

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 4:32-37; 5:1-16

LESSON 284 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Proverbs 19:5).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 4:32-37 ³² And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

³³ And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, ³⁵ And laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

³⁶ And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

³⁷ Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:1-16 ¹ But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

² And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

³ But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

⁴ Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Unity

After their release from prison, the Apostles continued to preach the Gospel. They spoke with the boldness that was given to them when they were filled with the Holy Ghost, as they prayed. They preached about Jesus and His resurrection. They spoke with great power as they witnessed and testified. Jesus had promised that they would receive power and be witnesses after they had received the Holy Ghost (**Acts 1:8** ⁸ **But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth**).

There was a multitude of believers. One day as Peter was preaching, 3000 people believed and were baptized (**Acts 2:41** ⁴¹ **Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls**). Another time, among those who heard the Gospel, there were 5000 who believed (**Acts 4:4** ⁴ **Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand**). The believers were bound together by love and unity, for Jesus had told them to love one another (**John 15:12** ¹² **This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you**). He had prayed for His disciples that they would all be one (**John 17:21-22** ²¹ **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.** ²² **And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one**). They were of one accord and of one mind, just as Paul wrote that Christ's followers would be (**Romans 15:6** ⁶ **That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** **Philippians 1:27** ²⁷ **Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;** **2 Corinthians 13:11** ¹¹ **Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you**).

Possessions Sold

Although there is no evidence that they were told to do so, Christ's followers sold what property they had and gave the money to the Apostles. Of their own free will they did this – none were asked or compelled to do so. The believers seemed to have a great desire for spiritual possessions. Treasures in Heaven (**Matthew 6:19-21** ¹⁹ **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:** ²⁰ **But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:** ²¹ **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also**.) seemed to be more valuable to them than anything else.

in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

⁵ And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

⁶ And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

⁷ And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

⁸ And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

⁹ Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

¹⁰ Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.

¹¹ And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

¹² And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

¹³ And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

¹⁴ And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

¹⁵ Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

¹⁶ There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto

The money was not hoarded. The Apostles were generous and gave to those who were in need. The true Spirit of the Gospel is to help others, for the Bible states, "God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7). God usually does not require a person to sell his property in order to be a Christian. Although, if a person loved his possessions to the extent that they kept him from serving Do, it would be necessary to dispose of them. There is an account in the Bible of a rich young ruler whose possessions stood between him and the Lord. He asked Jesus what good thing he could do to inherit eternal life (**Matthew 19:16 ¹⁶ And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?**). He had lived a good life, loved his neighbours, and kept some of the commandments. He asked, "What lack I yet?" The young man had many possessions and he loved them more than he loved God. Jesus told him that he would have treasures in Heaven if he would sell his possessions and give to the poor. The young man was very rich and loved his money dearly. He went away grieved. His possessions hindered him from serving God (**Mark 10:22 ²² And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.**).

Spiritual Possessions

Many of Christ's followers do not have great earthly possessions, but what they do have is consecrated to the Lord for His service. They also have spiritual possessions, which can be used to be a blessing to others. One day Peter and John helped a lame man. Peter said: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." To be healed of his lameness meant much more to the lame man than money. We, too, can pray, testify, and speak words of encouragement to those who are in spiritual need. In Isaiah 41:6 we read, "They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage."

Barnabas

Among the believers who sold their possessions and gave the money to the Apostles was one who was especially mentioned. He was a man by the name of Joses, later called Barnabas by the Apostles. In the days that followed, this man was used by the Lord in a great way. He let nothing hinder him from serving the Lord. He gave himself and his talent, as well as his possessions, to God. Barnabas befriended and helped Paul when he was a new convert (**Acts 9:26-27 ²⁶ And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.**). Later Barnabas was sent to Antioch to encourage the people, for "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord" (Acts 11:24). Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary trip, and then with Mark went to Cyprus (**Acts 15:39 ³⁹ And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.**). Thus Barnabas received many blessings and was also a blessing to many other people.

Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Ananias

A man and his wife also sold their possessions but kept back a part of the money. When Ananias gave some of the money to the Apostles, he pretended that he had given all. Perhaps Ananias did not say anything. He gave the appearance of being generous and religious but his heart was deceitful. No doubt he wanted the praise of men. He wanted the money, too. Ananias could not trust God to take care of him should he give his all to the Lord. Ananias was like one who wanted to serve God and mammon at the same time (**Matthew 6:24** ²⁴ **No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon**).

Deceit

God shewed Peter that Ananias was not honest. The Lord looks on the heart and He knows the true purpose that is there. A person cannot deceive God. If he tries to deceive men, usually God reveals it to his minister, his teacher, or his parents.

Peter knew that Satan had put the suggestion into Ananias' heart, and Ananias had yielded to the temptation. If you are ever tempted to do that which is not right, you know that Satan has suggested it and tried to put it into your heart.

Peter reminded Ananias that he had not been commanded or compelled to sell his property and give the money to the Apostles. Ananias did that of his own accord. The property was his to do with as he pleased. Even after it was sold, Ananias was not required to give the money to the Apostles. It was not a sin for Ananias to give just a part of the money. Ananias sinned when he tried to deceive the Apostles. He pretended to be what he was not. His actions showed that he loved money, and that he did not trust God or His disciples. Peter said to Ananias, "Thou has not lied unto me, but unto God."

Judgment

Ananias had probably expected to be commended and praised for doing what appeared to be good. Maybe he had even planned what he would say in case he was questioned. When the time came, he was speechless. Judgment was swift to this man who planned to do this evil. Judgment was serious – but so was the sin. In Ananias' plan to cheat God, he was belittling the power of God. One does not lie to God's ministers without lying to God. This should be a warning to others always to deal honestly with God and His people.

When Ananias heard Peter's words, he dropped dead, with no chance to repent. Without anything being said to his wife, Ananias' body was prepared and taken out to be buried, as it was the custom in that place to bury immediately after death.

Sapphira

About three hours later, Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, went to the Apostles. She and her husband had agreed to misrepresent the gift of money. They had bargained in private to give a portion of their money and to say that it was the full amount.

Perhaps Sapphira, too, had expected thanks and honour; but

when Peter questioned her, she was found to share Ananias' sin and dishonour – she did not tell the truth about the money. She made no excuse and was given no time to repent. Sentence was pronounced, and death came speedily. When Peter told her what had happened to Ananias and that she, too, would die, she fell down at his feet and died. When the men returned from burying Ananias, there was the man's wife to be buried beside him.

Sudden Death

There have been other times when those who defied and broke God's law have been smitten down suddenly by the judgment of the Lord. We have read about Korah's rebellion in the days of the Children of Israel (Lesson 105). Korah and all who were in sympathy with him, as well as those who sinned with him, were destroyed. "The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, . . . They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished" (Numbers 16:32, 33). There are other accounts given in the Bible of men who were punished for their sins by sudden judgment of the Lord (**Numbers 14:37** ³⁷ **Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD. 2 Kings 1:10-12** ¹⁰ **And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.** ¹¹ **Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.** ¹² **And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty).**

However, all sinners do not drop dead suddenly; and all sudden deaths are not punishment for sin. Sometimes God's people die suddenly, too, if that is God's way to take them. But when death comes suddenly to a sinner, he has no time to pray and repent – it is too late to have his sins forgiven and to make his peace with God. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (**Ezekiel 33:11** ¹¹ **Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?**); but, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Partaker in Sin

The experience of Sapphira should caution us. She did not go with Ananias to give the money, and thus take an active part in his sin. Sapphira protected Ananias in his sin and lied to help him. She was a partaker in Ananias' deceit.

May we be careful lest we become a partaker of the sin of others by shielding the guilty and by excusing their sin. A Christian does not cover sin; but rather, he reproves that which is evil (**Ephesians 5:11** ¹¹ **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them).**

The Truth or a Lie

In your schoolwork and in your play, do not have a part in the evil ways of others by failing to take your stand for the right. A lie is not always spoken; sometimes it is acted, too. Whether spoken or acted, "no lie is of the truth" (I John 2:21).

When we studied the Proverbs we learned that God hates lies

(Proverbs 6:16-19 ¹⁶ These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren). The devil is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 ⁴⁴ Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.). When one does not tell the truth, he belongs to Satan and cannot go to Heaven unless he repents and tells the truth. In Revelation 21:8 we read that all liars "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

Great Fear

What effect did the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira have upon the people? This made an impression on all who heard it. Fear came upon them, and they realized the seriousness of a lie, and the necessity of being honest with God. They knew that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Perhaps they were reminded of words spoken by men of old: "Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God?" (I Samuel 6:20), and the answer given by David in the 24th Psalm: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira did not check or hinder the spread of the Gospel. The people of the Lord continued their work and worship. The number of believers increased; and many, both men and women, were added to the Church. The blessing of the Lord was upon the people because sin had been taken from their midst. In order to have God's blessing today, sin must be taken out of lives, and from the midst of His followers. If sin continues in the heart and life, God cannot work as He would like to work.

Miracles

By the power of God, the Apostles worked miracles among the people. A multitude came from the cities and the country about Jerusalem. Many signs and wonders took place – the sick were restored to health, unclean spirits were cast out, and all who were brought to the Apostles were healed. The people had such confidence and faith that they laid the sick by the wayside, in order that the shadow of Peter "might overshadow some of them."

Perhaps Jesus was referring to these miracles when He gave His disciples the promise of the Comforter and said: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). These miracles were some of the signs that Jesus said would follow those who believe in Him (**Mark 16:17-18** ¹⁷ And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover). Today, these signs still follow true believers when they, in faith, pray in Jesus' name for His honour and glory. (**Acts 4:29-30** ²⁹ And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, ³⁰ By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and

wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. Romans 15:18-19 ¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, ¹⁹ Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.).

QUESTIONS

1. What enabled the Apostles to speak with boldness?
2. What is unity?
3. Tell what you know about Barnabas.
4. How did Peter know that Ananias was not honest?
5. Who caused Ananias and Sapphira to try to be deceitful?
6. In what way did Ananias and Sapphira sin?
7. What was the judgment of God upon Ananias and Sapphira?
8. How does the Lord feel about a lie?
9. What effect did the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira have upon the people?
10. How could the Apostles work such miracles?