

## The Acts of the Apostles

Lesson: 6

Topic: Ananias and Sapphira Lie to the Holy Spirit

Reading: Acts 4:32-5:11

### *Review*

### *Scripture Analysis*

#### Verses 32-37

- QUESTION: What united them in “one heart” and “one soul”?
  - The apostolic doctrine by which faith in the heart is created.
  - Outwardly, the crowd was made up of:
    - a vast variety of people, old and young, rich and poor.
    - A variety of occupations and gifts.
    - The 3000 won at Pentecost came from many lands and had different native languages.
  - Yet, outward connections doesn't unite the church.
  - The word of God that creates faith in the heart.
- QUESTION: Why did these early Christians lack nothing?
  - The Lord provided for them.
  - They sold their possessions and lands in order to support those in the church who were in need.
  - Everyone regarded his possessions as not being intended for him alone but to be employed for all as need required.
- QUESTION: What motivated them to perform these acts of love?
  - Faith in Christ.
  - There was no compulsion here. They weren't forced to do this by the state or by the disciples.
  - The proclamation of the Gospel created in them new hearts
- QUESTION: What does this teach us about our worldly goods?
  - Good are not the object of our faith...
  - But they are intended to be used for the benefit of others,
  - Especially those within the household of faith.
- “Joseph...sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”
  - It's here where we are introduced to Barnabas.
  - Barnabas will play an important role beginning in Acts 13 when he becomes an assistant to Paul.
  - In verses 36 and 37, Barnabas stands in contrast to Ananias and Sapphira who we hear about next.

#### Verses 1-2

- “But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property...”
  - Because of the gravity of the offense the names of the offenders are not withheld.
- “...and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds...”

- The issue isn't simply that Ananias didn't give all the money to the apostles which he received from the sale.
  - In fact, Ananias had the right to keep their property.
- The issue is that he was claiming to be giving all the money that he had received.
- "...with his wife's knowledge..."
  - Sapphira herself was aware of the lie.
  - Ananias and Sapphira were "one heart and soul" not in the things of the Lord but in evil.
  - This holding back the money was premeditated.
  - They must have talked things over:
    - What to say and how to act.
- QUESTION: Why would they have lied about the amount of money they received for their possession?
  - Most likely, they wanted people to praise them for having given such a great gift.
  - Ananias would have appeared as a second Barnabas.
- "...and he laid it at the apostles' feet."

### Verse 3

- Ananias:
  - Having just laid down the money, Ananias most likely added a few words to express his intention.
  - He no doubt expected Peter or one of the other apostles to answer with words of acceptance and commendation.
  - However, that wasn't the case
- "But Peter said..."
  - In this instance, Peter had a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit concerning Ananias and his wife.
    - (See 1 Cor. 12:10 – 'and to another discerning of spirits...')
  - He had the ability to see the faith of their hearts.
- QUESTION: Who does Peter say is behind Ananias' lie?
  - Satan!
  - Through the proclamation of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit had created in Ananias a new heart.
  - But Ananias turned away from God's Spirit and had once more opened his heart to Satan.
- QUESTION: Of what does Peter accuse Ananias?
  - Lying to the Holy Spirit.
  - It's the Holy Spirit that acted through the proclamation of the Apostles.
  - It's the Holy Spirit who creates faith and directs the Christian to good works.
  - In lying to the Holy Ghost, Ananias had lied to God Himself, for the Holy Spirit is true God with the Father and the Son.
  - Ananias rejected Christ's righteousness that the Holy Spirit declares through the Gospel in favor of the worship of self and seeking the praise and adoration of men.

### Verse 4

- “While it remained unsold...”
  - Ananias would have been compelled to answer yes.
  - He could have kept his land.
  - He could have retained the whole sum he had received for the land, and no one could in the least have blamed him, or
  - He could have brought as an offering for the needy any portion of money.
  - Yet, he deliberately lied.
- QUESTION: What do these words teach us about property?
  - It’s not wrong for Christians to own personal property.
  - We are to be good stewards of the temporal gifts that God has given us.

#### Verses 5-6

- “When Ananias heard these word, he fell down and breathed his last.”
  - With the words of Peter still ringing in his ears, Ananias fell down and died.
  - On account of his impenitence and unbelief, God’s divine judgment falls upon Ananias.
- “And great fear came upon all...”
  - The judgment and power of God caused great fear of those in the New Testament church.
  - Likewise, for us:
    - This narrative is a warning for us
    - We should to repent of our sins.
    - To flee from impenitence and to rely upon Christ alone.

#### Verses 7-8

- “Three hours...”
  - We’re not told exactly why Sapphira came in three hours later.
  - We can speculate:
    - Maybe it was to make their plan appear less planned.
    - Maybe it was to gain a second occasion for a congratulation.
    - Maybe it was because Ananias hadn’t returned home and Sapphira was wondering where he was.
  - Either way, Sapphira is ignorant of what had happened three hours before.
- “...Tell me whether you sold the land for so much...”
  - Peter’s question had been a last admonition for her:
    - to tell the truth
    - give glory to God
    - to avoid the same fate has her husband.
- “...Yes, for so much.”
  - Sapphira clings to the agreement made with her husband to say this amount.
  - This was loyalty to her husband it was loyalty of the wrong kind.
  - She forfeited her opportunity for repentance.
  - Her “yes” was a yes to sin and also a yes to her judgment.
  - Her answer reveals Satan is at work in her as well.

#### Verses 9-11

- “But Peter said to her..”
  - Ananias and Sapphira had conspired together.
  - By carrying out their agreement they have deliberately tempted the Lord’s Spirit.
- “...the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door...”
  - Only a moment before her own death, Sapphira learns that her husband is already buried.
  - Her death followed instantly.
  - The first two hypocrites in the early Christians church were buried side by side.
- QUESTION: What did the death of Sapphira cause?
  - Great fear!
  - As it was with the death of Ananias, great fear came upon the whole church at Sapphira’s death.
- QUESTION: What power was Peter exercising when he announced the judgment of God upon Ananias and Sapphira? (Hint: this power is still seen in the church today.)
  - The binding power of the keys.
  - The death of Ananias and Sapphira is a sign of God’s judgment.
  - In this sign we see what we believe concerning the Office of the Keys:
    - Jesus commanded His ministers; “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

***Terms***

***Catechesis Summary***

- The story of Ananias and Sapphira is the story of how hypocrites and false Christians are often found within the external communion of the Church.
- Where there are true Christians who believe the Gospel there will also be false Christians who do not.
- The deceit of Ananias and of Sapphira serve as a warning, a cause for repentance for the entire New Testament Church that extend to today.
- The first danger to the church came from the outside when the Sanhedrin struck at Peter and John.
- Now follows the second attack of Satan from within the sacred circle of the congregation itself: the true of two disciples, actually two hypocrites are unmasked.
- Barnabas, sold land and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles to be used for the needy.
- Ananias and Sapphira do the same, but in reality, it’s the absolute opposite.
- God’s attitude toward all hypocrites in the church is recorded whether His judgment strikes them at once or is delayed for a time.
- The death of Ananias and Sapphira is a sign of God’s judgment.
- In this sign we see what we believe concerning the Office of the Keys:
  - Jesus commanded His ministers; “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”
- In this lesson the veil is lifted so that we see what faith believes concerning the power to forgive sin and the power to retain sin.

***Learn by Heart Catechism Connection***

- The Catechism teaches: “When the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, in particular when they exclude openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation and absolve those who repent of their sins and want to do better, this is just as valid and certain, even in heaven, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself.”