

Lying To The Spirit and Dying

by James Jennings

This sermon delves into the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, emphasizing the severity of lying to the Holy Spirit and the divine judgment that ensued. The preacher draws parallels between the fear of God's judgment in the early church and the need for a greater fear of God in our lives today. Through historical examples of divine judgments in missionary contexts, the sermon highlights God's protection of His people and the importance of purity and genuine motives in our actions.

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Description

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Transcript

Well, before I forget this thought, so Prince mentioned at the start of his sermon, as he looked at Mark 5 in the Demonic, one of the things that he emphasized is it's something that it feels so far removed from us, right? It just feels like this happened 2,000 years ago. And we're going to find a similar thing with the passage that I'm going to look at. You could approach it thinking, wow, this is so far removed.

And we don't look at it with the face value on how it really can be more applicable today than we realize. And I would even back to Prince's message. I don't know if you guys heard, but at some point early on when he was reading the text and making points from the passage, a young guy, Eric, in the back who used to live with me 14 years ago, he just randomly happened to be here this Sunday.

He was at the Grace House. He wouldn't look me in the eyes before the service. We were talking.

He wouldn't give me any eye contact. I don't know what provoked him in the middle of Prince's sermon. But you know what Prince is talking about? The very things of demons impacting and influencing people's minds.

And right in the middle of talking about that, there's a guy back there who we know who hasn't been around in so many years, and he wasn't the same guy as he was at the Grace House. He is far worse than where he was back then. And so I just say that as a practical example here.

I'm sitting here hearing Prince speak about something, and you might think this is some far-off topic of demons. Brethren, it's not. Some far-off thing that has no application in our own day and age.

Let's pray. Let's pray for Eric even. Father, Lord, it's something to see Eric here today.

Lord, he wouldn't look me in the eyes. He was disturbed. And Lord, I look at that through a biblical lens.

And my Bible, even what our brother just talked about in the first hour, Lord, we don't want to be here today as the humans who try to chain people up and we're trying to force some change that only Your power can create in that person. And Lord, that's what Eric needed 14 years ago at 728 North Pine. Lord, that's what he needs right now.

And Lord, I pray You'd set him free from the spirits that are oppressing him. Lord, the world might not describe it in that way, but Lord, we're not here as people of the world. We're here as spiritual people.

Lord, we're just saying about You, the holy God. And Lord, You're holy. And You're so holy, You're so set apart, that Lord, we don't want to blend You wrongly with carnal thinking of the world.

Lord, we want to think about You for who You truly are in all of Your glory, even Lord, in all of Your terror. Lord, there are things about You, even some that we will look at in the following moments, Lord, Lord, we can step back. Lord, we can almost feel like apologizing for who You are or certain things that You have done.

But Lord, even that demoniac You set free, Lord, it's a miracle. It actually is a testimony of Your power. Lord, prior to that happening, it just looks like the world has fallen.

But Lord, the world is fallen. And there are people like even that demoniac in our own day and age. And Lord, we pray You'd have mercy.

Lord, we might not recognize and witness in a certain way demons come out of a person and go into a bunch of pigs and they go down to the river. Lord, we're not living in life expecting to see something of that nature, but Lord, we do expect there's power in Your name and that we can, in the name of Jesus Christ, just as we read in the Word, Lord, we can command even devils to depart, Lord. Father, we don't want to approach Your Word and just rip that out of it and think as if that was just something for the apostles.

And so Lord, forgive us. If there's in any way, Lord, situations that we've approached in a carnal way, and we've not approached it according to Thy Word. And so Father, we thank You for Your Word.

We thank You that we have a guide. We have a light. Lord, we're not sitting here in the dark today.

And so Lord, I just commit this time to You. Pray You'd bless this message to Your people. Lord, use this.

What I'm going to share, Lord, use it in my own heart. Use it in the heart of the people sitting here. Lord, there's certain things that I don't know how they could impact someone's soul.

But Lord, You work in ways that we cannot see. And so we trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

We'll go ahead, turning your copy of God's Word to Acts chapter five. Acts chapter five. We're going to start reading in Acts chapter four.

And this, you know, the book of Acts is Luke. He has written extensively about the church and the happenings of this early church. And there is much here.

Again, this isn't just some history book. There's things here to really consider about who God is. And we're going to see that this morning or this afternoon.

So let's go to Acts chapter four. And why don't we start, yeah, verse 32. We'll start in verse 32.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul. No one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own. But they had everything in common.

And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon all of them. You see that? They had great power, great grace.

If you look back at verse 31, it says there when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They continued to speak the Word with boldness. So you've got people being filled with the Spirit.

You've got people having great power. And you've got great grace upon them all. Verse 34, there was not a needy person among them.

For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet. And it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, a Levite, a native of Cyprus, he sold a field that belonged to him and he brought the money and he laid it at the apostles' feet.

So you get a picture here of the early church. And this guy Barnabas, he goes and he sells a field and he brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet for them to discern how to use these resources. Now chapter five, and you know, the chapter number obviously is added after the fact.

It's always connected by a contrasting word. He laid it at the apostles' feet, but he gave a positive example of what was happening and then he gives a negative example. And this is something that is written down for our example that we would learn from this.

So we don't want to just read over this and dismiss it, minimize it. There are certain ways that this could apply in our own hearts. We're going to consider that.

But a man named Ananias with his wife, Sapphira, doesn't say if they had any kids, they sold a piece of property. So they did exactly what Barnabas has done and many others are doing. Verse two, and Luke specifically, he adds this, and with his wife's knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds.

So the husband's leading apparently and keeping back some of the proceeds of the sell and Luke makes it clear the wife, she was fully aware of what was taking place. And he brought it and laid it at the apostles' feet. And we don't see what he says right here, but we get Peter's response.

So Luke records Peter's response. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? So Peter knows that they kept

back some of the proceeds. How did Peter know that? You know, there's a manifestation of the Spirit of God, of discernment of spirits.

You know, the Holy Spirit can give a prophetic insight into something. Now Peter goes on and it helps when you see what Peter goes on to say. This is going to help us.

Verse 4, While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Meaning, was it expected in the early church that if you sold your house, you had to give 100% of the proceeds to the church? No, that was not the expectation, right? It was all at their disposal. They had a decision, right? Imagine they sat around the table as a couple and they were speaking about selling this property and then they were talking about how much to give. You know, how much of this sell do we give to the church? And they were having that discussion and then the day came where they go down to the real estate office and the property is sold and that money is put into their bank account and they have these resources and Peter's reminding them it was at your disposal.

Why is it, goes on in verse 4, that you have contrived this deed in your heart? So something was contrived, gave birth in the heart. And then he says this, you have not lied to man, but to God. Now, he lied.

How did he lie? You might want more to be said here and it's going to become clearer with the life when that situation, we're going to read that. But clearly they were giving the impression that the money they laid at Peter's feet was what? All of the profits from the sell, right? Whether he said, he looked at it and said, hey, this is all of the profits of the sell or not. That was the impression that they were trying to convey to Peter or actually, I think it, maybe I missed that.

It says apostles feet. Is that plural? Yeah, plural. And so multiple people are there.

They're laying it down. They're giving the impression this is all of these resources that we got from the sell of the home. Okay, verse five.

And maybe, you know, this, I don't even remember the first time I read this passage as a new Christian. Right, but if you just stop right here at verse four and you did a survey to people who've never read the Bible and you said, hey, you knowing God and having the knowledge of God, how do you think God would punish the people who did what they just did? Right, you surveyed a group of people. How do you think God would punish? And maybe you can even add this.

How do you think God would punish them if these people on the survey, they had a working knowledge of the Old Testament? They knew the whole Old Testament and they hear about what this couple has done and you then think, how would God punish? What would even be some, is there any example in the Old Testament that almost feels a little parallel with what we're reading about here? You've got the early church. They're trying to progress. You have corrupt motives coming in.

It doesn't say that that was hindering the advance of the gospel, but you can imagine if this goes on like that and you've got people there just for show, that's going to absolutely hinder the purity of the church. Does that make you think of anything from the Old Testament? Achan, yeah, I mean, if you look, there's actually the exact same Greek phrase in the Septuagint right here for kept back. Exact same phrase right there in Joshua.

When it talks about Achan keeping back, that's exactly what they did here. When Achan kept back, what was it that he kept back? A cloak and some other things? And what happened? God was opposed to Israel. It's rather shocking.

But yeah, what would people put on a survey? Because honestly, the first time you read this, and maybe that's for some of you all right here, I don't know. But verse 5, look at verse 5. And he just made it clear, the sin, the primary sin is you've lied to God. It's not about a lie to Peter.

It's not about primarily trying to make it appear like you were really sacrificial. That's not the primary sin. Is that happening? Did they sin by trying to make it look they were more sacrificial than they really were? Yes.

Is it true they sinned by lying to Peter? Yes, but the primary thing, they lied to the Spirit of God. That's the main thing Peter emphasizes here. And it's that very Spirit of God who revealed to Peter, a possessor of the Spirit, that what was said was not true.

It's the only way he knew this inside. And now we actually see the Spirit of God at work in verse 5. When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. Now, was Ananias given a chance right there in the text to repent? Was he given a chance? Nothing in the text indicates he had any opportunity to rethink it.

It was too late for him to do that. Now we're going to see his wife is given a chance. His wife is given a chance.

Now look what happens. First off, we might be shocked by the punishment. I mean, how many people would have put on that pole, oh yeah, they lied and they made it appear like they gave everything when they didn't.

Oh, God's going to strike the person dead. How many people would really put that on a pole? I don't think a lot would. Now, the next thing too I think is surprising.

What do you think a divine judgment of God... Well, we know what it's going to produce, right? We know it's going to produce fear. And that's what happens. Great fear came upon all who heard it.

Let's keep reading. Verse 6. The young men rose and wrapped Him. And notice, the young men rose, meaning the young men were where at this point? They were sitting there.

Some would say this is during a church meeting. And it's going to go on to say, three hours later the wife comes in and that these were set times of prayer. I can't necessarily prove that, but the young men were there.

I mean, you've got the apostles, plural. You've got young men. They're all here and they just witnessed someone drop dead and die.

And I hope... Who killed Ananias? Who slew him? The Lord did. We just had that in our grace group. 2 Samuel 2. Hannah's prayer is the Lord who kills.

She said that in the prayer. That's absolutely right. I'm absolutely amazed.

You go read some commentaries on this. There are people who want to say that Peter had a hidden, concealed weapon. And that he killed Ananias.

And Luke just doesn't record that. The same type of people will argue that everything before Pharaoh and the staff turning into a serpent is an optical illusion. People want to rip out the supernatural power from God's Word.

We don't want to do that. We don't want to tear God's Word apart. Ok, verse 7. So the young men, they take him out and wrapped him up and they carried him out and buried him.

Verse 7. After an interval of about three hours, the wife came in. Not knowing what had happened. Does that surprise you that it says she doesn't know what happened? Why do you think it would say she doesn't know what happens? Because you know what we're about to get? What are we about to get? We're about to get an unfiltered, genuine response.

If she knew what had happened, what do you think that would do as her response? I mean, if you just found out from your friend, hey, you're about to go into a meeting, your husband just died there two hours ago. What do you think that's going to do? Is she going to get an honest, genuine response in the situation? No, she's not going to give that. And to me that is striking because sometimes you can almost feel bad trapping someone.

As a parent, there's times you have knowledge about what your kid did, but you don't let them know you have the knowledge and it almost feels like you're hiding something and then you ask them a question to see what response they give. Well, you do that because you want to get a genuine response. And that's exactly what happens here.

Peter doesn't tell her what had happened. He doesn't strike fear in her to see if she'll now, based on that, make the right decision. He wants to see, without her knowing of the death of her husband, does she really fear God or not? The last thing you need is someone making a false repentance out of fear and it's not genuine in the heart.

So verse 7, after an interval of three hours, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter said to her, tell me, whether you sold the land for so much. So she's got an opportunity right here to say no, we didn't sell it for that amount.

She has an opportunity to repent, to own that this is a deception that is happening right here. She's given that opportunity right there. And you know what, we could speculate about this woman and being there and even wondering why was she even being asked this question.

I mean, if you came into church and you just sold a property and gave money and one of us went up and asked you how much you sold the property, did you really sell it for this amount? Wouldn't that kind of make your suspicions rise ahead of time? What's her answer? She said yes for so much. Verse 9, but Peter said to her, and he makes the same statement, he says it a little different way, how is it? How? He said, how is this possible? How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband. She finds out right there her husband's dead.

They're at the door. Now, where were those guys before? They were in the meeting. Now they're at the door.

I mean, some would say they literally just got back after three hours of burying the person and they're right back right at the moment when she drops dead. Whether that is or that isn't, it doesn't really matter. But he says, the people who buried your husband are at the door.

They will carry you out. That's shocking. Immediately, she fell down at his feet and breathed her last.

When the young men came in, they found her dead. And they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Verse 11, and great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

So there you have the great fear again. Let's keep reading. Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles and they were all together in Solomon's portico.

None of the rest dared join them. That's interesting. There's a group of people who don't dare join them.

And I would agree with most who take that to mean it's other people who had false pretenses and false motives. This couple dying, all of a sudden, just made different cares not want to be a part of this. And look at verse 14, and more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, laid them on cots and mats, as Peter came by, at least His shadow might fall on some of them.

It's incredible. So there you have our passage. And I kind of give a lot of running commentaries as we're going through that.

But I don't know about you, the last time you've thought about this passage. And it's very, very thought-provoking to witness everything that is happening right here in this situation. And even I was thinking about we so often think that a sermon might lead to revival, or some great preaching might.

But what led to a revival right here in this early church? It was a divine judgment of God. Church discipline. Some might even want to use that type of language.

I personally wouldn't. Isn't that interesting? It strikes a fear of God. If one application from this passage that you and I should have in our lives, we should read Acts 5 and go away with a greater what? A greater terror of the Lord.

A greater fear of God. That's a right response to have. A greater fear of God.

Well, let's think of a few things more from this passage right here. And the first thing is, and I mention this, but to think about what the specific sin is. Let's think of that, alright? Because you've got to get this.

Is the sin of doing something with a false motive and having a false pretense, is that sinful? Absolutely. If I'm trying to represent myself in a certain way to you all that is not genuine, it is not true. If I'm trying to make myself to appear to you all more zealous than I actually am, if I make it appear like I gave a certain amount when it really wasn't genuine, is that sinful? Yeah, that is sinful.

Is that the thing that Peter reproves his couple for? It's not. He reproves them for lying to the Holy Spirit. How often do you think about sinning against the Spirit and it happening in this way? I mean, I don't think I think about that enough in my own life as a Christian.

And if you didn't notice this, make sure you catch this. Lying against the Spirit is lying against who? God, right? Look at verse 3. Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? Then you go to the end of

verse 4. You have lied not to man, but to God. Well, how did they lie to the Spirit? Did the lying to the Spirit happen in Ananias and Sapphira's hearts right when they were sitting around the dinner table scheming this plan? If one takes them to have been true Christians who committed a willful sin, well clearly, the moment the Christian is thinking of something sinful to do, who's at work within the Christian trying to prevent them from going down that path? The Helper? The Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, righteousness, and the judgment? I mean, is that when the sin against the Spirit was starting? If they're Christians and they're going in a path that's against the Spirit of God? Or is Peter referring to the fact that when they lied to Him, the Apostle and Him being full of the Spirit, and maybe them being unregenerate trying to deceive Peter, that right there their lying to Him was actually a lie against the Holy Spirit? Which one of those or another might it even be referring to right here? What does it even mean lying against the Spirit? How does that even apply to you and me? Well, here one way to look at it is, and I think this is really what he's getting at here.

Did they know of the Spirit's power and work in a greater way than many of us do? I specifically read earlier in chapter 4, they were all filled with the Spirit. Verse 33, great power, great grace. I'm not saying we aren't seeing great power and great grace, but this happens after all of these manifestations of the Spirit of God are happening within the life of the church.

This is happening after all these people have been converted. You've got this power of God. You've got the Spirit convicting of sin, righteousness, and the judgment.

And you're scheming about deceiving Peter, but you're ultimately deceiving the Lord. And look at v. 9. Look at v. 9 how it works. I think this really gets to the heart of it.

Peter said to her, how is it that you have agreed together to do what? To test the Spirit of the Lord. To tempt God. So, Ananias, Sapphira, you know that there is a protector of this church.

You know this protector is in your home. The Holy Spirit knows your thoughts. He knows your motives.

He knows your intentions. He knows everything. And you have this knowledge.

And you're going to try to experiment to see, well, what if we're just deceitful in this one area in our lives? We want to have a good reputation as big givers, but you know what? We don't want to give everything. We're going to keep some of it back. We know the Spirit is aware of everything.

Even the intentions of our heart. But you know what, honey? Let's experiment to see. Will the Spirit do anything if we are deceitful in this area right here in our lives? Is the Spirit of God going to do anything? We're going to test the Spirit of God.

Is the Spirit going to allow this to happen? The sin being described, this act of tempting God, it means you're testing His patience and challenging not only His all-knowing nature, but His ability to punish. Would the Spirit stand by and allow this corruption to happen and possibly cripple this early church? And this couple together, unified, had the boldness to sin in such a way. Right here.

Now, what happens when God doesn't judge when someone boldly sins against the Spirit of God? What happens when you have generations and generations or years and years of no judgment from God? What does that tend to do to people? There's a verse, right? What verse talks about this? Ecclesiastes 8. Listen to this. Ecclesiastes 8. 11. Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, what happens? The heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.

So imagine if Ananias and Sapphira, nothing happened here. No judgment from God. The Spirit doesn't reveal to Peter the truth.

They don't die. And they start to get involved in the community, even having a reputation of being incredibly sacrificial givers. And let's say all of that resources that they're giving even gives them some sort of influence within this early church.

And then that influence actually starts corrupting the church in certain ways. The Spirit is preventing all of that from happening by revealing the truth by judging these two individuals. And you know what? We saw right here that Ecclesiastes' verse has lived out right there in verse 13.

None of the rest dared join them, but they held them in high esteem. The church had a sense at this moment in its history, God is among these people. And you know what? Even studying this, it puts fear in you.

Like God can kill me at any moment. He has that power. It makes you think of David saying there's but a step between life and death.

And here they lied to the Holy Spirit. The church is called what? The temple of the Spirit of God. The Bible talks about us corporately being a temple, and then it does seem in 1 Corinthians 6 there's an individual reality of being a temple of the Holy Spirit.

And that made me think of this. Imagine you and I going into the Holy of Holies, which very few people, these high priests, these different people could even go into the temple. Most of us, we'd all be on the outside.

Imagine going in there and scheming in the temple, and talking there in the very presence of God, and talking with your wife about well, let's lie to the church about how much we're giving. Would you do that right there in the temple itself in the very presence and shekinah glory of God? Would an Old Testament Jew have done that? You'd think there's no way they would have done it. That's terrifying.

Brethren, this is the thing, us as New Covenant Christians, if I'm sitting at my table, and I'm looking at my wife, and I'm making some sinful plan with her to further our reputation in some carnal way, that's the same thing as me being in that temple. Because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We can right there deceive the very Spirit of God.

And so we need a greater fear of the Lord even in that sense. The church, we're the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. When you and I are dishonest, it carries the same significant impact I would argue is lying in that way in the Old Testament right there in the Holy of Holies, right there in the temple, right there in the presence of God.

One commentator, he says this, they would have succeeded Ananias and Sapphira in winning the esteem of man if they could only have kept God silent. If God would allow it to happen, if God would but keep silent, they could have done everything. But God thought it was necessary to show that young church that He was in them, that He was among them, that He is a God of truth.

He saw fit to impress upon them all by a terrible proof the fact that He has not deserted the earthly however much the earthly may set aside or forget Him. And you know, what's one of the statements people make about Ananias and Sapphira? And I think it's a right statement to repeat. They would say that

the lack of judgments like this happening in the church is what upon the church? The fact that this doesn't happen is in itself a judgment on the church.

Have you ever heard someone say it in that way? Because a judgment like this, an act of the Lord purifying in this way, what did it lead to in the church? I mean, it led to revival. It led to the fear of the Lord. It led to all manner of conversions.

It led to a sense that God is alive. In the same way, if in the first hour right back there, something would have happened and demons would have left the guy Eric who came here and was speaking nonsense, we would all have been reminded if he was sitting in his right mind giving a testimony here at the end of the 10 a.m. and being baptized 20 minutes later, we'd all be sitting here just in awe of God's power at what He just did in that person's life. You see? Again, we don't want to think, well, that's far off.

That's impossible with the demonic. We don't want to think, oh, this is far off. You know what? The early church, the Lord saw fit to act as He did right here.

I don't know how many other times the Lord has done something specific in this way. I'm going to share some examples here at the end of my message. It's an encouragement of God's protection of the church.

So, this is shocking, this passage. These people. It's kind of like Prince said.

There's names here. One person made the comment, you don't hear of any daughters named Sapphira. It's like that name's been ruined by this conduct.

Well, let me think of a few observations and then we'll have a final thought here on this passage. One thing to recognize, did their sin happen in some unguarded moment? Just some unguarded... Sorry, I shouldn't have said it maybe in that way. Was this just some compulsive thing? You know, you're in the line, and you're going up to put the money down and you're kind of hashing it out right there.

You just don't get that sense. You get the sense this is very willful. This is very willful by this couple, what they did.

And that just shows an extreme hardness for them to seek to carry it out. All for what motivation? Their reputation. I'm telling you, brethren, this is terrifying just in that sense.

This is a terrifying example of the snare that plagues humanity of people wanting to be people pleasers and be known amongst people in a positive light and to portray themselves in a way that is not genuine. So, you want to think of an application that should strike fear in you? If I asked you, hey, do you know anyone who's been killed by God in a judgment and it was because they misrepresented what they did to make it look like they were more giving than they really were? If you said it in that way, someone might not even think of this passage. Again, they're lying to the Spirit.

But if you lie to me, or I lie to you, does that mean I'm not lying to the Spirit of God? If I conceive a lie in my own heart, as a born-again Christian possessed of the Spirit of God, and I push that lie out my lips and I speak to you, I have grieved and lied to the very Spirit of God who is in me. Do I even think my sin is happening against the Spirit? The Spirit is there at work in me to will and to work for God's good pleasure. The Spirit is at work in me to mortify the deeds of the flesh.

To prevent me from saying that thing and being willful in sin. So, they're parting with their land apparently for zeal of the Gospel. Right? How gracious of them to part with all of this for the sake of the Gospel.

Yet, that really wasn't what was happening. It's like it says in Matthew 23, the Pharisees, they do all their deeds to be seen by others. It's a terrifying reminder here.

Another observation. Think of this. Ananias.

I mentioned this. The only warning apparently he got that the text indicates he got, the warning to repent, was from the Spirit of God. Look, you and I, we might have something in our life where we are drifting spiritually and the Spirit of God is convicting us.

That might be the only warning you get. It might be too late when you stand before Peter. You see what I'm saying? Don't minimize the Spirit of God's convicting work in your life or in my life.

We just assume, well, God is long-suffering. And He absolutely is. But brethren, God's long-suffering doesn't mean there aren't going to be fast judgments like this to purify the church and to drive home a point.

So he was swept into eternity without any real heads-up warning. It's shocking. Honestly, people will argue this is harsh.

You know what was harsh? You know what was a disgrace? It was them lying to the very Spirit of God. Them thinking they could deceive the One who is protecting this community of believers, these chosen ones of God. Another thought, another observation here.

You know, you and I can lie and have falsehood just by the impression, by letting on to something. We might not say anything. And I realize I could be stretching this, but you don't have Him saying anything in the text.

So that made me think as I'm studying this, it almost is like Ananias, he let on that this is all the money. Maybe he did say this is all the money from the sale of the property. But you realize even if I don't say it's all the money, but I let on, if Peter looks at me and says, is this all the money? And you just kind of nod your head or something like that.

I mean, we can commit falsehood in that way. And you know what? This even rightly makes you think again about where do I have exaggerations in my life? Exaggeration is going to be something we all fall into. Well, I shouldn't say we all fall.

Some of us. I know there's times I've made statements that I think about and it's like that was an exaggeration. Well, when does an exaggeration become a lie? I mean, there's a lying there.

So we could lie by letting on, even if I don't directly lie in my speech. Now his wife was directly asked. And here she lied.

So this also makes me ask this question. Is there any time in my life where rather than discourage someone in sinful conduct, I stood by and complied with what they were going to do? And I had knowledge of that, right? Apparently, that's what Sapphira did assuming her husband was the one leading in this decision. This didn't happen in ignorance.

She had the knowledge. Another thing, and we kind of already mentioned this, but we often think of God's judgment as hindering the Gospel's advance. But rather, it increases conversion.

I didn't look up that verse, but what's the verse Paul says, by the terror of the Lord we persuade many? Where's that at? 2 Corinthians 5? Yeah, and in that context, he's talking about us being who? Ambassadors of Christ. And you'd almost think, through the loving mercy of Jesus Christ, we compel many. But he actually says as ambassadors of Christ, even through the terror of the Lord.

Part of repenting and coming to Christ is seeing who God is. And when you see who God is in His fullness, what happens to you? You look and you see how sinful you are. And that makes the cross a place that you want to be at.

You realize this is my only safe place. It's in Jesus Christ. So what led to revival? God's judgment.

Another observation. This passage shows that Satan is not just a general enemy of the church, but Satan is a direct opponent of the Holy Spirit's work and conviction in your life. Satan sought to conflict with what the Spirit of God would do in Ananias.

You see, there is an internal conflict. How do you take that language right there? Look what it says. Peter said, Ananias, why, Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.

Isn't that incredible? It's like the Spirit is showing you truth. The devil is showing you a lie. Does Peter make Ananias seem like he had responsibility in the matter? Yeah.

What door are you going to let open? Are you going to let the heart be filled with lies from Satan? Or are you going to let the door be open and the influence of the Spirit destroy that which is not true? So Satan is conflicting not just against the Christian, but against the very Spirit of God. And brethren, the devil disguises himself as an angel of light. There could be impressions.

There could be thoughts that you have that you think is from the Spirit of God and it's from the devil. And we don't want to be ignorant of his ability and his schemes to strategically try to get our eyes away from Christ or to think about Christ in a wrong way. So in a way, he's saying to Ananias, you allowed that influence to happen in your life.

You derived this deed in your heart. Well, another observation. This is a married couple.

If you're single here today, there is a takeaway from this passage for you who are single. If you're getting to know a person and you find out that they lied to you, maybe it was subtle. Maybe it was about how much they gave, right? I mean, who knows? You should take that seriously.

That reveals something of their character. And who says whether or not once you marry them, there's going to be some decision like this that happens, and their strong influence corrupts you. And before you know it, you're complicit with a spouse and sinning against the very Spirit of God.

So, if you find a little deception in a person, that's something you should take very, very seriously. And you know what? Honestly, you talk about appearances. Oh my, the Internet.

Isn't it amazing? One application in this could be how do you portray yourself on the Internet? I remember Paul Washer sharing this years ago. He clicked on his Twitter followers to look through them, and he was shocked at how many of them, their very pictures were immoral and immodest. And he thought, why are

these people following my preaching? And yet, they're dressing and putting these things up in such a way of vanity.

I mean, to even think of something like that. It's trying to portray oneself in a certain way among their community. That's all Ananias and Sapphira do.

They're worried about man's approval. And in doing that, the Spirit is not a Spirit to lead us to long for man's approval. The Spirit is a Spirit to mortify that in our heart.

And so if we push through the Spirit of God convicting us, don't give in to that desire right there, James. Repent of that. And you willfully go through that right there.

You're just sinning against the Spirit of God. And you know what? You might not drop dead, but you know what's going to happen? You're going to start having a callousness build in your heart where your motivations are just twisted all up and down and you don't even recognize it. Here, thought is for the children.

Thought about children. Oh my, how many parents or kids... Think of this, kids. Any of you kids have been in a situation where your parents, they come to you and it's just like Peter.

Who took this? Who went and put this here? Who went and put that there? I mean, it's almost like Peter's talking to two of his kids. Who started the fight? Who did this? Who did that? How much did you really give right here? Is he asking Sapphira that? I mean, kid, think of this child. If your parents are Christian, they have the Spirit of God in them.

Just like Peter. And if you look in your parents' eye and you lie to them about something that you really did, you know what? God might not reveal it right there to them, but He could. Just like Peter.

He could show them the truth. He could give them the insight into exactly what happened. And that's actually a kind mercy of God when you're caught red-handed.

Right? Because eventually, everything is going to come out. You know what? Kids, you should be afraid to look at your parents' people filled with the Holy Spirit and lie to their faces and be deceitful. And it might not be a direct lie.

It might be something like, well, this is a direct lie, but you kind of justify it, right? There's truth in it. We did give money, but it just wasn't all of our money. Right? So you could feel justified in that.

As has been said, every white lie deserves the red fires of hell. There's no such thing as a supposed white lie. When was the last time? I ask myself this as I'm thinking about this.

When was the last time I had great fear fall upon me? Just grip with the fear of God. It's not something you can just manipulate, produce. People might try to manipulate it and produce it.

There are things God can do. Maybe it's in your reading. Maybe it's in fellowship.

Who knows? And God puts a healthy fear of Him in you. That is an immense, immense blessing. Well, the Bible is full of examples.

Jeff looked at one, right, just a few weeks ago of God's divine judgment. In Isaiah, 185,000 Assyrians were struck down. Dead.

Just incredible. Think about Uzzah. Touches the ark, struck dead.

Nadab and Abihu were consumed with fire. The sons of Korah, the earth, opened up. King Herod did not give glory to God and he was struck with worms and died.

And then another person, Lot's wife. It's amazing, Jesus referring to Lot's wife. And the same thing, that passage, you read it and it says, Remember Lot's wife, whoever seeks to save his life will lose it.

Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it. What did she do? She looked back. I take that to be physical, but the physical looking back indicates what internally? Something in the heart.

And what was she looking back to? Sodom and Gomorrah. That's astonishing. It wasn't Hawaii.

It wasn't some nice place. It's a place of homosexuality and sin. He brings this up.

Christ wants us to remember God's ability to take a woman who turns back, who disobeys a direct command, that He is able to strike her dead or turn her into a pillar of salt. Turn to Acts 13. Real fast.

We're going to look at one other passage. I'm going to close with my comfort here from these thoughts. Acts 13, verse 8, But Elinas the magician, for that is the meaning of his name, he opposed them, seeking to turn the procouncil away from the faith.

But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the Son for a time. Immediately, mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went out about seeking people to lead him by the hand. Then the procouncil believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

See that? Look at that. Saul right here, I like how it says also called Paul, right? Saul didn't get a name change. Saul and Paul, those are two names used, Greek and Hebrew.

Saul right here speaks in such a confident way that the person is blind. And what's going on? It's the same idea. God is a living God.

Isn't that what it says in Hebrews? The living God. He could act and He could judge in such a remarkable way, even as we read right here. I'm telling you, brethren, if I right now was sitting overseas in the Middle East as a missionary, and there's all manner of enemies, and there might be certain groups going house to house trying to find me as an American and as a missionary, and they're wanting to take me hostage, it would be pretty comforting to remember right at that moment that you have what type of God? A living God.

Yes, a God who killed Ananias and Sapphira on the spot. That's a picture of His divine judgment. But even some of those examples I gave from the Old Testament, often those judgments are towards outright pagans.

At times, it's towards religious hypocrites. But often, it's towards the opponents of God. And so think about this right here at the end.

There is great comfort here of the Lord, not just purifying the church, purging Achan, Ananias, and Sapphira, but God's comfort to protect. So I have two examples that have really impacted me in some recent reading of missionary biographies. So listen to these.

A.J. Gordon. He shares this. He says, would it be any less a miracle had right here what happened with Elimas that we just read, had it happened in our own time? You see, people ask that.

Well, that happened back then. What about my own time? Or to put it in another way, what should we name its exact duplication occurring under some modern missionary? At my request, Reverend Isaac Colburn, this is from 100 years ago, who served as a missionary in Burma for 20 years, wrote down the following incident. This is about 100 years ago in Burma.

A company of native Christians in the district of Thongzai, British Burma, assembled on the banks of a pool to witness the baptism of several disciples. The surrounding rocks and hills were covered with spectators who had gathered from the neighboring region. Near the water stood a father and his son, the first had made himself known as very bitter towards the opposition of the Gospel and by the most strenuous efforts was trying to discourage his heathen neighbors from becoming Christians.

So there you've got it. Opposition. A father and a son.

They hate what's happening. Imagine that happening out there during the baptism. You've got a father and a son in the neighborhood coming up yelling at these sisters, don't go do that.

Don't identify as a Christian. As the native pastor opened the service at the pool, this opponent broke into the most blasphemous interruptions mingled with all manner of obscene gestures and lewd demonstrations. The preacher repeatedly rebuked him, but his words only stirred him to a more flagrant and outburst of wickedness.

The father and son now stripped themselves of their clothing and plunged into the water. And as the pastor was about to baptize a disciple, the old opposer mocked the ceremony, seizing his son by the ankles, dipping him several times in the water and pronouncing over him the baptismal formula, coupling the name of the Trinity with the most horrible blasphemies so that the services were completely stopped. You see, these men, this father and a son, that's sad.

A son. Just like Ananias led his wife how he did. Here, a father leading his son, blaspheming God.

Where's the fear of God? Standing on the bank of the pool among the company of Christians was a native Karen evangelist by the name Salwa. He had been before his conversion a powerful chief, a noted warrior, a much dreaded opponent of the Gospel. Since then, he'd become a humble disciple of Christ.

His whole soul were given up to persuading his countrymen to turn to Jesus Christ whom he once hated. With a stern and commanding posture, Salwa rose up. He called for silence.

Then turning to the old man in the water, he said, O you full of all subtlety and mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to pervert right the ways of the Lord? This is 100 years ago. This man is quoting this verse that we just read. Those Christians who witnessed the scene

declare that as he talked, the Holy Spirit seemed to fall on the assembly with awful power and impression.

The disturbers as though suddenly smitten with terror. They fled out of the water and they ran up the hill. But before leaving, fell prostrate to the earth.

At the conclusion of the service, the Christians lifted them up and carried them to the village. The father was found to be dead. And though the son afterwards recovered consciousness, the stroke proved fatal.

Within a few months, he followed his father to the grave. Who can reasonably doubt that this was a direct judgment of God upon sin against the Holy Spirit? And can we wonder that again, the record should be, and great fear fell upon all the people. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ on earth is a most momentous fact.

It determines the Christian's strength and the persecutor's sin. The death of Ananias and Sapphira was not a punishment for the crime of simply lying, but for blaspheming against the Spirit. He uses the term blaspheming describing it in that way.

Why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? That's the first example. It was 100 years ago. And you know what? The first pastor, he was saying things.

Nothing was happening. And then this other man, God gave him the faith. He spoke and the Lord acted.

The next example, this is from J.E. Hutton's History of the Moravian Church. A leader of the brethren church was hastening on a pastoral visit and he was captured. He was loaded with chains.

He was cast into a dungeon. That's never happened on my pastoral visits. I've yet to be kidnapped and thrust into a dungeon.

Oh, we have it so easy. Loaded with chains, cast into a dungeon, and threatened with torture and being burned at the stake. At the moment, destruction complete and final seemed to threaten the brethren church.

Never had the billows rolled so high. Never had the breakers roared so loud. And bitterly, the hiding brethren complained that their leaders had steered them on the rocks.

Their leaders look and say, look what's happened. We're all going to die. These bad decisions.

Yet, sunshine gleamed amid the gathering clouds. For some time, there had been spreading among the common people a conviction that the brethren were under the special protection of God. And he didn't mention the verse.

Do you know what verse came to my mind? Psalm 34. What's it say? The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him. And you know what? Every time you think about Assyria and the angel of the Lord killing 185,000, if you think of that missionary in Iran that we read his newsletters, when he walked out of that house one day and the people were coming to get him and he saw all these invisible beings and he could see them for a moment standing there.

No one came and took them. All his fears were removed. Listen to this.

The brethren, they're believing this. God really protects us, right? I mean, I think of those over there in the Middle East. You want to lay hold of that, right? And even for us here.

They had a conviction that any man who tried to harm them would come to a tragic end. It was just while the brethren were sunk in despair that several of their enemies suddenly died. And people said that God Himself had struck a blow for the persecuted.

The great Dr. Augustine, their fiercest foe, fell dead from his chair at dinner. Baron Kolditz, the chancellor, fell ill of a carbuncle on his foot and it killed him. Baron Henry von Nuos, who had boasted to the king how many brethren he had starved to death, went driving in his sleigh.

The sleigh flipped over and he was killed by his own hunting knife. Baron Puta von Swihau was found dead in his cellar. Bishop John of Gross-Worden fell from his carriage, was caught on a sharp nail, had his bowels torn out and miserably perished.

And the people, struck with awe, exclaimed, let him that is tired of life persecute the brethren, for he is sure not to live another year. See, both of these examples are just a hundred years ago. A hundred years ago, brethren.

God is the same today, yesterday, and forevermore. And you know what? May the Lord give us a greater fear of Him. I hope a greater fear of Him.

It would not have to come in my life from some severe judgment of God. And you know what? Then don't tempt God. Don't tempt the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God, believer, is at work in your heart, in your soul, impressing, convicting, trying to even reveal to you a blind spot. Do you push that away? Do you fight? Do you buck against it? Or do you resolve to say, yes, Lord, You're right. That's true.

I'm going to own it for what it is and I'm not going to keep on with this. I don't want to be deluded in any way. And brethren, there is a great protector of the church.

The Holy Spirit. We better not forget about Him. He is God.

And we can lie to Him. We can test Him. And I'm sure there's many ways we can test Him beyond just giving a false appearance of being more sacrificial than we really are.

And you know what? As I was studying this, I was just thinking of that, trying to think of other examples. Like, Lord, is there anything in my own life where I knowingly say something that gives an appearance about something that is exaggerated in my own life? You know what I'm saying? It's like, Lord, I should be scared of that. Because that is going against the way the Spirit of God is seeking to lead and conform me to the image of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Father, Lord, who are You? We can think that You've figured it out. Man has his representations of You.

Lord, we want the real You. We want to know You. We want to have a mind fully renewed and gripped with the truth of who You are and Your character.

The whole spectrum. And Lord, yes, it's not emphasized. Lord, in a way, it's not emphasized in Acts 5 Your loving kindness and mercy, but Lord, it is.

That judgment kept the church pure and it led to conversions. Lord, that's a ton of mercy and kindness right there. But Lord, we often look and think, well, no, but it came at the expense of a couple dying.

But Lord, that's Your way. And Father, I pray You'd keep us, Lord, keep me from in any way experimenting with tempting You to act in my own life to deal with something that I could just be shrugging and putting off. Lord, search our hearts.

Lord, we think we know ourselves. And Lord, in many ways we do, but we even hear from the mighty Apostle Paul that he's not going to judge himself because the motives of the heart are going to be disclosed on that final day. And Lord, keep us from impure motives.

Lord, we want to do everything for You. Lord, we're just a family of believers here trying to honor the One who's loved us. And Lord, I do pray for the supernatural protection of the brethren over there, overseas in the midst of this war.

Lord, honestly, we've already seen it years ago. The man that Lord Terris hired to kill the missionary, Lord, You thwarted that. Lord, in many ways, that was a supernatural act.

You know the assassin didn't drop dead, but Lord, You did a miracle there preventing that. And so, Lord, You're the living God. Lord, we're thankful even just seeing the examples on the front lines.

And Lord, maybe in these years to come, we'll be more on the front lines here. Lord, we're not fanatics here wanting great experiences. Lord, we do want Your great grace and power.

Lord, just keeping us pure in heart. Lord, that right there is a miracle. Keeping us with clear consciences.

And so, Father, we just commit ourselves to You. Lord, we thank You that no doubt I think many of us could say we've sinned even more significantly at times than someone like Ananias and Sapphira and You didn't kill us. Lord, You didn't strike David dead.

But Lord, we don't want to sin against Your Spirit. Lord, I pray You'd fill us with more of Your Spirit. Lord, we see that in Luke 11.13. If we mean evil, good gifts to our children, how much more will You give the Spirit to those who ask? Lord, give us the Spirit.

More of You. Search our hearts. Try our ways.

Lord, lead us on. Lord, lead us on to higher ground. Just commit ourselves to You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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