

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 18

I. Exposition of Chapter Five.

A. Ananias and Sapphira.

1. Verses 1-2 – The deception of Ananias and Sapphira.

- a. It's important to remember that the chapter divisions are not always done well. Here we see that this account is connected to **4:32-37**. The fact that **verse 1** starts off with the word **“but”** confirms this.
- b. The context, therefore, is that of the generosity of Barnabas who sold some land and gave the proceeds to the apostles for distribution to the believers in need. Several expositors suggest that Ananias and Sapphira were competing with Barnabas and wanted to be recognized as he was for his generous gift. Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“With the example of Barnabas the Encourager before them, two members of the believing community conspired to get for themselves the same kind of attention given to him.”¹

- c. **Verse 2 – “And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostle’s feet.”**

- 1) **“...he kept back part of the proceeds...”** – The words **“kept back”** actually mean; **“to misappropriate funds for one’s own benefit—to misappropriate funds for oneself, to embezzle”²** This is one word in the Greek and is only found one other time in **Titus 2:10** pertaining to slaves stealing from their masters. (Translated **“pilfering”** in the New King James).

- 2) Clearly the Lord considered this to be stealing.

2. Verses 3-4 – Peter receives a revelation from the Lord.

- a. **Verse 3 – “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?’”**

- 1) It seems apparent that Peter knew of this through what is commonly referred to as a **“word of knowledge.”** (cf. **I Corinthians 12:7-8**). A word of knowledge is typically defined something like, **“a supernatural revelation of knowledge, given by the Holy Spirit, about people, places or events which would not be known otherwise.”**

- 2) **“...Satan filled your heart...”** – This is the first of only two times Satan is mentioned in the book of Acts (cf. **26:18**).

- a) The name **“Satan”** means literally **“adversary”³**

“Satan had failed completely in his attempt to silence the witness of the church. However, the enemy never gives up; he simply changes his strategy. His first approach had been to attack the church from the outside, hoping that arrest and threats would frighten the leaders. When that failed, Satan decided to attack the church *from the inside* and use people who were a part of the fellowship. We must face the fact that Satan is a clever foe. If he does not succeed as the ‘devouring lion’ (1 Peter 5:8), then he attacks again as the ‘deceiving serpent’ or an ‘angel of light’ (2 Cor. 11:3, 13–14). Satan is both a murderer and a liar (John 8:44), and the church must be prepared for both attacks.”⁴

- 3) **“...to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?”** – The primary sin seems to be that they lied – not to men, but to the Holy Spirit or, to God! (cf. **verse 4**).

- b. **Verse 4 – “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”**

- 1) We see from this that they are held responsible for their actions. Even though Satan was involved, they couldn’t blame Satan. What they did, they did voluntarily. They didn’t have to sell the land. In selling it, they didn’t have to give all the proceeds, but the sin was in the lying about it which made it theft. Dr. Horton states the following:

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 116.

²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 584.

³Ibid., 829.

⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 420.

“They could have submitted to God and resisted Satan (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). But they let pride, self, and the love of money possess them. The love of money is ‘a root of all kinds of evil’ (1 Tim. 6:10; cf. Heb. 13:5). That is, once the love of money takes possession of a person, there is no evil that he cannot or will not do. With the love of money in control, a person will do things he never would do otherwise, including murder and every other sin. It is clear also that if a person is filled with the love of money he cannot love God (Matt. 6:24)”⁵

3. Verses 5-11 - The Death of Ananias and Sapphira.

- a. Some scholars attempt to attribute the death of Ananias to having been shocked into a heart attack when he was confronted by Peter. The fact is, this was Divine judgment and not a natural death at all. Richard Longenecker points out concerning the words **“breathed his last”** (v. 5) that it is used **“...in the NT only in contexts where someone is struck down by divine judgment (Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23).”⁶**
- b. Some may wonder why God judged them in such a severe way. Warren Wiersbe suggests the following:

“It is worth noting that the Lord judges sin severely at the beginning of a new period in salvation history. Just after the tabernacle was erected, God killed Nadab and Abihu for trying to present ‘false fire’ to the Lord (Lev. 10). He also had Achan killed for disobeying orders after Israel had entered the Promised Land (Josh. 7). While God was certainly not responsible for their sins, He did use these judgments as warnings to the people, and even to us (1 Cor. 10:11–12).”⁷

- c. **Verse 11 – “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”** (cf. v. 5) – There is a godly kind of fear that needs to be a part of the Christian’s life. It includes having an awe and reverence for God. It also will include being afraid of God if we know we’re deliberately committing sin. (cf. **Deuteronomy 6:1-2; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 15:33; Acts 9:31; Hebrews 12:28**).

“The result was a wave of godly fear that swept over the church and over all those who heard the story (Acts 5:11). We have moved from ‘great power’ and ‘great grace’ (Acts 4:33) to ‘great fear,’ and all of these ought to be present in the church. “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28–29).”⁸

B. The Church continues in the Power of God.

1. **Verse 12 – “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.”**

- a. Note the fact that there was a continuation of **“...many signs and wonders...”** was an answer to the believer’s prayer as seen in **4:30**.

“The healing of the lame man in 3:1–10 is not the only miracle they experience but instead the only one Luke has written about thus far. We learn here that there were “many signs and wonders among the people,” in keeping with their prayer of 4:30. In fact, as we will see in 5:15–16, such miracles seem to have been a fairly regular experience.”⁹

- b. Jesus promised His disciples that these **“...signs will follow those who believe...”** and that these things would **“...confirming the word...”** (**Mark 16:15-20**). The purpose of these signs and wonders were for God to confirm the message of the Gospel being preached. They were also to demonstrate God’s love and mercy and His authority over the kingdom of Satan, which certainly are part of the message of the Gospel.
- c. **“And they were all with one accord...”** – There was a unity amongst the believers which was so important for the furtherance of the Gospel and the power of God to continue. (cf. **1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24**. Also see **Psalm 133:1-3**).

⁵Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 118.

⁶Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 110.

⁷Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 422.

⁸*Ibid.*, 422–423.

⁹Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 102.