

Acts Chapter Five

Acts 5:1-6

But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all who heard of it. And the young men arose and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

The Portion they kept for themselves:

- Remember, the story of Ananias and Sapphira is set in the context of: "...the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own; but all things were common property to them." (undivided, holy, submitted)
- Early community of the church functioned like the Temple. They walked in the fear of the Lord and holiness (Priests would drop dead if they were defiled in the Holy of Holies).
- Barbabas had been recognized for his giving. Perhaps they were seeking recognition themselves. (Acts 4:36-37)
- This is when sin entered the church. This story is similar to the OT story of Achan. In both—an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.
- Ananias and Sapphira appeared outwardly to give all---but kept some back for themselves. Their crime was not withholding money. It was theirs to use, but they deceptively implied they had given all.
- Sin of hypocrisy: pretender (5273 hupokrites)=what they use to call a stage player who acted under a mask impersonating a character. A counterfeit; a man who assumes and speaks or acts under a feigned character.
- The sin was deception and lying---birthed from greed and pride.

They brought a portion. (Kept back=nosphizomai=to misappropriate—same word used in story of Achan—Josh 7:21). Husband and wife agree in collusion.

Matthew 6:24—You cannot serve God and mammon.

If we give our heart to God—we are not allowed to divide it and keep back a portion for ourselves. It is ours before we gave it to Him, but when we give it to Him, He gets it all (He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us—James 4:5)

Hypocrites deny themselves in one thing while serving themselves in another.

Why has satan filled your heart:

- Peter is given a word of knowledge. He recognizes satan at work (remember when Jesus recognized satan at work in Peter and rebukes him—Matt 16:23)
- Conceived this deed in your heart—how the father of lies gains access and fruit ('filled your heart'—indicates this process has reached completion). If you are in Christ, He wants all your heart, soul, mind and strength. (John 8:31-47, James 1:13-16)
- They are being intimate-and taking their direction from satan instead of the Holy Spirit.
- We are so exposed to lies in our culture that they go unnoticed much of the time. The condition of the early church was a high level of integrity.

You have not lied to men but to God:

- Galatians 6:7 God is not mocked
- Lying is the opposite of the gift of tongues—one uses the tongue to access heaven, the other is accessed by hell.
- Rev 21:8—liars have no part in the Kingdom of God
- Shows that the Holy Spirit is God—triune
- It takes integrity (wholeness) to stand in persecution. Ananias and Sapphira had breached the integrity of the church.

Swift Judgment: no time to repent

- II Samuel 6:6-9
- Holiness taken seriously in OT—Lev 10 (2 sons of Aaron)—Josh 7 (Achan takes forbidden items)—II Chron 26 (King Uzziah violates sanctuary)

To invoke the name of Jesus—rely on the Holy Spirit—is to claim to be the Temple of God. This is bound to have consequences.

Dr. J. Edwin Orr:

"Revival is like Judgment Day—where God deal with sin in radical ways."

Acts 5:7-11

Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price. "Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out *as well*." And she fell immediately at his feet, and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.

- Agreed to 'put the Spirit to the test'—Ps 78:40-41, Heb 3, Ex 17:7
- Sapphira was a willing participant in the sin—she and husband were in agreement. If one submits to the idea of the other, it is sin (remember Adam and Eve).
- Shared same sin and same outcome
- In Joshua—the people execute God's judgment toward Achan. In Acts, God did it Himself.
- Sapphira='beautiful'—in Aramaic (she had been given much). Ananias='God is gracious'—in Hebrew (he was given much). God had desired goodness for them.

Great fear came upon the whole church:

- This is the first time that the word, 'church' is used—ekklesia: the congregation of the Lord; called out ones. This word had been used for calling Greek citizens from their homes to the public assembly for civic purposes. This word is used to describe people and not a building.

Acts 5:12-16

And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*; to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets, and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. And also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits; and they were all being healed.

Result: Many signs and wonders—all with one accord—people don't dare associate with them (apostasy)—church held in high esteem—multiplication of believers—authority to bring healing and deliverance.

- Acts 4:30—they had prayed for signs and wonders
- Being in one accord is miraculous
- Fear of association—the death of Ananias and Sapphira would bring to an end any casual association with the church.
- Multiplication of believers—added to 'Him'—more than to a church or movement.
- The level of purity called for in the church probably corresponds to the level of spiritual power they were experiencing.

Gathered at Solomon's Porch—part of the extended property/compound of the Temple grounds.

This is the first time that the work begins to travel outside of boundaries of Jerusalem.

Acts 5:17-20

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy; and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail. But an angel of the Lord during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, "Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."

- High Priest/Sadducees filled with jealousy (James 3 connects this with demonic)
- Laid hands on apostles—put in jail—set free/not for safety, but to preach
- Sadducees put them in prison—they don't believe in angels
- Angels are ministering spirits—sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation—Heb 1:14
- Angel gives them their next assignment.

Not always miraculous deliverances:

Matthew—beheaded

Mark—died being drug through streets of Alexandria

Luke—hung from olive tree in Greece

John—natural death after a failed attempt to boil him in oil

Peter—crucified upside down in Rome

James—beheaded

Phillip—hanged

Bartholomew—whipped/beaten to death

Andrew—crucified—preached at top of his voice to his persecutors

Thomas—run through with a spear

Paul—beheaded in Rome

Matthias and Barnabas—stoned and beheaded

Jude—arrows

James the less—thrown from cliff/ beaten with clubs

Acts 5:21-23

And upon hearing *this*, they entered into the temple about daybreak, and *began* to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates had come, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent *orders* to the prison house for them to be brought. But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned, and reported back, saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside."

- Paul—later—remains in jail for two years.
- Officers must be wondering at this point what they are up against.

Acts 5:24-32

Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. But someone came and reported to them, "Behold, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, lest they should be stoned). And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is* the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

- Charge: "You have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching"—an indication that stage one of presentation of gospel is almost complete—Acts 1:8—next step: Judea and Samaria

- "You intend to bring this man's blood on us" (they refuse to acknowledge His identity)—they had previously cried "His blood be on our heads"(Matt 27:25)
- Peter's response: must obey God rather than men)—act of submission rather than rebellion.
- Strict orders given to apostles were in conflict with assignment from the Lord.
- Believers are commanded to obey civil authorities except when it is in violation/conflict with the commands of the Lord.
- Begins with: "God of our fathers"—Peter still identifies himself as a Jew. Early church did not break fellowship with Jews—but existed as a fellowship within Judaism.

Peter's Message

- Man's guilt
- Jesus' death
- His resurrection
- Man's responsibility to respond—repent—receive forgiveness

Acts 5:33-39

But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and were intending to slay them. But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. And he was slain; and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. "After this man Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away *some* people after him, he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. "And so in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action should be of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

- Cut to the quick—furious anger—being sawn asunder in their heart
- Intending to slay them—escalation from threats to violence

Gamaliel:

- Known as one of the greatest rabbis (rabban) of all time (rabban=our teacher, rab=teacher, rabbi=my teacher)
- Two famous teachers prior to Jesus: Shammai (hardline/legalist), Hillel (make room for heart change).
- Gamaliel is a follower of Hillel—was his grandson
- He was the teacher of Saul of Tarsus—Acts 22:3
- He took a wait and see attitude when there was already enough evidence
- Question: Is movement from God or human initiative?
- Jesus faced similar question—Luke 20:1-7

Believers were not moving in Temple sanctioned activity—thus becoming a threat. Israel was used to salvation and forgiveness coming through Temple sacrifice.

Acts 5:40-42

And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

- Flogged—probably 39 lashes—would strip the skin off their backs
- Response: rejoicing to be considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.
- Operated as a large gathering and house to house.
- Until now—heaven and earth had overlapped at the Temple. Now it overlaps in the people of God.

Acts Chapter Five—Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read Genesis chapter 3.

Dig:

- 1) From Acts 2-5, what are the financial components addressed at the birth of the church?
- 2) What aspects of these components are over-arching principles, and what lies within the realm of choice? Why?
- 3) Why are Ananias and Sapphira accused of lying to the Holy Spirit?
- 4) Consider their immediate punishment. What is the lesson for us?
- 5) Consider Acts 2:43, 5:5, and 5:11----what effect does this have on the church?
- 6) Before this event, what evidence of sin shows up in the church?
- 7) After this event, what evidence of sin shows up in the church?
- 8) What set Ananias and Sapphira up to take this action? What does scripture say? What might be a good guess in this context?
- 9) What names for God are used in chapter five?

10) Who led revolts in Israel that came to nothing?

11) What is the difference between preaching and teaching (vs 42)?

Discuss:

- 1) What effect do "signs and wonders" have among the lost? Among believers? (Acts 5:12-16)

- 2) What is the 'root' of jealousy? What causes it to develop in someone's heart?

- 3) What kind of spiritual climate does jealousy create? (Ja 3:13-18, Ja 4:1-6)

- 4) What are the benefits of having 'great fear' come upon the whole church?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for the church to learn to live in the 'Fear of the Lord'.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) In the OT, the Father is 'tested'. In the NT, Jesus is 'tested'. Now in Acts the Holy Spirit is 'tested'. How do YOU put the Lord to the test? (read Exodus 17:7)

- 2) Is there anyplace in your life where vs 29 becomes YOUR directive?

- 3) Did you tell lies as a child? What were the consequences in your family for telling a lie?
- 4) Do any of your children lie? What are the consequences for lying at your house?

- 5) Do we allow some people to lie to us and not others? Who? When? Why?

- 6) Is breaking a promise the same as lying?

- 7) Name a Christian leader today that has the wisdom and influence to unite the church.

- 8) If a law is written that you believe is unbiblical—what are you willing to do?