

Acts Part 11 – Ananias & Sapphira

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, November 11, 2015

Acts 5:1-11¹

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,
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.
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?
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.
5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.
6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.
7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
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.
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.
11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

We left off in our last study looking at the results of how a Church operates when everyone has all things in common and are of one heart and one soul. We saw the generous outpouring of love for their fellow man by giving to those that were in need. We were introduced to Barnabas, a wealthy Levite from Cyprus who sold a portion of land and gave to the Church.

Tonight we begin Chapter 5 and we see the first internal Church problem.

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 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.

Last week we saw the very generous donation given by Barnabas and he laid down the money at the apostle's feet.

This husband and wife team of Ananias and Sapphira seem to be copying the same thing that Barnabas did. They also sold some land that they owned (according to verse 5) only they didn't give the full amount of money that they earned from selling theirs. It says that they brought a "**certain part.**"

Don't forget that we do not find anywhere in Scripture that anyone was required to do what they have done. If you can find otherwise please point it out to me because I have not found it. It appears to me that people were doing this because they felt compelled to do it as an act of Christian love, which is enacted through the urging of the Holy Ghost.

One thing you need to know is the Holy Spirit will NEVER lead you to do something that is contrary to his will. Anything you do outside of the will of the Holy Spirit was motivated by your OWN will and not His. Ananias and Sapphira are acting out of their own will and not the will of the Holy Spirit. If they Holy Spirit did motivate them to give, they were disobedient to Him and did not give all as instructed by Him to do.

This was a joint effort between them both. They were both in on the deception. We can only guess at what their motives were. Most likely they were wanting the attention and accolades from others for the appearance that they were giving out of the kindness of their hearts. They wanted to be seen as something they were not, maybe for social status or to fee their egos.

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?

Well, Ananias made a huge mistake of thinking he could pull one over on Peter. We see from the very first Chapter of Acts that Peter has been filled and acting in the power of the Holy Ghost. Obviously Ananias and Sapphira had no understanding of the power that was involved with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost allows Peter to see right through their little charade and he immediately calls them out on it.

Peter specifically mentions that this act was influenced by Satan. Remember when Jesus was addressing a crowd of Pharisees, he mentioned that Satan was the father of lies: **John 8:44: Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**

¹ All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version

Notice that Peter didn't accuse Ananias of lying to him or the other Apostles, he accuses him of lying to the Holy Ghost. Of course lying to the Holy Ghost is the same as lying to God, however, Peter specifically uses the name of a part of the Trinity; the Holy Ghost. That may not seem significant to the casual reader but I believe it has a very deep meaning.

By specifically using saying the Holy Ghost, Peter is emphasizing the distinct office of the Triune God Head of the Holy Ghost as being the One who guides the Christians actions. To lie to the Holy Ghost is a serious infraction because lying is a complete opposite of what the Holy Ghost would do. The Holy Ghost is the One that influences the Christian NOT to lie. So, lying to the Holy Ghost would indicate one thing, the person lying either does not have the Holy Ghost living within them or they are purposely defying the Holy Ghost's powers.

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.

This verse is proof that no one was required to sell their possessions and give to others. Peter asks him why he would do such a thing seeing as how he did not have to. It was in his own power to do with his own property as he saw fit.

We also see the first case of Hypocrisy within the Church. Of course the Jews had been dealing with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees for years, and Jesus had warned about them in Matthew 23, such as this verse where Jesus calls them out on it: **Matthew 23:28: Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.** - This is the kind of person that Ananias is. He is a hypocrite.

Then Peter invokes God's name and says that Ananias has lied to God himself. This is also further proof of the Trinity.

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

What a devastating way to die. As soon as Ananias hears what Peter says and realizes that he has been caught in his deception, the Lord initiates immediate judgement upon him.

Of course we do not know all of the circumstances involved around this, we can imagine all kinds of things that may have happened. For example, it could be that Ananias was so guilt ridden that his nerves were rattled and upon being found out it was more than he could take and it killed him.

Or, he could have been so stressed out that he had a heart attack and died. It really doesn't matter the way he died, but he died because God passed judgement upon his sin and it was death.

It would be real easy for us to assume that Ananias wasn't a true Christian, but I don't believe that's the case. The Bible says that these early believers had all things in common and were in one mind and one accord. It did NOT say they had all things in common except for Ananias and Sapphira. So, I believe they were truly Christians but they had allowed sin in their lives and this is the result of it.

This goes to show the seriousness of sin in the Church and how much God hates sin and hypocrisy. One thing is for sure, it has an everlasting impact upon the rest of the Church; **and great fear came on all them that heard these things.**

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

So, that was the end of the husband. Wow, talk about a fast funeral! His wife wasn't even invited! We don't know why he was buried so quickly. We do know it was common practice for them to immediately bury people because they did not embalm them. They wound them up in tight linen cloths and then buried them. Not sure why they didn't even consult his wife.

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

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

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.

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.

So we see that the same thing happens to the wife, Sapphira that happened to her husband. She is confronted, her sins are revealed and she too was immediately stricken and died. Quick judgment took place.

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