1) INTRODUCTION
   a) There are two great forces, orchestrated by Satan himself, working against the lives of believers and the church.
      i) Persecution
      ii) Hypocrisy
   b) The devil tried to intimidate the early church, but that did not work.
   c) Satan then tried to persecute the early church, but that just drove the Christians to their knees.
   d) The devil then decided to attack the church from the inside with hypocrisy and superficiality.
      i) The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been hurt far more by hypocrisy, lukewarmness and superficiality than by persecution.
         (1) Revelation 3:15-16
         (2) The Lord would rather you be out and out against Him than pretending to be for Him and, yet, truly denying Him.
   e) Satan loves to put doubts in the minds of people concerning the Word of God.
      i) Genesis 3:1
      ii) Anyone who puts a question mark after the Word of God is doing the work of Satan.
   g) The message today will give us two things to beware of and two things to be sure of.

2) BEWARE OF THE PRETENDED DEVOTION OF SUPERFICIAL RELIGION
   (Acts 5:1-11)
   a) A man named Barnabas had sold a piece of property and gave all the money to the disciples because there was a financial need in the church.
      i) Acts 4:36-37
      ii) It was a gift motivated by love.
      iii) People saw his good works, and they glorified God in Heaven.
   b) Ananias and Sapphira saw what Barnabas had done, and they decided to sell property.
      i) But rather than giving all the money to the church, they decided to keep part of the money for themselves and let others think that they had given all; thus, getting credit for giving everything.
      ii) This was a premeditated lie and pretended devotion.
   c) Pride was the cause of this deception.
      i) Pride is Satan’s chief tool.
      ii) Acts 5:3
      iii) The root of their sin was pride, and the fruit of their sin was hypocrisy.
   d) 1 Peter 5:5
      i) Grace is the desire and the ability to do the will of God.
ii) When someone is filled with pride, he does not receive the grace of God because God gives grace to the humble.
   (1) God withdraws His grace and sets up a barricade against that man; He resists the proud.

e) 1 Peter 5:8
   i) This man, devoid of the grace of God, now has Satan circling to devour him.

f) Nothing puts a person more out of the reach of Satan than genuine humility.

g) Ananias and Sapphira’s sin was not that they failed to give everything, but that they pretended a devotion that they did not have.
   i) Acts 5:4
   ii) God did not command that they give it all.
      (1) What we do not freely give, God neither needs nor wants.

h) Are you pretending a devotion to Jesus Christ that you do not have?

3) BEWARE OF THE PREMEDITATED DECEPTION OF SUPERFICIAL RELIGION
   (Acts 5:3–4)
   a) Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost; a premeditated lie.
   b) Every lie originates with Satan.
      i) John 8:44
      ii) Whenever we tell a lie, we are acting like the devil.
   c) The Holy Spirit revealed the seriousness of this premeditated deception.
      i) Acts 5:3
      ii) It is most serious to lie to God.
         (1) Not only is it most serious, but it is also foolish to lie to God.
            (a) The Holy Spirit was there from the beginning and saw it all.
      iii) This premeditation, this conspiracy, was a direct challenge to the Holy Ghost.
         (1) Acts 5:4

4) BE SURE OF THE PENETRATING DETECTION OF SUPERFICIAL RELIGION
   (Hebrews 4:12)
   a) God the Holy Spirit told Peter that Ananias and Sapphira were lying.
      i) Peter was an apostle; and God spoke to Peter, and Peter declared the Word of God.
      ii) The Word of God was in the mouths of the apostles.
   b) There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.
      i) The Bible teaches that one day all secrets will be made known.
      ii) It is only a matter of time until hypocritical and pretended devotion will be made manifest.
      iii) 1 Corinthians 4:5
      iv) Psalm 139:23–24
5) BE SURE OF THE PURIFYING DISCIPLINE OF SUPERFICIAL RELIGION
   (Acts 5:5–11)
   a) This discipline was a severe judgment.
      i) Both Ananias and Sapphira died.
         (1) It is likely that Ananias and Sapphira were saved.
      ii) God judges His own children.
      iii) There are three kinds of judgment:
         (1) Our judgment as a sinner.
            (a) This judgment takes place at Calvary.
            (b) Romans 8:1
         (2) Our judgment as a servant.
            (a) At the judgment seat of Christ, we will receive rewards for the things we've done.
         (3) Our judgment as a son.
            (a) This judgment takes place daily.
            (b) Hebrews 12:5–7
      iv) There will be severe judgment if we challenge God; if it is a premeditated conspiracy and confrontation between that which Satan has placed in the heart and that which the Holy Spirit has warned against.
   v) Paul warned the church at Corinth about the way they were taking the Lord's Supper.
      (1) 1 Corinthians 11:29–30
   vi) 1 John 5:16
      (1) There comes a time when a child of God can so challenge God that they go to Heaven sooner than they should.
         (a) Moses died prematurely.
            (i) Deuteronomy 34:7
      b) It was a saving judgment.
         i) It saved Ananias and Sapphira from further sin.
            (1) God is loving and kind, and He did this in mercy.
            (2) 1 Corinthians 5:5
               (a) God is more interested in the spirit of man than his body.
         ii) It saved the early church from the pollution of hypocrisy.
            (1) Acts 5:11
         iii) It brought salvation to the lost.
            (1) The worst thing that could happen to a church would be for the church to be so filled with hypocrisy and superficiality that unsaved people can see no difference between it and the world.
            (2) Acts 5:14
               (a) Where Satan ruled, God overruled.
         iv) It saved succeeding generations from hypocrisy.
            (1) God will do certain things in the physical world as an example of how He feels about it in the spiritual.
               (a) Jude 1:7
6) CONCLUSION
   a) Sin among the saints is more serious than sin among the lost.
   b) Sin against the Holy Spirit is very serious.
   c) Be on guard against hypocrisy in your life.
      i) Ask God to search your heart.
      ii) Do not pretend a devotion greater than you have.
   d) Do not let a hypocrite keep you away from Jesus Christ.
      i) People often say that they do not want to be a member of a church
          because it’s so full of hypocrites.
          (I) It is better to be in a church with a few of them than be in hell with all
          of them forever.
   e) A church filled with the Holy Spirit cannot be stopped by superficiality.
      i) The church in Acts 5 continued to grow.
   f) Love Jesus with all of your heart.
      i) Do not be superficial.
      ii) Do not pretend a devotion.
      iii) Be real, and God will guide you.
   g) God desires you to be saved today.
   h) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking
      Him to come into your life.
   i) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask
      Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      i) Romans 3:23
      ii) Romans 10:9-10
      iii) Romans 10:13
      iv) Acts 16:31
      v) John 3:16