

Uh-Oh (Acts 4:32-5:11)

You'll remember from the last couple of weeks that we have stepped into a new experience for the early church—persecution

- Peter and John were arrested for preaching Jesus and commanded to do so no longer (but, 4:19-20)
- After they were threatened and released, they engaged the church in prayer (with spectacular results)
- [Read 4:31-37](#)

Results of prayer

- They were all filled with the Holy Spirit—again (need)
- Enabled them to be **bold, united** and **generous**
- “To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the immediate presence of God Himself, and it therefore will result in feeling what God feels, desiring what God desires, doing what God wants, speaking by God's power, praying and ministering in God's strength, and knowing with the knowledge which God Himself gives” –Wayne Grudem
- When God is moving powerfully amongst his people they are **generous** (cf. Acts 2:44-45)
- Acts 4:33b-35, NIV
 - **Grace** = caring for those in need; “**from time to time**”; **Apostles' feet**

Satan tried to attack the church from without (persecution), but it only seemed to make it more faithful/Christ-like

- So, now, Satan is going to switch tactics and try to destroy the church from within
- If Satan cannot conquer Jesus' church, he will work hard to corrupt it
 - Anytime Jesus' followers look too much like Him—look out... (Read 5:1-11)

Uh-oh...

Ananias and Sapphira were under no obligation to give—nobody was (cf. 4:34 = “**from time to time**”)

- There would have been zero problem if they simply kept their land or the proceeds from the sale (**verse 4**)
- “**God is a great respecter of our property as He is of our persons. He covets no person's money. What is not freely given out of a spirit of generosity and integrity, He neither needs nor wants.**” –John Phillips¹

The sin here was not that they did not give all the money—but that they pretended to (**lied to the Holy Spirit**)

- For us to pretend that we are more holy, more dedicated, more generous, more spiritual than we are is a great offense to God
- This was much of what made Jesus so mad toward the religious leaders of the day—and here!

We see at the end of our text that this event causes “**great fear**” to fall on the church and the community (**v. 11**)

- Probably multi-faceted fear
- But certainly, a healthy [fear of the Lord](#)

How does this text make you feel?

- I think if we are honest many of us may realize it makes us feel a little ruffled (upset) toward God
- I want to remind us—God is not the culprit here (you have 3: **Devil, Ananias & Sapphira**)
 - Notice: The ones held responsible are Ananias and Sapphira (can't say: the devil made me do it)
 - Why are our feelings of dismay directed at God rather than them?
 - Because we identify with them
 - **Most of us have some of them in us—the desire to be thought of as better or more holy or more spiritual than we are**
 - We not only see ourselves in them, we see view the same way they did—a convenient way to get what we want (and not that bad really) (cheating; little lies...)
 - But, the text teaches us that God sees sin differently (as it really is)—destructive and so, evil
 - He knows it is evil, because he sees what we fail to see—the endgame
 - Of our little flirtations with that guy that work
 - Of our web of dishonesty
 - Of our refusals to forgive

¹ John Phillips, *The John Phillips Commentary Series: Exploring Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1986), 94.
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- Of our drunkenness and numbing techniques
- Of our love of money
- God hates sin because of what it does to us. Whom He loves dearly (and affront to glory)

God has always sought to teach humanity this lesson ([Deuteronomy 21:18-21](#), NIV)

- Here we see a NT example of God still wanting to teach His people that it is not okay to persist in rebellion
- And we see (in both texts) that God's intended result is that people will see sin for what it is before God and so be **fearful** to disobey Him
 - You say, but what about the Gospel and Grace??!!??
 - You balk at this because we have a distorted view of gospel and grace

This text teaches us to not misunderstand grace

- You think that grace means that God is not that concerned about sin
 - Grace is amazing because God takes sin so seriously
 - The gospel frees us **from** sin—not **to** sin
- What exacerbates this false idea is the fact that we seem to get away with so much sin
- But, God will deal with all unrepentant sin
 - God only deals with sin one way: Judgment
 - We can deal with sin one of two ways: (1) On our own or, (2) through Jesus ([2 Cor 5:21](#)) ([1 Jn 1:9](#))
 - Grace and mercy only come to us through Jesus (Gospel and Cross)
 - God delays judgment ultimately until the end ([Hebrews 9:27](#))
 - So, it seems we are getting away with something, but... ([Romans 2:4-6](#), NLT)
 - But also, and man this is so true... ([Galatians 6:7](#), NASB)

If you continue in sin, God will deal with it (lovingly)

- You may repent and receive forgiveness (cross)
- But if you do not relent, you will receive chastening/discipline

My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves... He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (Excerpt from Hebrews 12)

It may very well be that this text in [Acts 5](#) is the loving discipline of God on a young church that, for their good, would train them and work in them **the peaceful fruit of righteousness**

- God's discipline here would help them become **more aware** of the schemes of the enemy (cf. [v. 3](#))
- And teach them **to resist** the temptation to be spiritual fakers
 - Satan can influence our thoughts, make us believe that they originate with us, and that they make perfect sense (couples sleeping together; unforgiveness; character assassination; entitlement) (LIES WE BELIEVE)
 - Our defense against the lies of the devil is the truth of God

I think **we often miss** the discipline of God, because perhaps we expect it to look more supernatural (like here)

- But, in the life of the believer, natural consequences for sin are part of the intentional work of God (**reap**)
- You may be experiencing the affects of alcohol abuse—physically, relationally, vocationally
- You may be experiencing an unending cycle of fiscal mishaps ([Malachi 3:7-12](#), NIV)
- You may be experiencing perpetual dissatisfaction (you are looking for satisfaction in self or idols)
- You may be unceasingly sick ([James 5:14-16](#), NASB)
 - But, you think, maybe I am just sick? Just suffer melancholy? Just can't make ends meet?
 - Maybe, but why not rather search your heart and see if there is anything you need to repent of and do so! **What is the Lord saying to you about your sin?**
 - Remember what Peter told this same community in [Acts 3:19](#)... (**times of refreshing**)
 - **Stop seeing your sin the way you do and start seeing it the way God does**
 - I.e. As a true threat to your well-being and those whom you love—and hence truly bad!
 - But also, as an assault on the Glory of God and standing of Christ's Church