

SIN IN THE CHURCH

ACTS 5

Intro. The early church in Jerusalem was growing. The membership numbered several thousand. The same boldness which characterized Peter's sermon on Pentecost marked the kind of preaching that the apostles were doing in Jerusalem. Acts 4:32 describes the unity the early church had. Luke mentions Barnabas as an example of many who sold their lands to support the poor among them (4:36-37). If the story had ended there; it would have been encouraging for Christians of all ages. Chapter 5 reveals to us that there were some black sheep in the family of the early church. Ananias and Sapphira were a striking case of insincerity and hypocrisy. Acts 5 also reveals to us the persecution and boldness of the early church.

I. Ananias and Sapphira.

- A. All we know of this unfortunate couple is recorded in this paragraph.
- B. They sold a possession of land with the intent of giving part of the proceeds to the apostles.
 - 1. They retained a portion of the money (kept back—set apart for oneself).
 - 2. They turned the remainder over to the apostles, under the pretext that this amount represented the whole amount they received for their property.
 - 3. McGarvey stated, "their act was a compromise between two holy desires."
 - a. "The desire to have the praise of men, such as had been bestowed on Barnabas and some others, prompted the sale and the gift."
 - b. "The love of money, which still held too strong a hold on them, prompted the retention of a part while they were pretending to give all."

II. Peter's Rebuke...

- A. The problem was that Peter was aware of this dishonesty (by inspiration).
- B. "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie..."
 - 1. This is a common fact, always true when men sin.
 - a. God does not tempt men to sin (James 1:13), but they sin when enticed and drawn away through their own lust.
 - b. Satan is the originator of sin, and the father of lies (John 8:44).
 - c. When any one sins, whatever the nature of the sin may be, he is directly or indirectly under Satanic influence.
 - 2. Filled your heart is biblical language for planted the thought in your mind.
 - a. A man's "heart" or "mind" is "full" of a thing when he is "intent on it"; when he is strongly "impelled to it"; or when he is fully occupied with it.
 - b. The expression means that he was "strongly impelled" or "excited" by Satan to this crime.
 - 3. Satan evidently has the power to put ideas, desires, motives and purposes into the hearts of people.
 - 4. We may not be able to keep Satan from putting evil ideas and desires into our hearts, but we can keep from entertaining them there, allowing them to take root and grow and influence us.
 - 5. In verse four, we are told that Ananias conceived this thing in his heart.
 - 6. We can conclude from this that we are responsible for allowing these desires to stay in our heart until they grow to the point of controlling us and causing us to sin.
- C. While it remained... (v.4).
 - 1. Before they sold it they could do with it what they wanted.
 - 2. Passage shows that there was no obligations imposed upon the early Christians to sell all their property and pool their resources together in a common fund.
 - 3. Those who sold their property or good, did so on a voluntary basis.
 - 4. This sort of arrangement was not intended to be permanent in the church.
 - 5. You still have that privilege today.

- D. In Thine Own Power. . .
 1. Even after it was sold, they were still free to do with the money as they wised.
 2. Put it in the bank, saved it for old age pension, any number of things that were right.
 3. He could have saved part and given part, as long as it was represented accurately.
 4. There was no excuse for this particular sin.
 5. It was within his power to make the right decision.
 - E. Sin of lying. (5:3,5,9)
 1. Lied to Holy Ghost
 2. Lied to God – It is not your main and chief offense that you have attempted to deceive men... you have attempted to deceive God. Lied *not only* to man, but *also* to God!
 3. They tempted the Spirit of the Lord, i.e. try the Spirit of the Lord to see whether he could detect their hypocrisy.
 4. What about us today?
 - a. Any attempt to deliberately deceive or mislead is a lie.
 - b. Lying is sinful
 - (1) Eph. 4:25
 - (2) Prov. 6;16,17,19
 - (3) Rev. 21:8,27
 - c. Young and old alike need to learn this lesson.
 - F. Sapphira repeated the same mistake as her husband some hours earlier. (5:7-10)
 1. The two of them had agreed together.
 2. They had tempted the spirit of the Lord. (i.e. to put it to the proof whether the Holy Spirit, ruling in the apostles, could be deceived).
 - G. Result.
 1. Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives.
 2. Give up the ghost is a medical term for “to expire, to breathe out one’s life.”
 3. Acts 5:11-14
 - H. Look at the response of the church... (v.11, 14) [Church discipline]
- III. The apostles arrested again (Acts 5:18).
- A. Angel released them and instructed them to go continue to preach God’s word.
 - B. Questioned (v.28)
 1. (4:17,18,21)
 2. Tribute to the zeal and faithfulness of the apostles, tho not intended as such.
 3. To “bring one’s blood on another” is a phrase that signifies to accuse him of being guilty of murdering an innocent man.
 4. Notice that they do not mention Christ (this name, this man’s blood).
 - C. We ought to obey God.
 1. A Prince ((source from which life and salvation flow) and Savior (deliverer, preserver).
 2. Repentance and forgiveness of sins.
 - a. God grants repentance by giving men the opportunity to repent. Act of man’s will.
 - b. Forgiveness (Acts 2:38, 3:19)
 3. Holy Spirit
 - a. Context indicates baptism of the H/S from Pentecost.
 - b. Peter is saying that the preaching of the apostles has been credentialed.
 - c. They have been obeying God rather than you men.
 4. The leaders were ready to kill the apostles.
 - D. Gamaliel
 1. He wanted to use calm and reasoning to help them not do anything hastily.
 2. Gave two examples
 3. His advice concerning the apostles.

- a. Let time take care of it.
 - b. If from men, they will be overthrown.
 - c. If from God, we will not be able to overthrow.
 - d. Some say Gamaliel's word suggests *"I really think it is of men. But suppose for the sake of argument it is of God. It would be hopeless to be found fighting against God. You'd only lose!"*
4. They listened to Gamaliel.
 5. They beat the apostles and let them go. {Notice the name of Jesus is mentioned!}
 - a. Did not file a lawsuit, or call in the ACLU.
 - b. They REJOICED!!!
 6. Continued teaching and preaching everyday
 - a. Publicly
 - b. House to house.
 - c. Kind of evangelism we need today.
 - d. We need to preach and teach Christ (II Tim. 4:2; I Cor. 2:2; Acts 8:35)

Con:

The conduct of mankind is likely to be much more wholesome when we realize the God of the universe sees and hears and knows all that goes on. Even their thoughts and motives. If God knew what they were doing and planning, he knows the same about our secrets as well (Psalm 139). This act of church discipline caused the church to grow. The apostles loved their Master. They loved their work. What a wonderful chapter! Starts out with problems, but ends with the zeal and boldness of the apostles preaching Christ and Him crucified.