

# “Ananias And Sapphira”

## Acts 5:1-21a

Message by Michael J. Barnard

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**Teaching Aim:** To examine the circumstances surrounding the sudden and unexpected deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. To realize the terror that came upon the early church with this demonstration of God’s justice. To recognize Christians today have come to not only expect the grace and mercy of God, but also to demand it. To understand God always reserves the right to have mercy on whom He will and to have justice on others; God is God, He is sovereign!

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)**

#### **Part I: The unexpected deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)**

1. As we come to **Acts chapter 5**, we mustn’t forget how **chapter 4** ended. Luke used the opportunity of **Acts 4:36-37** to introduce Barnabas as a great example of a generous and loving Christian who sold his property and gave the proceeds to the church. As we come to **Acts 5:1-11**, we come to the story of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple who presented a financial gift to the church but tested the Holy Spirit of God. The two were struck dead on the spot. What characteristics of Barnabas would like to imitate in your life?
2. What do we find Ananias and Sapphira doing in **verse 1**? Was there anything wrong in them giving a gift (**vs. 2**)? John MacArthur writes, *“This was not a sin in and of itself. However, they had promised, perhaps publicly that they were giving the full amount received to the Lord. Their outward sin was lying about how much they were giving to the church, but the deeper, more devastating sin was their spiritual hypocrisy based on selfishness.”* Have you ever been guilty promising the Lord and doing something else? If so, when?
3. According to **verse 3**, who inspired Satan to lie to the Holy Spirit (**vs. 3**)? At this point only Ananias entered the room to talk with the apostles and present his gift. How does Luke use the examples of Barnabas and Ananias to contrast one another? Have you noticed that Satan usually attacks disguised as an angel of light? (See **2 Cor. 11:14-15**) How was this the case in the gift from Ananias and Sapphira? If the big issue wasn’t the money, what was it (**vs. 4**)? How do you see the truth of **1 Pet. 5:8** at work in this story?
4. What unexpected event surprised everyone in the room (**vs. 5**)? What was the response when people heard what happened? When we say God is holy, what do we mean?

5. Why did the young men carry Ananias out immediately bury him? (See **Deut. 21:22-23**) How long was it before Sapphira came wandering into the room, possibly looking for her husband Ananias (**vv. 7-8**)? What question did Peter ask Sapphira? What was her answer? Peter had already witnessed one death; how did he respond when Sapphira answered his question? Note: This time it was no surprise, her death was the justice of God (**vs. 10**).
  
6. How did members of the early church react to the death of Ananias and Sapphira (**vs. 11**)? It is important to remember that the God of the Old Testament is also the God of the New Testament. Note: This is the first instance of the Greek word "*ekklesia*" or "*church*" being used in the Book of Acts. What is the meaning of the word *ekklesia*? (Hint: Search online)
  
7. How many examples can you think of in the Old Testament where God's justice was delivered upon an individual and they died because of their sin? (See **Lev. 10:1-8; Josh. 7:24-25; 2 Sam. 6:6-7**) Notice in each case it was at the beginning of a new era. What important principle for life can each of us learn from **1 Pet. 1:15-16**?
  
8. Did any Christians die because of their sin in the New Testament? (See **Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:27-31**) Why do most scholars believe that Ananias and Sapphira were believers (**vs. 3**)? Were those in **1 Cor. 11:27-31** also Christians? How do we know? Why are so many Christians shocked when God chooses justice instead of mercy?
  
9. As Christians, we have become so used to receiving the grace and mercy of God that we not only expect it, we demand it. We are shocked when we see the justice of God strike someone. It is important to memorize the following definitions: 1) Grace means God giving us a free gift that we don't deserve; 2) Mercy means God not giving us the punishment that we do deserve. We need to understand that God always reserves the right to have mercy on whom He wants to have mercy and justice on whom He wants to have justice; God is God, and He is sovereign. Why is it wise for Christians not to demand the justice of God? Note: Never take the grace and mercy of God for granted.

## Part II: The answer to prayer for healings along with signs and wonders (Acts 5:12-16)

1. In **Acts 4:29-30**, the apostles had prayed, *“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy Servant Jesus.”* How do we see that prayer being answered in **verse 12**? What have we already learned about Solomon’s Porch (or Colonnade)? Who else taught there? (See **John 10:23**)
2. According to **verse 13**, how did the people respond to reports of the death of Ananias and Sapphira? Does this mean that the church stopped growing, or does it mean that no insincere person dared to identify with the church and pretend to be a Christian?
3. In **verse 13**, Luke didn’t mean that no one joined the church, **verse 14** indicates that multitudes of men and women were coming to faith in Christ. We must realize, hard times separate the wheat from the tares. The immediate reaction of the church to the wrath of God was to be strengthened by it. What is the significance of women being mentioned in **verse 14**? (See Commentaries) How did Jesus view women? Why was this significant?
4. How do we see the apostle’s prayer in **Acts 4:29-30** being answered in **verse 15**? Where else do we see similar stories? (See **Matt. 9:20-22; Acts 19:11-12**) The Holy Spirit was working so powerfully around Peter that people only needed to be near him in order to be healed. **Acts chapter 5** occurred in an amazing time in church history. Wouldn’t you like to be in a time like this once again?
5. What was the purpose of the healings along with the signs and wonders? Why do we not see as many today? Note: Only three times in history do we see a flurry of miracles occurring. All three are in the Bible:
  1. During the time of Moses and Joshua (Establishment of the Old Covenant of the law).
  2. During the time of Elijah and Elisha (Establishment of the period of the prophets).
  3. During the time of Jesus and His apostles (Establishment of the New Covenant.)

6. Perhaps the greatest miracle we see today is that of the regeneration of a lost sinner. What makes this so remarkable? (See **John 3:3,5; Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 2:13-14**) What are some ways that you've changed since coming to faith in Christ? Is **2 Cor. 5:17** a commentary on your life?
  
7. Today we see many supposed faith healers working in churches and large stadiums. Sadly, many of the people they work with are hand-picked. How was the ministry of the apostles different from what we see at these staged events (**vs. 16**)? Did you notice **verse 16** says, "*those who were tormented by unclean spirits?*" Were those being tormented true believers? Can demons "*indwell*" true believers? (See **1 John 4:4**)? Can true believers be harassed or tormented by demons?

### **Part III: The miraculous delivery of the apostles from prison and their boldness for Christ (Acts 5:17-21a)**

1. Who arose filled with indignation towards the apostles? Which historical figure was this most likely? What do we find the religious leaders doing to the apostles in **verse 18**? What is another name for "*the common prison?*" (See Commentaries) What event led to the original arrest and warning to Peter and John? (See **Act chapter 3**) Sadly, the healing of more people in the name of Jesus angered the religious leaders and provoked the second arrest and trial. How was this arrest different? Who did they arrest this time?
  
2. Faith in Christ doesn't mean our problems will go away, in coming to faith we have declared war against Satan and his minions. What can we learn from Jesus in the following verses: **John 15:19-20**? What did English martyr Hugh Latimer mean when he said, "*Whenever you see persecution, there is more than a probability that truth is on the persecuted side?*"
  
3. How were the apostle delivered from prison (**vv. 19-20**). Do you find it almost humorous that the Sadducees didn't believe in angels and yet an angel of God released the apostles from prison? What command did the angel give them? Why might this be dangerous for the apostles? (See **Acts 5:33-34, 40**) Where did the apostles go following their release? Why?

4. How could you use the following three verses to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone? (See **Rom. 3:23**; **1 Cor. 15:3-4**; **John 3:16**) What two messages do we find in **John 3:36**? What is stopping you from sharing the gospel with others?

**MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- Money was not the problem with Ananias and Sapphira, lying to the Holy Spirit was.
- Christians have come to not only expect the grace and mercy of God, but also to demand it.
- Many Christians are shocked when the wrath of God flares out against sin.
- Wise people don't demand the justice of God, they might just receive it.
- If God acted in justice and not mercy, we would all be doomed to an eternity in hell.
- Grace means God giving us a free gift that we don't deserve.
- Mercy means God not giving us the punishment that we do deserve.
- God answered the apostle's prayer in **Acts 4:29-30** to heal and to do signs and wonders.
- Once released from prison, the apostles went back to the temple courts and boldly shared the gospel of Jesus Christ.