

Acts Chapter 5

Acts 5:1 "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,"

“Ananias ... Sapphira”:

These are two classic examples of hypocrisy among Christians who faked their spirituality to impress others (Matt. 6:1-6; 16-18; 15:7; 23:13-36).

Acts 5:2 "And kept back [part] of the price, his wife also being privy [to it], and brought a certain part, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet."

“Kept back part of the price”:

This was not a sin in and of itself however, they had promised, perhaps publicly, and that they were giving the full amount received to the Lord.

Their outward sin was lying about how much they were giving to the church.

But the deeper, more devastating sin was their spiritual hypocrisy based on selfishness.

Ananias and Sapphira were not required of God to give their possessions.

They decided between themselves to sell the land and lie to the apostles (representing the work of the Holy Ghost on earth), and hold back part of the money.

Verses 5:3-4

The deity of the Holy Spirit is evident within this passage.

In verse 3 Peter states that Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit.

Then in verse 4 Ananias is told that he has lied to God.

Ananias must have promised the Lord he would give the whole amount.

He lied to the ever-present Holy Spirit in him (1 Cor. 6:19-20), and in the church (Eph. 2:21-22).

Acts 5:3 "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land?"

“Satan filled thine heart”:

Ananias and Sapphira were satanically inspired to do this in contrast to Barnabas' Spirit-filled gesture (see 4:37).

Acts 5:4 "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

Communal sharing is still being practiced some weeks or months after Pentecost, but it was totally voluntary.

Ananias's sin was not that of keeping back part of what he sold, but his hypocrisy about it.

The sin here is not in Ananias not bringing all the money for the land, but in the fact that he brought part of the money and told the apostles that he had brought all.

To lie to man is one thing, but to lie to God is an entirely different thing.

The sin here is lying.

Acts 5:5 "And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things."

"Great fear":

See verse 11.

They were afraid about the seriousness of hypocrisy and sin in the church.

The people learned that death can be the consequence of sin (see 1 Cor. 11:30-32; 1 John 5:16).

That fear extended beyond those present to all who heard about the divine judgment (see Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

Though God does not judge every believer's sin with death, in some situations God does just that, see 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 John 5:16.

As with Achan, this first act in a new era serves as an example (Joshua 7:10-26).

God is a loving God, but He is also a just God.

The judgment came swiftly here, so that all could see that lying to God is a very bad sin.

Notice, Sapphira did not die when Ananias lied.

You can imagine the fear that gripped the camp.

Somehow Sapphira did not hear of this.

Verses 6-10

The Jews did not embalm, but customarily buried the dead the same day, especially someone who died by divine judgment (see Deut. 21:22-23).

Acts 5:6 "And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried [him] out, and buried [him]."

In a case of this nature there would not have been mourning in the camp.

The sooner this was taken care of, the better.

This dishonest man was quickly removed from the camp.

Acts 5:7 "And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in."

There is one really important lesson to be learned here, besides the lesson of not to lie to God.

Notice, she was not condemned for the sin of her husband.

She will be judged on her own merit.

Had she told the truth at this point, she would have lived.

She is guilty of her own sin, not the sin of her husband.

Wives, you are responsible for your own sins.

You need to listen to your husband, until it involves things of the spirit.

Then you are an independent agent.

Husbands rule over their wives' flesh, not their spirit.

There is an order in the home that God has set up and we need to heed it.

Husbands are the head of the home (in the flesh).

Ladies, God will not accept the excuse for you not coming to church, because your husband won't come.

In things of the spirit, you are responsible yourself for your own decisions.

As we see in the next verse.

Acts 5:8 "And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much."

Who might be inquiring for her husband; though such a way of speaking was common with the Jews, when nothing goes before to which the answer is made.

Of which there are frequent instances in the sacred writings.

"Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much"?

Naming the sum of money which Ananias had brought; though the historian does not mention it.

The Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions read, "tell me, O woman", etc.

Not calling her by her name, as he did her husband (Acts 5:3).

"Yea" for so much".

Just that sum, and no more.

Acts 5:9 "Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband [are] at the door, and shall carry thee out."

"Tempt the Spirit of the Lord":

Sapphira had gone too far in presuming upon God's forbearance.

The folly of such blatant human presumption had to be shown as a sin, hence the ultimate divine chastening that followed.

Acts 5:10 "Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying [her] forth, buried [her] by her husband."

We see that this turning away from the beautiful workings of the early church and lying to the Holy Ghost brought sudden destruction.

Ananias and Sapphira conceived this crime together, they both sinned and they met with a common fate and were buried together.

This whole message is not saying, to be a Christian you must sell everything and give the proceeds to the church.

It is saying that it is a great sin to lie to the Holy Spirit of God.

Their sin was lying.

Acts 5:11 "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things."

“Church”:

This is the first use of “church” in Acts, although it is the most common word used to describe the assembly of those who had believed (4:32).

This fear here is fear of God.

These people suddenly become very aware that God is indeed not only a discerner of our deeds, but of the intents of our hearts, as well.

The power of God manifested here would cause great respect for God and His prophets.

Acts 5:12 "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.)"

“Signs and wonders”:

See note on 2:19.

“Solomon’s porch”:

Refers to the colonnaded eastern wall of the temple courtyard.

The early Christians commonly gathered here for mass meetings (3:11).

Few places could better accommodate the thousands (see note on 3:11).

These signs and wonders were from God to let the world know that these disciples were agents of Almighty God.

They were not acting on their own merits, but were obedient servants of God.

These miracles were evidence that could not be denied by the rulers of the temple.

Notice also that the followers of Jesus were not bickering among themselves, but they were all in one accord.

To me, this means their minds and hearts were stayed upon God.

Acts 5:13 "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them."

“No man join himself to them”:

See note on verse 5.

These unbelievers had respect for the followers of Jesus, but feared the deadly potential of joining the church.

We see here that, great astonishment gripped all the people.

No more people joined the group possibly for fear of their weaknesses causing them trouble like Ananias and Sapphira.

The people magnified them.

This included the Jewish rulers.

This unity and also this happening with the two that lied to the Holy Spirit put fear and great respect for these disciples in all of them."

Acts 5:14 "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"

“Believers ... men and women”:

While the unbelievers stayed away due to fear of the consequence of sin, there were multitudes who heard the gospel witness, gladly believed, and joined the church.

These believers here, who were added, were not added to these apostles, who those had all things in common.

These were ordinary people who started believing that Jesus was their Savior and Lord.

Men and women in great numbers accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Acts 5:15 "Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid [them] on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."

“Peter ... overshadow”:

The people truly believed he had divine healing power and that it might even extend to them through his shadow (3:1-10).

But Scripture does not say Peter's shadow ever healed anyone.

In fact, the healing power of God through him seemed to go far beyond his shadow (see verse 16, "Multitude ... they were healed every one").

This outpouring of healing was an answer to the prayer (in 4:29-30).

We see the power of the Lord Jesus Christ working mightily through Peter here.

We saw, when Peter and John prayed for the lame man to walk and he miraculously was healed; a small portion of this power in action.

We also, saw how the power of the Spirit refilled the disciples.

After this second filling of the power from on high to minister, it seemed that even the shadow of Peter brought such healing power from the Spirit of God that many were healed.

This was not Peter's power, but the power of the Spirit in Peter that was doing this healing.

Acts 5:16 "There came also a multitude [out] of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."

"Unclean spirits" (see the following: Matthew 10:1; 12:43-45; Mark 1:23-27; 5:1-13; 6:7; 9:25; Luke 4:36; 8:29; 9:42).

They are demons, meaning fallen angels (Revelation 12:3), who are so designated because of their vile wickedness.

They frequently live inside unbelievers, particularly those who vent their wicked nature.

John 14:12-14 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]."

Notice who does the healing (it is the power of the Risen Christ).

Peter is just using the power of the Risen Christ to heal. It is the name of Jesus the Christ that heals.

Jesus had said if His followers believed, they could do greater miracles than He did when He was on earth by just the use of His name.

Acts Chapter 5 Questions

1. What were the names of the husband and wife who sold the property in verse 1?
2. What did they do with the money?
3. What did they lie about?
4. Which disciple had they lied to?
5. Who did that disciple represent?
6. Who had filled their hearts with the desire to lie?
7. Were they required to give all their money?
8. What was the sin?
9. What happened to Ananias as punishment?
10. Who carried him out?
11. How much later was it before the wife came to Peter?
12. Was she punished for her husband's lie, or her own lie?
13. What happened to her?
14. How did this happening affect the church?
15. Who were many signs and wonders shown by?
16. In verse 13, we find what effect to the disciples all of this had, what was it?
17. In verse 14, who were added to the Lord?
18. In verse 15, they brought their sick and demon possessed and put them where what could happen?
19. How many were healed?
20. Who will be glorified in this?
21. When we pray, whose name must we pray in?