

Acts 029

Slain in the Spirit

Acts 5:1-11

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Acts chapter 5. Lord willing, we're going to try to cover verses 1 through 11 this evening. Acts 5:1-11 represents-- now that the church has been born in Acts 2. Now that the church has been externally attacked by the Sanhedrin, Acts 4. Acts 5:1- 11 represents the first internal attack on the church. And then once you get outside of verse 11 and read the rest of chapter 5, there's another external attack that's more severe than the external attack in chapter 5. But then you get to chapter 6:1- 7, and there's another internal attack. So, Satan has basically two strategies relative to the church. The first is to try to use the forces outside the church to persecute it. That strategy never works well for Satan because every time he does that, the church grows. You see that in China, Iran, many places. And you see it right here in the book of Acts. So, when that strategy doesn't work, he has a second strategy where he applies for membership and tries to join the church. He joins the choir. He wants to teach Sunday school. He wants to be in the pulpit, and he tries to kind of influence the church from within. So, this whole account of Ananias and Sapphira that I have entitled *Slain in the Spirit*, represents Satan's first attempt to derail the church from the inside. So here is an outline of verses 1 through 11.

VI. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

- A. Ananias' Discipline (1-6)
- B. Sapphira's Discipline (7-10)
- C. Result (11)

It's a husband-and-wife team. You see the husband's divine discipline in verses 1 through 6. His name is Ananias. And then you see his wife's divine discipline in verses 7 through 10. Her name is Sapphira. And then verse 11 explains why God did this, this severity. It had sort of an educational effect, I guess we should, we could say on everybody else within the church which prevented the church from being further

corrupted from the inside. Notice first, verses 1 through 6, the discipline of Ananias. We have his deed in verses 1 and 2. Peter's accusation against him, verses 3 and 4. And then Ananias's divine discipline. So, the first thing he does is he makes a sale. And you see that there in verse 1 of Acts 5. It says: *But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property.* Now, I was looking at Arnold Fruchtenbaum's commentary on this, and he basically traces the meaning of these words or proper names, Ananias and Sapphira, from Hebrew into Hellenized Greek. So, Ananias, the husband's name, literally means "God" or "Jehovah is gracious." So, here's a fellow that didn't live up to his name at all as we're going to see. And then his wife's name is Sapphira. Sapphira means "beautiful." So, she was probably, externally, a very physically attractive woman based on that name. But internally she was very corrupt.

1 Peter 3:3 warns us against such people. Concerning women, it says, *Your adornment must not be merely external-- braiding of the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses.* You know, people ask, 'is it okay for a woman to wear jewelry and earrings?' And 'Is it okay for a woman to wear makeup?' As J. Vernon McGee says, if the barn needs painting and paint the barn. So, you can't-- And I didn't say it, J Vernon McGee said it. So, you can't use this verse to say a woman or a man for that matter, should not try to look good. But it says when you place such an emphasis on external to the neglect of internal true character, you're making an investment in something that can't last. So, 1 Peter 3:4 says, *but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God.* That's the beauty of a woman that will endure. Proverbs 31:30 says, *Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised.* So, Sapphira obviously had her priorities wrong, as we're going to see.

Acts 5:1 says: *But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property.* So, they did exactly what Barnabas did at the end of chapter 4, verse 37. It says: *[Barnabas] owned a tract of land [and] sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.* So, Barnabas is an example of doing something with the right motive, and he is contrasted against Ananias and Sapphira, who do the exact same thing but with the wrong motive. So, we're dealing here with a husband-and-wife team. And the two of them after they made this sale, got involved with the conspiracy.

A. Ananias' Discipline (Acts 5:1-6)

1. Deed (1-2)

b. Sale (1)

c. **Conspiracy (2)**

A conspiracy is an agreement between two people to commit some kind of bad act. And you can be convicted in a court of law of the crime of conspiracy. If you agree to something and then take a substantial step towards the accomplishment of your goal, if it's against the law, you can be prosecuted for conspiracy. But the two of them were involved in a conspiracy. The conspiracy is in verse 2. It says: *[they] kept back some of the price for himself-- and look at this-- with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet*. So, when it says there, he kept back some of the proceeds, the verb "kept back" is *nosphizō*. "Kept back" in Greek. And it's interesting that that's the same verb used in Joshua 7:1 concerning Achan. And when I say it's the same verb, I'm talking about the Septuagint translation. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of Hebrew Bible created a couple hundred years before Christ. It says in Joshua 7:1, *But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zera, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the Lord burned against the sons of Israel*. So, Achan-- you remember that God gave specific instructions regarding the destruction of Jericho. And one of those things was they weren't supposed to keep the treasures of Jericho. Those were things that God condemned for destruction and Achan kept some of those things. So, when the Septuagint translates Joshua 7:1, it uses *nosphizō*, which is the exact same verb used here concerning Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias, with his wife's full knowledge, made a sale but kept back some of the proceeds for himself. And Achan, in the book of Joshua, was stoned to death for that. So that's easy to remember because Achan was later aching, so to speak, because he was stoned to death, not to make to make too light of the situation. So that's what Ananias did. Sapphira, his wife, knew about it. And their basic problem or their basic sin is not that they kept some of the proceeds for themselves, as we're going to see in a minute. The property was theirs. It was under their control. They could do whatever they wanted with it. They were under no obligation to sell it. They were no longer under any obligation to take the proceeds and give it to the church. Anything they

wanted to do with it, they could have done with it. The problem here is they misrepresented their generosity publicly. They had property, they sold it. They put the proceeds at the apostles' feet, just as Barnabas had done in the prior chapter. And they gave the impression publicly that they gave all the money from the sale of their property to the church. When in actuality they had not. They had kept back, just like Achan had done, some of the proceeds for themselves. So that's the sale and that's the conspiracy.

A. Ananias' Discipline (Acts 5:1-6)

1. Deed (1-2)
- 2. Peter's Accusation (3-4)**
3. Ananias' Discipline (5-6)

And then Peter, who is the main man in these first ten chapters of the book of acts. It's amazing how God uses this man Peter, because he doesn't look very usable in the Gospels, particularly when he was used as a mouthpiece of Satan. He tried to talk Jesus out of the cross. Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan" to Peter. He's the one that would walk out on the water and then sink because he lost faith. He's the one that denied the Lord three times. And here's the same man filled with the Holy Spirit being used tremendously by God. So just because you mess something up in life doesn't mean you're unusable. Peter messed up a lot of things, and yet God wasn't finished with Peter in the Gospels because he has a destiny to fulfill, as recorded in the book of Acts. So, Peter, the man of the hour, speaks up and he makes a public accusation now against Ananias. And he points to the guilt of the parties-- in this case, Ananias. And you see what he says in verse 3: But Peter said, *"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?"*

So, this was that communal living arrangement that you see in Acts 2 and Acts 4, where out-of-towners who were there on the day of Pentecost wanted to stick around after they were converted to Christianity, after they were saved, to learn of apostolic truth. They couldn't just go home and read the Bible to learn about the Christian way of life, because there's no New Testament yet. So many wanted to stay, and they only had resources to be in town for the weekend, so to speak, to participate as a Jewish person from outside the land of Israel. And so, their resources ran out. And so, the Jerusalem saints, those who lived there began to sell their property to have extra cash on hand to

help the out of towners. So that's why Ananias sold this property and put it at the apostles' feet. The problem is he told everybody, particularly the apostles, that they had given all the proceeds to the church. And Ananias, with his wife's full knowledge, had not done that. They kept back some of the proceeds for themselves. So, Peter then confronts Ananias and questions him and says: *"why has Satan filled your heart?"* Now the word Satan here is very interesting. This is the only reference that I know of to Satan in the whole book of Acts. Other encounters with the dark side will come through demons or fallen angels. But here Satan is directly involved in this according to Peter's confrontation. So, he asked him a question: *"why has Satan filled your heart?"* The Greek word is *plēroō*. Satan has "filled" your heart. It's the same verb used in the book of Ephesians 5:18 instructing the Christian do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be "filled" continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. So just as we are to be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit, Satan filled the heart of Ananias to commit this particular sin.

The big question here is, was Ananias an actual Christian or not? I mean, how can Satan fill the heart of a Christian? That can't happen, can it? Particularly when you trust Christ, your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. First Corinthians 16:19. And once that happens, you cannot lose the Spirit. We can certainly deny his influence in different areas of our life. But once you're indwelt with the spirit, that's permanent. Jesus says, [John 14:16] *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper--"* the Holy Spirit in other words-- *"that He will be with you forever;"* So if that's true, how in the world could this man, Ananias, be a Christian, being dwelt with the Holy Spirit, and at the same time his heart is filled by Satan himself? Well, the answer to that question is a believer cannot be possessed by Satan because God and Satan can't be roommates. However, a believer can be influenced by Satan, when a Christian caters to the old nature, the sin nature or the flesh, which is still inside of us even though we're saved. Did you guys, have you guys noticed that? Okay. And if you're telling me you haven't noticed it, then you're catering to the flesh right now because you're lying. When you get saved, the sin nature doesn't just disappear. The sin nature is always there to go back to. In fact, after you get saved, you're more aware of your sin nature than ever because the Holy Spirit is convicting you of sin in ways that didn't happen before you were a Christian. So as a Christian, I'm very much dual natured. I can live according to the desires of the new nature. But I can go back to the sin nature at will. In fact, an out of fellowship Christian can out-sin an unbeliever any day of the week. Paul the Apostle in

First Corinthians 5 tells the Corinthians that the sin that they're involved in is worse than what the pagans do. So, I'm no longer in bondage to the sin nature, but through volition I can return to it because I'm dual-natured. And that is my circumstances until glorification. Until glorification, as long as I'm in this body, pre-death or pre-rapture-- whichever comes first--the sin nature is there to appeal to. And when a Christian goes back to the sin nature, we give Satan influence over our lives. He does not possess us, he does not take over our lives, but he will take whatever ground that we yield to him.

And I believe this is what happened to both Ananias and Sapphira. I think both of them were saved. And the reason I think they were saved is because of verse 11, great fear came over the whole church when they were struck dead. If an unbeliever was struck dead, I'm not sure that would cause great fear over the whole church. But the reason that fear came over the whole Jerusalem church is one of their own, a Christian, was struck dead through something that we call maximum divine discipline. But Ananias was a believer along with his wife. They simply went back to the old nature. Satan did not take over their lives, but he certainly took ground and began to influence them in a negative direction. Now, let me give you some scriptures that explain that when we go back to the sin nature, we give Satan influence. First Chronicles 21:1, in David's life. It says there: *Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David*-- In other words, influenced David to number the troops of Israel. God did not want the troops numbered because he wanted Israel to trust in God and not their natural resources. But David took his eyes off God. He numbered the troops. He calculated battle in terms of military power. And it was when he moved in that direction, Satan influenced him that way. David was clearly a believer. Ephesians 4:26-27 says: *Be angry, and yet do not sin; Do not let the sun go down on your anger*. That's why I always wanted to move to Alaska because the sun never goes down. But anyway, *Be angry and do not sin; Do not let the sun go down on your anger*--And look at this--*do not give the devil an opportunity or a foothold*. So that's clearly written to Christians. And I know that in my personal life, when I'm angry about something and it's unresolved, like a grudge or whatever the issue is, as long as I'm in that state where I haven't forgiven the person, that anger spills out of me, typically onto innocent parties. It will spill out very sadly on people that don't deserve it. You know, members of my own family in some cases, which I'm not proud to admit, but that's the kind of thing that happens. And so, my wife will see me in this state and she'll go, what are you what are you really upset about? You're obviously upset about something else. And when I listen to her and kind of analyze the situation, you

know, she's right. I'm upset, I'm angry at somebody else. I haven't forgiven somebody else. And the human psyche is not designed to contain anger. We're not built that way. So, when we're angry, it's going to spill out of us in unkind words or actions or deeds or things we post or put up on social media. You know, you listen to a lot of people talk and you can say, well, that person's just angry. They're angry about something. So that's an example of what Ephesians is talking about; anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, going back to the flesh. And Satan now has a foothold. Peter, who knew all about this was—

Many wonderful things were said about Peter in Matthew 16:15-19 after he gave the right answer concerning who Jesus was. Jesus said, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."*

"...upon this rock I will build my church--" On Peter's confession, I'll build my church. And I think Peter, when he heard all that stuff Jesus said about him, you know, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven--He probably started to get a little bit inflated. Like, gee, Lord, you're really lucky to have me on your team kind of attitude. Look at how blessed I am. And the next time he opens his mouth, he tries to talk Jesus out of going to the cross. And the very next thing Jesus said to him is, get behind me-- what? --Satan. So, there's an example where he catered to the flesh, pride, and Satan had influence then in Peter's life, to actually use Peter's mouth to try to talk Jesus out of His crucifixion. I mean, clearly Peter is a saved man when all of this is happening. A lot of people say, well, a Christian can never be overcome by sin. Well, if that's true, then why does Romans 12:21 say to the Christian, do not be overcome by evil? But overcome evil with good. I mean, there's no point in it saying that if a Christian can never be overcome by sin.

So, I think both Ananias and Sapphira are saved, but I think they catered to the flesh. They wanted the church to think of them more highly than they were. And Satan took the inroad, and he filled them just like the Spirit of God can fill the Christian. Satan filled their heart. And Peter, who knew all about this because he was confronted by Jesus directly on this issue, now confronts Ananias. And he calls out the couple on their responsibility.

A. Ananias' Discipline (Acts 5:1-6)

1. Deed (1-2)
2. Peter's Accusation (3-4)
 - a. Guilty parties (3)
 - b. Couple's responsibility (4)**
3. Ananias' Discipline (5-6)

And their responsibility is given in verse 4: "*While it (the land) remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.*" Now notice the first part of verse 4. It clearly indicates that they were under no obligation to sell the property. They were under no obligation to give the proceeds of the property to the church. They could have done whatever they wanted with it. Now that's very important to understand, because the youth of today, through the social justice movement in the church and through what they're being taught in the public school, they all think communism is a great thing. Communism is godly. Communism is Christian. That's why somebody like Bernie Sanders, you know, who's an open socialist, in my opinion, Marxist, can soar in the polls. Whereas ten years ago, twenty years ago, you know such a person would have been dismissed outright. Marxism, cultural Marxism is making this huge inroad today, particularly among the youth, you know, our children and grandchildren. So, they all think communism is great. They're taught that, look, the early church practiced communism. They all had all things in common, just like communists teach. And the communists will never quote verse 4. Verse 4 goes against communism. "*While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?*" In other words, it's your property, private property. Do what you want with it. "*And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart?*" So, when your youth come home all starry eyed about Marxism or they're at some woke church and their youth pastor, for example, teaches them the virtues of Marxism. By the way, Hillary Clinton, that's how she was corrupted, as you might know. She was very much as a young person, sort of a Goldwater Republican. Came from a Republican conservative home. And then she moved into full blown Marxism when she went to Wellesley College, she wrote her college thesis promoting Marxism and these kinds of things. So, you say, well, what in the world happened to Hillary Clinton? Well, you know what happened to Hillary Clinton was her youth pastor in the Methodist Church opened her mind to Marxism by using biblical passages like this. So, the Marxists are always

going to quote the end of Acts 4. They're always going to quote the end of Acts 2. They will never quote Acts 5:4, which goes against Marxism, which says, while the land was your own, you could do what you wanted with it. So, the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not that they held on to property. The sin was they sold it, they gave money to the church, and they misrepresented their generosity. That's the issue.

Dr. Toussaint, in the Bible Knowledge Commentary, says: "The fact that believers had the right to keep their money shows that this was not Christian socialism." I wish he had said "Christian communism" because socialism is just a lighter form of communism. Communism, of course, denies the right to private property. Everything belongs to the state. "The fact that believers had the right to keep their money shows that this was not Christian [communism.] It was a freewill arrangement for the support of the church, used only temporarily--" because the early church expected Christ to come back in any generation. And then look at the second part of verse 4. It's a tremendous defense of the Trinity of the Godhead. Because Peter says to Ananias: "*You have not lied to men, but to God.*" Do you see? Verse 3, you've lied to the spirit. Verse 4, you've lied to God. You've lied to the Spirit. You've lied to God. Therefore, the Spirit is God. So, we teach here the doctrine of the Trinity. Trinity of God. Martin Davis and I are trying to come up with some ways to communicate the doctrine a little bit more succinctly in written form in our classrooms, because it's a difficult doctrine to understand, but it basically teaches there's one God, monotheism. But that God has eternally expressed Himself in three separate personages. God the Father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit. All three Father, Son and Holy Spirit sharing in the essence of deity. The Son is just as much a deity as the Father. The Spirit is just as much deity as the Son and the Father. That's why Peter says, when Ananias lied to the Spirit, he lied to God. But at the same time, the Father is unique in His fatherhood. The Son is unique and His sonship. The Holy Spirit is unique in His spiritness. The Spirit is not the Father nor the Son. He's a separate personage, but he shares fully in the inner deity. And he's the eternally existent third member of the Godhead.

And you can find Bible verses that say The Father is God, the Son is God. And right here, look at this. Here's a verse right here, Peter says that the Holy Spirit is God. And I think what's happening here is Peter is exercising a spiritual gift called the gift of discerning of spirits. If you want to study spiritual gifts, just memorize the mnemonic device 12-12-4-4. That stands for Romans 12, First Corinthians 12, First Peter 4,

Ephesians 4. If you just read through those 4 chapters, you'd have all the data in the New Testament telling you what the different spiritual gifts are. A spiritual gift is a spirit empowered ability to serve God in a special way. It's like the gift of giving, let's say, or the gift of evangelism. We're all supposed to evangelize. We're all supposed to give. But some people excel at it. It's like being on a softball team. Everybody gets a turn at bat, but some people can hit the ball a lot farther than others. So that's what spiritual gifts are. And every believer has at least one spiritual gift. One of the gifts of the spirit is the discerning of spirits. First Corinthians 12:10 says: *and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues*. So, one of those gifts of the Holy Spirit is discernment, which is a gift that's really needed today in the body of Christ, because the person with the gift of discernment can say, well, that doesn't sound exactly right.

And I think Peter had that gift. And I think when Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan," Jesus was discerning the wrong spirit behind what Peter was saying at that point in time. And I think the reason that Jesus did that is to show Peter that he, too, possessed the same gift that Jesus was using at that point, because he's going to need it, and he will use it in the book of Acts. The person with the gift of distinguishing of spirits and discernment. You know, I basically have three gifts. I think I have the gift of knowledge, understanding God's Word. I think I have the gift of teaching, the ability to communicate God's Word. And I also believe that God has given me the gift of discernment or distinguishing of spirits. Not that everything I've ever thought and said is 100% accurate. It's just a gift mix that God gave me. I always wanted the gift of evangelism. I don't have the gift of evangelism. I know people that do have the gift of evangelism. I'm very jealous of them sometimes because they can strike up a conversation with somebody and lead people to the Lord just like that. Bill Bright--I'm not promoting everything Bill Bright ever wrote either, but he could literally get into an elevator with somebody on the first floor and as the elevator is moving from floor one to floor two, he could start a conversation with somebody. And by the time the elevator door opened on the second floor, the person was a believer in Jesus Christ. I mean, that's like, wow, that's the gift of evangelism. Not everybody can do that. The gift of discernment is a tough row to hoe. Because the person that's a discerner can see trouble arising before it comes. They can see theological problems. They can see problem people long before your average person can see them. So, you're typically

looked at as being--it's like the guy saying the Titanic is sinking when nobody wanted to believe it was sinking. You're kind of looked at as being sort of negative. You're accused of being critical. You know, the word Pharisee is thrown at you a lot, and it just goes with the territory because you see problems before other people can see them. That's how the gift of distinguishing of spirits works. And I think Peter is operating in that here. And so that leads to the discipline of Ananias. Peter makes the accusation, and here comes the discipline, verse 5. *And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last.* So, if he's a believer, what happened to him? He was disciplined. Whom the Lord loves the Lord—what? --chastens.

Hebrews 12:5-13 talks about that. Divine discipline is applying pain to a sin. So, the next time you're thinking about sinning, you remember the pain associated with that sin, and you stay away from the sin. It's like a child that runs across the street without looking. Any parent that's worth their salt will discipline the child. And so, the next time the child thinks about running across the street without looking, they'll associate the discipline with the act of running across the street without looking, and their life is spared. That's how divine discipline functions. It's not judgment, it's correction out of love. And the Bible says, if you don't discipline your children-- and I'm not here advocating any particular form of discipline, I'm just saying there are different forms of it. You know, you have to go to the Lord based on the temperament of your child and ask the Lord how you're going to discipline your child. But if you--the Bible says the book of Proverbs is filled with these types of statements. If you don't discipline your children, then you hate your children because they're just going to be hellions, basically. And if they're not going to get disciplined at home, then the only thing left is the Sugar Land Police putting them in jail when they're adults and they're too big to be disciplined. The Lord disciplines us. Can I get an amen on that? All right.

I wonder if I was talking to the right crowd here. It looks like you guys are so spiritual you've never been under the Lord's discipline. I've been under the Lord's discipline many times, and it ain't fun. I remember my dad. Maybe I shouldn't bring this up. This was back in the days when you could spank kids. He would pull out a belt and he would say, okay, lay down over the bed. And he's in California, so I don't want to get him arrested by publicly saying this. He would say, the first one, I'm just going to kind of get the dust out of your pants. The second one's going to hurt. And this second one, I'm telling you, hurt to the point where you couldn't sit down for a week or two. And I

remember seventh grade, my assistant principal, Mr. Castillo had this big plank that he would discipline people with, smack them in the rear. And it had these eight holes in it. So, when he got ready to really hit you hard, it just sailed right through the air and whacked you right on the rear end. And I'm telling you today that would probably be called abuse and all these kinds of things. But I stayed out of a lot of trouble by going near the assistant principal's office and seeing that thing that he used to spank us hanging there in his office. My dad once when I was little--I used to climb everything. And I was climbing up this telephone pole in the back of his house. And he saw me going up, and he knew I was going to touch the live wire. And he said, Andrew--Now every time my dad said Andrew instead of Andy that was a big deal. And I remember him seeing me up there and then touching the belt that was around his waist. And I got the message. I didn't keep crawling up. I didn't put my hand on the live wire. And consequently, I'm still alive to tell the story today. So that's how the Lord deals with us. Whom the Lord loves the Lord chastens. I mean, today that's called abuse and all these kinds of things, but it's a biblical reality. It's a parental guideline that God has given us as parents. And if you don't apply it, you don't understand the power of the sin nature. And your kids will just grow up to be rebels, and the only thing left to stop them will be the city police force. Now, sometimes divine discipline takes the form of death. Sometimes God will terminate the life of a child of God and take them to heaven because they are so totally destructive. And they're creating so much mayhem and so many problems.

Let me give you three verses on that besides what we're learning here. First Corinthians 11:30: *For this reason--* the Corinthians drunk and disorderly at the Lord's table. *For this reason, many among you are weak and sick, and a number are asleep.* "Asleep" is a euphemism, a polite way of saying death. First John 5:16, *There is a sin leading to death.* And it never tells you what the sin is. What's the sin leading to death? It doesn't tell you. So, everybody asks me, what's the sin leading to death? As if I know because the Bible doesn't say. But there are certain sins that you go into where God says, that's it, I'm going to end your life on this earth and take you into heaven. Because the destruction caused by the sin is so great. In the church at Thyatira, there was a woman whose name is Jezebel, leading his bond servants into sexual immorality. And this is what Jesus says to the church at Thyatira. [Revelation 2:22] *Behold, I will throw her (Jezebel) on a bed of sickness--*like a bed, because of sexual immorality, God says I'll put you in a bed of suffering. If you like a bed so much, I'll make you so sick you can't

get out of it. That's divine sarcasm right there. *Behold, I will throw her* (that's Jezebel) *on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. And I will kill--* this is Jesus speaking-- *I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the hearts and minds.* This is not just discipline here, divine discipline. This is maximum divine discipline to the point of death. Now, does that mean every single death that occurs in Christianity is maximum divine discipline? No. You shouldn't conclude that the reason people die is we're living in a cursed world because of original sin. God said to Adam and Eve, when they sinned, for dust you are and to dust you shall return. Paul in Second Corinthians 4:16 says, *Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.* Creation itself, Romans 8:19-22, is portrayed as being in a state of corruption. So, death is all around us. Christians die constantly. So, you shouldn't conclude that every death is related to maximum divine discipline. Because someone can die having lived a very godly life. However, there are those very unique circumstances where the person is such an embarrassment to God, or the person is so destructive, that God terminates their life early. And this had-- second part of verse 5-- a purifying effect on the rest of the church, because it says, great fear came over all who heard it.

You'll see the same thing repeated in Acts 5:11. And the thing to understand is the church at this point is a newborn. A newborn with a virus. That virus can be destructive to the newborn because the newborn hasn't developed resistance yet, or antibodies and that kind of a thing. So, a virus in a newborn, you have to really be concerned about it. The church is brand new. The church has been birthed. If this virus of lying to the Holy Spirit goes unchecked, it's going to contaminate the whole rest of the church. Because a little bit of leaven leavens the whole lump. That's why God took the radical step that He made here, where He brought in maximum divine discipline. Jesus to Thyatira said *"I will kill her children—"* concerning Jezebel. And her children, I think it's speaking of those who are influenced by her poor doctrine and practice immorality. *"I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts."* This maximum divine discipline had a purifying effect in Thyatira. It had a purifying effect in all the churches. The maximum divine discipline that took place here has a purifying effect in the church in Jerusalem. That's why God did what He did, because His newborn can't have a virus. If the newborn has a virus, it's going to be destructive to the newborn.

A. Ananias' Discipline (Acts 5:1-6)

1. Deed (1-2)
2. Peter's Accusation (3-4)
3. Ananias' Discipline (5-6)

a. Death (5)

b. Burial (6)

So, God is very aggressive here in moving into not just divine discipline, but maximum divine discipline. And so, what did they do with Ananias? It says [Acts 5:6] *The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.* You notice it doesn't say they cremated him. There's a big discussion about should you bury or should you cremate. I'm aware that there's some financial advantages to one over the other, and people all the time ask me which one is Biblical. In my humble opinion, the one that mirrors the scripture is burial and not cremation. Cremation basically comes from paganism. What you'll discover in the Bible is people are buried over and over again. Stephen is going to be martyred in Acts 8:2. He's not cremated. His ashes aren't given to the Neptune Society to throw into the Mediterranean. He's buried. Now, does that mean if you've cremated a loved one rather than buried him, you've committed the unpardonable sin? No, we're not saying that either. Because God is capable of going into the ocean and recycling all the ashes in preparation for the person's resurrected body. So, I don't want to put people on a guilt trip. I'm just saying, if you're going to ask me the question, which method is more Biblical cremation or burial? I'm going to say burial. Because that's what you see over and over again. A Christian dies, they're buried. Yeah, but what about the expense and the cost? Well, sometimes godliness is expensive. God doesn't always call us to do the easy thing. I used to be sort of ambivalent about this, but I've been convinced by an article that you can find online by the late Norm Geisler, entitled *Cremation or Burial*. I think he's very fair. He gives both sides of the argument and comes down on the side of burial as being more of a biblical model. At least Ananias was buried. Non-burial in the Bible is a sign of disrespect. Saul was not buried by the enemy. They put his weapons in the temple of Ashtaroath and fastened his body on the wall of Beth-shan. First Samuel 31:10. Paul, in the New Testament when they thought he was dead there in Antioch and Iconium: *they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.* So, they didn't give him a proper burial. And then the two witnesses in the tribulation period will not be given a proper burial because the world will hate their message. Revelation 11:9 says,

Those from the peoples and tribes and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. So, when you don't bury someone and you just let their corpse rot, that's a sign of disrespect.

The proper thing to do when somebody dies, even under the disciplinary hand of God, is to take them and bury them. Well, the story ends there, right? Not quite, because now the wife gets involved in the action. You see Sapphira's discipline in verses 7 through 10.

VI. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

A. Ananias' Discipline (1-6)

B. **Sapphira's Discipline (7-10)**

1. **Sin (7-8)**

2. Peter's confrontation & judgment (9)

3. Death and burial (10)

C. Result (11)

You see the sin of Sapphira in verses 7 and 8. It says: *Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours.* Notice the word "about." The Bible is pretty clear when it wants to be understood with mathematical precision. And other times just generally you'll see the word "about." Was it exactly three hours? No, it says *about* three hours had elapsed. And his wife came in not knowing what had happened. She did not know that her husband had been taken out by God through maximum divine discipline. Look at what Peter says to her in verse 8. *And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."* Remember verse 2? She was in on the conspiracy. Let's tell people we sold the property for this amount, when in reality we're going to misrepresent our generosity and hold back part of the proceeds for ourselves. Peter, in verse 8 is giving her an opportunity to come clean. Peter knows what's going on, but God is gracious. Maybe she's going to repent. Which unfortunately she does not do, so Peter confronts her just like he confronted Ananias.

Verse 9, *Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together (the conspiracy) to put the spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well."* So, the people

that took your husband's corpse and buried it have returned from their task, and they're going to bury your corpse. Ananias buriers had returned and will now bury Sapphira. Verse 10, *And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last--* So she died --*and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.* So, there's your second example of burial in the church age. What's the result of this whole thing? Maximum divine discipline and great fear came over the whole church. That's why I think these two were Christians. Their salvation was not in doubt because now the whole believing community is saying, we better not get involved in such and such sins, because look at how God is moving in the early church. Look at how He is protecting his newborn from viruses. So, the whole church is fearful. This is the first time the word church is used in the New Testament. When we were in Acts 2:47, I showed you there that some of the early manuscripts use the word church, some don't. I tried to give you evidence why I think the manuscripts that use the word church at the end of Acts 2 are legitimate. The King James Version uses the word church there. The NASB does not. I think the King James has it right here. We went into a big discussion about that, which I won't repeat here. But this one is unmistakable. Clearly, the church exists because you see the word church in Acts 5:11.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum says: "In the Book of Acts, both Israel and the Church exist simultaneously. The term Israel is used 20 times, and *ekklesia* (Church) nineteen times, yet the two groups are always kept distinct." Why even bring that up? Because there are people today that will tell you that the church did not exist until Paul started the church. Hyper-dispensationalism. Well, obviously Paul did not start the church because we don't even know who Paul is yet. I mean, Saul converted to Paul, Acts 9, is not going to take place for four chapters. The church clearly exists before Paul. Paul did not start the church. Paul explained the church better than anyone. Read the book of Ephesians, but he never started anything. Man does not start the dispensations. God does. God started the church age in Acts 2. Paul just explained what happened in Acts 2 and following. And you see this with these pre-Pauline references to the church. This hyper dispensational stuff that Paul started, the church and all these kinds of things people want to spread all that stuff. All that stuff does is cause confusion and dissension within the body of Christ. There's no fruit in any of it. I've seen Christians go to war over this. Be careful about Les Feldick on TV. If you've ever listened to him or watched him. He's a good teacher on a lot of things, but I'm telling you, Les will push that hyper-dispensationalism stuff like there's no tomorrow. We don't teach hyper-

dispensationalism here. We are normative dispensationalists meaning we think that church started in Acts 2. It did not start with Paul. Paul explained it, but he certainly did not start it.

And this is maximum divine discipline. This discipline had a purifying effect within the church. You can jot down Revelation 2:22-23. The same thing happened in Thyatira as the Lord brought discipline on this woman named Jezebel. And you'll notice it doesn't just have an effect within the church, it has an effect on those outside the church. Verse 11: *And great fear came over the whole church and over all those who heard of these things.* So, it had a spillover effect on those outside of the congregation as well. Its primary purpose was to put fear into the hearts of the people within the church. But when God does something like this, it has an effect on those outside of the church. And so, this is how this is recorded for us, because it's a record of how God spared the early church from an internal attack. The church probably could have been destroyed. At this point had God not done what did what He did. So, the fact that the church has survived for 2000 years is supernatural. God took steps to protect His newborn from a virus.

Three observations: Number one, notice Peter's apostolic authority. Peter has the authority to do what he did because he is an apostle. And the apostles were the foundations of the church. I'm not going to go around at Sugar Land Bible Church and pronounce death over people because I'm not an apostle. Number two, discipline is always stricter at the start of a new dispensation. When things start in terms of a new epoch of God or era of God, the discipline at the beginning tends to be stronger. Take the inauguration of the law. And Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, who offered strange fire. Leviticus 10:2 says, *fire came down from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.* That's the beginning of a new dispensation, the dispensation under law. The priests were not doing things the way God wanted. And so, God dealt with Nadab and Abihu via maximum divine discipline, just like he's dealing with Ananias and Sapphira her, because discipline tends to be stronger at the beginning of a new dispensation. And observation number three, judgment begins in the house of God. Peter, who was involved in all these things, would later write in his epistle (1 Peter 4:17) about thirty years later, *"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God."*

Today, your modern Christian is more worried about the White House than they are the church house. We're all worried about what the pagans are doing in the culture. Well, let me tell you something about the pagans. They're just fulfilling their job description. The pagans are acting like pagans. You put pagans in the white House, you're going to get a paganized White House. And is God all tense and uptight about what's happening in the White House? I'm sure God is concerned about that. But His ultimate concern is what's happening in the church house because judgment begins in the house of God. Wowzer. That's a pretty intense paragraph. Not exactly a light reading for a Wednesday, huh? But it's part of our Bible, so we've got to interact with it.