

The office of a prophet being more than to foretell, all these interpretations are admissible in estimating Barnábas as a preacher. “[Adolf] Deissmann considers Barnábas the Jewish Grécized form of Barnebaus, a personal Semitic name recently discovered in Asia Minor inscriptions, and meaning the “son of Nebo.”

He was a Levite from the island of Cypress, and cousin of the evangelist Mark. When we first learn of him, he had removed to Jerusalem, and acquired property there. He sold “a field,” and contributed its price to the support of the poorer members of the church (Acts 4:36 ff).

When the preaching of some of the countrymen of Barnábas had begun a movement toward Christianity among the Greeks of Antioch, Barnábas was sent from Jerusalem to give it encouragement and direction, and, after a personal visit, recognizing its importance and needs, sought out Paul at Tarsús, and brought him back as his associate.

Ordained as missionaries on their return (Acts 13:3), and accompanied by John Mark, they proceeded upon what is ordinarily known as the “First Missionary Journey” of Paul (Acts 13:4.5).¹

NOTE: To avoid confusion I will keep the chapter and verse structure where the Bible has them, yet understand the full context is necessary.

Acts 4:36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

v. 37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Acts 5:1 A certain man named Ananiás, with his wife, Sapphīra, sold a piece of property,

v. 2 and kept back some of the price, with his wife’s full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles’ feet.

v. 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?”

¹ H. E. Jacobs, “Barnabas,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, James Orr, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 1:405.

Acts 5:4 “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own land? And after it was sold, was it, the money, 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.”

v. 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

v. 6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

v. 7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

v. 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.”

v. 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 will carry you out as well.”

v. 10 And immediately she fell 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.

v. 11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of those things. (NASB)

Synopsis:

1. Ananias was evidently a man who had established himself as a major contributor to the church in Jerusalem and news that Barnabas had just made a large contribution to the church motivated him and his wife to do him one better.
2. Ananias’s actions, after learning of Barnabas’s significant gift, inspired him to get in the game of one-upmanship, a term that means “to keep a step ahead of one’s competitor by recourse to claims, challenges or techniques that succeed whether or not they are entirely ethical.”²
3. Ananias and Sapphira also had a nice piece of property which they chose to sell. But their sale amounted to more money than Barnabas’s contribution, so they only gave the amount that exceeded his.

² William Morris and Mary Morris, “one-upmanship” in *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins*, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 426.

4. We learn from Chapter Five, verse 2, that Ananias kept back some of the sale price for himself about which Sapphira was well aware. The rest is the amount Ananias handed over to Peter.
5. The principle here has nothing to do with the amount of money the couple gave to the Jerusalem church. The issue was the mental attitude by which it was given. The exchange was something like, “Peter, I sold some property and I’ve given the money to the church.”
6. Principle: It is Ananias’s money. He is free to do with it as he wishes. Giving it to the church is his business. What is wrong is the fact he not only lied to Peter, but most importantly to the Holy Spirit.
7. Peter is an apostle. Peter knows better than to fiddle with God’s money. The money is designed to sustain these new believers who are focused on evangelizing the people of Jerusalem, Palestine, and beyond.
8. Ananias is only interested in being looked up to by the people of Jerusalem. Thus, the money, his money, that he gave to Peter was not what he and his wife pretended it to be.
9. Instead, his contribution was intended to be more than the sum given to Peter by Barnabas. Wrong motivation resulted in the divine sentence of the sin unto death.
10. For a review of this “execution,” see Acts: Chapter Five, verses 3 through 5, posted above. What happens next is the indictment and execution of Sapphira.
11. About three hours later Sapphira shows up, but ignorant of her husband’s execution under the sin unto death. In verse 8, Peter confronts her with this question: “Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?” And Sapphira said, “Yes, that was the price.”
Resultant verdict: “Liar, liar, pants on fire!”
12. Peter knows how much the property was worth, but Ananias lied to him about the price for which he sold it while insinuating that it was the full price. Peter is an apostle. Ananias, by lying to Peter, simultaneously lied to the Holy Spirit.
13. Sapphira, in cahoots with Ananias in their scheme, has entrapped herself with a boldfaced lie to which Peter responds, “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 will carry you out as well.”
14. And immediately she fell 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 (Acts 5:10).



15. These two executions are illustrations of capital punishment. What were the crimes which were committed that were considered to be capital? It had nothing to do with the money.
16. Ananias and Sapphira owned the property they sold. The buyer considered it to be a fair price so he was pleased with the purchase.
17. The money he paid to the couple became theirs. They were free to do with it as they pleased. Yet, at this point, the real reason they made the sale was to get some ready cash to out-give Barnabas.
18. It has nothing to do with helping the believers of Jerusalem evangelize the lost souls of Jerusalem and its environs. Instead, it was really about maintaining their high place on the list of The Top Givers to the Jerusalem Church.
19. Wrong motivation resulted in divine discipline executed by the Holy Spirit in the form of the sin unto death.
20. This couple is said by Peter to have conspired against the Holy Spirit:

Acts 5:3 Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back for yourself part of the proceeds from the sale of the land?”
21. Contributions to the Jerusalem church were intended to finance the outreach of those who would spread the gospel of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. Those who responded positively would become members of the church where they would grow in grace under the ministries of a prophet, an evangelist, or pastor-teacher, e.g., James.
22. The money collected was the result of free-will offerings willingly given by the volitional decisions of believers. That money was for the purpose of enlarging the resources necessary to get the Word out to whosoever would give it a hearing.
23. Ananias and Sapphira’s “contribution” did not have this goal as their objective but rather a means to aggrandize themselves among the congregation. Had they not been disciplined then their influence would have had a negative impact on the legitimate reasons for its existence.
24. Ananias and Sapphira were Lucifer’s “inside agents” who he had selected to become his agents provocateurs among the congregation. They did play their parts well but the Holy Spirit intervened by the hand of Peter and both were executed by means of the sin unto death.



DOCTRINE OF THE SIN UNTO DEATH

A. Definition and Description.

1 John 5:16

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not [$\tau\upsilon\epsilon\grave{\nu}\mu$ (*prós*): in close proximity] with death, he shall ask and He [**God the Father**] will give life to him who is not in close proximity with death. There is a sin in close proximity with death; I do not say that he should ask concerning this category.

1. The literal meaning of the preposition $\tau\upsilon\epsilon\grave{\nu}\mu$ (*prós*), plus the accusative of relationship, means “in close proximity.” It can be translated idiomatically “the sin terminating with death.”
2. The sin terminating in death is the sin of not executing the spiritual life of the Church Age. This does not open the door for you to malign or judge anyone.
3. The sin face-to-face with death is a sin which is repeated many times and there is no rebound. Therefore, God’s judgment of this person is always fair.
4. The sin face-to-face with death is maximum divine discipline from the integrity of God. It is the highest form of disgrace that can occur.
 - (1) Divine discipline results from the believer using his own volition to create his own failures in life after salvation.
 - (2) The sin in close proximity with death is described in:

Psalm 7:14

Behold, he shall have labor pains of vanity [**warning discipline**] because he has become pregnant with frustration.

v. 15

Therefore, he has given birth to a life of deceit [**intensive discipline**]. He dug a grave [**the sin in close proximity with death**]. He explored it [**the experience of warning and intensive discipline**].

v. 16

Therefore, he has fallen into the ditch which he himself has constructed. His frustration will return on his own head.”

- (3) The sin in close proximity with death does not come all at once, but in segments. Failure to use the rebound technique of 1 John 1:9 results in perpetual carnality.

1 John 5:17

All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not in close proximity with death.”

5. 1 John 5:16b means that while you are still dying, you can still sin. It is the sins that intensify the suffering in dying. This is a reference to sinning when you are in the “death-shadowed valley” (Psalm 23:4).



6. When you are going through the valley of the shadow of death, there are certain sins that you can commit face-to-face with dying that are going to make the journey miserable: jealousy, bitterness, vindictiveness, self-pity, fear, worry, anxiety. All of these sins make dying miserable.
7. There are those who sow to the wind and reap the tornado in the death-shadowed valley. The sin face-to-face with death is you creating for yourself your very own dying misery in the death-shadowed valley God has provided for you. This is fair, painful, and terminates in physical death. Sins committed while dying intensify the journey through the death-shadowed valley.
8. The divine initiative of eschatological grace challenges the believer to deploy the problem-solving devices on the FLOT Line of the soul,³ so that you can travel through your own death-shadowed valley with the most fantastic blessings:

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Psalms 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [*ie*⊗C (*shevet*): “authority”] and Your staff [*kw*⊗⊗ (*mash‘enah*): “protection”], they comfort me.

9. The training for the blessing or profit in dying comes from the daily function of the spiritual skills in your life. This is why 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not given us a lifestyle of fear, but of power and virtue-love and of sound judgment.”
10. Four categories of death exist.
 - a. Dying grace is given to mature or advancing believers. It is the greatest blessing of life because it is directly related to and is only exceeded by rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ:

Psalms 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

- b. Transfer to heaven apart from death is mentioned for two men:
 - (1) Enoch:

³ The FLOT Line is a military acronym for “Forward Line of Troops.” This tactic has both offensive and defensive applications in the spiritual realm. The believer must learn through doctrine when to apply one or the other in the Invisible War. For offensive actions: (1) personal evangelism, (2) function of the Ten Problem-Solving Devices, (3) Application of the invisible assets, (4) execution of the protocol plan of God, and (5) production of divine good. For defensive actions: (1) Application of the doctrine of eternal security, (2) application of facilitated doctrine resident in the soul, and (3) utilization of divine power which is application of the Word of God.



Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. [See: Genesis 5:9–11]

(2) Elijah:

2 Kings 2:11 As they [**Elijah and Elisha**] were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

v. 12a Elisha saw it and cried out, “My Father, my Father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw Elijah no more.

- c. The sin face-to-face with death. This disciplinary death is given to believers who refuse to execute the spiritual life. It occurs where the believer in the cosmic system takes his own life.
 - d. The exit-resurrection at the end of the Church Age.
11. The sin face-to-face with death is not a specific sin. It is the believer residing and functioning in the cosmic system. All his human good and personal sins add up to motivational evil toward self and functional evil toward others.
 12. The sin face-to-face with death is maximum divine discipline, the most painful experience in life with no alleviation. It implies loss of reward and blessing and shame at the judgment seat of Christ.

B. The Context for the Sin Face-to-Face With Death.

1. The context is the general doctrine of divine discipline. Divine discipline is the sum total of punitive measures by which God judges, corrects, and teaches the believer in time.

Hebrews 12:5 You yourselves have forgotten the principles of doctrine which teach you as sons. “My son do not make light of discipline from the Lord, nor be fainting when you are punished by Him;

v. 6 “For you see, ‘Whom the Lord loves He punishes and scourges with a whip every son whom He receives.’”

2. Divine discipline is confined to time:

Revelation 21:4 “He will wipe away from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

3. Divine discipline results from the believer using his own volition to create his own failures:



Psalm 7:14 See the one who is pregnant with wickedness, who conceives destructive plans, and gives birth to harmful lies –

v. 15 he digs a pit and then falls into the hole he has made.

v. 16 He becomes the victim of his own destructive plans and the violence he intended for others falls on his own head. (NET)

4. Certain sins are worse as far as divine discipline is concerned, e.g., sins of the tongue that bring triple discipline:

Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

v. 2 “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.”

If you have personal love toward God, you have impersonal love toward man. So do not gossip, judge, or malign others.

James 4:11 Stop slandering fellow members of the Royal Family. The one slandering a fellow believer or judging his brother, slanders the Law [**Bible doctrine**] and judges the Law [**Bible doctrine**]; but if you judge the Law [**Bible doctrine**] you are not a doer of the Law but a judge of it. (EXT)

James 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. (NASB)

5. For the believer in the cosmic system, there are three stages to the sin face-to-face with death:

- a. The first stage of divine discipline is warning discipline:

Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone has heard My voice and he opens the door [**rebound**], I will enter face-to-face with him and dine with him [**restoration to fellowship with God**] and he with Me.”

- b. The second stage of divine discipline is intensive discipline:

Psalm 32:1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!

v. 2 How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!

v. 3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.



Psalm 32:4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

v. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”; and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Psalm 118:17 I will not die, but live, and tell of the works of the Lord.

v. 18 The Lord has disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death.

- c. The third stage of divine discipline is the sin in proximity with death or the sin unto death.

Revelation 3:16 ‘Therefore, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold [unbeliever] nor hot [believer but not executing the spiritual life], I am about to vomit you out of My mouth.’”

Philippians 3:18 ‘For many keep walking concerning whom I have communicated many times and now I keep on communicating even though weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ,

v. 19 whose termination is ruin, whose god is his emotion, whose fame is by means of dishonor, who keep on thinking about earthly things.’ (EXT)

6. There are two categories of suffering.
- Suffering for discipline is a teaching aid unless you ignore it. This discipline is unbearable.
 - Suffering for blessing is bearable and accelerates your spiritual growth by helping you to apply doctrine to the situation.

C. Documentation for the Sin face-to-face with death.

- In the Old Testament, Psalm 118:17–18.
- In the New Testament, 1 John 5:16.

D. The sin face-to-face with death is related to the stages of reversionism.

- The stages of reversionism are:
 - Reaction to Bible teaching or distraction from Bible teaching.
 - A frantic search for happiness.

(End JAS4-30. See JAS4-31 for continuation of study at p. 301.)

