananias and Sapphira saw what Barnabas had done and wanted that same status and recognition. They wanted to be seen as, "Wow! We're awesome, too," and "We're spiritual, too! We sold our land and gave it all to God. Aren't we wonderful?" The sin wasn't that they kept back part of the price of their land. The sin was that they lied about it. It was theirs, as Peter is going to go on to say, from the beginning. They didn't have to sell it. They could give any amount of the sale to the church, and it didn't matter. It was all up to them and between them and God. Their sin lies in the fact that they wanted people to think that they were giving it all. They were feigning or hypocritically acting out like, "We've given everything," when they hadn't given all. The issue was that it was most likely motivated by pride—that desire to want to be recognized. Underneath this story, there are a lot of important things we can learn; but we need to be careful that we're not being motivated by a desire to have recognition. We're not going to be motivated by, "I want recognition for my donation," or "I want recognition for my service," or "I want recognition for my sacrifice," or "for what I do for the church," or "what I do for God." We should all ask ourselves, "What motivates me?" If it's not the glory of God and is the recognition of man, then we need a little change of heart. We need God to change our motives and change our hearts.

The contrast was between Barnabas, who I believe was giving for the right reasons and motives, and Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira conspired together to keep back part of the price of the land. In chapters 3 and 4, Satan came against the believers as a roaring

lion seeking whom he may devour. He attacked the Church with persecution from the outside, but Satan is a sly enemy. He comes now inside the church. He comes as the serpent. He comes first as the lion and attacks outwardly, now he comes with subtlety and through these individuals who are part of this church.

Let me say this right now, lest I forget. I don't believe that you can be dogmatic that Ananias and Sapphira were true Christians. Most Bible students believe they were, and I don't necessarily disagree with that, but I would also point out that you can't be dogmatic that they were brothers and sisters in Christ because they're not really called that in the text. One of the reasons why I point that out is because many times (as you'll see in a moment) they're used as an example of a Christian who becomes demon-possessed and God destroys or wipes them out or they've lost their salvation. Well, we can't be for sure that they really had salvation to begin with. It's very possible they were believers and were influenced by their own flesh and pride. Peter says, "Satan has filled your heart," and God judged them very harshly. God actually killed them, which is really radical, but we can't be sure that they are believers. It says that they sold their property, "...and kept back part of the price...and laid it at the apostles' feet." I can't help but believe that they were patting themselves on the back. They probably thought, No one knows what we sold our land for, and no one knows whether or not we're giving it all so, like Barnabas, let's make like we're giving everything that we got for our property—we're selling our land and giving it to the church—and let's put on this show and make like we're doing that.

Let me give you a very important distinction. Hypocrisy is not a Christian who fails to meet up to biblical standards or even their profession. Hypocrisy is intentional deceit of trying to pretend that you're something you're not. We all fail. We all come short. We all make mistakes. Sometimes if you're a Christian and you stumble or fall people say, "You're a hypocrite! You're a Christian and you do that!" Well, you're not a hypocrite unless you're trying to pretend. If you honestly and humbly admit, "Yes, that was wrong. Yes, I failed. I was trying to do my best, but in a weak moment I stumbled and fell." I'm not pretending or feigning to be something that I'm not, then that's not really hypocrisy. That's just the aspect of the weakness of your flesh. I don't think that we should condone the weakness of our flesh or sinful behavior, but we need to be careful. Sometimes we're labeling people as hypocrites when the truth is a hypocrite is someone that intentionally and purposely practices deceit. They put on a show feigning that they are something they're not. We can do that in so many different ways when we come to church. We want people to think we're more spiritual than we are, we pray more than we really do, or that we're more holy than we really are, then we're practicing hypocrisy.

Beginning in verse 3, it says that, "Peter said, Ananias," now it would seem that Peter here is given this insight by the Holy Spirit—kind of a word of knowledge and understanding of what was going on in their life. Something made it very clear to Peter that what they were doing, something wasn't right. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" Then, he points it out in verse 4, "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?" There's an indication here that there's nothing wrong with personal property. There's nothing wrong with you owning a house, or land, or a

car, or having personal property. It was your own, "...and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" Notice, it wasn't just the devil made me do it, but they conceived it in their own heart. "...thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

Again, there have been different points in times in the Church when people get kind of all hyped up about that Christians can have demons. Christians, if you open a door of your life, a demon can come in and can take control of you and you can become demon-possessed; and even though you're a Christian, you need to have the demon exorcised. It comes in different degrees and different levels. I believe that if you've been born again, you've been regenerated, you're a child of God, you're a Christian, I don't believe that satan can come and possess you. I believe he can oppress you. I believe he can heckle you, and I believe that you can surrender your heart, mind, and thoughts to him and come under his influence, but you're not taken captive by satan. You're not demon-possessed like an unbeliever that needs to have that demon cast out or exorcised. There's nowhere in Scripture that would indicate that, but this is one of the places that those who believe Christians can have demons turn to and try to support their doctrine or idea based on Acts 5:3—satan has filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. I don't believe that term "filled thine heart" is an indication that they've become demon-possessed. I believe that he's just basically saying, "Why did you let satan influence you?" Not only is it your own sinful heart, but this is satanic. This is demonic. Satan tempts us and we yield to the temptation and come under that influence. As Christians, we don't want to do that. We don't want to listen to him. We don't want to be under his influence. We want to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the deeds of the flesh.

They had lied to the Holy Spirit—the third person of the Godhead—indicating that He is a person. He is subject to personal treatment—He can be grieved, He can be lied to. You "kept back part of the price," of your land, and as I pointed out, it was okay if you sold it and kept whatever you wanted to and gave it, but the hypocrisy was acting like you had given it all when you really had kept back part of the price of the land. He says, "...why has thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" Notice at the end of verse 4, "...thou has not lied unto men, but unto God." This is one of the places in the New Testament (you should mark it well) that we understand the Holy Spirit is divine or the Holy Spirit is God.

It surprises me. I meet Christians all the time when I make statements like that saying, "I didn't really know the Holy Spirit was a person," or "I didn't realize the Holy Spirit was God." The Bible teaches there is one God in three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We use the term trinity or triunity to describe the triune nature of God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all persons in the Godhead; and they are all divine. They are all God, and they all possess the same attributes. The fact that he says, "...thou has not lied unto men, but unto God," and in verse 3 he says, "...to lie to the Holy Ghost," is indicating that the Holy Spirit is God.

"And Ananias hearing these words," this is where the story gets pretty heavy, "fell down, and gave up the ghost," that's King James for he croaked. Luke's a doctor, and he doesn't tell us

whether it was a stroke or a heart attack or what happened but, you know, when God wants to take you out, it's no problem for God, right? I mean, just if God wants to take His hand off you, you're gone. I mean, He's the One that sustains us and gives us life. Here's this guy in the church, putting on this show, "Yeah, I sold my property and gave all this money...aren't I wonderful," and he dies right then. "...and great fear came on all them that heard these things." That was the church where people were freaking out. "And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him." They had to have pallbearers in the church. The ushers had to carry this guy out.

"And it was about the space of three hours after," so there was a time gap between Ananias and then his wife following up. I think that somehow they must have planned the whole thing out to really dramatize it—You know, she'll come in later and she'll get the recognition as well. She didn't know what had happened to her husband. "And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much." Now, if anyone was standing around knew what happened and was listening, they're like, "I don't want to watch! I don't want to see!" Amazing. "Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband." Notice the commentary in verse 11, "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Wow! People are saying, "Man, be careful if you go to that church down the street. They're dying over there!"

Aren't you glad that God doesn't deal with sin like that today in the Church? We would never make it through a worship service. Zapping noises. People falling in the aisles, the ushers dragging them out, you know. Fear and trembling! "I don't know if I want to go to that church. They're dying over there!" You know, there are so many lessons again that we can draw from this but, man, does God take sin seriously or what? Does God take hypocrisy serious or what? In the early stages of the Church, God wanted to maintain its purity. He knew that impurity would lead to the Church being impotent and lacking power and effect in reaching the world around it. He wanted to maintain its purity, and it's so crazy that they lied to the Holy Spirit. They lied to God. They put on this big show, and God actually struck them dead and drug them out.

There is Scripture that indicates (1 Corinthians and 1 John) there is a sin unto death. We were talking with some friends from church the other night about this "sin unto death." I was being questioned about it, and it would seem that sometimes there can be a believer...and as I mentioned, we don't know for sure that Ananias and Sapphira were believers, but just assume for a minute they were believers. It doesn't mean that they lost their salvation, it just means that God judged them and took them to heaven. Now, I know that people have a hard time understanding or comprehending that, but in Corinth they were abusing the Lord's supper. They were taking communion and not doing it in a worthy manner. Paul actually said, "For that reason, some of you are sick and some have even died in the congregation at Corinth." The

Scriptures would indicate that a believer can sometimes fall into sin, and rather than God allow it to dishonor Him, God will take them home. Now, we need to be careful that we don't judge when a Christian dies, assuming that God was judging them for their sin. That would be a wrong thing to do because only God knows why He does what He does, and only God knows the heart. Certainly, the Scriptures would indicate that, and John even says If you see someone sinning a sin which is unto death that you don't even pray for that person. If God is going to judge them and take them home, it doesn't do any good to even pray for them, which is a pretty radical thought.

This isn't really church discipline. This is just the judgement of God directly intervening and dealing with individuals that are practicing hypocrisy in the Church. Again, thank God that this is one of the things that was going on in the early Church in the book of Acts that doesn't necessarily happen today. In another sense, the Church really maintained their purity. People weren't just so eager to join that church when they realized how serious God took sin. We should take sin very seriously, and we should take hypocrisy very seriously. We should be careful that we don't try to pretend, that we don't put on a pretense trying to get people to think that we're something we're really not. God knows our hearts, and God knew that they were pretending and sinning and that they had yielded to satan and to their pride in this situation.

It says in verse 12, "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch," or portico. There was an area around the temple where there was a big patio. The Christians would often gather there (and the public was there), and people were being healed by the ministry of the Church. So, the sin is being dealt with, God cleanses the Church, and once again power is restored to the Church. God starts to work again through the Church, so purity leads to the Church's power. It says, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them."

There is such a thing as blessed subtractions in the Church. We're always thinking in terms of, "God, grow the Church, increase our numbers." We should do that. I think, shame on us if we just want us four, no more, shut the door, and don't invite anyone to church because we all know each other and we're a comfortable church. They may sit in our spot on the pew, and we don't want them to do that, you know. I busted some of you on Sundays. You come in and want your little spot and somebody is already sitting there. You're kind of like, "Ah! What do I do?" I can tell you're almost like, "Excuse me. This is where I sit." Sometimes we don't want unsaved or new people coming because we want to have just a nice little warm, cozy fellowship where we all know and love each other, but in this case God was subtracting in order that then He might add through their evangelism.

Notice these characteristics of what was going on now that God had dealt with the sin in the Church. It says, first of all, "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people." God was confirming His Word preached with miracles as the Church was just born, and God was confirming that He was working through these new believers. Secondly, "they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Thirdly, verse 13,

people were hesitant to join them but magnified them. They were amazed at what God was doing with them. Fourthly, verse 14, "...multitudes both of men and women," were added to the Lord. Just a little footnote, this is the first time in the book of Acts that Luke specifically mentions women being converted and added to the Church. Luke, in his gospel, is famous for referring to women so much as well as in the book of Acts but the first time that women are mentioned as being a part of the new converts.

In verse 15, "Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches," or mats, "that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." Now, it doesn't actually say here in the text that they were being healed as Peter's shadow passed over them but it is inferred. I think we're safe to believe that that happened. Does that mean Peter had a magic shadow? No. That just means that people saw it as a point of contact to believe that God was working through these individuals. It was like the woman that reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' garment and virtue flowed from Jesus and she was healed. Jesus even stopped in the crowd, "Who touched Me?" Everybody said, "You're being bumped and jostled by the crowd, what do You mean who touched You?" He said, "I perceive that someone touched Me intentionally and virtue has gone out from Me. Someone is being healed." It seems as though people, lying around on the street, when Peter walked by they knew that people were being healed as they prayed, "If I can just be touched by his shadow, maybe even I would be healed." What an amazing thing! By the way, in the ancient world, they were much more into shadows than we are today. They didn't have electricity. They didn't have light. They had to have sunlight, and the sun casts a shadow. They told time by the shadow, and it was all shadow stuff. We have watches that will cook for you today. Can you imagine that they had to use a sundial and deal with shadows and so forth in those days.

What an amazing thing that as a result of the hypocrites being removed out of the Church, and it is true that there are hypocrites in the Church, but God hates hypocrisy and judges sin and knows our sin. We need to ask God to search us and try us tonight. Somehow, God was using even their shadow, Peter's shadow, that some of them might be healed. Jesus said in John 14, "...and greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father." The "greater" there, when the Holy Spirit would come, and we see that fulfilled here in the book of Acts, isn't greater in quality but greater in quantity because they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They went off and God was using them. They were preaching and God was healing people. They were doing greater works in number, not quality but in quantity, the number of Christians that were going out and people were being healed by their ministries. In verse 16, it says, "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one," of them. Amazing!

Satan comes and attacks the Church on the outside with open, hostile persecution as a roaring lion. The Bible says in 1 Peter, "...your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion...seeking whom he may devour." Then, satan comes into the Church by, if need be, even using a believer with their pride and they can yield to the devil. Do you know we, as the body of Christ, need to all pray that God search and try our hearts to see if there be any wicked way in us and He lead us in

the way of everlasting, that we don't bring hypocrisy and sin intentionally into the congregation and dishonor God and weaken the Church and defame God's name, that we're serious, and that we're men and women of integrity. No one is perfect. We all have mistakes. We all have faults. The Church isn't a museum for saints, it's a hospital for sinners. We ought to be able to come here and pray for one another that we'd be forgiven, that we'd be healed, that we'd encourage, that we can be Barnabas' and sons of consolation and encourage one another; but let's not be hypocrites. Let's not pretend to be something we're not. Let's be men and women of integrity and sincerity. Let's love each other, pray for each other, seek as best we can to yield not to our flesh but to the Holy Spirit, and walk in the Spirit not fulfilling the deeds of the flesh. Amen?

We're going to stop right here, and we'll continue right where we picked up two weeks from tonight. Don't lose your thought and your place. Mark it in your Bible, and we'll pick up as the story continues.