



Living Walking Serving

FAITH AND GRACE CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY NOTE ON THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH (A BOOK STUDY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES)

(Rom.15:4, Joel 2:28-32, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5)

STUDY 20-21: LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Acts 4:32-5:16

A. The sharing heart of the early church

(Act 4:32) Their attitude towards each other and towards material possessions.

Those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of things he possessed was his own: This unity was a wonderful evidence of the work of God's Spirit among them. Because of their unity, they regarded **people** more important than **things**. This unity is not conformity, where everybody is exactly alike. It is not organizational, where everyone must be forced into the same denomination.

They recognized God's ownership of everything; it all belonged to God and His people. Because God had touched their lives so deeply, they found it easy to **share all things in common**. they put God first, people second, and material things a distant third.

It isn't accurate to see this as an early form of communism. Communism is not **koinonia (fellowship)**. "Communism says, 'What is yours is mine; I'll take it.' **Koinonia** says, 'What is mine is yours, I'll share it.'"

(Act 4:33) The effective witness of the apostles.

With great power: This is both the result and the root of the attitude in the previous verse **Great grace was upon them all.** Grace is God's favor, His smile from heaven, and it was upon them all. God's favor was evident everywhere.

(Act 4:34-37) Examples of early giving.

For the early Christians, being filled with the Holy Spirit meant not only proclaiming the Word of God, but also sharing their possession with those in need. One man named **Barnabas** was a notable example of this giving spirit. Josep was known for more being generous with more than material things; he was so generous with encouragement that they called him **Barnabas**, meaning **"Son of Encouragement."**

B. The lie of Ananias and Sapphira

(Act 5:1-2) What Ananias and Sapphira did.

After they saw the great generosity of Barnabas and how well he was respected (Acts 4:36-37), Ananias and Sapphira decided they wanted to receive the same respect.

The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God

He kept back part of the proceeds: They sold the possession, and gave only a portion to the church, while implying that they sacrificially gave it all to the church.

His wife also being aware of it: Clearly, both husband and wife were partners in the deception. They both wanted the image of great generosity, without actually being remarkably generous.

(Act 5:3-4) Peter confronts Ananias.

Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart: God apparently gave Peter supernatural knowledge of what Ananias had done. This spiritual gift, called the word of knowledge, is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8.

Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit: Peter did not accuse Ananias of lying to the church or to the apostles, but to **the Holy Spirit** Himself. His crime was not in withholding the money, but in deceptively implying that he gave it all. Of course, his sin was greed (in keeping the money); but his greater sin was pride, in wanting everyone to consider him so spiritual that he "gave it all" – when he had not.

Their sin is imitated in many ways today. We can exaggerate our spiritual accomplishments or effectiveness to appear something we are not. It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality of spiritual life.

Their great sin was rooted in pride. Pride corrupts the church more quickly than anything else.

(Act 5:5-6) The death of Ananias.

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last: Peter did not pronounce a death sentence on Ananias. He simply confronted him with his sin and Ananias fell down dead. It isn't the business of the church to pronounce a death sentence on anyone.

So great fear came upon all those who heard these things: God's purpose was accomplished in the church as a whole. This was evidence of a great work of God among His people.

(Act 5:7-9) Peter confronts Sapphira.

How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Sapphira was a knowing and willing participant in the sin, as well as the blatant cover-up. God's judgment of her was just as righteous as His judgment of Ananias.

(Act 5:10-11) The death of Sapphira.

Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last: Fittingly, the same judgment came upon Sapphira as came upon her husband Ananias. Since they shared the same sin, it was fitting that they shared the same reaction to being found out – shock and horror.

C. Continuing power in the church.

(Act 5:12) Power shown through miracles and unity.

Many signs and wonders were done: In Acts 4:30, we read that these early Christians prayed that God would continue to do signs and wonders through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus. This shows that this prayer was answered, and these remarkable signs and wonders continued.

They were all with one accord: Often, the fact that God's people are together **all with one accord** is a greater display of the power of the Holy Spirit than any particular sign or wonder.

(Act 5:13-14) The church's reputation and growth.

None of the rest dared join them: The community of Christians had a marvelous reputation for integrity, and everybody knew it was a serious thing to be a follower of Jesus. An Ananias and Sapphira incident would reduce the level of casual commitment.

And believers were increasingly added to the Lord: Yet, the church kept growing. Though people knew it was a serious thing to be a Christian, the Spirit of God kept moving with power.

(Act 5:15-16) The expectation of miracles among the early Christians.

They brought the sick out into the streets: People were so convinced of the reality and power of what the Christians believed, they thought they could be healed by the mere touch of Peter's shadow.

Some Scriptures on lies and deceit:

1Pet. 2:1, 2:22, 3:10, Ps.101:7, Rev. 21:8,

NEXT: THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EARLY CHURCH CONT'D (ACTS 5)