

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Part V: The Ministry Of The First Local And Universal Church, Acts 3:1-8:3
C. Christ's Work To Discipline Sin In The Body
(Acts 4:32-5:11)

I. Introduction

- A. God is holy, or separate from sin, and He calls His people to be holy just like He is, 1 Peter 1:15-16.
- B. Failure for a believer to be holy in certain circumstances in the local church can do great harm to the rest of the body, and, for that reason, God Himself occasionally dispenses severe discipline on the sinful.
- C. Acts 4:32-5:11 records such a discipline, and it offers meaningful application for us in our day:

II. Christ's Work To Discipline Sin In The Body, Acts 4:32-5:11.

- A. When the Early Church relied on Him, God greatly blessed its ministries, Acts 4:32-37:
 - 1. The blessed unity produced by the Holy Spirit led to selfless sharing of possessions, Acts 4:32.
 - 2. The Apostles simultaneously were powerfully witnessing the Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection, and God's abundant grace was upon them all as the spiritual gifts worked mightily in the group, 4:33.
 - 3. Indeed, no believer lacked any material good: as many as had lands or houses sold them, bringing the proceeds of these sales to place at the Apostles' feet for distribution to needy believers, Acts 4:34-35.
 - 4. Of special blessing was the gift by Joses, surnamed Barnabas, meaning "son of consolation": he was a Levite, a member of the tribe that was mainly to receive Israel's tithes rather than to give heavily under the Law (cf. Deut. 12:19); he sold a parcel of land he owned on Cyprus, and returned to lay its proceeds at the Apostles' feet as a moving sacrificial gift by a Levite for God's people, Acts 4:36-37. It is little wonder that he became a source of great consolation to needy believers throughout the body!
- B. Impressed by all this, Ananias and his wife Sapphira saw an opportunity to be viewed as godly by other Christians through participating in this giving program, but doing so under false pretenses, Acts 5:1-2:
 - 1. Ananias and Sapphira saw all this giving, and desired to be viewed by others as godly givers.
 - 2. Accordingly, they sold a possession to lay money at the apostles' feet, pretending to give all of the proceeds to gain fame as godly while secretly holding back part of it for their own use, Acts 5:1-2.
 - 3. However, in doing so, they failed to honor the holiness and thus the deity of God the Holy Spirit!
- C. God had to discipline their action severely and quickly lest the Early Church think such deception against the Holy Spirit was tolerable, for tolerating sin against the Holy Spirit was to tolerate sin against God, and the Lord could not tolerate the Early Church thinking the Holy Spirit was anything less than God! Hence, God used the Apostle Peter to expose this fact by exposing Ananias' lie (as follows), Acts 5:3-4:
 - 1. When Peter exposed the lie, he noted Ananias and Sapphira had had full control of the sale's proceeds, and thus were fully responsible for how its entire sum had been disbursed, cf. Acts 5:4a; 2 Cor. 9:6-7.
 - 2. Accordingly, they sinned in giving part while pretending to give all so as falsely to impress others as being sacrificial givers at the cost of lying to God's people and to the Lord in the matter, Acts 5:3, 4b!
 - 3. That lie was spawned by Satanic influence (Acts 5:3), one that if left unchecked could spread disrespect for the Holy Spirit in the Church to the Church's harm and to the dishonor of the Holy Spirit!
- D. When Ananias' lie was exposed, God slew him to protect the Holy Spirit's reputation, Acts 5:4-6.
- E. After onlookers had been impressed to revere God over this event, and the young men had carried out Ananias' dead body, Peter addressed his wife Sapphira three hours later, exposing her part in the lie, and she was likewise slain by God for her role in this sin against God the Holy Spirit, Acts 5:7-10a.
- F. When Sapphira was likewise buried next to her husband, great awe for the Lord came upon all, 5:10b-11.

Lesson: *For making a contribution to the Church under false pretenses that failed to honor God the Holy Spirit as a HOLY God, God killed Ananias and Sapphira in Church discipline!*

Application: *(1) May we see our accountability before the Lord to revere Him and to live separate from sin. (2) In giving to the Lord's work in particular, may our aim be to (a) HONOR GOD and (b) MEET the NEEDS of OTHER BELIEVERS as in Barnabas' case, (3) NOT to (a) give to FEED SELFISH AMBITION or PRIDE under (b) FALSE PRETENSES as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira!*