

Acts 5: Ananias and Sapphira (Church Discipline)

- The church was growing and united –Satan could not tolerate this.
 - His goal: Divide it / Disgrace it / Decrease it
 - Ch.4 thru outside persecution / Ch. 5 from within the church
- People were selling lands in order to help those who were in need
 - Ananias / Sapphira did this and kept back part of the price
 - Hypocrite: “one who acts a part” (deliberate deception).
 - Their love of praise collided with their love of money (1 Tim.6.10)
 - They lied: “Sin has many tools, but a lie is a handle that fits them all.”
- God knows the hearts of all men (Heb.4.13; Mark 2.8)
- Ananias—“you conceived this deed in your heart (V.4)
 - Satan tempted but Ananias acted! He was responsible for his actions
 - He lied not only to men but more importantly to God.
- What was the sin?
 - “While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?”
 - “And after it was sold, was it not under your control?”
 - He did not have to sell it; He did not have to give all the proceeds;
 - He/She said that they gave it all but kept back part of it. (Lied).
 - He fell over dead (Peter was probably as surprised as Ananias!
- Reaction of the people: Great fear came over all who heard it.
 - See Lev. 10; 2 Samuel 6; Acts 12; Joshua 7.1.
- Sapphira came in 3 hours later (Partner in the conspiracy)
 - “Tell me whether you sold the land?”
 - She had a chance to repent and tell the truth—she didn’t.
- “Why have you put God to the test?”
 - Test/tempt: “to check up on God; too see how far He will go:”
 - Matthew 4.7: Jesus said, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”
- If their deception had succeeded, the reliability and authority of the Spirit-led apostles would have been thrown into question and the church would have been left without effective leadership.
 - Galatians 6.7: You cannot make a fool of God!
 - “Great fear came upon all the church.”
 - The church grew as a result (V.12-16). “Believers were multiplied both men and women”
- *More Persecution:* (V.17-42). Apostles were cast into prison.
 - An angel released them from prison; Go teach in the temple!
 - They were arrested again the next morning; they did not resist.
 - God can use them in prison or out of prison.
- *The Trial:* (V.27-32). He stood before the Council (Sanhedrin) 71 men composed Sanhedrin.
 - “We must obey God rather than men.”
 - “We are witnesses of these things.”
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- *Gamaliel's Advice: (V.33-39).*
 - The Sanhedrin was “cut to the heart” Kill them!
 - Pharisees: were ultra conservatives; they had no political ambitions; they believed in spirits and angels; they believed in the resurrection of the dead; (Acts 23.8).
 - Some Pharisees became Christians (Acts 15.5; 23.6).
 - They considered the traditions of men equally as binding as the commandments of God (Matthew 15. 1-9).
 - Leave the apostles alone: if it is of men, it will die out; but if it is of God, then we can't fight against it. It would succeed in spite of their efforts.
 - God providentially used Gamaliel to preserve the lives of the apostles.
- *The Flogging and Release of the Apostles (V.40-42).*
 - They were whipped with strips of leather and on the tips were pieces of bone or metal.
 - The Law allowed up to 40 strokes (Deut. 25.1-3)
 - One executioner did the beating and the other counted the strokes (could not go over 40 strokes. For each one over 40, the executioner was beaten himself.
 - If this bloody beating was successful, then the church would cease to exist.
 - The apostles went on their way rejoicing! What would you have done?
 - Considered worthy to suffer for His name (Matt.5.10-12).
 - Peter's past, he would have struck back (Matt.26.51). Jesus had changed him!
- ***Lessons for Us:***
 - Church discipline: sin in the church hurts the cause of Christ; See 1 Cor.5; 2 Thess. 3.6;
 - Our motives must be pure—God knows our hearts
 - Sin is serious business: Achan in Joshua 7; Acts 5; James 1.14,15;
 - We must obey God rather than men. (Romans 13).
 - One cannot rob God and get away with it. (Malachai 3.8).
 - The value of trials—“tested by fire:” (1 Peter 1.6; 4.12). Strengthened!
 - \$10,000 example: We are given \$10,00 to spend on suffering
 - Some Christians are called to lay down the entire \$10,000 at one time as they sacrifice their lives for Christ.
 - For many of us, it is a matter of laying down one dollar at a time
 - We protest when a co-worker uses God's name in vain
 - We stand up for someone who is being mistreated
 - We refuse to go along with immorality, dishonesty and we are ridiculed.
 - In the end, it all adds up to the same thing! (2 Tim.3.12).