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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Acts 5.

(2013).

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Acts 5.

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### Topics.

- Why has Satan filled your heart to lie?
- Ananias and Sapphira are struck dead.
- Many signs and wonders were done by the apostles.
- People afflicted with unclean spirits were all healed.
- The religious rulers put Peter and the apostles in prison.
- We must obey God rather than men.
- If it is of man it will fail; but if it is of God it will succeed.
- Success cannot be used as evidence that a work is of God.
- The religious authorities let Peter and the apostles go.

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter five thousand believed and the Sadducees arrest Peter and John overnight for proclaiming Jesus. In a prayer meeting Peter John and their friends were filled with the Holy Spirit. Joseph, (called Barnabas) sold a field and many others sold their homes and gave the money to the apostles' to distribute to their poorer brothers and sisters who were in need so that everyone had all things in common.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

### Ananias and Sapphira are Struck Dead.

Acts 5:1-11 ----- <sup>1</sup>But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, <sup>2</sup>and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. <sup>3</sup>But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan (the accuser) filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." <sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. <sup>6</sup>The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. <sup>7</sup>After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. <sup>8</sup>And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." <sup>9</sup>But Peter said to her, "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 are at the door, and they will carry you out." <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

The word, but links what Luke is saying back the end of the previous chapter and to a man named Joseph (called Barnabas) who sold a field and gave all the money as did many others who sold their houses and land to the apostles to distribute to their poor brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 4:31-37). The link back to this group is to contrast their giving to the giving of Ananias and Sapphira.

### Ananias and Sapphiras' Lie.

Peters words, "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?" (v4) shows that Ananias and Sapphira were not struck down, because they sold the property and kept part of the money. Peter shows they were fully entitled to do this since the money was theirs.

Ananias and Sapphira were struck down because they lied about it, most likely because they wanted to appear more generous in the eyes of their other brothers and sisters than they really were. It may even be that their giving was motivated by guilt rather than love and that they only gave what they did because those in Christ around them were being so unselfishly generous, but whatever the reason lying is something God hates especially when it is lying for one's own benefit or gain.

### **Why has Satan filled your Heart to Lie?**

Satan is a word that symbolises and embraces in its meaning everything that is offensive to God and against God's will, thus the reason Peter asks Ananias, "Why has Satan filled his Heart to Lie" their lying to Peter is the same as lying to God. The following is a list of seven things the book of Proverbs tell us that God hates and that are an abomination to Him. Lying is listed in number two and in number six thus lying to any brother or sister who faithfully follows Christ (especially when motivated by greed or pride) can be in biblical language referred to as lying to Satan.

Seven things the LORD hates and that are an abomination to Him: -

1. Pride and Arrogance.
2. A lying tongue.
3. People who murder and kill the innocent.
4. Those who devise wicked plans.
5. People who love doing what is wrong
6. A false witness who lies about another person.
7. Those in Christ who cause discord among God's people (Prov. 6:16-19).

Thus the reason Peter uses the phrase, "Lying to the Holy Spirit" in Jewish culture and in the mind of biblical writers lying to sons and daughters of God and especially to those who are called to serve God as the apostle Peter was is considered the same as lying to God Himself.

### **For further information regarding Satan, see: -**

- Satan, in Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

### **Great fear came upon the whole Church.**

Great fear came upon the whole church and on all that heard about Ananias and Sapphira. This was a unique period in history, Old Testament prophecy was being fulfilled and God was pouring out His Spirit on all flesh (Jews and Gentiles alike) in a spectacular way. Gentiles who had never known God were finding Him, Jews who only knew the law were finding grace, brothers and sisters in Christ were speaking in languages which they hadn't learnt but others understood, and the apostle were performing stunning miracles.

Added to this was the enormous charitable and generous spirit those in Christ were showing toward each other, many were selling houses and land to help their poorer brothers and sisters. It is possible in this environment of God's awesome presence that Ananias and Sapphiras' own embarrassment, shame and guilt struck them down when their lies, greed and pride was made known to all.

### **Many Signs and Wonders were done by the Apostles.**

Acts 5:12-16 ----- <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. <sup>14</sup>And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, <sup>15</sup>so that they even carried out the sick

into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. <sup>16</sup>The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

**Solomon's Portico:** (Porch in the KJV) refers to a colonnade or interior porch.

**NOTICE:** that Luke points out it was only the apostles who were performing miracles and not those who were being added to the Lord.

It appears the apostles are all gathered together in Solomon's Portico, but many feared to join them, no-doubt because they had seen or heard what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira nevertheless the people highly respected the apostles and multitudes were being added to the Lord.

This period of time was unique God's Spirit was flowing through the apostles as His Spirit had never been seen before on earth. The apostles didn't need to build an atmosphere with music to prepare people to receive a miraculous healing as many ministers do in churches do today. It did not matter in what environment the apostles were they simply spoke in the name of Jesus and people were immediately healed of every kind of physical and mental sickness.

Signs and wonders were so majestic and abundant that people were even carrying the lame and the sick and laying them in the streets so that the shadow of Peter might fall on them.

This period of time could be likened to Moses and the Ten plagues in the sense that both eras were a moment in historical history that God was doing something new and mighty on earth through pouring out His Spirit in an awesome and majestic fashion through certain men He had tried, tested and chosen for the privileged and honoured work he had called them to do.

**People afflicted with Unclean Spirits were all Healed.**

The words, "Those afflicted with unclean spirits were all healed" (v16) refers to those who had a mental illness, were crippled or lame or had a sickness that the people of this generation did not understand.

**For further information see the title: -**

- Unclean Spirits (Old and New Testaments).

In, Satan and his Family (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**The religious rulers are filled with Raging Jealousy.**

Acts 5:17-25 ----- <sup>17</sup>But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him, and filled with jealousy <sup>18</sup>they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. <sup>19</sup>But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup>"Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." <sup>21</sup>And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council and all the senate of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought. <sup>22</sup>But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, <sup>23</sup>"We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." <sup>24</sup>Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. <sup>25</sup>And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."

This is absolutely stunning and a good example of religious leaders being so bound up by pride, legalism, tradition and their own selfish ambition that they are totally blind to what God is clearly doing right in front of their eyes. Upon seeing the overwhelming success of the apostles ministry and multitudes being added to the Lord instead of rejoicing with them the high priest and all other religious authorities

were filled with raging jealousy clearly showing that they were not in the priesthood to serve God but for their own selfish ambition and the power and fame they received from being seen as important men of God.

### **The religious rulers put Peter and the Apostles in Prison.**

Peter and the apostles are put in prison, but during the night an angel of the Lord set them free, then told them to stand in the Temple and speak all the words concerning Christ. Imagine the bewilderment of the high priest, those who were with him, the Jewish council and all the senate of Israel when they were told the apostles were in the Temple teaching Christ.

### **We must Obey God rather than Men.**

Acts 5:26-42 ----- <sup>26</sup>Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. <sup>27</sup>And when they had brought them they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup>saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup>But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup>The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup>God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup>And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." <sup>33</sup>When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. <sup>34</sup>But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honour by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup>And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. <sup>36</sup>For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup>After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. <sup>38</sup>So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; <sup>39</sup>but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice,

**NOTICE:** the crowds are favouring the apostles far more than the Jewish religious authorities so much so that they were afraid the multitudes who were listening to the apostles teaching might stone them if they were seen to be harming the apostles (v26). The high priest and the Jewish council command the apostles not to teach Jesus, but they reply, "We must obey God rather than men." Then Peter accuses them of killing the one who their God raised up and exalted at His right hand (30-31). The religious authorities upon hearing this were furious and wanted to kill the apostles.

### **If it is of Man it will fail; but if it is of God it will Succeed.**

Gamaliel was a Pharisee and eminent doctor of the law (Paul was one of his pupils) (Acts 22:3). When the enraged religious rulers sought to slay the apostles for their bold testimony to Christ Gamaliel stood up in the council and urged judicious caution on the ground that if the new doctrine were of God they could not overthrow it, but if it was of man it would perish of itself (Acts 5:34-39). Because Gamaliel was held in esteem by all the people his counsel was heeded and God used it to give a needed respite to the infant church.

### **Success cannot be used as evidence a work is of God.**

Gamaliel statement, "If it is of man it will fail, but if of God it will succeed" (v38), is true on an eternal level, but success in this mortal world cannot be used as evidence that a religious movement is of God and of His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, since there are many very successful religious movements on earth today that teach totally contrary to the words of Christ and some of the most successful deny Christ altogether. Though all things that succeed are in God's control and His sovereign and eternal plan to establish an eternal family of brothers and sisters in

Christ and God's everlasting Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth not all religious movements that are successful lead sinners to eternal life and therefore just because a movement does succeed it cannot be taken as guaranteed evidence that it is of God.

In as much as Gamaliel believed in God's sovereign control and his advice was sound on an eternal level, it falls short on a mortal level because underlying the words, "If it is of man it will fail, but if of God it will succeed," is the premise that what succeeds is good and what fails is evil, but this is contrary to Scripture because they point out that the wicked do prosper (Ps 73:12) and the godly are often destitute (Ps 109:22-26), showing that truth must be tested by the standard of God's word and not by success or even failure.

### **The Religious Authorities let Peter and the Apostles Go.**

Acts 5:26-42 ----- <sup>40</sup>and when they (the Jewish council) (v27) had called in the apostles they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup>Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. <sup>42</sup>And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

What a fantastic testimony, "They left rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for Christ's name" (v41) especially when it is considered that they were beaten and yet immediately go back to the Temple and continue teaching Christ.

**NOTICE:** they also took the Gospel from house to house.

Ponder for a moment; when the early church came together after Christ's death and resurrection it was made up of Jews who had been indoctrinated with Moses Law for nearly four-thousand years, Samaritans who had married foreign wife's and adopted their pagan practises, and Gentiles who knew nothing about God or the Old Testament Scriptures.

These groups of vastly different mindsets were coming together in home churches to worship God. Though there was amongst their meetings a multitude of different views all had one thing in common, Jesus was central in their lives; he was the 'ONE' that they were coming together for.

They no-doubt loved talking about Christ and studying the Scriptures together, I suspect much like university students who when given an assignment get together in a spirit of friendship so they can learn from each other by sharing their thoughts, ideas and discoveries to improve their knowledge and their marks.

They don't argue and impose their thoughts onto the group, but simply share in a spirit of discovery their ideas, and all have the knowledge and awareness that some ideas will be accepted and others may end up in the bin, but they have learnt through their school years that to improve their knowledge, enhances what they are studying and enriches their learning they need to be with others who have an interest in the same thing. Thus the reason the early church gathered together in homes in the regions they lived in.

### **House Churches.**

Church in the New Testament was in the home of a faithful brother or sister of Christ. The observant reader as they journey through the writings of the apostles and Paul will notice that though the word church is mentioned many times there is no mention of any church buildings.

There is in the secular global world today a mindset that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building but this is not the New Testament concept of church. During the early church era building God's church was not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they were able. Never make the mistake of limiting the church to only the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings, they may be a part of the body of Christ but they are not the only part.

There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives.

God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around.

Throughout history there has always been hundreds of thousands of unseen humble Christian brothers and sisters in Christ spending their time helping the poor and the less fortunate.

The church is the reflection of Christ on earth and therefore should be  
walking in the same Spirit of love, kindness, compassion  
and grace etc. that Christ walked in while on earth.

New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day. The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained. It has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life, thus the New Testament church is global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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End