



# The Hypocrisy Of The Church Robs God Of His Glory

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol.  
1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 422–423.



# ACTS 5:1 – 11 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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?

<sup>4</sup> While it remained, was it not your own? And 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."



<sup>5</sup> Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

<sup>6</sup> And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

<sup>7</sup> Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

<sup>8</sup> And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.”





<sup>9</sup> 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.”

<sup>10</sup> Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

<sup>11</sup> So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.



# THE HYPOCRISY OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

George MacDonald wrote, “Half of the misery in the world comes from trying to look, instead of trying to be, what one is not.” The name that Jesus gave to this practice is “hypocrisy,” which means “wearing a mask, playing the actor.”

We must not think that failure to reach our ideals is hypocrisy because no believer lives up to all that he or she knows or has in the Lord. Hypocrisy is deliberate deception, making people think we are more spiritual than we are.



The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was putting on a lovely “front” to conceal the shabby sin in their lives -- a sin that cost them their lives.

- Ananias means “God is gracious”, but he learned that God is also holy.
- Sapphira means “beautiful”, but her heart was ugly with sin.





Some people are undoubtedly shocked when they read that God killed two people just because they lied about a business transaction and their church giving.

But when you consider the features connected with this sin, you must agree that God did the right thing by judging them.



# WORTH NOTING...

It is worth noting that the Lord judges sin severely at the beginning of a new period in salvation history.

- After the tabernacle was erected, God killed Nadab and Abihu for trying to present “false fire” to the Lord (Lev. 10).
- God also had Achan killed for disobeying orders after Israel had entered the Promised Land (Joshua 7).





While God was certainly not responsible for their sins, He used these judgments to warn the people and even us.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:11 – 12 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.



If Satan cannot defeat the church by attacks from the outside, he will get on the inside and go to work.



Firstly, the Sin of Ananias and Sapphira was energized by Satan (Acts 5:3); That is a serious matter.





# ACTS 20:28 – 31 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

<sup>29</sup> For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

<sup>30</sup> Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

<sup>31</sup> Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.



Satan knows how to lie to the minds and hearts of church members, even genuine Christians, and get them to follow his orders.

We forget that the warning about the spiritual armor, in Ephesians 6:10 – 18, was written to God's people, not to unbelievers, because it is the Christians who are in danger of being used by Satan to accomplish his evil purposes.



Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all.”





## JOHN 8:44 (NKJV)

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

- Satan lied to and through this couple, and the lie led to their deaths.
- When God judged Ananias and Sapphira, He was also judging Satan. God was letting everybody know He would not tolerate deception in His church.



Secondly, their sin was motivated by pride, and pride is a sin that God especially hates and judges.

## PROVERBS 8:13 (NKJV)

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.

## PROVERBS 16:18 (NKJV)

Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

In Acts 4:36-37, it is possible that the church praised God for the generous offering that Barnabas had brought when Satan whispered to the couple, “You can also bask in this kind of glory! You can make others think that you are as spiritual as Barnabas!”





# RESIST & BE CAREFUL

## JAMES 4:7 (NKJV)

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

- Instead of resisting Satan's approaches, they yielded to him and planned their strategy.
- Jesus made it very clear that we must be careful how we give, lest the glory that belongs to God should be given to us.



# MATTHEW 6:1 – 4 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

<sup>3</sup> But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

<sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.



The Pharisees were skillful at calling attention to their gifts, and they received the praises of men—but that's all they received!

God has given us what we possess; we are stewards, not owners. We must use what He gives us for His glory alone.

## JOHN 5:44 (NKJV)

How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?





Pride opens the door to every other sin. Once we are more concerned with our reputation than our character, there is no end to the things we will do to make ourselves “look good” before others.



Thirdly, their sin was directed against God's church.



- We have reason to believe that Ananias and Sapphira were believers. The fact that they could lie to the Spirit (Acts 5:3) and tempt the Spirit (Acts 5:9) would indicate that they had the Spirit of God living within.
- God loves His church and is jealous over it, for the church was purchased by the blood of God's Son (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25) and has been put on earth to glorify Him and do His work.
- Satan wants to destroy the church, and the easiest way to do it is to use those within the fellowship.





Had Peter not been discerning, Ananias and Sapphira would have become influential people in the church!

- Satan would have been working through them to accomplish his purposes!
- The church is “the pillar and ground of the truth,” and Satan attacks it with his lies.





## 1 TIMOTHY 3:15 (NKJV)

but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.



The church is God's temple where He dwells, and Satan wants to move in and dwell there too.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16 (NKJV)

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?



The church is God's army, and Satan seeks to get into the ranks of as many traitors as he can.

## 2 TIMOTHY 2:1 – 4 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup> You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.





The church is safe as long as Satan is attacking from the outside, but the church is in danger when he gets on the inside.

We can quickly condemn Ananias and Sapphira for their dishonesty, but we need to examine our own lives to see if our practice backs up our profession.

- Do we mean everything we pray about in public?
- Do we sing hymns and Gospel songs sincerely or routinely?





“These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me” (Matthew 15:8 NIV).

How many church members would be left if God killed “religious deceivers” today?



What is described in this chapter is not a case of church discipline, but it is an example of God's judgment.



## HEBREWS 10:30 – 31 (NKJV)

<sup>30</sup> For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.”

<sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

## 1 PETER 4:17 (NKJV)

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?





Had Ananias and Sapphira judged their own sin, God would not have judged them, but they agreed to lie, and God had to deal with them.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 11:31 (NKJV)

For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.



Ananias was dead and buried, and Sapphira did not even know it! Satan always keeps his servants in the dark, while God guides His servants in the light (John 15:15).

## JOHN 15:15 (NKJV)

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.



Peter accused her of tempting God's Spirit, namely, deliberately disobeying God and seeing how far God would go.

## EXODUS 17:2 (NKJV)

Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?"

## DEUTERONOMY 6:16 (NKJV)

"You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah.





# “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” Matthew 4:7

We must remember that their sin was not in robbing God of money but in lying to Him and robbing Him of glory.

They were not required to sell the property; having sold it, they were not required to give any of the money to the church (Acts 5:4).

Their lust for recognition conceived sin in their hearts (Acts 5:4, 9), and that sin eventually produced death (James 1:15).



# JAMES 1:15 (NKJV)

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

- A wave of godly fear swept over the church and all who heard the story (Acts 5:11).
- We have moved from “great power” and “great grace” (Acts 4:33) to “great fear,” and all of these ought to be present in the church.



## HEBREWS 12:28 – 29 (NKJV)

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

<sup>29</sup> For our God is a consuming fire.





The hypocrisy of the  
church robs God of glory.

