

# Acts 5 - Part 1

by Robert F. Adcock

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of purity in the church, the consequences of sin, and the need for holy boldness in witnessing, highlighting the story of Ananias and Sapphira as a warning against lying to God.*

**Scripture:** Acts 4:31-32, Acts 5:1-5, Acts 5:7-11

**Topics:** "Church Discipline", "Holiness Matters"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the downfall of the early church and how it was infiltrated by the enemy, Satan. The sermon begins by highlighting the brief duration of the beautiful work of God in the church, which was soon marred by problems. The speaker then focuses on the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to God and faced severe consequences. The sermon emphasizes the importance of holiness and warns against the defilement that can come from allowing sinful influences, such as television, into our lives.

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## Transcript

I'd like for us this morning to look again in the book of Acts, chapter 5, and we'll read the first eleven verses of chapter 5. 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? 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. The young man arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. That 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? And 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 man 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. Now, what we have read this morning indeed is a startling revelation of just how serious it is to lie to God. And I think it would help us to understand this to go back into that fourth chapter and pick up at that thirty-first verse where we read that after Peter and James and John and some of the others had met together with the other believers, they had, of course, discovered that persecution and trial was on its way.

Everything was running so smoothly. Men and women filled with the Spirit of God were proclaiming a message, and results were absolutely fantastic. The Lord was adding to the church daily all of those that believed, and the Body of Christ, the church was just growing by leaps and bounds.

But then the opposition appeared. Satan is always alert, and when he sees men and women responding to the divine invitation to be reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrifice that he made for sin, Satan gets busy. He's got to do something to try to stifle the free flow of that glorious message in the world in which we live today.

Well, they went to their own, and they had a prayer meeting, as we mentioned last week. Now, they didn't pray that their persecutors and their attackers would be silenced. That wasn't their prayer.

It was one of the things that was so striking about what we read last week. They didn't pray for that at all. They prayed very positively and said, Lord, give us boldness to speak the Word of God.

You know, we are always praying, Lord, take care of those that are abusing us. Take care of those that are causing the work of the Lord to be hindered in some way. Take care of them.

You know, if I learn anything from this thought that is presented here, we need to stay on a good, high, positive note. Lord, I know you can take care of the opposition. I don't have any doubt about that.

I know you can. But my prayer is that you would give me the courage, the boldness that I need to be a good witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, with that positive note ringing in our hearts, I'm not concerned about the opposition.

God can take care of the opposition, but just keep my heart and soul in tune with your will. Oh, Lord, may I be filled with the Spirit of God and speak with holy boldness the truth of the Word of God. That's what they prayed for, and that's what they got.

They preached with boldness. It was accompanied by signs and wonders, miracles. People were healed.

Oh, there was a mighty movement of the Spirit of God in and through the membership that made up the body of Jesus Christ, that infant church. It had power, but it had something else. It had purity.

It was pure. It was undefiled by all of the things that Satan, the wrecker, the spoiler, would seek to bring into that fellowship. Beloved, before we finish this morning, we're going to be reminded that that indeed today is a threat.

It's a threat to the individual and to the corporate body of Christ. When we allow sin in our own hearts and it's unconfessed and it's not forsaken, something happens. The Spirit of God is grieved.

Deep sorrow is inflicted upon the Spirit of God that engulfs us, that would fill us, and as a result, we lose our power. And little wonder in the world today that men and women, when they hear the name Christian, they no longer sit up and take notice. This has become something that you speak so casually about,

Christian nations.

In the realm of Christian profession, there's anything and everything you want to think of today. One of the things you can be sure of, it has been defiled and corrupted because of the presence of sin. They prayed and they received holy boldness to speak God's Word.

They performed miracles through God's Holy Servant, through the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Stop preaching in that name. Stop teaching in that name.

Those were the warnings that were given to them. Don't do anything in that name. They hated that name.

They hated the person of the Son of God. They had crucified the Lord of glory. Little wonder they didn't want to hear His name.

We're talking about spiritual leaders in the nation of Israel. They didn't like that name. Just don't do anything in that name.

But you know, Peter said, is it better to obey God or to obey man? We must do what we have to do. We have indeed been mandated, commissioned of God to be a witness of Jesus Christ in this world. We cannot stop what we're doing.

We don't want to, but we can't stop. We're going to do what God has willed us to do. And that was holy boldness.

That's what we need today. That confirmation in our own hearts and souls that what we're doing, we're doing for God. And God empowers us to do it.

And we have the Word of God. And it's so clear. It's so simple.

There's a message here. A message of God's grace and love. Well, as a result, that place where they were praying, they had a little earthquake there.

It kind of shook things up. It says the place in which they were praying, it was shaken. Things moved about.

But the important thing, I think, is to remember that they were filled with the Spirit of God. That's so important. I don't think last Sunday, or when I made mention of that, that that could be said too often.

If you're going to do anything for the glory of God, you must do it God's way. You must do it in the power of the Spirit of God. And you know, there's no lack of the Spirit of God.

When the Spirit of God indwells a believer, he comes in all of his fullness. Any concept of a person being partially filled with the Spirit of God is not in harmony with what the Scriptures teach. You have all of the Spirit of God, beloved.

And what is needed is for Him to have all of us, for Him to have such complete control over our being that we will be fruitful for God. We will be channels of blessing to the world in which we're living. That requires being filled with the Spirit of God.

If you let sin come into your life, as it does in this instance, he will be grieved. He will be overcome with great sorrow. But because of the purity of the local church, and as an example for those in that day, and

for you and I to look very carefully at this morning, lying to God is serious business.

Defiling or corrupting in any way one's own personal life, once you become the property of God, is serious business. It's serious business. You know, one of the things that the Spirit of God does, verse 32 says, The multitude of those that believed were of one heart and one soul.

It's a wonderful thing to see God's people gathered together, and they are of one heart and one soul. That oneness that is expressed in the oneness of the body of Jesus Christ, to see God's people loving and caring for each other the way that they should, it's a fulfillment of our Lord's command. That commandment that says, I'll beseech you, brethren, I'll preach to you, brethren, that you love one another the same way I loved you.

And I hope and trust that you understand the manner in which He loved you and He loved me. He loved us even unto the death, the shameful death of the cross. You say, you mean that as believers in Jesus Christ we should love each other that way? Yes.

That's what He said. And you know, that mark, if it's indelibly impressed upon our activities as individuals and members in the local assembly, others will take note that we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ. True discipleship can be marked out by how much we love those that are in the family of God.

And it was being expressed here. Oh, it was something beautiful to see. They loved each other.

They were indeed 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. In other words, they shared everything they had.

If there was someone hungry, he didn't stay hungry long because another member recognized that and did what he had to do to remedy that situation. Someone didn't have enough clothing to wear, that situation was remedied. Couldn't pay his rent.

He had a need. Whatever that need was, it was addressed immediately. Well, that's oneness in the body.

We read in the Scripture that when one member in the body of Jesus Christ suffers, we all suffer together. It's not true today. It's not true today, beloved.

I know a lot of God's people today that are suffering. And do you know what? There are a lot of God's people that don't even care. They don't even pray for them.

They don't show any interest, any care for them. How tragic that is. How far we have departed from the perfect will of God concerning the fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ, if there's a need.

So often people ask me, I want to do something. What can I do? You can pray. Have you ever tried loving your fellow believer the same way Jesus Christ, the Son of God, loved you? Have you ever tried that? That's a challenge to every one of us in this room this morning.

Our Lord would have us to love each other the same way He loved us. I'll tell you what. But there wouldn't be any in the fellowship of God's people that were hurting and feeling alienated and feeling left out if they had that assurance from God's people, from God's family, that they were loved dearly by the family of God.

The greatest of all gifts is love. All other gifts may fail and pass away, but love endures forever. What a challenge to you and to me.

The Spirit of God so kindly reminds us again of the necessity and the importance of the resurrection. When you read in that thirty-third verse, it says, And I want to say this because it's so important. You know, if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not a risen Savior, we ought to all pack up and go home right now.

If He's still in a tomb and He's not a resurrected, glorified Savior at the right hand of God, our faith and everything that we say we believe is a sham. And we are, of all men, most miserable. We're just playing a silly game if Jesus Christ is not a risen, glorified Savior.

Don't forget that. He is a risen, glorified Savior at the right hand of God. And the Spirit of God was quick to remind us that with great power, that holy boldness, isn't it wonderful that when you tell someone about the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, you have that opportunity of telling them, He loved us, He died for us, He was buried, but He arose from the dead.

Oh, what a mighty victory for God! It was God's seal of approval upon all that the Son of God had done in perfect accord with the will of God. So perfectly fulfilling that will, accomplishing all that God had entrusted Him to do to provide salvation for poor sinners. There is quite a bit mentioned in Scripture about the resurrection.

And again, without that resurrection, without the divine power that accompanies the resurrection, the Apostle Paul prayed, O that I might know Him, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death. Paul wanted to know something about the power, resurrection power. Well, listen, we are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

New creations in Christ Jesus. A man that is born again, a woman that is born again into the family of God. You are a new creation.

You are God's new creation. No longer dead in trespasses and sin. No longer just marked out by all of the defilement that is associated with being lost and dead in trespasses and sin.

Alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful that is! O things pass away, behold, all things they become new. There is that passage in Colossians chapter 3 that encourages believers, If you are indeed redirected with the Lord Jesus Christ, think upon heavenly things.

And you know, very often we have to be reminded of that. We become so earthly minded and we concern ourselves with so much that is a part of this world that we are living in. We don't have time to think about God.

We don't have time to think about these things that are indeed so special and so precious and so profitable for us as believers in the Lord Jesus. But these closing verses of that fourth chapter from verse 34 down through 37, the need of all was supplied. There was no poverty.

There was no want here. The person had a need. Other members of the body responded immediately.

It's like those white corpuscles in your body. I'm told that they fight infection and all that sometimes attacks the body. And you have a point of attack by some virus or something.

Those white corpuscles, they rush right to that area. Well, we're in the body of Christ. And when there's a need by one member, all the other members are attracted to it.

And they attack that problem. And they solve that problem. And, of course, there's blessing.

The only thing about it, it only lasted for a brief time. Isn't that sad? Something that starts out so beautiful, empowered by the Spirit of God, the fulfillment of the will of God, so perfectly being carried out, and it is such a brief duration. In fact, the chapter that we've read this morning introduces us to the cause of the problems that were soon to arise and would indeed permeate even that special, special thing that God had created by His Spirit through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5's, But, tells you why. But, But. That chapter seems to set the scene for a change that takes place.

From the beautiful picture of the Holy Spirit filling and working in the hearts to the record of Satan's work. That's what we're told. The question is put to Ananias.

Why has Satan filled your heart? I have to conclude that at that point in time, Ananias wasn't filled with the Spirit of God. Because had he been, he would have been fortified against this satanic attack. It shows you how easy you can get out of touch with God.

And the Spirit of God so jealously guards over us. Walk in the Spirit. Let your life be controlled.

Be yielded to the control of the Spirit of God. And you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. This man wasn't filled with the Spirit of God.

And the lust of the flesh took over. Oh, how defiling it really was. It was to indeed hinder the work of the Spirit of God from working in the hearts of His people.

This record of Satan's work of evil. That word, but, again. It speaks of failure.

It speaks of a decline. You see, what Satan wasn't able to do by attacking from without, he had them thrown in prison. He had the opposition mounted against him.

It wasn't working. It wasn't working at all. Later we'll discover that in Jerusalem, persecution and trial resulted in those Christians going everywhere, carrying with them the message of the gospel of Christ.

The outward attack, the frontal attack wasn't working. And you remember this. Satan is no dummy.

He is no dummy. What does he do? Well, if it won't work this way, I'll try another way. What does he do? He goes within.

Within. He infiltrates. He comes in as an angel of shining light.

We were reminded of this just recently. So often people think they've had an encounter with the Lord. They speak of seeing Jesus in all of His glory.

They may have just gotten a glimpse of Satan, the angel of shining light. It also reminds us that Satan has his ministers of righteousness. And they perform his bidding and they do his will.

So here is an infiltration tactic that Satan employs. Can't hurt them from attacking them from without. We'll get within.

We'll do our work on the inside. He enters the flock and begins his work within. He uses two believers to start out.

Ananias and Sapphira. I have to believe that what they did, they did ignorantly. I don't think in the vaguest moment in which they were thinking about this that they realized the seriousness of what they were fixing to do.

They were going to pretend they were going to lie to God. And you know, what happened is such a shocker that I trust that it will arrest every one of us this morning and cause us to think very seriously. The next time that I have an encounter with the Lord, when I have that which I have claimed was my total best that I'm giving to Him, any circumstance in which I'm dealing with the Lord, and I pretend that I'm giving it my best when I'm not, all this complete commitment to the Lord, and it's all a show, there wouldn't be any of us in this room this morning as believers in Jesus Christ, I'm convinced of this, at some point in life, somewhere along the way, even if we've been self-deceived to the point that we didn't even know what was happening, we have lied to God.

And it's only by His mercy and grace that He didn't strike us dead, just like He did Ananias and Sapphira. If that grips our hearts and we are aware of the seriousness of this business of lying to God, pretending, pretension and hypocrisy, we can speak of Pharisees and indeed we come down hard on them. Our Lord said some hard things about them and we say, that Pharisee, that hypocrite, you know when you're pointing that old finger out there and you're singling out those Pharisees and those hypocrites, that big thumb just comes right back and hits you in the eye and says, you may be the biggest one of all.

Don't be judgmental in that sense. Just positively say, I want to be sure that I am absolutely truthful with God. What He asks me to do, I'll do it and I don't make excuses.

The very moment you make an excuse, you are drawing a fine line. You may be right on the threshold of telling a lie. It would be much better to say, Lord, I don't want to do it and I'm not intending to do it.

I don't have any appetite for those things. So often we make appeals and we say, you know, if you'd help us with the Iwana club, you'd help us with this or become involved or whatever. And some people are very, very open about it and they say, no, I'm not going to help with the Iwana.

I have no inclination whatsoever to help with the Iwana. Praise the Lord, that openness, that frankness. Others say, I'll pray about it.

And I have no more intention of praying about it than their puppy dog. That's the truth. And God hears it and God knows it.

The seriousness of this dreadful sin in this passage has to be impressed upon our hearts this way. I know there's an account in the Old Testament. It's found in Joshua chapter 7 about Achan and that experience at Ai for the children of Israel in which a man did something that he wasn't supposed to do.

God had very forcefully said, don't take any of the spoils. And you know, that man, no doubt, he just looked upon some things that looked real good. Some garments and a wedge of silver and whatever.

It wouldn't be in hire and I'm just going to take this. Nobody will know. But God knows.

Do you know it cost that poor man his life? It cost him the lives of all of his family and everything that he had was stoned. And the account in Scripture is that that monument to his failure and to his act of lying to God, that will be there as a monument and something to remind us of the seriousness of disobeying the Lord. Let that truth kind of grip us and say, I'm going to examine what I do in the future with my life as a believer.

When it comes to that moment of commitment, saying I will or I won't, I'm going to be very careful what I say. I Corinthians chapter 6, I think, gives us some pointed instructions along this line. I think it will serve to bring it into focus.

It says, Or do you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? Verse 20 says, For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Now, did you know, did you know that you as a believer in Jesus Christ are indwelt by God's Spirit? Do you know that anything that you let come into your mind, your heart, your soul, become a part of your being that is impure and unholy? It defiles that temple.

Now, for those that would teach and defile the family of God and the body of Christ through false teaching, that comes as a strong warning. Because the Word of God would tell us, and if you read in that 15th verse or the 16th verse, Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Listen. The body of Jesus Christ, God's Son, indwelt by the Spirit of God, is holy in the sight of God. He doesn't want anything to defile that temple.

Oh, how careless, how indifferent we are sometimes to what we allow to come into our lives. I'll tell you one of the things that to me becomes more and more alarming is what we receive through the eye gate by looking at a stinking television. That thing is going to corrupt and defile every one of us if we don't do something about it.

You say, what do you want to do, burn all the televisions? No, I want God's people to wake up and to realize that what's coming in through that eye gate, what you are viewing, those movies, is that defiling stuff that they are just sending out. They're just bombarding homes, families. Little boys and little girls are being raised on a diet of filth.

How defiling it is. How it must grieve the Spirit of God. All purpose to pray about that and to do something about it.

We are bought at a great price. Ananias and Sapphira, you were purchased with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. You were incorporated into the body of Jesus Christ through that new birth.

You were indwelt by the Spirit of God. Yes, they were believers in the Lord Jesus, yet they lied to God. God says, I'm going to see to it that this sends fear into the hearts of those that would behold such an act and realize that God does not for a moment look upon sin lightly.

They drop dead. 1 John 5, 16 tells us that we can send a sin unto death. I think there are many, many of God's people that have gone home to heaven prematurely because they didn't realize the seriousness of

defiling that which God calls holy.

Lying to God. Corrupting the purity of the body of Christ. It's serious business.

It must be dealt with in a manner that impresses this upon the minds of every believer. Well, the but bears out to us the threat and what happened. But one thing was accomplished.

In verse 11, it closes with, Great fear came upon all the church. Listen first. Fear came upon all the church.

Beloved, that's where we want to start. Let's get some awe and wonder in our souls about our God and how He looks upon sin. We laugh at sin.

We're entertained by sin. And yet God hates sin. And He says it's sin that's defiling.

It's sin that's robbing you of your power. And we laugh at it. We're amused by it.

We like it. God is merciful. God is gracious not to strike us dead.

Take us home to heaven. But there was a great sense of God's attitude toward all sin, and especially that which would defile the body of Christ. Do you remember a little leaven will leaven the whole loaf? Well, it started with Ananias and Sapphira.

A little way down the road, no longer this very strict, this very drastic measure of striking people dead. But power was gone. The enemy infiltrated the body of Christ.

He learned how to work and manipulate God's people. He knows how to manipulate and work you and me so that we are no longer any value as far as being a bold spokesperson for our Lord Jesus Christ. The message is so clear.

Let us bow in a word of prayer. Our Father in heaven, send within each of our hearts this morning, by the power of the Spirit of God, a deep sense of reverence for your holiness. Oh, the Word of God says, Be holy like your holiness.

Lord, too often we find ourselves very comfortable with sin. We have looked at Ananias and Sapphira. These two dear ones long ago went to be with the Lord because they took lightly sin.

They lied to God. Oh, we pray thee this morning, speak to our hearts. Remind us that to be sanctified and separated from all that is a part of the defiling things in this world is so necessary if we are to have power with thee.

Speak to our hearts this morning. Send us away from this place different people from what we came into this room. Oh, our God, cleanse us as we confess and forsake all sin.

For we ask this in the precious name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. Our brother has a verse of a hymn.

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