

"Ananias and Sapphira"

Acts 5:1-14

Introduction: Tonight in our study of Acts we have arrived at chapter 5 where we find a frightening miracle. So far in the book of Acts we have seen God add to the church and we have seen Him multiply believers and now we will see Him subtract from the church. This is what God does. He adds, multiplies and subtracts, but He never divides. Now, up to this point there have been several miracles in the book of Acts. The events of the Day of Pentecost were miracles. Then the multitudes that were saved were all miracles. Then the healing of the lame man was a miracle and the shaking of the place where the apostles offered their prayer was another miracle. Then as we come to Acts 5, we find the miracle here and that is the death of two of the church's members.

I point this out because there are many today who long to see God do miracles like He did in the book of Acts, and some say He still does. But this chapter will prove that supernatural miracles such as we find here no longer take place and we can be thankful for that. Ananias and Sapphira are going to die because they were not what they pretended to be. They will die because they lie to God. Can you imagine if God still did this today? We could not sing many of the hymns. If we sang the hymn, "I Surrender All" the majority of the church would fall over dead. Someone has said that if God did in the church what He did in Acts 5 each church would need a basement for a morgue and they would need a mortician on staff at all times.

What happens in Acts 5 is solid evidence that the book of Acts is a transition book, and that God's ways are not the same today as they were back then. Supernatural miracles such as healings, shaking houses, and causing people to fall over dead for being hypocrites do not exist today. We do not need these because we have the completed Bible, and we can learn from what is recorded.

I. The Deception

Notice Acts 5:1-2

The first word of the versed tells us that something is about to change. The word "BUT" introduces a contrast and before this the church was in unity and harmony with one another and were being used of God to glorify Him. But now that is about to change. What we read in this chapter should not surprise us at all. Before this Satan attempted to stop the church with fear as the Sanhedrin threatened Peter and John. In chapter 6 Satan will attempt to divide the church through strife and contention.

Acts 6:1

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

Here in Acts 5 Satan will try to bring sin/contamination into the church. His attacks are never ending but God is greater, and Satan will not be victorious.

Matthew 16:17-18

¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

¹⁸ And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Ananias and Sapphira sold one of their possessions and they conspired together to hold back part and give the rest to the church. They lied about what they had received and made it appear as though they gave it all.

Notice Acts 4:34-37

These two watched what Barnabas did, and they also heard the praise given to him. They too wanted in on the fame. Barnabas gave the money because he cared for those who were suffering but these two did it for recognition. It was their love of money that got them in this situation.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Notice Acts 5:3

Peter was given special discernment in this situation and God enlightened him to what was happening. I was to see several points here:

1. Satan can fill the heart of the believer.

We must assume that Ananias and Sapphira were believers. They identified with the church, and they were disciplined as believers. Someone might ask, "How could a believer do this?" Let us remember that each of us has the potential of falling into any sin.

Consider Moses who killed the Egyptian and David in his sin of adultery and murder and Peter in his denial of the Lord. Praise the Lord He does not strike dead every saint who gives into sin. We must thank Him that we have a Great High Priest who makes intercession for us.

Hebrews 7:23-27

²³ *And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:*

²⁴ *But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.*

²⁵ *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

²⁶ *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;*

²⁷ *Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*

We must be always watching and alert to the ways of Satan.

Ephesians 6:14-18

¹⁴ *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

¹⁵ *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

¹⁶ *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all **the fiery darts of the wicked.***

¹⁷ *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

¹⁸ *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;***

Satan is always shooting his fiery darts and sometimes the darts are greed and pride. These are two that got Ananias and Sapphira. Greed caused them to hold back, and pride caused them to lie.

2 Corinthians 2:11

¹¹ *Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*

2. The sin was not that they gave too little, but it was in their deception.

There was no set amount which they were to give. They did not need to give it all. The problem was they said they gave it all when they actually only gave part of what they received. If they would have been honest there would have been no problem.

3. They lied to the Holy Spirit.

They had made a vow with the Lord to give it all before they actually sold the possession and then once it was sold, they decided to keep part of it. We cannot be sure, but we do know they lied to God about what they were doing.

Notice Acts 5:4

In verse 3 we are told they lied to the Holy Spirit and here we are told they lied to God. There is nothing that God does not see.

Romans 2:6

⁶ *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

Notice Acts 5:5

Ananias took his last breath and he died as he was confronted by Peter.

Now there are those who would want to declare that because of what happened here he lost his salvation. But that is not at all what happened. Even when a believer's life is shortened because of sin they still go into the presence of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 5:1, 4-5

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

⁴ *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

⁵ To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 11:29-30

²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

³⁰ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Sleep is only used as a term of death for believers. Therefore, when Ananias died, he was present with the Lord.

Notice Acts 5:6-10

Sapphira experienced the same fate as her husband. What do we learn from all of this?

1. God is not pleased when there is sin in the camp.

God was not playing games in this situation. This is here to show us how God views sin in the lives of His people.

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

God made the greatest sacrifice to set us free from the power of sin and therefore He expects us to live in newness of life. Notice the words of Woodbridge on what took place here in Acts 5:

"The form this particular miracle took—its violent, deadly nature—is unusual. The Holy Spirit was teaching the Church a basic lesson, one of which she needs often to be reminded. The lesson is this: Purity is a condition of power. The Church must be clean to be conquering, disciplined to be daring, holy to be happy. Ananias and Sapphira were blots on

the Church's escutcheon [a shield or emblem bearing a coat of arms]. They had to be removed. Pure first, then powerful. Pure first, then peaceable."

Notice Acts 5:11-13

This entire event made many cautious to join up with the church. Why would God do this? God wants people to know that becoming a Christian is something that is not to be taken lightly. Notice the words of Whitcomb:

"If you become a true follower of Christ, the following will be true of you: You will be hated by the world (John 15:18-19; 1 John 3:13). You will be persecuted even as Jesus was (John 15:20). You will no longer partake in worldly activities (1 Pet. 4:3-4). Your former friends will speak evil of you (1 Pet. 4:4). You will renounce your possessions and understand that all you have belongs to Christ (Luke 14:33; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). You will love Christ more than you love any other person close to you (Matt. 10:37). You will deny yourself and say "No" to all your personal desires, plans and ambitions (Matt. 16:24). You will go through very difficult trials and your faith will be severely tested (1 Pet. 4:12). You will be ready, if need be, to die for your faith (Acts 21:13; Matt. 10:28). Would you want to join under such conditions?"

Conclusion:

The end result of all of this was more people saved.

Notice Acts 5:14

The events before us did two things"

- a. It repelled the casual onlooker who may have thought of stepping into the community of the church but who was not being drawn by God.
- b. It attracted those who were serious about eternal life. These were those who hearts were being drawn by God.

The purity of the church made their influence far more effective.