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## **Is Guardian of the Truth of Christ Acts Chapter 5**

We will discuss a very interesting passage dealing with Ananias and Sapphira. Where does that come into play, and how is that a part of the foundation of the church? Because, essentially, the Book of Acts is about laying the foundation of the church. It is one of the reasons why we use the term “acts” as we defined early in this series, literally making reference to the acts or the works of the apostles. More specifically, we could define it as the business of the apostles. What is their business? What is their job? Whether we call it the job or the business of the apostles, the purpose of the Book of Acts is to lay the foundation. I am going to give you some passages as a way of proof texting so that you know this is not only in the Book of Acts. There are other passages that complement this. In Ephesians Chapter Two,

(Ephesians 2:20) “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,”

I would like for you to see these things in writing for yourself. And, hopefully by seeing them in writing, it will stir something in your heart that this is the word of God that is clarifying for us the work of the apostles. As a reminder, the word apostle means “one sent” out. They were disciples to begin with, which means learners. They were learning of Christ; but then, Christ sends them out. Therefore, they have and take on the name apostles. These are the ones that are now laying the foundation. They have been sent out to lay the foundation of the church with Christ Jesus Himself being the head. We become part of the body. The church, therefore, is building upon this foundation. And what does it say in

(Ephesians 2:20) “Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.”

There it is in black and white. This clarifies it for us. We have a foundation that is being built. As we look at these first five Chapters, we see in the very first Chapter the hope of the church which is Jesus Christ. In every case, it is about Christ. Everything is being built on Christ. If you were to go to First Corinthians chapter 3, it tells us that Paul actually says

(I Corinthians 3:10) “According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.”

(I Corinthians 3:11) “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Hebrews chapter 2 will reiterate this. All the way through Scripture, you are seeing this point. But in the Book of Acts chapter 1, what we see is the hope of the church, and this is a foundation. This is a foundation for you. You cannot pursue something with zeal and with confidence if you have no hope. I think it is one of the main points of First Thessalonians. The reason that

the Thessalonians were having such a difficult time was because they had lost hope. If you take hope away from people, you tell them they have no tomorrow, then they are not going to go to work today. You tell them they are going to lose everything; and they think, “What is the use?” Apathy and lethargy come into their lives. That is why Paul will write to them,

(I Thessalonians 4:13) “...so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.”

As you see at the beginning of the Book of Acts chapter 1, Christ is ascending into heaven. The angels say

(Acts 1:11) “They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’”

This is the hope. It is the promise of Christ, as Paul will write to the Thessalonians:

(I Thessalonians 1:10) “...and wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.”

You are waiting for it.

(Colossians 1:27) “to whom God willed to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

If you look in

(I John 3:1) “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him.”

(I John 3:2) “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

(I John 3:3) “And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies Himself, just as He is pure.”

John reminds us that this hope literally purifies us. Every man who has this hope in Him purifies himself. There is this confident expectation that Christ is coming. Paul will say in

(II Timothy 4:8) “in the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

This is probably the greatest impetus of every believer--waiting for Christ, longing for Christ. We look forward to that, and that is foundational. Paul says in

(Hebrews 6:19) “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.”

This hope we have in Christ Jesus. So that is a foundational principle of the church. The church is waiting. Now why is that so important? Because many churches perceive even today that they are going to usher in the kingdom of God. That is totally erroneous.

You and I, by our works and by our deeds, as Spirit-filled as we may be, without the appearance of Christ, are not going to fix this world. People boast, “We are going to eradicate hunger. We are going to make sure that people are not ever going to be lacking for water, or we are going to make sure that we all live in peace someday.” Give it up. Scripture tells us very clearly that things are going to proceed from bad to worse, but we are waiting for the return of Jesus Christ. He will make all things well. This is the great confidence that we have. Why, then, do we proclaim the message? To please Him. To please Him. We do not proclaim the message because we are going to fix the world. We proclaim the message because this is what He calls upon us to do. We know that God has those who are His, who are sealed; and we get to participate in the gathering of the saints. What a wonderful responsibility we have. Then in the Book of Acts 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, we see the life of the church. Of course, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Book of Acts is about Pentecost when the Spirit of God

breathes into the church. The church becomes a living being; it becomes alive. The life of the church is the Spirit of Christ. There are a number of passages that I could have listed, but let us turn our attention to one in Romans 8. Let us see what it says about the Spirit of God:

(Romans 8:9) “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

It says you cannot please God unless His Spirit is in you. Right before this in verse 8, Paul says,

(Romans 8:8) “and those in the flesh cannot please God.”

Verse 9 then says what? You are not in the flesh, but what? In the Spirit. What spirit? The Spirit of God. Just the Spirit of God? Keep reading. The Spirit of Christ. Spirit of Christ. That is the Spirit of Christ breathed in us. He sees the Spirit of His Son within you. He is Christ

Who is, Colossians says, our life. In fact, if you turn to Colossians, there is another great verse. You just cannot stop with one or two verses, can you?

(Colossians 3:3) “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

(Colossians 3:4) “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

Both the hope and the life are mentioned in that particular passage. There are many great passages dealing with this. Then the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter that we looked at in the Book of Acts is about the worship of Christ. It is important that you understand that the word “worship” is not just simply a bowing down, although that can certainly be a part of reverence. But it almost always has a connotation of work, of labor, or of offering a service. It is actually the root of the word liturgy. What that is about is not just the repetition of words, but this is what it has become. The word really has to do with service. What we see is the work of the service done by

the disciples who are now at the temple. Much of the church perceives today that the work of God is contingent upon finances. Yet the text in this chapter is very clear. The work of God is that which points to the power of Christ that goes beyond what man can, in a tangible way, perform. This particular chapter is pointing to the power of God that makes this man whole; no one can give credit to Peter. He himself says, (Acts 3:12) “...Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?”

Why are you giving credit to me? Why do you stand amazed at this? It is the Christ who is resurrected. He is the One who did this; it is all pointing to Him. Then Philippians 2:9-11 gives us that wonderful picture of every knee that will bow, every tongue that will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The worship of the church is always pointing to Christ. Peter asks, “What do you think? That we did this? You think we did this?” This is one of the great fallacies. The church is not a place

where we stand up and boast. No man should boast. This is the reason He picks the weak and the foolish-- people like me. The reason He picks us is because we cannot do anything. It is as if God says, "I do not think that Elliot guy has anything going for him. All right. I will pick him." It is the graciousness of God that He uses me in some small way. To that I think, "This is an amazing thing. That is a miracle. It has to be a miracle that God could use somebody like me." That is the worship of the church. It is all Him and none of us. Praise the Lord! Right? It is all Him. That is chapter 3. In chapter 4 of the Book of Acts, we see the authority of the church. It is very important that we understand that Christ is the authority. We do not take our cues from fads. We do not take our cues from the latest book. We do not take our cues from the government. We do not take our cues from the nation where we live. We have a supreme authority. The church has its authority. The head is Christ, and He is the authority. Peter makes it very clear.

(Acts 4:12) “...for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

(Acts 4:19) “...whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than God, you be the judge.”

(Acts 4:20) “for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

You hear the authority. The foundation of the church is being laid in chapter 4. Now we come to chapter 5 in the Book of Acts where we begin to see that there is a Guardian of the church. Ephesians 1:21-23 is a great text because it says “far above” all rule and authority. It does not say above. It says far above. Far above. That is very comforting to me. We are going to understand that He is the Guardian of the church which is expressed in chapter 5; Christ is the Guardian of the church. Look with me in 1st Peter 2:25. This is our proof text for the passage that we are going to be looking at tonight. What does this say about Christ?

(I Peter 2:25) “For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your soul.”

Christ is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. It is good to know that we have not only an Advocate in the heavens, but a Guardian in the heavens. It is a great comfort to me when I am doing what I know God wants me to do, these are rare moments, you know. You are doing what God wants you to do. There is a confidence that goes, “I am not going to be taken out until God makes sure I get finished with the job. We know that there is a Guardian of the church who is going to protect you until you finish the job. Paul will actually say to Timothy,

(II Timothy 4:7) “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;”

God would not command Paul to finish unless He had the power and was the one backing him to do it. But we know that God is all powerful. There is no contest there. So as we come into chapter 5, what might

surprise us are those entities, those forces that attack the church. What is going to surprise us is the one who is perceived by God as the most heinous of enemies. It is the enemy within. That is interesting because within this same chapter we are going to see the enemy without more specifically. Paul is going to talk about governing forces. We will call them governing forces because he deals with the Sadducees who are political. Besides the political Sadducees, we will see their entourage--the Pharisees and the lawyers. They are a mixed quasi-government as well as the spiritual leaders. It is an interesting mix because it amalgamates all of them together. In chapter 5, all of the apostles get locked up. That is a wild thing--all of them. They get locked up and then released. It is a lock and release. How are they released? An angel. They get thrown into jail, and the angel tells them to come out. They really are not supposed to be in there. At the end, we see that there is a hidden plot or an unforeseen evil. You could call it anything you want to, like subterfuge or

hidden evil. There are some things that you just cannot plan for. People behind closed doors are talking about killing you. How do you know that? The doors are closed. You do not even know that they were planning on killing you. Much like Jeremiah. But there are forces that are against us. How is the church protected from them? Also, this chapter is going to show us more about laying the foundation. The church does not trust in anything else but Christ. It is going to show us in a very tangible way how Jesus takes care of these things. As we come to the very beginning of Acts chapter 5, what we are going to see is Ananias and Sapphira. I could probably take time to read the whole chapter, but I would rather ask you to read it as I am talking to you about it. As you come to Acts chapter 5, it begins with the whole church teeming with life. The members of the church are generous; they are laying all of their gifts at the apostles' feet. There is trust. There is love; there is a generosity that just cannot be held back. Paul will say to the Corinthians,

(II Corinthians 3:17) “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

There is a sense of freedom that is spontaneously happening. There are no real rules and regulations. It is a birth. The foundation is being laid. You begin to realize that the power of the Spirit is moving in the hearts of people. But then, Scripture will record a most heinous event. I remember reading this when I was younger thinking, “Okay. They sold their property, but they did not give it all to the apostles. You do not have to get so uptight about it. You know?” But obviously, I was missing the point. What you see within the passage is that this crime is dealt with so quickly. Scripture tells us what happens as though the Spirit of God has a behind-the-scenes movie camera. Ananias and Sapphira did not know that God was filming it. But they sell their property. They decide to keep some of the money. I do not know how much they kept. Probably they made a killing on it and did not think they

were going to make that much. They rationalized that they had sacrificed. They decided to say that this is what they got, and they gave that much. Peter says to them: “Why did you guys decide to lie about this?” The crime is not so much that they were lying to Peter as it was that they were lying to the Holy Spirit. Ananias immediately dies. He dies right there. It says they hauled him off and buried him. Then his wife comes along. There is nothing against Sapphira. The name Sapphira comes from sapphire. She arrives, and the apostles gave her the same opportunity. What happened here? She replies as her husband did, and she dies. Instantly. Wow! Obviously, God is upset! Apparently, this is a big deal. Your initial thought about this event is that this is really going to bring attendance down. But that is not what happens, is it? It says that the Lord was adding to their number daily; more and more people were coming. Undoubtedly, there were some people who were saying, “I do not think I am going to get too close to church” because they were not

honest. They realized if a person was not honest, then the church was not a good place to go. Some were keeping their distance. But there was a sense of awe and reverence. There is something holy going on here. We are going to put this on hold for now and go to the second part of the chapter. We begin to sense the jealousy and envy of the religious leaders. If you look with me in chapter 5, we will pick up in verse 17.

(Acts 5:17) “But the high priest rose up along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees) and they were filled with jealousy.”

(Acts 5:18) “They laid their hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.”

I am figuring they got them all. They rounded them up and threw them in jail. These are the governing powers. If you look within the passage, it is the high priest and his associates who are the whole sect of the Sadducees. These are the power moguls in the land. In verse 19, almost as quickly as they are thrown into jail, an angel opens the door. Wow! That is pretty fast. Then

they exit the jail, and the angel says, “Men, you have work to do.” Now what is it they are to do? “Go back and start preaching the gospel where they arrested you.” It looks like we have a revolving door. They realize that they will probably be thrown in jail again. Even so, they do as they are instructed. The guards are baffled because everything is secured, but there are no prisoners. They have to tell their authorities. “Did you lock the doors, guys?” “We locked them. Go check.” They are checking all the doors, and they are confused because nobody is there. That is an enigma that they were having to deal with. But where are the prisoners? Where are the guys, the apostles? They are preaching again. They are out there preaching again. If you look at the passage, it says in verse 20:

(Acts 5:20) “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”

(Acts 5:21) “Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the

Council, together with all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought.”

(Acts 5:22) “But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back,”

(Acts 5:23) “saying, we found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside.”

(Acts 5:24) “Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.”

(Acts 5:25) “But someone came and reported to them, “The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”

There they are. They are not hiding.

(Acts 5:26) “Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without

violence (for they were afraid of the people, lest they should be stoned).”

(Acts 5:27) “When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,”

Here we are again.

(Acts 5:28) “saying, ‘We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.’”

(Acts 5:29) “But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’”

(Acts 5:30) “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you had put to death by hanging Him on the cross.”

(Acts 5:31) “He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior to grant repentance to Israel. and forgiveness of sins.”

(Acts 5:32) “And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

Again, the bottom line is that they have a higher authority. In verses 17-32, what we have are the governing powers who are trying to subvert the church, doing their best to keep the church at bay. But we know who our Guardian is. We know Whom we serve. We know who our Protector is. We just do what we are told without any thought about the consequences. What is God going to do if the governing powers come in? The answer is in the text. If God wants you out of any situation, He is going to send governing authorities who have more power than the ones who put you there. He sends an angel because at this juncture on the earth, there is not a higher governing authority. What do we know about angels? They are governing authorities. Right? Angels are governing. In fact, if you look in the Book of Acts chapter 7, Stephen will mention this. He will talk specifically about the angels in his argument.

He turns to the Pharisees, Sadducees—the religious leaders. He says,

(Acts 7:53) “you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

Once again, the angels are the ones that ordained the law. That is seen not only here, but in Galatians. It is seen in Hebrews chapter 2. All the way through Scripture, the fact is reiterated that there is a hierarchy of power. He trumps their powers, and this is not an unusual thing. If you if you want the text, I think it is Galatians 3:19. I think it is in in that. Also Hebrews chapter 2, if you just read the first two to three verses, you will see the establishment of angelic beings over governing authorities. So he trumps the governing authority, which means that God can raise up somebody who is more powerful than the authorities who are troubling you. How can He do that? Look back in Ephesians 1:20-23. Far above all rule and authority. We see in Romans 13:1 that all authority is ordained by God. It was God's authority that locked you in prison. It

is God's authority that will get you out when He is ready to get you out. He can trump whatever authority He wants to. Jeremiah 39:11 is an interesting passage because it makes reference to Nebuchadnezzar, the great King of the Babylonians, whom God had raised up to take over Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar comes in, takes over, and then gets Jeremiah. He says to his guards, "Make sure this guy is taken care of. God uses His greater authority to rescue Jeremiah from the hand of Jeremiah's own king. Not only that, but if you look within that same passage, He is rescuing the poor people. If you were to go back in Jeremiah to 7:1-9, Jeremiah turns to his own people and says, "You are hurting the poor. You are hurting the widows and the orphans. You are taking their lives. You are sucking their life out. I cannot let you do this." God then brings in Nebuchadnezzar. If you turn to Jeremiah 39:10, God will raise Nebuchadnezzar up. He leaves the land of the rich in the hands of the poor. He will leave the poor and not take them to Babylon with the others. He will take

the rich into captivity. He will say, “You poor people, you can have the land. You see those grape arbors there? Those are yours.” This is God rescuing through a greater human authority. God is clearly managing those powers. Now, returning to the Book of Acts chapter 5, we come to verse 33 through the end, verse 42. We are going to see that there are unseen enemies that are planning or plotting to hurt. We know that there will be those who are overt and obvious. We can see them coming. The sirens are blowing. We can see them coming. But there are some powers you cannot see coming. If governing authorities are coming for you, do not run. If you do, they might ask you to put your hands on the hood of the car, resulting in an arrest. But in this particular passage, there are people who are trying to slay them.

(Acts 5:33) “But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them.”

This is an interesting passage to me. What we understand once again is that Christ is sovereign over

everything that is happening. What is He sovereign over? For one, He is sovereign over the planning of evil against us. What does He do in this particular passage? He raises up an influential entity. Gamaliel is a well-known rabbi. God raises him up to throw out a question. He goes, “Look, there have been insurrectionists before. It will come to nothing if in fact they are false. But if it is of God, you will find yourself fighting against God. So let's just leave it, guys.” They would not have listened to just anyone. But Gamaliel speaks, and everybody gives him their attention. Everybody listens. Without question, they are going to do whatever he says. If you look at verse 34, Gamaliel is respected by whom? All the people. He stands up in the Council. Where did this guy come from? Why has he not been saying something before now? You see, God has these people reserved for whatever time He chooses to use them. God will rescue using whatever means He sees fit. In this particular passage, He uses him. The Book of Jude is about hidden reefs in your love

feast. It is our nature to say that we have to do some investigation. We have to put some cameras all over the place and “bugs.” Then we will find the bad guy who is causing all the problems. If you have ever read the book of Jude which has only one chapter, it fundamentally says that you just keep doing what is right. God will take care of them. We understand that we have a Guardian of the church. In the Book of Acts chapter 19, Paul is in Ephesus. The whole town is against him, and they are ready to kill him. God raises up the town clerk. The town clerk will stand between Paul and the people who are upset. The town clerk will protect Paul. Then we have the Book of Esther. In Esther chapter 6, the king cannot sleep. This is the very time in which Mordecai is about to get slaughtered. God's man Mordecai. This righteous man Mordecai. Who is going to protect him? Who would know that Haman is plotting terrible things? Nobody would know. Nobody knows this except God. But God causes the king to have a restless night. He decides to do some

reading. Everybody has a little reading material tucked away somewhere. He finds in the chronicles about the days gone by and just happens to pull out the book containing the incident where Mordecai had saved his life. “I did not even know that.” He starts reading this. Then he starts calling for this Mordecai. “I want to elevate this guy.” What could be done? Who could orchestrate that? The Guardian of the saints had it all in hand. I find it very comforting to know that God is the One who controls all these things. Ecclesiastes says (Ecclesiastes 10:20) “Furthermore, in your bedchamber, do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.”

Be careful what you say in your bedroom. Be careful what you are plotting because God is listening. I think one of the more obvious of these examples is found in the Book of Acts chapter 23. In particular, if you were to start with verse 12, you begin to read about a plot

against Paul. Paul's sister's son, a teenager, happens to be eavesdropping. What are the odds of that happening? What are the odds of that? A teenager happens to be eavesdropping, and he tells his sister that some men are plotting to kill Paul. She then sends him to Paul in prison. He tells Paul that they are coming to kill him. Paul calls to the guards. He goes, "You need to get me out of here. They are coming; they have a plot to kill me." The guards usher him out of prison and smuggle him out of town. How would you get that information? Where would you get that? You could not have planted enough spies to be at the right place, but it comes upon the ears of an eavesdropping teenager. God is the Guardian of the church. The same is true with this as well as when Gamaliel spoke to the Council. What Gamaliel ends with in chapter 5:39 is, "If it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You may even find out you are fighting against God." How can you fight against the Guardian of the church? He is going to win. The best that the Council can do is to flog

them. And what? You think that hurts the apostles? They rejoice over it.

(Acts 5:41) “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

(Acts 5:42) “And every day in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

That is where the Council told them not to preach. Do not preach, whatever you do. Do not preach in the temple. Every day in the temple, they just kept preaching and also from house to house. Speak of adding insult to injury, they went from house to house, too. Once again, the point is that we have a Guardian. Now I want to go back to the initial story in chapter 5. The reason I want to go back to that is that the greatest enemy of the church comes from within. This is the point really of the passage. There is one particular Psalm that I want you to look at with me. It is Psalm 81. There are several verses that I would like for you to turn

to so that I can help you see why God deals with it in such a swift and harsh way. It would be good to underline it if you have not already done so in your Bibles.

(Psalm 81:15) “Those who hate the Lord would pretend obedience to Him, And their time of punishment would be forever.”

Do you see the passage? We know that there are going to be enemies of the cross, and we know that people and the world are full of hate. But God will not stand for pretenders, for fakes. He will not allow them in the church. He rescues them out of the hand of the governing authorities. He does not squash the government. He rescues His servants. But Ananias and Sapphira, you are dead. Because the one thing that is the most heinous crime against the Spirit of Truth is a lie and that muddying of the water of the truth. The church is to be the light of truth. God does not want that light tainted by a lie. It is that pretending, that feigning. In fact, as you read through the Gospels--in

particular, Matthew chapter 23--it is so clear what angers God more than anything else. What is it? I am going to tell you what it is. Hypocrisy. It angers God more than anything else. How many times did Christ say it in Matthew chapter 23? Hypocrites. Woe. Hypocrites. Woe. Hypocrites. Woe. Hypocrites. How many times did He say it? Ten, twelve times in Matthew chapter 23. Woe. Woe. Does He say that to the woman who was caught in adultery? No. Does He say that to the woman at the well? No. I mean, we can go down the list of the different ones who had other sins, but it is the hypocrisy of the self-righteous that He will not stand for in His church. It is that same hypocrisy, if you think about it, that He squashes and that Paul has to deal with in

(I Corinthians 5:6) “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?”

Paul is saying that you have to get these people out of here because a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

What does Luke 12 say the leaven of the Pharisees was? Hypocrisy. Hypocrisy. Right. What is it that God is trying to get out of His church. Here is the problem. The church is born, and immediately the evil one responds. Do you not think it is interesting as you look at the Book of Acts chapter 5:3 that Peter literally says Satan has done this. He uses Satan's name in the text. Satan has planted a lie. In John 8:44, it says that Satan is the father of lies. He is tainting the purity of sincerity. The greatest enemy of the church is insincerity. The greatest enemy of the church is you saying that you love your brother, but you do not. That is the greatest enemy. The greatest enemy is saying, "Oh, I will be glad to give", but you are not. You talk against Him. The whole reason that the Children of Israel could not go into the promised land was their grumbling and complaining. This is why Paul will write in Colossians chapter 3:8 to tell the people to not grumble and complain against one another. These things we do not value as much as God does. But this is very valuable to

God--this thing called genuineness because it was genuineness that came to the cross. If you look with me in First Timothy

(I Timothy 1:5) “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

Sincere. This is why Paul will say to the Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians 2:17 we are not like those who peddle the Word of God.

We are selling things. No, no. This is the sincerity of our hearts. This is why we do what we do because we actually believe what we believe and love those whom we say we love. The greatest enemy of the church is insincerity. The greatest enemy of the church is hypocrisy. It is not genuine. To say that you love somebody and not really love them, that is the greatest enemy. If you look at First Corinthians 11:30, why is it that many people will be sick and will die? Insincerity in the body. There are people who are coming to the time of communion and, instead of caring for the body and

loving those in the body, they were thinking of themselves. God says that because of this, many are sick and weak. I am convinced that many believers are sick because they have not been genuine about the love of the brethren. That is a key point. God is telling us, “This means a lot to me.” He has to establish it because it is part of the foundation of the church. If we perceive this event as a kind of a cavalier happening, then the whole foundation is messed up. If you look at 2 Timothy chapter 1, let me just try to show you a few passages about this.

(II Timothy 1:5) “For I am mindful of the sincere faith that is within you which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.”

He makes reference to Timothy's background. He talks about Timothy's sincere faith that is within him because he saw it in his mother and grandmother. He will mention this in 2 Timothy chapter 3 if you drop on down with me. Just read verse 14 because he is telling

him, “Look, it is going to get really bad here. It is going to get really ugly.” But he writes this:

(II Timothy 3:14) “You, however, continue in the things that you have learned and have become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,”

What is it that convinced him? I can tell you what convinced him. The sincerity of his mother and his grandmother. He saw their sincerity since his childhood, and he knew the Scriptures, the sacred writings which are able to give him wisdom. He saw this and knew the reality of it. Why is it such a crime that you are insincere about your faith? Because the sincerity is the only thing you really have going for you in sharing the Gospel. Paul makes it very clear that this gospel is stupid. Paul said that. I did not say that.

(I Corinthians 1:18) “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.”

The gospel is foolishness to man. You start quoting John 3:16 to somebody, and they are going to laugh at you. But if you quote John 3:16 from your heart, they cannot combat that. Sincerity is the only thing we have going for us. It is the Spirit of Truth that breathes within us. If He is not breathing within us, we have no Gospel. We have no power. We have no message. This is what He is laying this foundation on. There is a passage in Jeremiah that really demonstrates just how God perceives these things. Jeremiah chapter 3, if you look there with me--you remember the passage. He is contrasting and comparing Israel and Judah. The tribes had been divided, separated. He is saying that Israel was treacherous first. Israel left Him. Jeremiah begins to describe their leaving. He writes this, and it is just an interesting passage. He says:

(Jeremiah 3:8) “And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.”

(Jeremiah 3:9) “Because of the lightness of her harlotry. she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.”

(Jeremiah 3:10) “Yet in spite of all this, her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart,”

Now watch the phrase at the end,

(Jeremiah 3:10b) “but rather in deception, declares the Lord.”

(Jeremiah 3:11) “And the Lord said to me, ‘Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.’”

Why is Judah more treacherous? Because the people pretended. There is no greater or heinous crime.

(Psalm 41:9) “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”

If it had been my enemy, I could have taken it. But it was my trusted friend who ate at the table with me, and he did not like me? He told me that he liked me, but he really did not? If an enemy does something like that,

you go, “Oh, it is just an enemy.” But if it is somebody who is saying that he is a follower of Jesus who betrays you, that is treachery. Do you understand why Ananias is so guilty, why the event in the passage is so horrific? If you look with me in Psalm Chapter 55:

(Psalm 55:1) “Give ear to my prayer, O God; and do not hide Yourself from my supplication.”

I do not know what to do. But look at the passage in verse 4.

(Psalm 55:4) “My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me.”

Now, read verse 12,

(Psalm 55:12) “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me. Then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me. Then I could hide myself from him.”

(Psalm 55:13) “But it is you, a man of my equal, my companion and my familiar friend;”

(Psalm 55:14) “We who had sweet fellowship together, walked in the house of God in the throng.”

You betrayed me. You lied to me. And you have lied to the Spirit of God. “Oh, it is no big deal,” you say. It is a big deal. You said you loved me, but you did not. You are insincere. Everything about you is insincere. I would rather you had not said it. You’re trying to take it back. You can see hatred within the person. That is one of the reasons why people feign obedience; they hate the other person. If you are faking it, you hate him. God takes offense at this more than anything else. That is why Judas’ betrayal of Christ was the worst thing that anybody could have done to Him. It was not Herod. It was not Pontius Pilate. It was Judas because he was one of the disciples. You will see the same thing in Psalm 69 which emphasizes this same point. You can hear the hostility. Do you want to hear how this person feels when he has been betrayed? I am going to read it to you. This is what he wishes for the person who betrayed him.

(Psalm 69:22) “May their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, may it become a trap.”

(Psalm 69:23) ”May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, and make their loins shake continually.”

“(Psalm 69:24) “Pour out Your indignation on them, and may Thy burning anger overtake them.”

(Psalm 69:25) “May their camp be desolate; May none of their tents be dwelt in.”

(Psalm 69:26) “For they have persecuted him whom Thou Thyself has smitten, and they tell of the pain of those that Thou hast wounded.”

(Psalm 69:27) “Do Thou add iniquity to their iniquity, and may they not come into Thy righteousness.”

(Psalm 69:28) “May they be blotted out of the book of life, and may they not be recorded with the righteous.”

Obviously, the psalmist is upset. The passage makes strong reference to that. If you have ever read the Book of Obadiah in the Old Testament, you realize that that

particular prophet was writing to the Edomites. The Edomites were from Esau, and it was Esau who tried to kill his brother. But worse than that, the whole genealogy of the Edomites tried to hold back and subvert their brothers. When the Israelites had come out of Egypt and were entering into the promised land, other nations were attacking them. At first, the Edomites just sat back and did nothing. God says, “On the day that your brother had a need, you sat back and did nothing; for this reason, I am going to blot your name out of the universe. You will not exist anymore.” To this day, the Edomites do not exist. Think about this prophecy in light of all the nations that have ever existed. Many of them still exist. Egypt is one of them. But when God says to a nation, “You are not going to exist anymore,” they cease to exist. If you ever want proof of Scripture, you can go through the different nations where He says, “That is it. You are not going to happen anymore.” My point is that, within the church, it

is the most heinous crime. That is why in 1st John chapter 5, he says:

(I John 5:16) “...There is a sin leading to death.”

I do not ask that you pray for this one. They destroyed their brother. They are hurting their brother. They are being insincere. They are being disingenuous. It is one of the things that, as a pastor, I feel compelled to warn you about. It really is not proclaimed very much, but the worst thing you could ever do is to talk against your brother. That is the reason why something that we perceive initially as almost being overdone is really understood to be necessary for the foundation of the church. God wants to establish truth within His body. The Book of Acts chapter 5 is about Jesus Christ, the Guardian of the church. You see this all the way through the Scriptures. Let me just ask you this.

How does Christ guard the church? With His authority over the church. Do you see that? This is why He says in James chapter 5,

(James 5:14) “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

(James 5:15) “And the prayer offered in faith will heal the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

“If” because of sin, you need to go to the elders. They can pray for you to be set free from this.” What was the sin? They were complaining against each other and James in particular. Because of that, they were sick. At the end of chapter 5, he says, “Okay. You can be free from this, but you have to go to the elders to get it taken care of.” The same thing is true in the last passage in the Book of Acts chapter 20. God uses the elders to be the guardian. As Paul is standing with the overseers of the church at Ephesus, he says:

(Acts 20:28) “Be on guard for yourselves and for 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.”

There is a guardianship that the elders have within the church. The elders have no authority outside the church. When the governing authorities outside the church attack the church, who is God going to raise up? Authorities that are bigger than those outside the church. If there are hidden dangers outside the church, what is God going to do? He is the Lord of *Saba*. The word that is used is *saba*, which means the Lord of “hosts.” He has all kinds of things he can pull out. He can use this person if He chooses. He will use the town clerk if He needs to. He will use somebody else. It does not matter. He will take care of that, so we do not have to worry about it. The overseers within the church are there to warn you, to protect you from these problems. That is why Peter will stand up. He said in verse 4, “Why have you done this? Why have you lied? He holds Sapphira as responsible as he held Ananias. Let us

look at one last passage in Hebrews chapter 13, and we will close there.

(Hebrews 13:15) “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”

(Hebrews 13:16) “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

(Hebrews 13:17) “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

Why did he not use the word spirits? They are watching over your life. The word soul in this verse is making reference to your “*psyche*” which means your thoughts, your life, your well-being. God is disciplining the church for that particular reason. There are a lot of other things we could say about that; but hopefully you are beginning to see the foundation that is being laid for

the church. In this particular passage, we see the Guardian of the church, Christ Jesus, our Lord.

## **Prayer**

Father, we want to give You thanks that You are guarding over us. And, clearly, we understand that there are going to be a lot of attacks. But the attack that is the greatest as we see so clearly in this passage is the one that is from within. That insincerity, that disingenuous spirit, how destructive it is to the body because we are to be truth seekers. We are those who worship in Spirit and in truth. We are of the genuine and sincere Spirit of Jesus Christ. And so, Lord, keep us in this truth. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.