

Brookland Baptist Church
Bible Study
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Lecture XIV

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The Book of Acts
Acts 5:1 - 13

The First Sin & Trouble in the Church Chapter 5

In Acts 5:1–8:3, the first sin ever to appear in the Church was serious, very serious. It was the sin of keeping back. The sin and the judgment upon it serve as a warning to every believer. It also tells of the internal and external problems facing the early Church. Inside, there were dishonesty and administrative headaches; outside, the Church was being pressured by persecution. While church leaders were careful and sensitive in dealing with the internal problems, there was not much they could do to prevent the external pressures. Through it all, the leaders kept their focus on what was most important — spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:1-2 -

1 “Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

2 “With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet.”

Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, we professing believers and members of the early Church. They professed Christ and professed: to deny self and all they were and had.

To take up the cross daily. They had some property that they did not personally need for their own necessities. They were professing to follow Christ, to take Him at His Word. Therefore, they sold their property in order to help those who were desperately needing food, shelter, clothing, and the gospel. But their profession was just that, profession only, a false profession. It was hypocritical, deceptive, and a lie. They tried to fake their commitment. They tried to deceive the Church.

Acts 5:3-4 -

3 “Then Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.”

4 “The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God.”

Given insight from the Holy Spirit, Peter saw through Ananias's lie. Apparently involved in the new Church, Ananias and Sapphira had succumbed to temptation and allowed Satan into their hearts, so they had lied to Peter about the amount of money they were giving. They brought the money from the sale of their property but kept some of the money for themselves. The word for "kept" is the same one used in the Septuagint of Achan who "kept" some of the spoils of Jericho, which ultimately caused a great defeat of Israel (Joshua 7:1–26).

Acts 5:5-6 -

5 "Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it."

6 "The young men came and wrapped up his body, then carried him out and buried him."

When Ananias realized that Peter knew all about his scheme, he fell down and died. The Greek word *ekpsucho* literally means "to breathe one's last, to die" and usually connotes death by divine judgment 1 Corinthians 10:6; obviously fear would seize any who heard of this event! It is important to note that Peter didn't kill Ananias, nor did he ask the Holy Spirit to kill him. Peter condemned the lying, and the Spirit of God executed judgment. Also (Acts 13:11), where Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind at Paul's command.

Acts 5:7-8 -

7 "About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened."

8 "Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Sapphira showed up about three hours later ... not knowing what had happened to her husband. Peter's questions to Sapphira expose her complicity in the deed. Peter gave her the opportunity, to tell the truth, but she told the same lie that her husband had told. In so doing she revealed a hardness of heart that had not been touched by the grace of God.

Acts 5:9 -

9 "And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of doing a thing like this—conspiring together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Just outside that door are the young men who buried your husband, and they will carry you out, too."

To test God is to see how much one can get away with before God will respond or act according to his Word. (Exodus 17:2); (Matthew 4:7;) The entire direction of this lie by Ananias and Sapphira was wrongheaded, self-serving, church-destroying, and, to put it simply, sinful.

Ananias and Sapphira had conspired together to mock God, lie, and think they could get away with it as if God would not know. They had tried to test the Spirit of the Lord, referring to the Holy Spirit in the body of believers — specifically, the apostles before whom this lie was told (John 16:8).

Acts 5:10 –

10–“Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.”

As she and Ananias had been joined in their “testing” of God, so they were joined in death. This is more than just a historical record of events in the early Church. This serves as a warning that no one should trifle with the Holy Spirit or take lightly the importance of telling the truth. While the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira came because of their deceitfulness, the temptation to hoard money selfishly must not be overlooked. Greed corrupts Christians’ lives. It can affect families, churches, and ministries of all kinds. We must be very careful in handling money.

Acts 5:11

11 “Great fear gripped the entire church and all others who heard what had happened.”

This is the first appearance of the term “church” ekklesia, meaning “assembly in the book of Acts—and notice it is a moment of judgment! It will become the regular word for the universal Church and the local Church in the remainder of the book. God’s judgment on Ananias and Sapphira produced great fear among the believers, making them realize how seriously God regards sin in the Church.

Acts 5:12 – 13 –

12 The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. 13 No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

Many signs and wonders were done: In Acts 4:30, we read that these early Christians prayed that God would continue to do signs and wonders through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus. This shows that this prayer was answered, and these remarkable signs and wonders continued. We aren’t told what these signs and wonders were. Presumably, they were like what we see in other places in Acts and in the Gospels – healings, deliverance from demonic powers, unusual blessings. **They were all with one accord:** Often, the fact that God’s people are together all with one accord is a greater display of the power of the Holy Spirit than any particular sign or wonder. Our selfish hearts and stubborn minds can be harder to move than any mountain. **Through the hands of the apostles:** Seemingly, God chose to do these miraculous works through the hands of the apostles and not mainly through others. Yet God wisely chooses which hands will bring a miracle. He had a purpose in doing it through the hands of the apostles.

The community of Christians had a marvelous reputation for integrity, and everybody knew it was a serious thing to be a follower of Jesus. An Ananias and Sapphira incident would reduce the level of casual commitment.