

THE DEATH OF ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA

TEXT: ACTS 5:1-14

INTRODUCTION:

1. We know from the Bible and from experience that after enjoying a season of great blessings and spiritual victories, the devil will soon show up.
2. After Elijah's great victory over the prophets of Baal, wicked Queen Jezebel put him to flight (I Kings 19:1-3).
3. In the first four chapters of the book of Acts, we see great things happening (cf. Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4).
4. In the end of chapter 4 we are introduced to Barnabas, who went on to become the apostle Paul's first missionary partner.
5. His name means "The son of consolation (or exhortation)" (4:36). He was a great encourager. And he was very generous. Barnabas had given a large sum of money to the church (4:36, 37).
6. W. Graham Scroggie said, "Never, when the heart has been open, has the pocket been closed. The great generosity of these Christians issued from their '*great grace*' (4:33)" (*The Acts of the Apostles*).
7. "Great power" accompanies "great grace" (4:33). God was really blessing, and then chapter 5 begins with the word, "But..."
8. In chapter 4, the devil attacked the church from without (4:1-3). In chapter 5 we see how the devil attacked the church from within.
9. The devil got into the early church, and the people he used were a couple of regular church members by the names of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1). But God intervened and protected the apostolic church by exposing and removing Ananias and Sapphira.

I. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

1. Hebrews 3:13 refers to the deceitfulness of sin. Way back in the Garden of Eden we see how the devil deceived Eve.
2. And ever since then the devil has been successfully blinding the minds of sinners (cf. II Cor. 4:3, 4).
3. We see here in Acts 5 that Satan led Ananias and Sapphira "to lie to the Holy Ghost" (5:3). This means they lied to God because the Holy Ghost is God (5:4b).
4. Let me emphasize that there was nothing wrong with the fact that they kept back part of the money. It was their money. If they wanted to keep back part of it, that was their prerogative.

5. The property had been theirs and they had the right to do whatever they wanted with the money (after paying their tithe, of course).
6. Their problem was that they lied about it (5:1-10). This was their great sin, and this was what brought down the swift judgment of God.
7. They said they were giving all when actually they were keeping part of it for themselves. They sinned against the Holy Spirit in pretending to a state of devotedness that they did not genuinely possess.
8. Ananias and Sapphira were singing "I Surrender All," but they were lying. They were hypocrites. Hypocrisy is always wicked, but it is worse when it shows up in a church.
9. Ananias and Sapphira wanted others to think they were very generous and very spiritual (like Barnabas) but they were just pretending, so God killed them.
10. Can you imagine if God was to strike dead all the religious deceivers and hypocrites in our churches today?
11. Harry Ironside said, "If the Spirit of God were working in that way today, what a lot of work there would be for the undertakers! There would not be enough of them in any of our cities to bury those who dropped dead!"
12. Many come up to the altar on Sunday morning but by Monday morning they go back to their worldly ways.
13. I hate to sound unkind, but some Baptists come to the altar to pray like Roman Catholics go into their confessional booths.
14. We need to be honest with God, and if we haven't been real, we need to get right with God. And if we haven't been genuine, we need to get that right today.
15. The Bible teaches church discipline (Matthew 18; I Cor. 5). What we have here in Acts 5 is a case of instant church discipline.
16. Ananias and Sapphira's sin brought down the swift judgment of God.

II. THE SWIFT JUDGMENT OF GOD

1. Every now and then I will hear some one say they like the God of the New Testament, but they do not like the God of the Old Testament.
2. When people talk like that it is obvious they do not know the Bible very well. We should remember that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the LORD, I change not."
3. The story of Ananias and Sapphira is in the New Testament. God judged Ananias and Sapphira. God killed Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5-11), and God could do the same thing today if He wanted to.

4. We read in the Old Testament that God killed all the people in Noah's day, except for Noah and his family.
5. God killed all the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, except for Lot and his family. Lot's wife disobeyed God and He turned her into a pillar of salt.
6. God killed Nadab and Abihu. And God killed Korah and Dathan and Abiram. God opened up the earth and sent them right down to hell, just like he recently did to that fellow in Tampa, Florida.
7. God killed Achan and his entire family, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. "And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones" (Joshua 7:25).
8. God killed Uzzah for touching the ark of God.
9. God killed Judah's son Onan for practicing birth control (Genesis 38:8-10).
10. The LORD had already killed Onan's older brother Er. Genesis 38:7 says, "And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him."
11. And God killed Nabal, Abigail's husband; and God killed King Saul, and many other sinners.
12. Isaiah 37:36 says, "Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." That's a lot of dead soldiers that God killed in one night.
13. And God killed Ananias and Sapphira. God does not play around with sin. God deals with sin.
14. God wants a pure church, a holy church, a clean church, an honest church. Ananias and Sapphira allowed the devil to trip them up (5:3). And this brought down the swift judgment of God.
15. Ezekiel 18:4 says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."
16. Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

III. THE BLESSINGS THAT FOLLOWED (5:11)

1. This was a shocking example of the judgment of God – two dead bodies being carried out of the church building and buried outside (Acts 5:9, 10).

2. It was a shocking experience, but look at the good that followed – "great fear came on all them that heard these things" (5:5, 11).
3. This fear of God is sadly missing today. There are many church people who lie, and steal, and gossip, and commit adultery, and look at pornography, and skip church services, and drink and smoke, and live just like devils. Then we wonder why more people don't come to church, and why more people are not getting saved.
4. The purity of the church was preserved. Normally, God blesses a church by addition, but sometimes He blesses by subtraction.
5. Scroggie said, "The outflow of judgment may be a preparation for the inflow of grace" (*The Acts of the Apostles*).
6. God had to cut out the cancer, and new power was experienced by the apostles (5:12). The church grew and prospered (5:13, 14).
7. Back then there was a clear line of demarcation between the saved and the unsaved, between the holy and the unholy, between those who believed in Jesus and those who rejected Jesus.
8. The believers "were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (5:12, 13).
9. It is better that way. We want to reach everyone with the Gospel, but if sinners will not repent and get right with God they should not join the church. Churches that open their membership to unsaved people cannot expect God's favor.
10. Men were filled with fear because of what happened to Ananias and Sapphira, and so they thought carefully about joining the church. It's not that way today. Worldly people join worldly churches and this hurts the cause of Christ.

CONCLUSION:

1. In his book, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*, A.T. Pierson states that judgments like what happened to Ananias and Sapphira are rare, but nevertheless do occur from time to time, and he mentions a few examples.
2. Charles Wesley was preaching revival meetings in Cornwall, England when a country squire named Eustick drove a pack of hounds right through the congregation in an effort to break up the meeting and drive the people away.
3. The people regrouped and met in another location, and Wesley said at the end of the meeting, "The man who has this day troubled you shall trouble you no more forever."
4. Shortly afterward Eustick died in a state of raving madness.

5. A.T. Pierson gave several other examples.
6. I have seen this myself from time to time. A former member caused me great grief. He transferred to another Baptist church where he got involved in an adulterous relationship with a young lady in that church.
7. He was gambling at a slot machine in Atlantic City and God struck him down dead.