

JOHN BEVERE

The
Awe
of
God

A 6-WEEK SERMON SERIES

Lesson 2: Revealed as We Are

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Outline:

1. Three Images
2. Ananias & Saphira
3. Ananias & Saphira's Deadly Trap
4. Close

Three Images

2 Cor 5:9-10 | AMPC

For we must all appear and be *revealed as we are* before the judgment seat of Christ.

Look closely at the words *revealed as we are*.

Every human being has 3 images, their: *perceived* image, their *projected* image, and their *actual* image.

- Our *perceived* image is how others see us.
- Our *projected* image is the way we desire others to see us.
- Our *actual* image is who we really are, and can be hidden or unnoticed by others, but it's fully visible to God. It's how we'll be revealed before all at the Judgment Seat.

Consider Jesus; He was misunderstood, falsely accused, identified as a drunkard and glutton, labeled as a heretic, and even accused of being demon inspired. He was rejected by the religious leaders and others.

His *perceived* image was unfavorable in the eyes of many, especially the notables.

- Misunderstood
- Lied about
- Demon possessed
- A drunkard
- A glutton
- Unholy man who hung out with sinners
- A heretic
- The list continues

John 7:3-4 | NLT

“Go where your followers **can see your miracles!**” they scoffed. “You can’t become a **public figure** if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, **prove it to the world!**”

Jesus’ brothers were controlled by other’s perceptions and attempted to bring Jesus under the same slavery - the fear of man.

Jesus’ *actual* image is quite different than many *perceived*

- “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15).
- God Almighty audibly affirmed, “This is my dearly loved son, who brings me great joy” (Matthew 3:14).
- Jesus’ *perceived* image is not what endured, rather His *actual*.

While on earth, Jesus . . .

- shunned self-promotion and any efforts to build His own reputation.
- He avoided popularity, notoriety or the accolades and approval of men.
- When people wanted to promote Him to be king, He pulled away.
- There was no facade, false illusions, or deceit in Him.
- He delighted in the fear of the Lord, which kept His focus on the Father.
- We should also be the express image of Jesus.

When our *perceived* image carries greater weight than our *actual* image.

- Our reputation is what we will protect.
- Our efforts will focus on appearances, status, titles, popularity, acceptance, reputation, and so forth, for they *cover* our shortcomings.
- But none of this is what will be revealed and examined at the judgment, rather it will be our *actual* image, which centers around our motives and intentions.

1 Corinthians 4:5 | NKJV

So don’t make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our ***darkest secrets*** to light and will reveal our ***private motives***. Then God will give to each one whatever ***praise*** is due.

Many discount this scripture thinking it applies to the unbeliever’s judgment. Not so, for no unbeliever will receive *praise* at their judgment. This can only speak of believers.

- Our awareness of its reality creates a holy fear, which in turn keeps us in check, and enables us to live from our *actual* image.

- The antithesis also holds true, the more we lack the fear of the Lord, the more we will lean on our *projected* image.

Ananias & Saphira

The backstory is important to understand this couple's errant behavior. Their saga begins in the 4th chapter:

Acts 4:36-37 | NKJV

Barnabas...a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

During this time-period,

- Cyprus was an island of great wealth, an abundance of precious stones, copper and iron mines, and a great source of lumber.
- It was famous for its flowers, fruit, wine, and oil.
- If you owned land in Cyprus, you were most likely well off.

Imagine this . . .

...a wealthy Levite from Cyprus brings a very large sum of money received from the sale of his land to give openly before the entire church.

Acts 5:1 | NKJV

But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property.

Notice the first word, "But."

- This wealthy newcomer joins the church and brings a massive offering that everyone witnesses. His gift creates a reaction on the part of this couple.

They immediately sell some property and...

Acts 5:2 | NKJV

He (Ananias) brought part of the money to the apostles, **claiming it was the full amount**. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest.

Acts 5:3-5, 11 | NKJV

³ But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?

⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

⁵ Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.

¹¹ So **great fear** came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

What initiated this response?

- Could it be that this couple, up to this point, had the reputation of being the biggest givers in the church?
- Did this couple enjoy the respect and attention too much?
- Were their insecurities threatened in being outdone by the new guy?
- Were all the people celebrating his enormous gift, how it would help their outreaches and care for the poor, causing their focus to shift away from Ananias and his wife?
- Perhaps the couple coveted the lost attention, so they responded by selling a plot of land, quite possibly, their greatest asset.

They reasoned, “*This is far too much money to part with. But we want to appear to give it all. So let’s only give a portion, but announce, ‘It’s everything we received.’*”

- This deceptive thinking could have been strengthened by rationalizing: “*...it could encourage others to give large gifts.*”

Appearance was more important than truth, and thus, led to deception.

How could this couple ever think God didn’t see this?

- How did two professing believers, who’d witnessed notable miracles in the previous chapters - the wind of heaven blowing and getting the attention of an entire city, thousands saved in unannounced meetings, a cripple person miraculously walking, God’s power shaking a building, and more, possibly believe they could hide their motives from God Almighty?

This happens all too often . . .

- how could **Adam and Eve** who walked with God in the garden possibly believe they could hide from Him after sinning (see Genesis 3:8)?
- Or, how could the people of Israel say, “**The Lord does not see!**” (Ezekiel 9:9 NKJV)?

- Or how about this shocking statement: “‘Son of man, have you seen what **the leaders of Israel are doing with their idols in dark rooms? They are saying, “The Lord doesn’t see us”**” (Ezekiel 8:12)?

All these scenarios have a common root that fosters this gross error: **A lack of holy fear.**

Here is a very important truth:

Our holy fear grows proportionally to our comprehension of God’s glory. The antithesis is also true; we will dumb down His greatness, even to the point of human limitations, the less we fear Him.

...and the less we fear Him the more emphasis we place on how people see us.

Ananias & Saphira’s Deadly Trap

They were more interested in how they were **perceived** by those they saw as their rivals, friends, church members, and leaders.

Let’s imagine their journey that led to their downfall,

I’ll modernize and paraphrase their journey to their downfall for the sake of relatability...

- The church was young and growing...
- They were beginning to be gain a “reputation” and God was perhaps working through them...
- They enjoyed the feeling of being recognized as “important” and reveled in it...
- As their reputation grew, they possibly felt the need to cover their questionable behaviors to maintain their reputation in the eyes of others...
- Maybe they fought and disagreed often with each other...
- The couple didn’t want their peers to see their disagreements and strife, so they *project* a loving and caring attitude toward each other.
- They posted pictures and videos on Instagram and Tik Tok of hugging, smiles, and ‘enjoying’ fun activities together.
- The captions read something like, “living the dream,” or “I love doing life with her (or him)!” There were numerous other posts depicting their successful life (which was struggling), growing business (which was on a downturn), beautiful children (whose behavior was defiant, entitled, and selfish), and other shortcomings.
- It seemed to work because their social media followers were rapidly increasing.

Ananias and Saphira were in a pattern of keeping their *projected* image strong. It all seemed harmless, yet their godly fear was gradually diminishing with every act of hypocrisy.

- Then the day came when a man named Barnabas brought his offering before the church.
- The attention of their peers suddenly shifted.
- They were outdone, and their *projected* image was threatened. And by this time, the emphasis on their self-made image had already been well developed.

The rest is history.

- It all seemed harmless and inspiring to others, but it led them down a dangerous and destructive path.

Did the Holy Spirit give us this couple's fate in Scripture to warn us and give us a glimpse of how serious the judgment seat will be?

Paul writes:

1 Timothy 5:24 | AMPC

The sins of some men are conspicuous (openly evident to all eyes), going before them to the judgment [seat] *and* proclaiming their sentence in advance; but the sins of others appear later [following the offender to the bar of judgment and coming into view there].

Ananias and Saphira's sin was made openly evident to all on that memorable day.

- Their judgment was proclaimed in advance. However, what is more alarming is the sins of most will be made evident later.

Close

God knows not only what I do, but the motives and intentions behind my actions.

We can confess our dark motives, repent of them and God will not only forgive, but if we cry out to Him for holy fear and renew our mind through Scripture, we can be blessed with pure motives.