

A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- Once a court painter painted the portrait of Oliver Cromwell.
- Cromwell was disfigured by warts upon his face.
 - The painter, thinking to please the great man, omitted the disfiguring warts.

- When Cromwell saw the picture, he said,
"Take it away,
and paint me
warts and all."

- It is one of the great virtues of the Bible that it shows us its heroes, warts and all.

- In our study for today we are present with one of the stories which demonstrate the **honesty of the Bible.**
- It might well have been left out because it shows that even in the early Church there were **very imperfect Christians;**
- The Bible **refuses** to present an idealised picture of anything.

- Acts 5

records a
beautiful glimpse
of what life was like
in the early church.

- **Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.**

(Acts 4:32 RSV)

- All appeared to be going well.

- But Satan never let's the Lord's work go well for long.

- Satan is still attacking the believers, and as he does, he uses a dual plan:
 - **# 1 Deception**
from within
 - **# 2 Persecution**
from without.
- and we see him operating in both spheres
in this chapter.

- This story shows us that even in its greatest days the Church was a mixture of good and bad.
- In the garden Satan is portrayed as a serpent.
 - In Acts 5 he is portrayed as a Christian.
 - The serpent has only changed his appearance and not his true nature.

- In our study today **there is true Christianity.**
- And unfortunately there is also **a counterfeit Christianity.**
- Wherever the true church has gone throughout the world, **counterfeit Christianity** has gone right along with it.

- The main characters in Acts 5 are Ananias and Sapphire.

- Ananias means “grace of God”;

- Sapphira signifies “a sapphire,”
the jewel of
brilliance and beauty.

- Ananias lied.
- It was then that
“the grace of God”
went out of him for ever.
- Sapphira lied.
- That which signified
grace and beauty
became
soiled and dirty.

- Why not treat their offense as a trifling one?
- Why not pass it over without notice?
- Because the Church is called unto holiness,
 - And sin must ever bring down the anger and judgment of God.

- From the conduct of these people
we see:

- **1.** We may imitate Christ,
and yet not know Him.
- **2.** We may mingle with Christians,
 - And **yet know nothing** of
the spiritual power of Christianity.
 - **Matthew 6:24**
**You cannot be
a slave to God
and to
material things.**

- **The Revised Standard Version**
translates it:
 - No one can **“serve”**
two masters.
- But that is **not** nearly strong enough.
 - The word which the Revised Standard Version translates **“serve”**
means to be a slave to.

- The word that the **Revised Standard Version** translates **master** is the word which denotes **absolute ownership**.
- We get the meaning far better, if we translate it:
 - **No man can be a slave to two owners.**

- To understand all that this means and implies we must remember **two things** about the slave in the ancient world.
- **First**, the slave in the eyes of the law **was not a person but a thing.**
 - He had absolutely **no rights of his own;**
 - In the eyes of the law the slave **was a living tool.**
- His master could sell him, beat him, **and even kill him.**

- **Second**, in the ancient world a slave had literally **no time which was his own.**
 - Every moment of his life **belonged to his master.**
 - The slave had literally **no moment of time** which belonged to himself.

- Here, then, is our relationship to God.
- In regard to God we have no rights of our own;
- God must be undisputed master of our lives.
- The Christian has no time off from being a Christian.

- There is no time when he can relax his Christian standards, as if he was off duty.
- A partial service of God is not enough.
- Being a Christian is a full-time job.

- And therein lies the problem with Ananias and Sapphira.
- They did not take their Christianity seriously.
- Like so many it was considered a part-time religion.

· **Matthew 22:36**

**Master, which is the
great commandment in the law?**

· **22:37 Jesus said unto him,
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God**

- **with all thy heart,**
- **and with all thy soul,**
- **and with all thy mind.**

**22:38 This is the
first and great commandment.**

- ***Our God is a Holy God.***
(**Joshua 24:19**)
- He reveals His Holiness
by way of example.
- Those who would challenge Him
are destined to lose.
- How **many** examples
do we need
before taking
God seriously.

- As He did with the man who broke the sabbath in the wilderness (**Numbers 15:32-36**),
 - And with Achan when Israel began to enter Canaan (**Joshua 7:18-26**),
- And with Ananias and Sapphira. (**Acts 5**)

- Later in Israel's history **many broke the sabbath** and did forbidden things **without incurring similar penalties,**
- Just as during the church's history many have acted lies or told them **without falling dead.**
- But **examples** have been given and let the wise heed the **warning.**

- What lay behind the lie in this case were the twin evils of covetousness and vainglory.
- Ananias wanted to keep part of the money for himself,
- And yet gain the reputation of having devoted all to the Lord, as Barnabas had done.
 - Such is the mind of the flesh, even in a saint.

- How many of us are free from ever having similar evils in our own hearts?

- But in this case Satan had been at work, and by the unhappy couple he issued a direct challenge to the Holy Ghost.

- A challenge that could not be ignored.

- The Holy Ghost accepted the challenge, and demonstrated His presence in this drastic fashion.
- What other examples are there?

- Nadab and Abihu
(**Leviticus 10:1-3**)
- The beginning of Leviticus is God's commands about how the sacrifices were to be presented and offered.
 - Nadab and Abihu come before the Lord and offer unauthorized fire before the Lord.
 - Because they offered fire which was not commanded, fire came from the Lord and consumed.

- Notice the reason
why this happened,

as Moses gives the explanation in
Leviticus 10:3.

- “By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.”
- What was the point Moses was making?
 - When we try to do things our way, we are glorifying ourselves and not God.
 - God must be glorified in all we do.

- Korah and 250 Israelites leaders
(**Numbers 16:1-35**)
- Korah and some of the Israelite leaders
are upset that Moses
and Aaron are in charge.
- They rebuke Moses saying that
he has gone too far
by exalting himself above
the whole assembly
(**Leviticus 16:3**).
- Now, who had appointed Moses
as their leader?
 - God had done so.

- Korah and the leaders wanted the glory that they felt Moses and Aaron were receiving as the leaders of the assembly.

- Numbers 16:32

The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses and all the men of Korah and all their goods.

- 16:33 ... and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation.

- **Uzzah**
(**2 Samuel 6:3-8**)
- We find King David **moving the Ark.**
 - In doing so **the oxen stumbled.**
- As the Ark appeared **about to tumble off.**
- With good intentions **Uzza reached out and touched the Ark.**
- **God struck him dead.**

- **Uzzah had excellent intentions.**
 - He was trying to prevent the ark of the covenant **from falling off the cart.**
 - But God had commanded that **no one** was allowed to touch the ark,
 - Only the sons of Kohath **could touch the poles that carried the ark.**
(**Numbers 3:31**)

- **God struck Uzzah dead**
for touching the ark of God
against the command of God.
- God takes His commands
seriously.
 - God expects us to
keep His commands
- And when we do not, we are
claiming glory for ourselves.

- Now let us come back to our story in **Acts 5** with **Ananias** and **Sapphira**.
- Now, Let us ask the question: **Why did Ananias and Sapphira lie?**
 - They wanted **ill-gotten glory**.
 - They wanted the believers **to be impressed that they had given all**.

- We may not realize it but many times our rebellion and temptation comes from our desire to be glorified by others.
 - We want people to be impressed with our Christianity.

- In Numbers 15 God had given King Saul orders to destroy the Amalakites
- But he didn't follow orders.
 - So we learn in 1 Samuel 15:30 that Saul's desire was that he receive honor from the elders and from the people.

- From this story of Ananias and Sapphira, along with the other people whom God struck dead,...
- I would like to offer three applications.

- # 1 God punishes what we would call “trivial” offenses.
- Have you ever considered the sins that these people died for?
- Would you not expect that the sins committed where God struck that person dead were grievous, major sins?
- Yet that is not the case at all.

- What did Nadab and Abihu do wrong?
- They used the wrong kind of fire.
- That does not seem like a big deal to us.
- In fact, we would surely call it a trivial offense.

- Isaiah establishes an everlasting principle:

- Isaiah 55:9

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- What did Korah do wrong?
 - He wanted to be in charge and thought Moses should not rule over them.
- We have that all the time, do we not?

- What did Uzzah do wrong?
- He tried to prevent the ark of the covenant from falling off a cart.
- He had good intentions and was struck dead.

- What did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong?

- They lied about the price which they sold their land.

- Do any of these sins seem monumental in your mind?
- Did you notice that none of them were murderers or adulterers or thieves?
- These are sins that we could rationalize in our minds.
- In fact, some of these we may not have considered sins at all.

- What is the big deal to use a different fire?
- Shouldn't Uzzah be allowed to touch the ark of God since it was falling?
- Korah was simply crying for balanced leadership and power not reside in only one person.
- We can rationalize their actions easily and yet God killed all of them.

- Take it a step further and consider that none of these people were “heathens” or “unbelievers.”

- All of these people were the people of God.

- Nadab and Abihu were priests of God.

- Korah was a leader in the Israelites community.

- Uzzah was an Israelite.
- Ananias and Sapphira were baptized Christians.
- God did not strike down the unbelieving murders and the heathen adulterers.
 - It was the people of God who were punished.

- There is nothing we can call “trivial” in the eyes of God.
- Everything written for our learning is a big deal to God.
- If the Biblical examples of old brought death, then we would be foolish to trivialize any of God’s words.

- When God says something,
He means it.
- We do not have the right
to second guess
how important it is to God.
 - Are there any
wasted pages
in His book?
 - Has God
wasted His breath?

- It seems clear in my mind that the reason God struck these people dead was to make a point to the community of believers.
- The point God was making to those believers is the point we are making now.
- When God says something, He expects us to do it and to do it His way.

- When Nadab and Abihu **altered the command of God.**
- God wanted the people to know **that this was not acceptable.**
 - God wanted the Israelites **to know that they**
do not complain
or go against God's leaders,
therefore God killed Korah
and the 250 Israelite leaders.

- In the same way,
God was making a point
to the church with
Ananias and Sapphira.
- God's commands
were and **are**
to be taken seriously.

- It is easy for us today **to want to discount these things** because many of these events occur in the Old Testament.

- But notice that **the severity of God** was followed through here into the New Testament as well.

- **Romans 11:22**
Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God:

- As a result of what happened to Ananias and Sapphira
”great fear came upon
all the church”
(**Acts 5:11**)
 - That is the
attitude of holiness
we must bring before God.

- **# 2 God must always be glorified.**
 - **Consider what Peter said,**
 - **“ Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God;**
 - **whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies,**
 - **so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.**
 - **To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever.**
 - **Amen ”**
 - **(1 Peter 4:11).**

- Was Ananias and Sapphira glorifying God by lying to the apostles and the brethren about what they had sold their land for?
 - Absolutely not!

- Was God glorified when Nadab and Abihu used a different fire than what God had authorized?
- Absolutely not!

- Was God glorified when Uzzah with good intentions touched the ark even though Israel had been clearly commanded to never approach or touch the ark?
 - Absolutely not!

- Jesus said,
“**Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.**
(Matthew 6:1-4).

- Romans 15:4

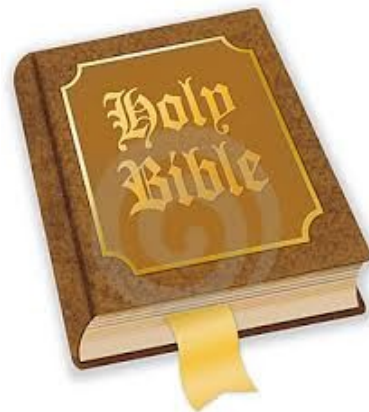
For whatsoever things
were written
in times past,
were written
for our learning, ...

- Are we
learning?

**The doors of the church
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride
Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17



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