

The last time we were together we took a look at Acts chapter 4 and the arrest of Peter and John. As you may recall they had been taken into court by the religious leaders of the day and without any cause, other than a lame man now walking, they were beaten and told to stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter responds exactly how you think that the sometimes strait forward disc. would, *Acts 4:19-20 Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

There was no stopping the plan for the salvation of man. Jesus died for our sins and belief in that will grant you forgiveness and all that comes with a right relationship with God. These guys aren't making this stuff up, the truth has to come out.

Acts 4:23-37 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.'

"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."
And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

A simple picture of rejoicing in the works of God, what a moment this must have been. Notice there all of the people were of one heart and one soul.

Everyone is loving God, serving one another and there is this feeling that its all good, God has blessed and finally we made it through the storms. Enter Chapter 5 and Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5:1-11 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 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? 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."

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Just when things seem to be going so good this horrible event takes place. People were giving as unto the Lord and to each other, no one had need or lacked anything. Whats mine is yours and we can live in perfect harmony together, love for God and love for one another is all we really need. Great in concept but don't forget about our old buddy sin. Always ready and willing, constantly searching for avenues to upset our lives.

If everything was so perfect then why would this husband and wife even want to do such a thing. I think there is a clue for us back in chapter 4. ***Acts 4:36-37 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*** Everyone is giving all they had and this one guy, Barnabas gets a mention because of a land donation. Notice he is from Cyprus, so he was most likely at Jerusalem at the time for the passover. Maybe he saw the miracle of the lame man and was one of those who now believed in Jesus. He would have seen right away how difficult it would be for the church to function in this hostile environment. They are growing at a rapid rate, they were not going to be treated fairly, remember the trial, and they were going to need a lot of prayer and support to continue.

I've got some land that i could sell to help the cause. Simple response to a need. But in the mind of Ananias and Sapphira its something much different. They saw the respect, they saw the accolades and decided to cook up this plan to sell some land and receive the same rewards as Barnabas.

Acts 5:1-2 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. This term "kept back" is the Greek word *nosphizomai* it means to misappropriate. It's the same word that we find in Joshua chapter seven to describe the sin of Achan when he decided to keep back some the spoils of Jericho for himself when God told Israel to leave everything behind after that incredible victory. The only other time we find this word in the NT is in ***Titus 2:9-10 Exhort bond servants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, (nosphimozmai)but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.***

This really describes what's going on here, not just an oversight but outright deception and theft. Interesting that both Achan and Ananias disrupt the flow. The victory of God takes a pause and a very selfish and stupid act becomes the focus. For whatever reason Ananias decides that the gift of Barnabas wasn't the real blessing, the real blessing comes from the way that people see you or tell you what a great gift that was. Identical gifts but two different hearts.

Right before the crucifixion of Jesus He gathered some friends for dinner. Mary decides to break open a very costly flask of oil and anoint Jesus. The gift of sacrifice is something that the Lord will take notice of but it has to be because He is worthy of our best, not for our own gain. Judas is in a bad spot at this moment, the oil has been wasted, he is not happy and his heart toward Jesus is plain to see, ***John 12:4-6 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*** To the outsider looking in Judas seems to have some genuine concerns about the stewardship of the resource he had been entrusted with, but that outside covering would soon give way to the real Judas., ***This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.*** Two gifts with two completely different agendas, Barnabas gave to bless the Lord, Ananias gave to bless himself.

Acts 5:2-11

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? 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."

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Lets' title this section "God don't play" First off, lets get our facts straight. The sin here that led to the death of this husband and wife was not based on anything other than pride. It was Ananias's land to keep or to sell, after he sold the land it was his money to keep all to himself or to give any or all of it to the kingdom, the problem isn't even the lie itself. The real issue that God has a problem with lies in the motive behind the lie.

Peter asks, ***"why has Satan filled your heart"*** No doubt Satan can influence us, he can plant the seed or seeds that will cause us to stumble. We can hear something or see something that has no real evil intent at all, like the gift of land from Barnabas, and Satan can twist that up in our heads and plant all kinds of thoughts in our heads. Why is Barnabas getting so much attention, I give to the cause all the time. People like him better than me, on and on we go. Satan may plant those seeds, but that's all he can do, the actual sinning part is all up to us.

We face an enemy that knows the word of God, Satan is aware that his demise is imminent and eternal, he's down to last resort fighting. There is no victory for Satan and so he tries to use us as kind of a jab at God as our sinful actions displease our heavenly Father. Thank God for His word that we are warned and can see these types of attacks coming. ***James 1:12-15 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.***

We all have those things in our lives that are not the perfect standard of God. They trip us up and they get into our minds and if they go unchecked they will birth sin into our lives. ***Matt 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.*** The murder of someone just doesn't happen, its seed is born into the mind, grown in the heart and finally the body is taken over and sin runs rampant. Sinful thoughts are just a part of this corrupt tent we dwell in, but while they are thoughts they can be dealt with if they give birth to those thoughts and we take action, then there will be consequence.

Peter has been used to give a lame man a fresh lease on life, he most definitely is living a life led by the HS and because of that has been given authority over the believers that are coming to Christ. As an apostle of Christ Peter would oversee the gifts of the people and the distribution of those gifts to the needy. The plan of Ananias was to get on the good side of the great apostle. Notice here that it's not the lie to Peter that causes all the problem, ***Acts 5:4 You have not lied to men but to God.***" You may be able to pull a fast one on Jeff or on me or on the church, but you will never get one by Jesus.

Heb 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Ananias shows up with the expectation dropping this huge donation at the feet of Peter and receiving some form of a pat on the back. Peter checks Ananias without any delay.

On a side note, this would be the definition of the word of knowledge mentioned in **1 Cor 12:8**. The HS immediately showed Peter what's really going on and Peter, in his typical fashion, just comes right out with it. No chance for explanation, no second chances here, you are busted, Ananias hears these words and just falls to the ground dead.

At first this may seem harsh, I mean after all this is kind of a no harm type of sin. Yes they withheld money, yes they lied but no one got hurt. It's not like they murdered or anything like that, it's just a little sin. That's the mentality that will get us into trouble every time. Sin, one sin, is the problem. No matter how insignificant we feel our sin is against the perfect, 100% sinless standard of Christ, any sin needs to be dealt with.

We really have to understand the concepts of precedence to understand this scenario. From time to time in the scriptures God establishes for us very clear boundaries. When those boundaries are crossed there is a very swift action to make sure that everyone else will see the severity of what just happened. It's important to keep in mind that Ananias and Sapphira are part of this new church. They are believers in Christ, giving what they sold for the growth and provision of the church.

Since they are believers does that mean that they are no longer sinners? no. It simply means to them what it means for us today, we believe in Jesus, we have asked for forgiveness from our sins and because of that heaven awaits. We have been made righteous through the sacrifice of Jesus but rest assured, sin is still in our lives, **1 John 1:8-9 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

We will be sinners until Jesus returns for His church. Until that day we are going to sin, we are going to make mistakes and we are going to fall, does that mean we are not saved? no, it just means we are sinners, saved by grace.

Now, as Gods' kids, wouldn't it be better, if the discipline, especially this severe a discipline, went to the sons and daughters of God. In other words, if God chooses to take the breath from a sinner, why not His own? It's kind of a win for Ananias and Sapphira.

If you ask me what I did all day at work and I tell you I was studying the bible on line and then I just fall over dead. Then later, in my office you find that the last thing I did on my computer was an eight hour marathon of ebay, you tube and facebook please don't think that I was trying to deceive the HS, lie about my study habits and so God just took me out. Rejoice that I am with the Lord and know that I am a sinner saved by grace.

Don't miss the lesson that God is sending a wake up call to His church, God don't play!! Remember when you were in school? The whole class is talking, passing notes, goofing off and then all of the sudden, wham!! It's your buddy who gets nailed. The entire class is suddenly on their best behavior and quiet again. Reminds me of the story in **1 Chron 13:6-12**

So they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.

And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez Uzza to this day. David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God to me?" Doesn't this seem kinda harsh as well? I mean Uzza was just trying to keep the Ark from hitting the ground. Once again we see God setting a precedent for those who take liberty with what He has said. *Num 4:15 And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. Plain and simple, do not touch the ark or you will die!*

By the time David returns to get the ark, in the 15th chapter, attitudes have changed, the ark is not on a cart, but rather carried by the poles just as God told them to do. To sum all of this up, God is making a very strong point. I read a quote that said, *"the church has never been harmed or hindered by opposition from the outside, it has been perpetually harmed and hindered by perils from the inside."* God is a God of love but also a God to be feared. Contrary to popular belief God isn't one of your buddies to test and to toy with, He is to be worshiped and held in our highest of praise.

Ananias has this scheme, Peter reveals that he knows what's up courtesy the HS and Ananias falls dead. Some believe that the shock of this revealed sin caused a heart attack to occur. Aren't you glad we serve a God of mercy today! Can you imagine how different this service would be if there was immediate judgment for your secret sins when you came to church.

Drop a 20 in the offering even though that's not even close to the tithe you should be giving..pop. Tell someone, "I'll pray for you" ..and then you don't..liar...pop. Maybe you gave a halfhearted effort in your service to God this week...pop. Maybe you were mean to your wife..pop mean to your husband..pop God reveals to us in this story just how serious our sin is but also how gracious He can be. We all deserve this kind of treatment and yet God gives us unending grace and mercy.

Acts 5:11-13 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. "great fear" that's probably the understatement of the year. It's a truth we do well to learn, Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

We see the people still unified, they were still in one accord but we also see a new respect given to the service of the Lord. None of the rest dared to join them (speaking of the disc.) but they also knew why they were in the authority position they were in, God had put these guys in service to grow His church. This was serious, there is no room for a casual commitment. **Mark 12:30** *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* If we would just give God our all, there is no room for us to get in the way and mess things up. God doesn't want us only when it's convenient or if we feel like today is a good day to serve. We have made a commitment, entered into a contract if you will, not to the church but to God and we need carry that with the diligence it requires. Jesus wants us be all in or all out but by His grace and mercy we get to serve Him when .5 is all we can deliver. **1 Cor 9:24-25** *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.* We can become so guilty of just keeping pace with those around us when we really should be doing what we feel God has called us to do. **James 4:17**

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Acts 5:14-16 *And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

This section shows us the results of Godly discipline. The HS is alive and well, people are not running from God because they fear Him, just the opposite. The truth is alive and well, Jesus is able to heal. What an awesome time this must have been.

As we soon see its very short lived. **Acts 5:17-21** *Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.*

Acts 5:22-39 *But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"*

Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.

When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them. Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God

And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

We wont spend a lot of time in this section and we are not far from finished but there is on thing I really want you to see. Since Chapter one of this book this has been a crazy ride. The spirit falls people get saved and then everything goes nuts. This all starts with a trip to Sunday service. A lame man gets healed, Peter and John are put in prison and beaten. Let out, threatened, rejoicing that God has delivered, more church growth. Ananias and Sapphira hit the scene with a bad deal, more preaching, more prison, Notice this time an angel sets them free and they head right back to the call. Now the religious leaders are really mad and devised plans to kill these guys and finally a voice of reason is heard "*And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God.*"

This sound a lot like the lives each one of us live everyday, up, down, God moves, we rejoice, up,down, God moves, we rejoice..On and on we go. Is there a peace in serving God absolutely, Does it get hard sometimes? yes, does mean anything to us either way? it shouldn't. in John. Jesus was sharing of the reality of His sacrifice and His requirements to be counted as one of His kids. some thought that this was over the top, This is to hard and too much to fit in to the lives that we lead,

This was too much for some and they left, Jesus turns to His disc. and asks them if they want to go away as well, their response should resonate deep in our hearts. ***John 6:68-69 "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."***

May that be our resolve today, where else are you going to go, there is no other option. The aggravation and pain of trials and struggles in this life by no means hold a candle to the joy of eternal life with our Heavenly Father. Our mandate should be to follow Christ, period. If things get tough because of our commitment to Christ then so be it, God has called us and He will be faithful to finish the work He has started.

Acts 5:41-42 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

After all of the ups and downs that will happen to us while we walk with Jesus may this moment here in acts be our witness. The leaders thought they could intimidate and discourage the apostles with a beating. Instead, they left **rejoicing**. They were not rejoicing that they suffered, but that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. It was a privilege to be associated with Jesus in any circumstance, even to suffer shame.

God has everything under control, there is a peace in that knowledge. ***Jer 29:11-14 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back from your captivity;***