

God's Power for the Church
CBBC
9/21/2025

Introduction—Ananias and Sapphira

Summarize the story. We have to remember that we are seeing the beginning of the church. The baptism of the Holy Spirit has brought this incredible change that was always desired. We saw how God basically outlawed poverty in the Law. No one is to be without in the nation of Israel. We saw how that turned out. It is when men are changed, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that real change happens. This was the change promised back in Jeremiah 31 when God talked about the New Covenant. The community built of people who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit is unique. Nothing is like the church.

But we also have to recognize that even though the Holy Spirit has changed us, we are not sinless. We still struggle with our sin. Romans 7:7 and onward talks about the ongoing struggle we have with sin. I John 1 also tells us that we still sin. The baptism of the Holy Spirit changes us so that while we struggle with sin, we are no longer slaves to sin. We don't have to sin. We did have to sin before. We don't have to sin now. So, we realize that we have this entire community of people working together in worship, edification, service, and evangelism. These overlap, and everyone has different responsibilities. We are going to talk about this later, but God is also doing amazing things. And because sin is such a prevalent sin, even among God's covenant church community, people scheme to gain spiritual coin.

In this case, you have a couple who want more recognition. They want to be seen as more spiritual than they truly are. People are noticed and lauded for selling their

property. They are taking a total loss on it. They receive nothing in return. It also puts them more at risk. What if bad times come? What if they need that money? So, someone who says, I'm taking this risk, and showing my total faith in God, by giving everything and showing how committed I am to the Way, they are demonstrating that they are up there spiritually.

1-2—Summarize the crime. This married couple took the property that they owned and sold it. Then, with his wife's understanding, he takes the money and lays it at the apostle's feet to meet the church's needs. But he presents it in such a way that people believe that it was all of it. Which leads me to believe that it was a pretty sizable portion they kept out.

3-4 Peter confronts him of his sin. He says that the desire to lie about what he gave was satanically inspired. Satan loves pride. It is his greatest sin. It is his greatest weapon. (later Satanic thinking).

We talked last week about lying to the Holy Spirit. Being that all believers are now indwelt with the Holy Spirit, there is a sense that lying to another believer means we are also lying to God. Peter says that down in Acts 5:4. I won't spend a lot of time on it because I did last week, but pride leads to deception. We want to be recognized for something, and we want to be recognized for more than we actually did. That is satanic thinking.

So we see that God takes Ananias' life. We see that God also takes Sapphira's life. It is not Peter. God tells Peter the truth about what happened, and He tells Peter what He is about to do. And we have two people from the church drop dead.

Why would God do this? This sounds incredibly harsh, and we also know there are people who do basically worse later on, and God does not slay them. Consider Peter over in the book of Galatians. He leaves the Jews and goes to sit with the Gentiles. Paul calls him out. That is pretty bad. It misrepresents the Gospel, and yet God does not take his life, or Demas, who leaves Paul to serve in this present world.

God demonstrated that His holiness was just as important to a community based around grace as it was to a community based around Law. The call to personal holiness and worship is consistent between both the Old and New Testaments. It should not surprise us that God took their life. If we think of Aaron's sons, Uzzah with the ark of the covenant, and the unnamed prophet who was lied to, and chose to believe that lie. God took his life. We should not be surprised when God takes life; we should be surprised and thankful when He doesn't.

It is not a new thing that God expects incredible personal holiness. In fact, in **1st Peter 1:15-16**, Peter quotes Leviticus 19:2. Peter roots the New Testament call to holiness in the Old Testament, which anchors it in God's character. God's desire for us to be holy has not changed in the slightest. What has changed between the Old and New Testaments? We have because God changed us. How? Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which caused us to be born again. Why was the Holy Spirit able to enter in? **Titus 3:5-6** It was because of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Looking at Titus **2:13-14**, we are reminded that we were redeemed to be redeemed, and to be purified in such a way that we pursue good works. We lack contentment unless we are serving.

God protects His covenant communities. He protected them from false worship and false prophecies back in the Old Testament. He protected them from

unholiness. He is going to do the same with the church. He is going to protect the Lord's Table. He is going to protect us from false teachings and those who follow them.

(Thyatira, Revelation 2). God protects His covenant communities, the church, today. It is a fact that our Lord knows the heart of every person in every church, and what they are doing.

This ties in with what it says in verse 11. Great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. Are they afraid that God is unjust, or cruel, or arbitrary? No, they are afraid of the consequences of their own failure because, as we grow in the Gospel, we are reminded how absolute His holiness is. But we are reminded at the sign time of the grace and forgiveness He offers us in spite of every failure.

But the right type of fear is powerful. Acts 9:31 tells us that the church grew, and they were walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Spirit, and it multiplied. Paul says in Philippians that we are to work out, or confirm our salvation, with fear and trembling. [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) tells us that we are to cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, until we understand that there will not be condemnation for our sin, but there will be consequences, we will not grow in holiness as we should.

Fearing God for the early church meant that if they were tempted to lie about their ministry or service, they knew that God might very well directly intervene. It helped them turn away from being performative.

Final Thoughts--God causes the church to grow. We see this over and over again. But we forget that God is changing the people in the church. That change is always towards personal holiness. The fruits of the Spirit are another way to describe part of holiness.

Maturity and holiness—Are we growing in personal holiness, because that is a mark of personal maturity? Don't relax. Rest. Don't rest in yourself, rest in Christ.

Do we take this community of people and what it does seriously? Do we commit to prayer, the Word, worship and evangelism, because our God takes it very seriously. He asked His Son to die to create this community.