

THE FEAR OF GOD

Zhang Cheng

There is a very special and very important passage in Acts chapter 5.

¹ But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? ⁴ While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." ⁵ And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶ And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. ⁷ Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." ⁹ Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out *as well*." ¹⁰ And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things. (Acts 5:1-11 NAS)

Why do so few speak on this passage?

I would like to ask: Since you entered the church and became a Christian, up to this day, have you ever heard a preacher explain this passage? I suppose very few, myself included, have ever heard such a preaching. Do you know why? One of the reasons is that this passage is not very beneficial to sharing the gospel. Think about it: If a non-Christian were to hear this passage in a meeting, will he dare to come again next time?

I guess very possibly that this is the reason why many preachers dare not share on this passage. Perhaps it will give the hearer a certain pressure, thinking that after one becomes a Christian, he must sell all that he has and donate it to the church, without reserving a single cent for himself. If this were the case, who would dare to come to church? To sum it all up, the preachers are concerned that if they were to speak on this passage, the number of people who come to church to listen to the Word will become less and less.

However, we must ask the question: Why does the book of Acts go into such detail to record this unusual incident? The importance of this passage can be seen precisely because the Bible is so detailed about it. There must be a very vital message for the church for us here. For this reason, you have to put a lot of thought into it when you read it.

How should we look at a sharp increase in the number of churchgoers?

Let me first give you some background. At the time, God, through the church, caused the gospel to be spread widely in Jerusalem, increasing the number of believers. We can see this in Acts 2:41.

So then, those who had received his word were baptized;
and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
(Acts 2:41 NAS)

Just in one day, the number of believers went up by three thousand. We can see the sharp increase in numbers in such a short space of time, with such speed. The number of believers greatly increasing did not just happen once. Acts 4:4 also mentions another incident.

But many of those who had heard the message believed;
and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.
(Acts 4:4 NAS)

It tells us here, that another five thousand believed. That is to say that on top of the above mentioned three thousand, the total number of believers exceeded eight thousand. Do you see? Just in the space of two short chapters, there is this tremendous growth in numbers. So, it begs the question: Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Most would think that with so many people attending church in such a short period of time — it must be a wonderful thing! If the gospel were to be spread at this kind of speed, there would be a Christian in every corner of the world.

The answer is: Perhaps not! Why do I say so? Reason being, on the surface, it looks like the numbers are growing at an astonishing speed, but what is the real motive behind all these people coming to church? It could very well be that many come out of curiosity to see how the apostles work miracles. Some might have witnessed healings and come to church thinking that they would save on medical insurance. There are all kinds of insurance in today's society, insuring you against this and that. You do not have to buy any insurance when you come to church because you would have God's protection. It would save you time and money.

Besides, are you in need financially? Not to worry — in the church, we have everything in common. All those rich believers would share the proceeds from the sale of their property with those in need, and you do not have to worry anymore about losing your job. Even if you are jobless, the church can still provide for you. On top of this, believers love one another. You argue with your family every day, but you can enjoy this loving relationship when you come to church — how attractive is that! So, for sure, the numbers coming to church will increase. What is crucial is why exactly do these people come?

Back to the question of whether it is a good thing or a bad thing if the number of churchgoers jump. It must be emphasized that if the church can preserve holiness with the increase in numbers, then it is a good thing. Conversely, if holiness in the church cannot be maintained, such that people with all kinds of mixed motives enter the church, wanting to gain something from the church, then, it is not a good thing. So, it is hard to come to a conclusion by just looking at numbers. The important thing is whether the church can keep itself holy.

Loving God has to be out of a willing heart, and not out of deception and falsehood

Let us see why Ananias wanted to sell his possessions. In the preceding passage, it is written:

³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need. ³⁶ And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:34-37 NAS)

We see from this passage that disciples, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, sold their land and houses, and gave the proceeds from the sale to the apostles, who then gave to those in need, such that there was not one who was lacking in the church. Here, we see that a person, a Levite called Barnabas is especially mentioned. He also sold his land and laid the money at the apostles' feet (that is to say that he handed the money over to the apostles to manage), and they gave to those in need. In quick succession, in chapter five, Ananias is mentioned.

We can imagine the situation at the time. Suppose it happened that in our church, you discovered that the brother sitting on your left sold land and offered the proceeds to the church. The sister on your

right also sold her land and offered to the church. The brother in front of you sold land and offered to the church. The sister behind you sold her land and offered to the church as well. How would you think at this time, since you also have a lot of land? When you see every brother and sister loving God and loving Man, you cannot very well pretend that you did not see anything. But you cannot continue sitting there without feeling uneasy or ashamed either. So, you come up with a “smart” plan to show off in front of others. Ananias was a typical example of this. He sold his land in order to show that he loved God and Man. On the surface, he gave all the money to the apostles, but he privately left half for himself.

From all appearances, Ananias looked like the rest of the disciples — a person who loved God and Man — even perhaps surpassing them (supposing the proceeds he gained was a sizable amount). However, what he did was superficial. On the surface, he seemed very loving, but in reality, he had other motives. This is not holy — it is what God is displeased with. This is why I said that perhaps a jump in numbers in the church may not be a good thing, depending on whether holiness is maintained.

In order to maintain the holiness of the church, the Spirit of God intervened in this matter — through the punishment of Ananias and his wife — to remind the church to fear God and to maintain holiness. That is to say, that you cannot be a Christian who is not one within and without. Even if you manage to deceive others in what you do, you cannot deceive God. This, we must remember.

The Holy Spirit intervened to teach believers the fear of God

How do you feel when you finish reading Acts 5:1-11? Are you terrified? Are you scared? Do not doubt that it is a good response if you fear. Let us look at the response of those who witnessed this matter.

And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. (Acts 5:5 NAS)

Note: “great fear came upon all who heard of it”. Let us look at verse 11.

And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things. (Acts 5:11 NAS)

Here again, it is emphasized that “great fear came upon the whole church, and all who heard of these things”. This is the work that the Spirit of God wanted to do — to remind the church to fear God.

The situation at the time was like this: As there were greater numbers in the church, there were many matters to be dealt with, and it was busier and more chaotic. Slowly, people lost their fear of God. Therefore, the Spirit of God had to intervene. Why the need for immediate action? Because the church at the time was like a newborn babe, who would not be able to survive without holiness. So, the Spirit of God must let everyone know that God is real and holy, and that you must know to fear Him. Of course, this message is recorded in such detail in the Bible, not only for the early church but for us saints living in the last days.

I have observed a strange phenomenon these days — people fear everything but God. If you were to ask people what they were afraid of, the answer would be quite varied. For example, afraid of losing their jobs, afraid of having no money, afraid of how others look at you, afraid of illness, afraid of death, afraid of ghosts...the only exception is that they do not fear God. These fears are prevalent not only among non-Christians but among Christians as well. You too, could very well do things that offend God out of fear for this or that. For example, you choose to lie and offend God for fear of losing out, for fear that speaking the truth will cost you financially or cause you to lose a certain social status or reputation.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus understands us very well, that is why he teaches us in Matthew 10:28 (NAS), “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” He teaches us that we ought to fear God. The truth of the matter is this: he who fears God is a truly courageous person. I hope that you can become such a person.

However, it is very terrible that many believers do not know to fear God. It once happened in the church that a sister had a girl for her first child, and she prayed to God that the second child must be a boy. In the end, she gave birth to a baby girl, and you know what she did? She decided not to believe in God anymore. After I heard about it, I was quite incredulous. Is God a servant that we can freely order about in our hearts? So, if He doesn't perform well, then we can fire Him?

You see, when we do not know to fear God in our hearts, we will be like this sister, “praying” according to our own wills to

command God to do this and to do that. And then, if He doesn't settle the matter properly, we will no longer believe in Him and we will turn to other gods because other gods are more "obedient". But if God truly reigns over your life, even if He does not answer your prayer, you will not treat Him in this manner. If you often have a selfish, godless attitude towards God, it only proves that you are a godless person.

Here, I beg of you to earnestly think about it — why did you choose to believe in God in the past? Is it because you gained some things from God? For example, you had a certain illness and after prayer, you recovered and therefore believed? If you were to get sick again and God did not answer your prayer for healing, how would you treat Him?

From observation, there is no difference between believing in God and believing in idols in many peoples' hearts. It is just a matter of changing labels. These people treat God the same way they treat idols. In the past, how they used to treat the idols, they would likewise treat the God they believe in. So, we ought to examine how we treat God. We need to be very careful, because the message that Acts 5:1-11 wants to convey to the church is — *you have to fear God.*

God hates falsehood but delights in honesty

What serious mistake did Ananias make such that he "fell down and died"? Objectively speaking, is not what he did something great? Compared to him, how many of us believers these days would sell our own property and give half to God? I guess, none.

But Ananias did it. Is this not enough? So, what wrong did he do to deserve such a fate? Deceive God? – That is correct, yes. Did God require of him to offer all that he had? Is it that God flew into a temper and gave him such an extreme punishment because he did not offer up his all? Let us look carefully at verses 3-4.

³ But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? ⁴ While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.” (Acts 5:3-4 NAS)

Here, it clearly states that the land when unsold was yours, and the money from the sale is at your disposal. It does not say that because you did not offer up all that you had, God is very angry. If that were the case, why did he want to lie to God?

We must be clear that the reason God judged Ananias was not because he did not sell his land; and not because he sold his land and did not offer up all the money to the church; but because he lied to God — doing what seemed to be a very godly thing, but with a completely opposite thinking in his heart. God hates those who are not one within and without.

Looking back at our church, how many Christians struggled over the matter of tithing? Often people would ask me, “Pastor, must a believer tithe?” Here, I need to make clear that the incident of Ananias has nothing to do with tithing. Offering a tithe is the basic requirement that the Bible makes of every Christian, to support the

work of spreading the gospel. But the offering that Ananias made, was a freewill offering that is on top of the tithe. The Bible does not have a hard and fast rule on this. Since it is not a requirement, then it should be done out of a willing heart, motivated by love for God, willingly offering help for the needy.

By his superficial act, Ananias thought he could deceive man — but did he not know that he was deceiving God? On the surface, he seemed to be very zealous and loving, but actually it was all for his own “face”. Perhaps he thought he needed to do some good to prove himself since he saw everybody else zealous in doing good.

This is not a new phenomenon in today’s church. For example, you see brothers and sisters zealously serving or doing good, and it would seem as if you are not loving and a loss of “face” if you do not join in. Therefore, you would need to do some “good works” to maintain your good image. What difference is there between this way of doing things and Ananias’ attitude? If what you do is not out of a willing heart, but just for others to see, it is deceiving others and deceiving God. The passage in Acts is to remind us that God really hates our dishonesty towards Him.

If a person does not know to fear God, then he will naturally be insensitive towards spiritual things. For example, you are not afraid or you do not mind lying in front of man because you are not aware that God has already seen what you have been doing. Perhaps you would think, “How did Peter know that Ananias was lying?” The answer is, “Of course it was the Holy Spirit who told him.” Yet Ananias thought that the matter was only between him and his wife, and so how would others know about it? He was wrong to think in this way. Did he not know that God was looking at all he

was doing? Moreover, as he did not fear God, he naturally would not see Peter as God's servant, and it would never have occurred to him that the Holy Spirit would reveal and rebuke his evil deeds through Peter. If he had repented immediately and feared God, the matter would have ended very differently; but regrettably, he did not.

Through this matter, I hope that you understand that God really hates us being dishonest with Him. Actually, Peter made it clear to Ananias that the land was his, and that the proceeds from the sale thereof, was also at his disposal. It is not that God has to have your money (everything is His, Job 41:11). What he wants is honesty and reverence towards Him.

“Agree together” to discern the truth

Let us look at verse 9.

Then Peter *said* to her, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out *as well*.” (Acts 5:9 NAS)

After three hours, Ananias' wife, Sapphira returned and Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” I feel that God was very merciful to Sapphira. He did not immediately condemn her but was willing to give her the chance to repent. Hence, God moved Peter to ask this question. Regrettably, Sapphira still chose to follow her husband in their lie.

Peter said to Sapphira in verse 9, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?” Take note of the words, “agreed together”. The church often emphasizes unity of heart in all things, but can you understand, or rather, can you clearly discern that not all unity of heart is good?

Take for example a matter that often happens in the church — a sister commits adultery and seeks you out to talk, asks for prayer, and then tells you not to tell the church’s pastor about this disgraceful matter. At this time, you might think that this sister is just making a request out of love, to be united in prayer with her, asking God for forgiveness. Hence, you agree to her request and promise not to tell the pastor about the adultery she committed. Let me ask you: is this Biblical unity of heart and loving one another? Do you think God will be pleased with this kind of “agreement,” to together keep secret a sin?

Not only this, many times, out of ignorance, some believers mistakenly think that so long as everyone has the same view on the matter, that they are united in heart, and that they are loving one another. This is a very wrong thinking. So how shall we discern? To put it precisely, all unity of heart that does not come from fear of God is not good.

Therefore, if we do not know the fear of God, then, we cannot possibly have the agreement of heart that God delights in. The unity of heart that those who do not fear God have, will only displease God.

Not to test God

Peter rebukes Sapphira by saying, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?” As Ananias’ wife, surely Sapphira knew about her husband’s decision to sell the property and donate the funds. Let us assume that the amount of money was one hundred thousand yuan (we don’t know exactly how much they sold the land for). And the husband suggests donating fifty thousand to the church, and then tells Sapphira, “If anyone were to ask about the amount we sold the land for, just say it was fifty thousand, so that my reputation is not ruined.”

As Sapphira willingly conspired with her husband, Peter rebuked her by saying that she tested the Spirit of the Lord. If Sapphira were a God-fearing person, she would have known the consequences of her actions, and would certainly have not conspired with her husband in this deception. Regrettably, she chose to conspire with her husband and ended up meeting with the same terrible fate.

Here we ought to take a lesson from history and ask what kind of person we are. Are we the kind who can save or the kind who will harm ourselves and others?

Many Christians claim to believe in Jesus, but the important thing is not whether you believe or not, but whether you imitate Jesus’ fear of God. If you identify with the words “great fear came upon all who heard of it” after reading verses 5 and 11, it shows that there is still fear of God in your heart. If you are unmoved after reading the verses, then you need to examine your faith.

Hopefully after reading this passage, we will rethink the kind of relationship Christians ought to build with one another that will please God. Let us not be like Ananias and Sapphira – the husband dragging down the wife because of godlessness, and the wife finally causing her husband’s death by not fearing God as well. We must become a person who fears God, for only such a person can become a blessing to others.

The reason God does not immediately punish today’s church for her sin

Perhaps, in reading through this passage, you would ask, “Is this incident real? Could it be that the preacher wanted to use this incident to scare Christians into offering more money to the church?”

The reality of the matter is: the spiritual condition of today’s church is very far from that of the early church (this can be seen by all). As the condition worsens, Christians see sin as something very common. Even as evil after evil happens, one may think, “Why doesn’t God punish the Christian who commits sin in the same way that He judged Ananias and Sapphira?” Wouldn’t the church become holy if God were to intervene each time? – Nobody would dare to commit sin then. But why doesn’t God do so? Does this prove that the incident in Acts chapter five is not true? Some others might say, “If it were real, why is it that some Christians commit sins worse than Ananias and don’t suffer punishment from heaven?”

Here, I would like to answer with a Biblical principle. From Biblical history, we can see that God does some things only once (for example the incident of Sodom and Gomorrah), enough to serve as a warning. There is no need to do the same thing to serve as repeated reminders. Paul took the experience that the Israelites had in the wilderness, after the exodus from Egypt, to serve as a warning in 1 Corinthians 10.

¹ For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. ⁷ And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” ⁸ Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. ⁹ Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. ¹⁰ Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
(1Corinthians 10:1-11 NAS)

Note the conclusion in verse 11: “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction,

upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” “These things that were written” of course includes the incident of Ananias and Sapphira. Here, you must understand that the principle of *God does many things only once* is enough to serve as a warning to those who love the truth and who fear God. As for those who are not willing to fear God, they will not be afraid even if such things happen right before their eyes (Luke 16:31).

Furthermore, these incidents are recorded in the Bible not only as a reminder, but also as a test of whether we will fear God. Even if God were to repeat His admonishments a hundred times, those who do not fear God will still continue on as if they did not see and did not hear. Conversely, if you fear God in your heart, even when you were to make a mistake out of ignorance or carelessness, you would immediately repent when reminded by someone or by the words of the Bible.

Therefore, it is very important to understand the principle behind how God works. Paul used the Old Testament example of the failings of the Israelites after the exodus to serve as a warning. He did so to remind the church to fear God. The same principle applies then, that when you read of the incident of Ananias and Sapphira, you must remember not to make the same mistake.

Tempting God is no longer something new

Let us return to Acts to look carefully at verses 7 and 9 of chapter 5.

⁷ Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ And Peter responded to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?” And she said, “Yes, that was the price.” ⁹ Then Peter *said* to her, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out *as well*.” (Acts 5:7-9 NAS)

Look carefully at verse 9. Peter says to Sapphira, “Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test?” Just now, I have already explained what the right kind of unity of heart is, and what is the wrong kind. Now, we need to take note of the words “to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test”. Paul rebuked them for being united in heart to test the Spirit of the Lord (that is, the Spirit of God). So, it begs the question, “What counts as testing the Spirit of God?”

I would like to ask you here: Have you ever tested the Spirit of God? Perhaps you are surprised that I would ask such a question. Let me use an illustration to help us understand. Imagine driving on a road with an eighty-kilometer speed limit. You don't see traffic police anywhere in sight, so you increase your speed to ninety kilometers per hour. After being unhindered for some way, then you decide to increase the speed further to a hundred kilometers per hour. This is testing traffic law. This is how we often treat God. You know clearly that there are some things which a Christian should not do but you still wish to give it a try, to see if there are resulting consequences. Once you have tried it and discovered that you got away with it, you become bolder and

bolder, and start to throw off all restraints in doing it. Or perhaps you see other Christians getting away with it after doing something they should not, and you decide to give it a try too. This is deliberately doing what you know is wrong and this “give it a try” attitude is testing God.

There are numerous such real-life examples. For example, the adultery of the Israelites mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10. Take a look at today’s church and you will find that sexual immorality is no longer something new. And many people are doing it in a hidden manner. When we see or hear of Christians committing sin, and yet we don’t see God punishing them, our hearts will be tempted to try to see how far we can go without suffering any consequences. Or perhaps you would think to yourself, “Even if I commit a sexual sin, it is no big deal. So long as I confess to God, the consequences are not that serious. Didn’t the preacher say that God is love? If we confess to Him, He will surely forgive us.” Is this not a sinner’s mentality? Many Christians are not aware that this, in itself, is testing God — wanting to test God’s boundaries.

Hence, many people question the reality of the incident recorded in Acts chapter 5. Actually, it is with the hope that it did not really happen, so that we can go on boldly to do what we want. But the way God does things is beyond Man’s expectations, He purposely allows it such that it looks as if nothing is happening, in order to see how you treat His word, and to see if you fear Him.

Hopefully you will take this matter of “testing God” seriously. If you know that there are some things that God is not pleased with, but you still wish to give them a try thinking to continue if no consequences result, then you will gradually get bolder and bolder,

until you fall into outright rebellion, like the Israelites did. This also explains why there are many hidden and unimaginable sins occurring in the church again and again, making sins like dishonesty and cheating seem unworthy of mention. As a result of constantly testing God, the Christian's conscience will become numb, having no place in his heart for God. In speaking of these things, we really need to bear them in mind and be on the alert! You ought to know that God is not to be mocked (Galatians 6:7).

I believe that many have a burden for the gospel and are very happy to participate in serving the church. But before you busy yourself with service, I hope that you will first learn to fear God. I believe that you definitely wouldn't want to be like Ananias and Sapphira — only keeping up appearances yet having no fear of God in your heart, eventually bringing harm to yourself and to others.

The misguidance of only talking about God's love without talking about fearing God

If you read the book of Acts carefully, you will notice that this book does not talk about "God loves the world" and does not mention "God's love". Perhaps this will surprise or disappoint many Christians. I would like you to understand that the main point of the Acts of the Apostles is not to relate church history but to tell of the work of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God). And one of the things the Spirit of God does is to teach the people of God to fear Him. But today's church dares to just stick to sharing God's love while neglecting how we ought to fear God. This is our blind spot. The friends you have brought to church came because of "God's

love”, but because they only know that God is love without knowing how to fear God and to abstain from sin, they would be unable to establish a relationship with God in the end.

If you do not fear God, it would be of no benefit to keep talking about “God’s love”. The reason why many Christians are not afraid to sin is precisely because they firmly believe that God is love, and that if they were to sin, all they need to do is to pray a prayer of “repentance” and God would forgive them. In the end, “God is love” becomes a life-saving talisman for the sinner. God wanted the early church to fear Him, precisely because this is the foundation of the church. Otherwise, there is no way the church can be built up.

The reason we are unwilling to talk about the topic of “fearing God” is because we worry that no one would dare to come to church. In reality, because of your avoidance of this topic, you will cause many who come to church to become the next Ananias and Sapphira. They would be happy to participate in serving, and they don’t mind offering, but they won’t be honest with God.

I am not saying that the church should not share that “God is love” (this is a Biblical truth), all I am saying is that we should not neglect “fear of God”. Only one who knows the fear of God can truly appreciate God’s love. God’s love is shown in His willingness to sacrifice His only son to deliver you from sin. This is enough to prove how seriously God regards the matter of sin. When we experience God’s love, we ought to then have nothing more to do with sin. From now on, we fear God and sin no more.

A person who does not fear God will take God's forgiveness for granted. "Confess and repent" becomes his "get out of jail card", and it causes him not to be afraid of committing sin. Hence, a gospel that only stresses the "love of God" to the neglect of the "fear of God" will attract many people such as the likes of Ananias and Sapphira into the church. When there is a huge influx of people like this, the holiness of the church will disappear without a trace. Of course, our responsibility is not to discern who is Ananias or Sapphira among us, but to first ensure that we will not become the sort of person who will corrupt the holiness of the church.

The church will be revived because of the fear of God

Many preachers believe that stressing the fear of God will obstruct people from believing in the gospel. Let us take a look then, at what the Bible says. Please have a look at the verse that follows.

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*;
(Acts 5:14 NAS)

Out of our expectation, after this incident, the number of believers did not decrease but increased all the more! Here, from this incident, we see that when the church learns the fear of God, God will use them greatly to save, to increase the number of people who belong to the Lord.

At the same time, we gain an exceedingly important revelation — not to use human wisdom to attract people to the church. We must establish the church according to Biblical teaching. Only in this

way can the church have a firm foundation. It all boils down to the main problem of the church today: what is lacking are people who truly fear God, not churchgoer numbers. Hence, we ought to start from ourselves, and begin to learn the fear of God. Look at every word of God as directed to ourselves. In this way, God will be happy to bless others through us.

— End —