

MONDAY, MAY 27 | The transaction, 3

5When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

How swiftly Ananias died shows us the power of God, not of Peter's hand. His death was of "divine purpose". Whether he died because of the guilt he felt or by an angel, as we see Herod struck down in Acts 12:23, and Ananias' punishment was just.

There is a debate over whether this husband and wife were believers, not believers or lapsed believers. Either way, they had been deceived by Satan and were rebelling against God. "Their story is told in the context of the actions of 'all the believers' (Acts 4:32). They knew of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3)...". Another clue they were part of all of the believers is they received discipline (Hebrews 12:8, 1 Corinthians 5:12).

At this point in time it was early in the life of the church, and actions so divisive and hypocritical as these had to be dealt with harshly. They were made an example to others not to act in such a way, a deterrent from such behavior. Being given the gift of the Holy Spirit, there would be consequences for such disrespect.

As Christians, we are held to the knowledge and teachings we have of Scripture. When we act in opposition, we will be disciplined. Expect it. Thankfully, through the years God has become more lenient and gracious. It reminds me of how most of us are as parents. At first we are very cautious and heavy-handed. As time passes we lighten up. We have a different reason than God does, though. We become more comfortable in what we're doing and have a better understanding, although we definitely don't have it figured out! God has all knowledge and understanding from the beginning, but he needs to set certain standards for us so we will stay in line. It's for our benefit more than his.

We shouldn't expect to get away with continual laziness or willful neglect of our spiritual walk with God. There will be a price to pay. When we act dishonorably and in direct opposition to the character of Christ, we are doing more damage to the body of Christ and to our witness as a Christian. We will not be able to share the Good News with anyone or make a positive impact to others who need this Good News. When God sees we will not repent and turn back to him, he will discipline us drastically, possibly to our death. I have seen it happen, leaving family wondering why a person was taken so young with seemingly no explanation.

Constantly taking inventory of our walk with Christ is key. As a caring friend to our fellow Christians, keeping each other accountable is necessary also. When we see another Christian turning away from bearing the fruit of the Spirit and having the character and mind of Christ, we need to help them. Why would we not scream to someone if we see them heading down a road if we know imminent danger is ahead? I believe we would. It's the same situation with our fellow Christians. Even more so! Death could possibly be in store for them, so let's help each other and ourselves stay on the straight and narrow. Heaven awaits with more than we could possibly imagine!

Response: Take a look at your spiritual disciplines today – Bible reading, prayer time, journaling, tithing, church attendance, witnessing, mentoring to others and having a mentor – and see where you need to improve. Allow God to show you what would be the next step to take.

I am praying for you, as I am every day. I would appreciate your prayers, too.

MEMORY VERSE Hebrews 4:13 – *"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*