

"What's In Your Heart"
Pastor Wally Contreras
July 19, 2020

"But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 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. 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? 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 men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." 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." 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. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things." (Acts 5:1-11)

* * * * *

Pastor Wally began his message reminding me that the Holy Spirit is God with "personhood". C.H. Spurgeon pointed out in his January 21, 1855 message that: "We are so accustomed to talk about the influence of the Holy Spirit and his sacred operations and graces, that we are apt to forget that the Holy Spirit is truly and actually a person—that he is an actual life—an existence; or, as we Trinitarians usually say, one person in the essence of the Godhead. But I am afraid that, though we don't know it, we have acquired the habit of regarding the Holy Spirit as a divine emanation flowing from the Father and the Son, but not as being actually a person himself. I know it is not easy to carry around in our mind the idea of the Holy Spirit as a person. I can think of the Father as a person, because his actions are such that I can understand. I see him hang the world in space; I observe him wrapping the newly created ocean in darkness; I know it is he who formed the drops of hail, who determined the number of the stars and calls them each by name. I can conceive of Him as a person, because I see his actions. I can comprehend Jesus, the Son of Man, as a real person, because he is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. It takes no great stretch of my imagination to picture the babe in Bethlehem, or to behold the "Man of sorrows acquainted with grief," or the king of martyrs, as he was persecuted in Pilate's hall, or nailed to the cross for our sins...But when I come to deal with the Holy Spirit, his actions are so mysterious, his activities are so secret, his works are so removed from everything that is familiar to our mind and body, that I cannot easily grasp the idea of him being a person; but he is a person. God the Holy Spirit is not an influence, not an emanation, not a stream of something flowing from the Father; but he is as much an actual person as either God the Son, or God the Father." If the Holy Spirit is a person (see John 14:26; John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 12:11), then why do some refer to Him as "it"? Explain.

Do I ask, "what is the Holy Spirit?" or do I ask "who is the Holy Spirit"? Explain.

Spurgeon went on to point out the united agency of the three persons in the work of our salvation found in John 14:16-17 (“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”) He said, “Look at the text, and you will find all the three persons mentioned. “I” - that is the Son – “will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor.” There are the three persons mentioned, all of them doing something for our salvation. “I will ask,” says the Son. “I will send,” says the Father. “I will provide comfort and counsel,” says the Holy Spirit...But before closing this point, there is one little word that pleases me very much, that is the word “forever.” You knew I wouldn’t miss that; you were certain I couldn’t let it go without observation. “Be with you forever.”...Once I am given the Holy Spirit, I will never lose him until “forever” has run out; until eternity has spun itself out of existence, which is impossible.” Do I properly give the Holy Spirit credit for His part in my salvation and thanks that “I will never lose him until ‘forever’ has run out”? If so, how so? If not, why not?

When it comes to giving, I am told that I “...must give as [I have] made up [my] mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7) It appears that it isn’t so much the “how much” I’m giving, but rather “how” I’m giving that matters to God, so, how’s that whole “cheerful giver” thing going for me? Explain.

What thing(s) do I consider/should I consider in making up my mind when it comes to my offering to the Lord? Explain.

Pastor Wally also spoke to the “Holy” part of the Holy Spirit, that God is serious about His holiness, and that I am to be set apart (holy) for the Lord and that sin such as rebellion, hardness of heart and spiritual blindness get in the way of my ability to be holy. Realizing that I’m still a work in progress, what sin specifically am I struggling with that is keeping me from the holiness that God demands of me and why?

Pastor Wally spoke of the death of Aaron’s sons found in Leviticus 10:1-2 (“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized (or strange) fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.” We find in Exodus 30:9 that God said “You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it.” God told Aaron that “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.” (Leviticus 10:10-11) In what way(s), if any, do I “distinguish between the holy and the common” and why?

Discuss Pastor Wally's statement that a faulty view of God leads to wrong living/wrong action.

Stopping to consider Proverbs 19:9 regarding giving "false witness" (lying), what are some ways that people try to rationalize "the need" to lie and why?

Is truth with just a dash of exaggeration still the truth? Explain.

Pilate asked of Jesus in John 13:38, "What is truth?" Do I struggle with Pilate's question at times in my life? If so, how so? If not, why not?

I must realize that I can also live a lie. Scripture warns: "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." (1 John 2:3-6). So, how's my walk?

Pastor Wally said that God hates hypocrisy. John Piper once said that "God means for his people to fear hypocrisy. He means for us to be afraid of treating the Holy Spirit with contempt. Notice at the end of verse 5, after Ananias had died: "And great fear came upon all who heard of it." Then again in verse 11 after Sapphira died, "And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things." This is the lesson Luke wants us to get: faking faith in the presence of God is a fearful thing... And so it is that the Holy Spirit is discredited in the church today. Some people come to worship and operate totally on the human level, never even reckoning with the living presence of God in this room. Some come and give theoretical assent to his presence but don't really come to terms with the awesome fact that he hears every thought in their mind and sees every imagination of their heart. And others come and convince themselves that the thoughts of the heart are not serious enough to forsake because grace always means tolerance. In each of these three cases the Spirit is discredited and demeaned." How about me when I come to worship? Do I see any of the three examples Piper presented concerning the Holy Spirit in me? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Should we be seeing more instances where "great fear [comes] upon the whole church" because we "discredit" the Holy Spirit? Explain.

Discuss Pastor Wally's exhortation that, though we are not a perfect church, we're not to be a resort for saints but rather a field hospital for sinners. What does that mean?