

Our Sin Won't Impede Him
Acts 4:32-5:16 (June 8, 2025)



There are a number of passages in the Bible that we read and find them deeply uncomfortable – they just don't sit well with us.

It might be God's command that when His people took the Promised Land they were to cleanse every last living thing – men, women, children, animals – from the land.

It might be Uzzah – the covenant begins to tip – he reaches out to steady it and is incinerated.

Something about them causes us to struggle with our view of God's holiness and justice. It seems too severe.

These passages can cause us to lie awake at night fearful that we don't understand God and are worried about the implications for us.

The account of Ananias and Sapphira is one of these accounts.

Let me be clear – every last one of us should read this account and fear.

But rightly understood, this fear shouldn't rob us of our assurance – it should remind us of His grace and drive us to the refuge of the cross.

And it should show us that nothing – not even our sin – will derail the plan of God.

We are in the book of Acts and we have seen that the message in this book is:



We must strive to see His kingdom come, through the empowering of His Spirit, by witnessing to the nations, until He comes again.

In chapters 3-6, we see the kingdom growing and spreading throughout Jerusalem.



And the message that empowers this growing kingdom is simple.

Our King Has Come And He Alone Saves.

And:

His Kingdom Comes And It Is Unstoppable.

What we began to look at last time is that there are dangers that seem poised to derail the growth of the kingdom.



4:13-31	Your Threats Can't Intimidate Us
4:32-5:16	Our Sin Won't Impede Him
5:17-42	Your Persecution Can't Stop Us
6:1-7	Our Division Won't Distract Us

These dangers are *both* **external** and **internal**.

But the far more dangerous and significant are the **internal** threats.

One of the first books I was given to read as a young Christian was *The Screwtape Letters* by CS Lewis.

It was subtitled – *How a senior devil instructs a junior devil in the art of temptation*.

Basically, a senior devil – Screwtape – writes to his nephew, Wormwood, about how to mess up the Christian he was assigned to oversee.

He makes it clear – outright attacks are not the best – they often drive a Christian to prayer and to the church.

A demon's greatest success comes in tempting us to sin. It destroys our assurance, our testimony and often leads to division.

The greatest danger to the progress of the kingdom is sin in the church or its leadership – pride, division, immorality, greed.

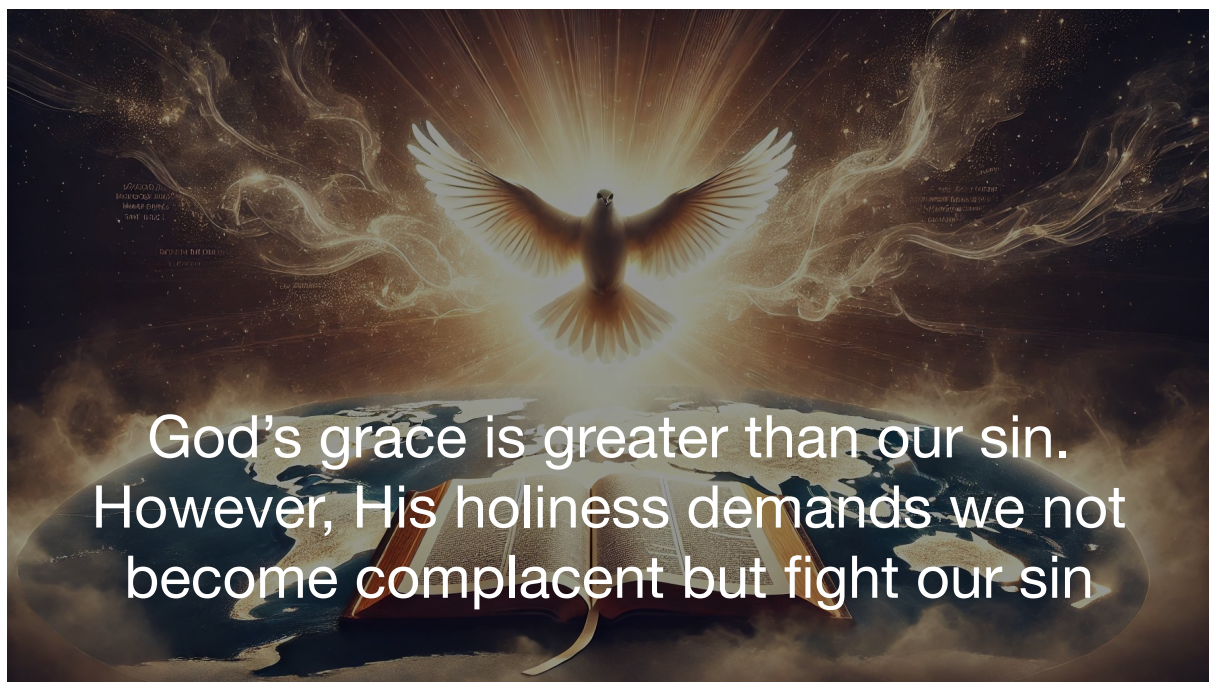
But, **God will not allow our sin to impede His kingdom.**

That is what we see this morning.



4:32-5:16 Our Sin Won't Impede Him

Here is what we will see in our passage:



God's grace is greater than our sin. However, His holiness demands we not become complacent but fight our sin.

We love that God's grace is greater than our sin.

However, grace can make us complacent about our sin.

A holy God will not allow that.

We are fine with a God who is loving, gracious and forgiving.

But a holy God who will even kill those in the church who do not fight their sin – that doesn't sit so easily.

But brothers and sisters – I remind you – our God is a jealous God, a consuming fire who dwells in unapproachable light.

He calls us to be holy as He is holy – we are to fight our sin.

And if we don't – passages like Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 – commands the church to act in discipline.

But as well, there are times when God chooses to intervene directly against sin as a warning to us.

It is a declaration – judgment is coming – and God will deal with sin.

God intervening in this way is not just Old Testament – it happens in the New.

How far will God go? **As far as necessary.**

That is the bit we struggle with – *as far as necessary.*

I don't know if your view of God includes a God who will kill people in the church who sin – but it should.

That is what this passage tells us.

However, when we read it – instead of focussing on what it tells us about God – too often all we want to know is what does this mean for me?

I am not sure I signed up for a God who will kill people for a sin like lying.

Could God kill me?

And – I really want to know – are Ananias and Sapphira in heaven or not?

Might I be deceived and headed to hell?

Now – this passage was **not** primarily written to answer these questions. It was written to tell us about God's holiness and His unstoppable kingdom.

But you won't let me get away with that. So here is what I will do:

I am going to work through the passage.

Then tell you what it reveals about God and His plan.

Then tell you what I believe it means for us.

So, first let's work through the passage.

We begin with:



God knows that the best of churches will always have to reckon with sin 4:32-5:2

Christians should be holy as He is holy.

Churches should be places of grace, love, generosity, integrity, unity.

The reality is that the best among us are flawed at our core.

The reality is that the best church on earth is flawed at its core.

Christians often forget this.

A trusted leader, a dear brother, a beloved relative – all professing Christ – fall into deep sin.

Be shocked, disappointed, upset – but don't be surprised.

A church has division, discrimination, favouritism, toleration of sin.

Be shocked, disappointed, upset – but don't be surprised.

Just this week I spoke to a dear couple who were burned twice in churches and said – I won't ever go to a church again – now we just listen to old sermons at home.

At other times, sin in a church causes someone to say – I am out of here – there has to be a more perfect church somewhere – I just have to find it.

Look – there **are** sins that mean you should leave a church.

But if sin in the church means – move on – you will forever moving on.

Often the early church is idealised as the 'perfect church.'

Don't get me wrong – it must have been amazing.

Led by Apostles, healings, miracles, thousands of conversions – and a genuine sacrificial love for one another.

But here is the point our passage makes – it was **not** perfect. It had people which means it had sinners. Later, in chapter 6 we will see it had its divisions.

Right from the first – there is a perfect God – but no perfect church.

But, in many ways this first church was the church at her best.

Chapter 4 verse 32:

Now the entire group of those who believed were of one heart and mind.

This is what the church is supposed to be.

Most of the time we can't even agree on what colour to paint the walls.

One heart and mind – this is a genuine miracle.

A couple of months before this time most of these people did not know each other and didn't want to.

They would not have socialised with each other.

There were natural barriers – the Hellenistic Jews were looked down on by the Hebraic Jews.

There were the barriers of tribe and where you came from in Judea.

Clearly there were social structure and wealth barriers.

There were probably theological barriers – more liberal and more conservative factions of Judaism.

These people would not chat after synagogue let alone let their kids play together.

Now they were so united they willingly make huge sacrifices for each other.

Their unity in Christ and their common mission welded them into one.

I hope you understand how extraordinary what we have here this morning is.

People from different ethnic barriers, wealth strata, educational levels, ages, cultural backgrounds.

Where else do 70-year-olds hang out with 20-year-olds in a constructive positive way?

Where else do medical specialists, stay at home mums and tradies all hang out as friends?

Where else do people from every continent mix as if they are brothers?

We are one in Christ. We have the same vision and mission.

And more than that – I truly believe we care for one another. The first church certainly did:

And no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.

Understand what this **does** mean and **does not** mean.

What **does** it mean?

There was no one in need – the church met genuine needs.

What **does** it **not** mean?

This is not communism. Communism is a forceful redistribution of wealth and resources and has never worked.

This is compassion – a *voluntary* use of resources to help others.

There was no set figure for giving like this. It came from the heart. Jesus told the rich young ruler give everything. Zaccheaus gave half and Jesus said – salvation has come to this house.

Nor does this mean we are obligated to help anyone and everyone who asks in whatever way.

Even in the church – it is not just help those who ask – there are guidelines.

From time to time, we have people join the church and expect others to just support them – even though they could work or have family.

No. This verse describes those in genuine need – cast out from family and employment – faithful – but in need.

Those with means delighted to help brothers in need.

No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own – doesn't mean no one owned anything.

In fact – in Acts 5:4 Peter says it was theirs to do with as they chose.

Property and money was rightly owned by each person – but they *chose* to use it for the good of the church.

Verse 33:

With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them.

Here is the point.

The Apostles are testifying to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus – and their testimony had power – why? Because the world is looking and seeing something unnatural – something supernatural.

Men and women willingly sharing their resources is something as outright miraculous as the miracle of the healing of the man born lame.

Luke calls this a miracle of grace.

What is natural is to say – what is mine is mine. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps.

What is natural is to say – hey with all this persecution my family will probably need every last denarius I have – I can't afford to help you.

What is unnatural – incredibly unnatural – is for those with resources to use them to support those without – especially those who are different to them.

The unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem would have seen this and it would have had a stunning impact.

Verses 34–35:

For there was not a needy person among them because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet. This was then distributed to each person as any had need.

It is hard to know what percentage of Jews actually owned land at this time.

It is estimated – and it is only a very rough estimate – that around 10% may have owned land.

The rest paid rent – were servants – tenants – or just lived on land they did not own.

So, land ownership was quite concentrated.

Basically, in those days there was no middle class – you had a few wealthy – the landowners – the rest were poor.

Incredibly, some with wealth were converted and even more incredible they were willing to use their resources to help those in need.

Likely the wealthy in the church owned multiple properties – so don't think this means they sold the home they lived in – but still it is a huge sacrifice.

They had no obligation to do this. But they saw a need and did what it took to meet the need.

Luther said the last part of a man to be converted is his wallet.

Luke then focuses on one specific act of generosity. Acts 4:36–37:

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus by birth, the one the apostles called Barnabas (which is translated Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Joseph is a Levite – not a local – he is from Cyprus. He is a Hellenistic Jew.

Levites were the one tribe who were not to own land. But Hellenistic Levites – those living outside the Promised Land – didn't serve in the Temple and were not bound by the same rules.

The fact he owns property puts him among the elites.

Likely he came to Jerusalem for Pentecost – came to Christ and joined the church.

This man showed his heart. He sold his land – gave it to the Apostles – to support Hebraic Jews – that is real fruit.

And clearly, he was a joy to be around – He is known as Barnabas – Son of Encouragement.

Thank God for those men and women who encourage you in word and action. They point you to Christ, they are there when you need help, they are an aroma of life.

Barnabas sold his field – and laid **all** the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles.

The implication is the church saw this and appreciated it.

I have struggled a bit with this public giving. In Matthew 6:3 Jesus said:

Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

Yet, here the giving is anything but secret.

Does it mean anything for us?

Regular giving is in secret – between you and God.

Maybe the application is that if someone gives an extra gift that cost them significantly – perhaps we should thank them publicly.

We celebrate those who are gifted in other ways – maybe we should celebrate the generous givers.

Just this week we found out someone left our church a significant sum in their will – when it is finalised it may be right for us to celebrate that.

Regardless, the point here is that this type of sacrificial love encouraged the church – and this unnatural love mystified the watching world.

They will know you are My disciples if you have love for one another.

Now – to this point, we see the church at her best.

So, why are verses 32 to 37 here? In chapter 2 we already saw the church looking after each other this way?

It is here not just to make every other church look bad by comparison – Luke makes it clear – even in this incredible church – there were still sinners.

It seems that a couple in the church saw Barnabas celebrated for his generosity and wanted a little piece of the glory themselves.

The New Testament is so honest. It never pictures the church as this utopian community of unending love and peace. That is heaven.

The church has saints – but they are still sinners.

Acts 5:1:

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property.

It seems fairly clear that this couple saw the example of Barnabas – and wanted that kind of respect in the church.

So, they too sold some property and gave a portion of the proceeds to the Apostles to do with as they will.

Now, on the surface you think what a wonderful thing for them to have done.

They were under no compulsion to sell the land nor to give all the proceeds to the church.

If a member of our church sold an investment house – made \$450,000 and gave the church 10% of that – we would do cartwheels of thanks.

Yet, these guys end up dead and today hardly anyone calls their kid Ananias or Sapphira.

What is the issue?

Verse 2:

However, he kept back part of the proceeds with his wife's knowledge, and brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

They sold their property – deliberately kept some of the proceeds – but indicated they were donating **all** the proceeds.

They lied to look godlier than they were.

Look – I assume they gave most of the proceeds or it would be too obvious.

You know what – if they had just said – here is **most** of the money – we kept some – everyone would still say – these guys are godly pillars of the church.

They had to push it. I suspect they never thought there was any way they could be called on this.

I mean who is going to say all that money is not enough?

The Apostles were fishermen not property valuers.

But, really what a stupid thing to do.

They made a huge sacrifice – selling property and giving a significant sum.

It is just they wanted to look uber-godly in the church.

They wanted the praise that Barnabas got.

This church is barely a couple of months old and the leaven of sin is there.

And now comes a deeply uncomfortable picture.



We must know that the grace of a holy God must not lead to complacency 5:3-16

OK – they lied – who hasn't?

How serious is this?

I mean they also did make a sacrifice and give a chunk of money.

Here is the issue – the leaven of sin never just stays small – if you don't fight sin – it grows – and it may destroy the testimony of the church – and a holy God will not tolerate that.

Once we come to Christ, our natural tendency is to become complacent about our sin.

Grace will cover it.

We let ourselves slip a bit here, then slip a bit worse – and before we know it we are deep in sin and our conscience isn't even pricked.

This passage is a stark warning to confront that complacency before it gets to that point.

Verse 3:

“Ananias,” Peter asked.

Ananias has just laid this huge chunk of money down.

Yes Peter.

He is expecting lavish praise and thanks.

He was blindsided by – “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land?”

Have you ever had that moment of horror when a hidden sin is exposed? You are blindsided – this is that moment.

The Apostles might not know what that property was worth – but the Spirit did.

One quick aside – in verse 4 – Peter says He lied to God.

Put together these verses clearly show that the Holy Spirit is God.

And when you lie or sin – you sin against God.

In this life, most sins eventually come to light. You are caught, you confess or someone does you in.

But not always. Some sins seem lost to time – but at the judgment – they are there in books.

Ananias lied. Satan knows the surest way to bring the church down is sin – even lying over something so seemingly minor can derail the church.

Maybe they get away with this sin – and next time it is worse.

Maybe even this sin can destroy a testimony. What if Ananias is made a deacon because everyone says he is such a godly guy. His name means **Yahweh is gracious** – after all.

Sapphira is seen as a woman to emulate and after all her name means **beautiful**.

Then a new convert just happens to mention he was the one who bought their property – gave them a good price too – 5500 denarii.

No, you are wrong – they only got 4200 denarii.

Truly – 5500. You are lying – you are besmirching two pillars of our church.

Well, I have the paperwork.

And out it comes. And trust in leaders and the church is undermined – no one knows what to do with Ananias and Sapphira – and the watching world says – hypocrites and Satan does a little jig.

But in an act of mercy – God intervenes. The lie is exposed to the light.

Christians have never claimed to be perfect or better than anyone else.

Far from it because we are not.

But, because we claim to be forgiven and washed by the blood of Christ – it draws a target on our back.

Just as – Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion – so the testimony of the church – Christ’s wife – must fight to be above suspicion.

You know full well that when Christians selflessly serve others – the world looks and says – I don’t get it but glad you guys are helping.

But you also know full well that when a Christian sins – the world smirks and says – just knew you were a bunch of hypocrites and it undoes the tireless testimony of so many.

Chapter 4 verse 33 – the world was looking at the great grace going on in the church.

Sin in the church – can undo all that testimony.

The church has to know this – so we have this example of how much God hates sin.

Now – does the phrase Satan filled your heart mean – Ananias and Sapphira are absolved of blame?

The devil made us do it. We couldn’t resist.

Not at all.

We all face the fiery darts of the evil one.

We are all face a struggle that is not merely flesh and blood.

We all face a struggle against our own sinful hearts.

But ultimately when we sin the responsibility is ours and the consequences are ours.

And frankly, they had no great need to lie in this way.

Acts 5:4:

Wasn’t it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn’t it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart?

We didn’t force you to sell it.

When you did, we didn’t say you had to give everything.

We would have rejoiced at a gift freely given. But you lied – and do you think God doesn’t see, doesn’t know or doesn’t care?

It is foolish to think you can deceive God – but it is dangerous to lie to God.

Now, taking into account all that the Bible says about how God deals with us – what would you expect to have happened next?

If I was reading this for the first time – I would think it would depend on what Ananias did next.

If he said – yes you are right – I lied – to you – to God – I am so ashamed. God forgive me. There would have been restoration.

If he said – don't call me a liar. Give me the money back.

Then it would lead to a warning and if there was no change – to church discipline and ultimately removal from the church.

But what happens next is shocking.

Acts 5:5:

When he heard these words, Ananias dropped dead, and a great fear came on all who heard.

You lied to God – dead!

OK – first glance – that seems a bit harsh. Too much punishment for this crime.

A great fear came on them

A great fear comes on me.

I am pretty sure in the scheme of things I have committed sins at least in the ballpark of this this kind of seriousness.

If you have not lied to God, to brothers and sisters, to the church – have not told a few porkys to look better than you are – let me know – O future Elder.

And it was not just Ananias – it was his wife too.

Verses 6–8:

The young men got up, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him. About three hours later, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. "Tell me," Peter asked her, "did you sell the land for this price?"

The main difference with Sapphira is she is given more of a chance to reflect, repent and tell the truth.

If someone asks you directly about a sin:

Did you commit this sin?

You have to think the one asking the question knows the truth and are giving you a chance to confess.

By God's grace we have only had a few instances of adultery in the church.

In each case when we confronted the member – they lied to our face.

Me – how could you even think that?

Some repented and confessed within hours – others it took months for the truth to come out.

But we looked at their faces and were pretty sure straight away.

Our instinct is to lie.

Sapphira had to know the game was up. These are Apostles – men God used to heal the lame – they knew and she knew they knew and yet - - she kept lying. Verses 8-10:

“Yes,” she said, “for that price.” Then Peter said to her, “Why did you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?”

Why are you testing God? – read your Bible about those who tested God in the wilderness – it never ends well.

Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Instantly she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men came in, they found her dead, carried her out, and buried her beside her husband.

If you think God is not serious about sin – all sin – read this again.

Maybe there is sin in your life no one knows about – well God knows – better repent.

Maybe it is sin that is known – but you don't see it as really serious.

God is holy and He is not mocked – you are playing with fire.

Verse 11:

Then **great fear** came on the whole church **and** on all who heard these things.

Fear came on the church. I bet it did. God is so serious about holiness this is how He deals with sin.

But it was not just the church who saw this – all who heard these things – refers to the watching world.

The Jews were watching this group – loving one another – the rich helping the poor – no one had need – and they are thinking – these would be great people to join.

But then they watched Ananias and Sapphira – carried out dead for a lie.

Seriously – what kind of God does that? I don't want a God like that.

What kind of God? A holy God. A jealous God.

This should not surprise the Jews – this is how God often acted in the Old Testament.

Achan, Nadab, Abihu, Uzzah.

Look – the great consuming threat we all face is not AI, global warming, nuclear annihilation or biological weapons.

Our great problem is that God – the Creator – is holy – and we are not.

For now, He stays His arm of judgment – but episodes like this remind us not to be complacent – the day of His judgment must come.

No one will escape except those who are made holy by the blood of Christ.

The gospel says – come to Christ and be made holy.

But – drawing near to a holy God is a dangerous place if you are complacent about sin.

And now everyone has to make a decision.

Look at verses 12–16.

The Jews found themselves torn.

They wanted to come near – just enough for Peter's shadow to fall and get a miracle.

But not too near – because then there was the whole sin and you die thing.

It is one thing to read about Achan and Uzzah – it is another thing to two fresh graves.

They realised that to join the church is to draw near to a holy God. I might end up buried next to Ananias.

They didn't really want to deal with their sin and were worried – Peter might look me in the eyes and call out my greed, my porn, my gossip, my dissatisfaction.

It was clear – if you join this group and don't deal with your sin – you must deal with a holy God.

So, many did not dare to join the church. I don't want to die.

But, notice there was **also** a group who said – but God **is** holy – He is coming in judgment and our only refuge is Christ.

This group became believers and were added to the Lord in increasing numbers—multitudes of both men and women.

The result is that those inside the church and outside the church knew – God is holy and must deal with sin.

That is our passage.

So:

What does this passage tell us about God?



God is gracious but also holy.

At the heart of the gospel is grace.

Grace means all our sins are forgiven – even huge ones like lying to God. Wonderful.

But grace does not erase another truth – God is holy – and to be saved we must be holy.

Harder.

In Christ:

We are *free* from the **penalty** of sin.
We are *being freed* from the **power** of sin.

We *will be free* from the **presence** of sin.

Salvation does not end sin in us now – but it promises it will be ended.

Salvation means fighting to be free from the power of sin – now.

God won't tolerate His people being complacent with sin. It undercuts the gospel which says we must be holy.

Don't test God by saying I am a Christian then being drawn to sin and failing to fight it – because a holy God will have to act – maybe sooner – maybe later – but He must act.

How serious is God about sin?

Achan, Uzzah, Ananias.

The Flood, the exile, the cross, hell.

God is serious and will do what He must.

Sin will not derail the plan of God.

What does this passage tell us about us?



Complacency with sin is a dangerous place to dwell.

To show why I think this is in our passage – let me ask you a question.

I don't think there is a definitive right answer – but let's see which way which way you lean.

Do you lean toward thinking it is more likely Ananias and Sapphira were **unsaved** and judged **eternally** and are in **hell**?

Do you lean toward thinking it is more likely Ananias and Sapphira were **saved** and judged **temporally** and are in **heaven**?



If you lean toward thinking it is more likely Ananias and Sapphira were unsaved and judged eternally and are in hell?

Hands up

If you lean toward thinking it is more likely Ananias and Sapphira were saved and judged temporally and are in heaven?

Hands up

If you committed the great sin of refusing to get off the fence.

Hands up

Let me be clear – we are not told conclusively. You can make a fair case either way.

Some evidence points to them being unsaved.

In Acts 4:8 – Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit.

But here – it is Satan who has filled Ananias' heart.

They lied to God – even after being confronted – and they brought evil into the church.

We have examples like Judas – or Demas – those hiding in the church until God unmask them.

However, I personally believe it much more consistent with the New Testament to say they were saved but complacent about their sin.

Why?

We are told that they were part of the group of those who believed 4:32. They were baptised and professing faith – joined the church – and they showed fruit – they sold land and gave a significant gift.

Lying to the Spirit is more suggestive of the sin of a believer.

I think they knew lying was wrong – they just didn't think it was really all that bad – especially compared to all the good they were doing.

But God knows that once you let sin in – you let more and more in – and before you know it a believer can commit just about any depravity imaginable.

God hates sin and He wants us to know that.

So here, right at the start of the church – we have this warning to believers – don't tolerate sin – deal with it.

Brothers and sisters – God didn't begin by acting against a gross sin – mass murder, rape, incestuous abuse.

Then we might think – God only cares about big sin.

He acted against a sin any of us could commit and probably have committed.

Some have said – a true believer would not lie to the Spirit like this.

Really? Really?

I think a true believer can commit incredibly heinous sins as well as much more mundane ones.

Years ago – most churches used to have offering envelopes. We gave everyone a supply of blank envelopes to put your cash or cheque in – so the person sitting next to you didn't know how much you gave.

Ask the pastors of various churches from 20 years ago. A significant proportion of those envelopes put in the offering bag were empty or had an absolutely token amount.

This church had far fewer empty ones than most – but we still had our fair share.

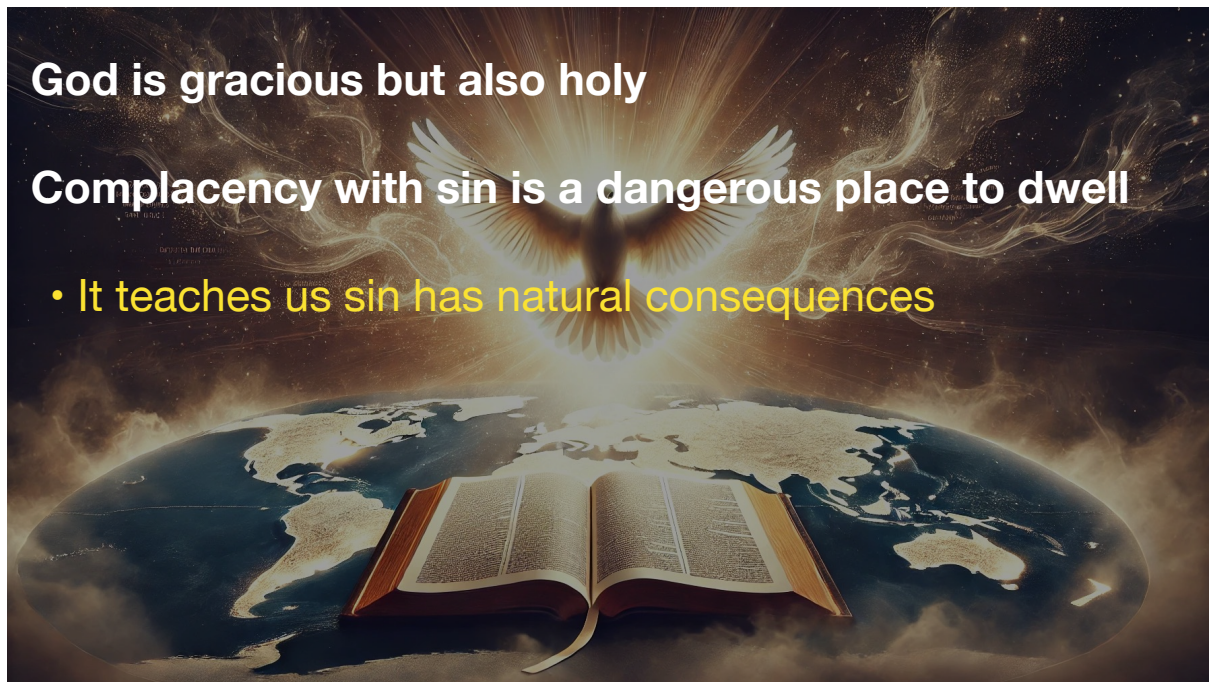
People wanted to look like they were faithful givers – without actually giving.

Can a true believer do that?

You bet we can – and it can barely trouble our conscience.

So, while I don't think we can be definitive here – how you understand this episode leads us to different ways to view this message.

Some say:



1. It teaches us sin has natural consequences.

Some believe what happened to Ananias and Sapphira is not divine judgment – it is just a natural consequence of sin.

Ananias was confronted by his sin and it shocked him so much he had a heart attack or a stroke.

Some just can't picture a loving God intervening like this.

They argue God doesn't act like this. In 1 Corinthians 5 the guy in the church is sleeping with his father's wife – a terrible sin yet he is given a chance to repent and then only disciplined out of the church not killed.

Let me say this. If this was just natural consequences it must be a pretty unhealthy family because Sapphira drops dead too.

In the Bible, God repeatedly acts to protect His glory. He does what is necessary.

We **are** meant to see this as an act of God. They lied to God and paid the price.

In 4:33 the world looked at the church and saw the great grace of God that testified to their gospel of the resurrection of Christ.

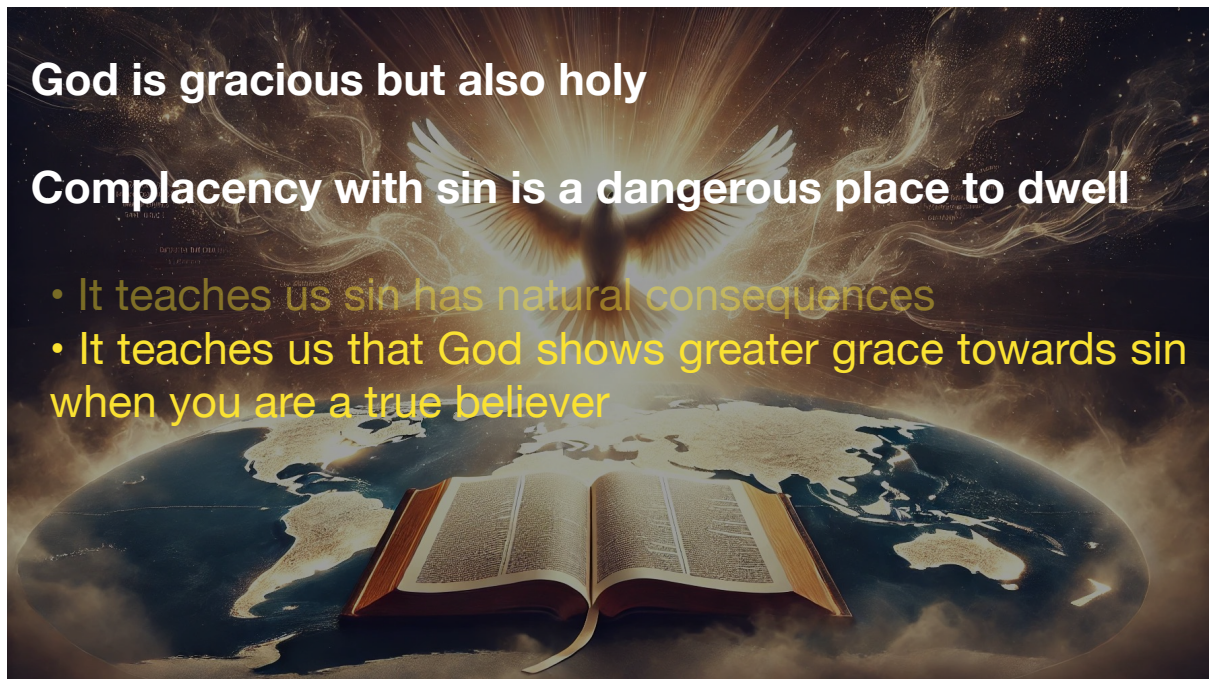
God hates it when sin in the church mars our testimony.

In grace He doesn't cause every sinner in the church to just drop dead – forget church growth – if that is how God always acted, we would have church extinction.

But this event right at the beginning of the church was a warning that God is holy and if you claim to be His you better not be complacent about your sin.

In grace, the more common pattern is that God calls on believers to repent and is patient.

But at times He does act like this to remind us that sin has to be dealt with.



Others say:

- 2. It teaches us that God shows greater grace towards sin when you are a true believer.**

Some are convinced that this is God acting – but He would not deal with a true believer in this way.

So, they must be unsaved.

This group would admit that true believers can sin like this – but once you come to Christ – God shows greater grace. He doesn't treat you in this way because of the cross.

Sorry, but that is not what we find in Scripture.

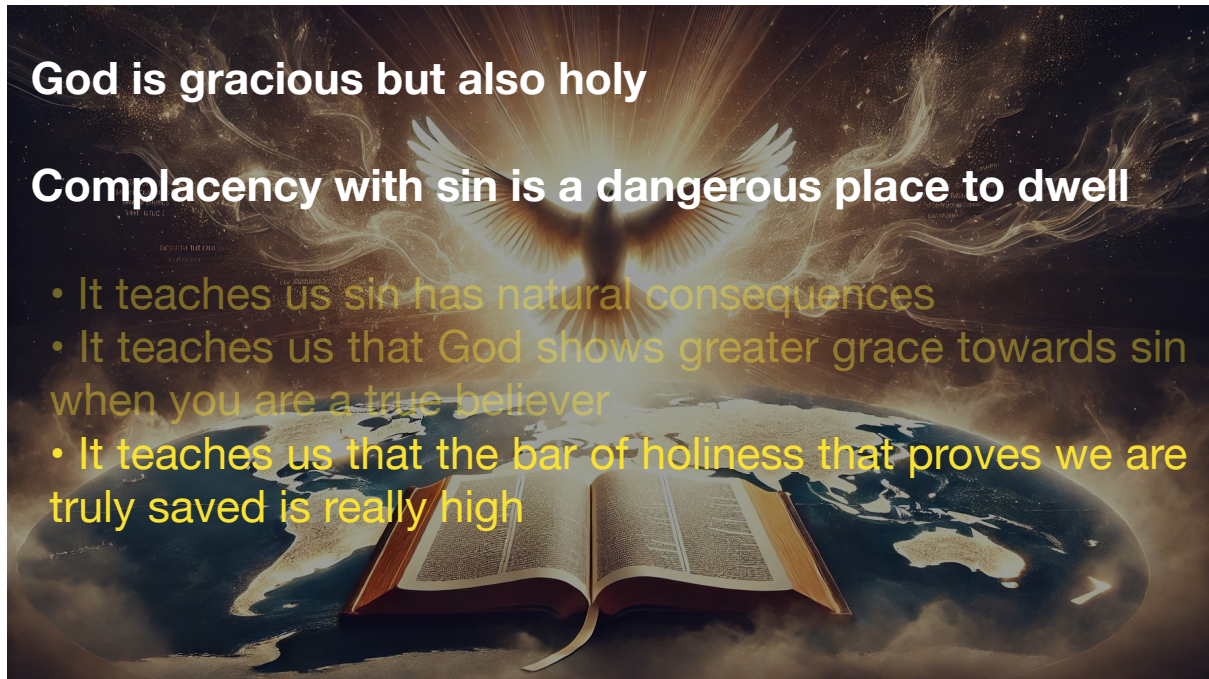
God calls on **all** to repent and be holy. Believers are not given a special pass to get away with more in this life.

We are called to a higher standard.

Nor do we find God weeding out the tares in the church now.

In Matthew 13 – we are told that it is only at the harvest that God will sort the tares from the wheat.

Look, God **does** show great grace toward believers – but do not think that means we get more leeway with our sin.



Others say:

- 3. It teaches us that the bar of holiness that proves we are truly saved is really high.**

Basically, if you sin like this – it is proof that you aren't saved.

Lying to the Holy Spirit – being filled with Satan showed they were unsaved. A saved person would not commit this kind of sin.

Really? Set the bar here – who will stand?

I have already said – I think true believers should not – but certainly can – sin like this.

Many who hold this view really struggle with assurance.

Ananias and Sapphira clearly thought they were saved – they did good stuff – sold land, gave money – yes they lied – but some then realise – wait – that is me.

I have sinned as bad as them – if they are lost then I am also doomed – I am headed to hell.

I think there is a better way to understand this.



God is gracious but also holy

Complacency with sin is a dangerous place to dwell

- It teaches us sin has natural consequences
- It teaches us that God shows greater grace towards sin when you are a true believer
- It teaches us that the bar of holiness that proves we are truly saved is really high
- It teaches us to take sin seriously and not be complacent

4. It teaches us to take sin seriously and not be complacent.

At the beginning of the church God made a statement – if you are in Christ – fight your sin.

He does not expect perfection – but He will not tolerate complacency.

He will forgive any sin. He gives power to fight sin. So, fight sin.

If you say sin like this shows they don't deserve heaven – what does that say about the gospel?

Personally, I think Ananias and Sapphira were saved. They received something they did not deserve – a death that took them to heaven.

But, that **is** the gospel – by faith we all get that gift – and not one of us deserve it.

God didn't kill them to show sin like that shows they are unsaved. He did it as a message to the church and to the world.

Being complacent about sin is not to be tolerated.

Does God act like this every time?

No.

He should – but in grace this is rare – for now – until the Day of Judgment.

But from time to time, God has and may act in such a way to remind us – He is holy and His people must fight sin.

Take communion unworthily – some may die. A church with sin may lose its lampstand.

But, sin is so deceptive – we know God hates sin – yet we can convince ourselves – the good stuff I am doing outweighs the bad – I am not perfect.

I do good stuff – I play on the music team, clean the church, give faithfully – I know God doesn't like my struggle with lust or gossip or anger – but God is a God of great grace – and one day I intend to get around to dealing with my baggage.

No. Today is the day. God calls on us to fight sin – right from when it first begins in our hearts.

Look – I do think the grace of God means that even though this couple lied to the Holy Spirit – God saved them by the power of the blood of Christ.

But, the lesson of Ananias and Sapphira is not – even look if my sin gets too out of hand – the worst is that God might kill me – and I wake in heaven – I'm OK with that.

That is a dangerous place to be.

The lesson is God hates sin – is not OK with it – and if you love God you will fight sin with everything you have when it first rears its ugly head.

I don't know if your sin is minor or out of control.

I don't know if your sin is known or hidden.

But God knows.

And I **do** know that if we confess our sin – His grace is great and the power to fight sin is great – and that is what we are called to do.

If I am right, grace covers even a sin like lying to God. Whatever your sin – bring it to Him.

And if any here are not Christians – for sure there is sin and hypocrisy in this church, in every church – but that is not the great point you need to hear.

God hates sin – all sin – and if this is how He deals with believers who sin – do not think you will escape on the Day of Judgment.

The only escape is the blood of Christ – the refuge of Jesus.

Our God is holy – but in love He sent Christ so sinners like us can draw near to a holy God.

Our Sin Won't Impede Him **Acts 4:32-5:16 (June 8, 2025)**

Main Point: God's grace is greater than our sin. However, His holiness demands we not become complacent but fight our sin.

General Questions:

1. Why is the early church so often upheld as an example of an ideal church?
2. Considering the honesty of the New Testament about sin in Christians and churches – why do Christians struggle so much when that sin is revealed?
3. What does the early church teach us about love for each other, generosity, unity?
4. What is it about the account of Ananias and Sapphira that is so jarring and difficult?
5. What does this passage teach us about the holiness of God and His tolerance of sin?
6. What does it teach us about our attitude to sin?
7. Do you think there are sins that a true Christian cannot fall into or not?
8. How should their response once sin is uncovered affect their assurance they are truly saved?
9. If Ananias and Sapphira are saved – what does this tell us about the magnitude of the grace of God?
10. How can we fight sin and avoid complacency?
11. How is the role of accountability, confession, spiritual disciplines in helping us to fight sin?

Application Questions:

1. How should we respond when we experience those first tendencies to sin?
2. If we have ignored or covered up sin – what should we do now?
3. Is there someone in your life holding you accountable?
4. If we have relatives or friends that respond – I am not a Christian because the church is filled with hypocrites – how will you respond?

What convicted me in the message?

What moved me in the message?

What will I do in light of the message?