

Date: 31st May 2026
Theme: The Holy Spirit
Topic: The Holy Spirit purifies & emboldens the church in persecution.
Passage: Acts 5
Key verse: ... *great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events... Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number, Acts 5:11, 14*

Introduction

Right from the beginning of Acts 2-4, the Holy Spirit was working to build a community of people to relate to each other, not individually or selfishly; but as a church = *koinonia* (fellowship, having in common).

- *Koinonia* is not mere socialising. It is a deep spiritual bond among believers in Christ, as seen in the relational nature of the early church community:
 - Communion/shared purpose
... *All the believers were one in heart and mind Acts 4:32*
 - Communal/sharing goods
... *They shared everything they had Acts 4:32*
 - Commitment, submission/sacrificing
..... *those who owned lands/houses sold them, brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet Acts 4:35*
 - Community, common good/shared responsibility
... *no needy persons among them Acts 4:34*
... *distributed to anyone as he had need Acts 4:35*
- In this context of the Holy Spirit building a church based on truth and sacrificial love, how did Ananias and Sapphira's selfish action disrupt the work of the Holy Spirit?

Where the Holy Spirit moved, people were driven from selfishness to radical generosity. Believers sold their property, from time to time, to support the needy and placed their gifts at the Apostles' feet (exemplified by Barnabas' generosity).

Ananias and Sapphira's collusion of pretence and greed were contrary to what the Holy Spirit was building in the new church.

1. What was Ananias' sin?

Ananias' sin was not in withholding money.

Peter freely acknowledged that the land value belonged to Ananias alone, and to do with it what he wanted.

- a) Why was Ananias's sin a lie? Acts 5:3-4
- Ananias **lied** about the amount. He deceptively implied that he gave all.
 - He wanted the image of generosity without actually being generous.
 - His greed was in keeping the money.
 - His pride was in wanting everyone to consider him generous.

- How serious was Ananias' lie?
 - It was a lie to men, the Holy Spirit and to God.
 - It was hypocrisy and a deliberate deceit. He pretended to be fully sacrificial while looking for the spiritual clout of respectability and generosity.
 - It underestimated God's holiness, made a mockery of the Holy Spirit, stoked his selfish ambition, corrupted the Church body.
- He **kept back** Acts 5:2
Kept back (= *nosphizomai* Greek) means to misappropriate, steal, stealthily set apart for oneself. It implies dishonest withholding of money that was presented as a full gift. This paralleled the sin of Achan in Joshua 7:1.

b) Why was Ananias' sin a betrayal?

- Ananias allowed Satan to fill his heart
...How is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Act 5:3
 - Ananias' source of filling contrasted with the believers' source
...At that time the believers ... were all filled with the Holy Spirit Act 4:31
 - Ananias listened to the voice of the enemy, like Adam and Eve who listened and chose the enemy's advice over God's.
 - Ananias acted as an agent of the enemy to destroy, from within, the integrity of the believers' *koinonia*, the Church's spiritual foundation.

c) Was the Holy Spirit's judgement against Ananias & Sapphira too swift and severe?

- Pattern: God's attributes of His love and His justice

In the Old Testament, God is a God of love and also a God of holiness/ judgement.

- **Adam & Eve** Genesis
God's love & grace provided intimate fellowship for Adam & Eve and in His love, forewarned them of the spiritual and physical consequences of sin and death. God's holiness demanded that, having broken the covenant, they had to be expelled from God's Presence in the Garden.
- **Nadab and Abihu** Leviticus 10
God's love for Nadab and Abihu was shown through the profound privilege for them to serve as priests, a role of great honour and nearness to Him. God's judgement was swift and severe when they violated His holy command by offering *strange fires*.
- Purpose: The Church's collective awe of God Acts 2:42
...everyone was filled with awe...many wonders and miraculous signs were done...
The gravity of lying to God for personal gain, at the expense of God's community, must be stopped at its root.

- Protection: Safeguard the infant church's credibility
The infant church must be protected from any cancerous spread of greed, deception and hypocrisy, preventing satanic infiltration from defiling the young community.

After removing deception & establishing a standard and purity in the church community, how did God's people react to trials and opposition to preach the gospel?

2. How did the Holy Spirit help the early church to preach the gospel?

- a) The Holy Spirit helped the Apostles to heal so as to authenticate the gospel Acts 5:12-16
 - Holy Spirit enabled apostles to perform signs and wonders in partnership with the Holy Spirit Acts 5:12
 - Numbers added Acts 5:13-14
 - The fear of God filtered out the **fake** 5:13
 - The power of the Holy Spirit drew in the **committed** 5:14
 - The gospel message validated with signs and healing Acts 5:16
- b) The Holy Spirit released the apostles from prison to continue preaching Acts 5:17-42
 - The disciples' boldness was an answered prayer from Acts 4:29. What were they bold about?
 - They were bold because of their obedience Acts 5:32
 - They were bold despite being flogged
 - They were bold to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ
 - God does not seem to rescue us always. Why?
 - Stephen was **not** rescued but martyred Acts 7
Luke remarked that Paul who stood by watching was so impacted that he would be willing to die for Jesus, counting it as 'gain'.
 - James was **killed by the sword** Acts 12 :2
Fulfilled his genuine response to Jesus when He asked him "would you pay the same price to attain greatness?"
 - Peter was rescued in Acts 12, but later **died for his faith** (foretold by Jesus in John 20:18,19)
In fact all the apostles apart from John were put to death. None of them shrunk from it, because to them it was their gateway to glory. Ps 116 assures us "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"
 - Paul was imprisoned repeatedly and **not delivered most of the time**
Paul was willing to be God's example to show us the extent to what greatness looks like. Paul concluded "henceforth is laid up for me a crown..."

- God's priority is His purpose
If God rescued every believer every time, the gospel would lose one of its strongest testimonies – faithfulness under suffering.

Application

- a) Share with your leader any sin of lying, deceiving or hypocrisy which you recognise as a problem that the Holy Spirit is surfacing in your life.
- b) As we wait to move into our new church building, name one potential threat from within BC which will destroy our testimony. (for example, in-fighting among members, disagreements with leaders, sexual impurity, forming cliques to disparage others etc).