

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #233

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Chapter 5

Ananias and Sapphira

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.
2. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.
3. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"
4. "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."
5. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.
6. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.
7. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.
8. And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."
9. Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."
10. Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead and carried her out, buried her by her husband.
11. So great fear came upon all who hear these things.

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was lying and hypocrisy and want to look good to please men rather than God. The Bible says much about liars and lying. One of the most poignant scriptures on lying is found in Revelation 21:8: *But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake*

which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (NKJ). Unfortunately, lying has become very common in our society from the highest levels of government to everyday common people cheating on their income tax. I think we are failing this generation of believers in not emphasizing the scriptural importance of telling the truth.

The first mention of Satan in the New Testament Church and the first problem *within* the church (rather than without) was a sin over money. Ananias and Sapphira were not asked to sell this land nor to give all the money they got to the Church. No one was under compulsion to give and when they did give, the giving was a personal matter between the giver and God. The sin was in giving a lying impression that they were giving all the money they got from the sale. The sin was also in trying to deceive the Holy Spirit, which, of course, is impossible. Do we try to deceive Him today?

There are nine gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in 1st Corinthians 12:8-10: *...for one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.* They can be broken down like this: THINK LIKE GOD-Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Discerning of Spirits. SPEAK LIKE GOD: Prophecy, Gift of Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues. ACT LIKE GOD: FAITH, HEALING, MIRACLES.

So far in Acts we have seen the operation of at least five of these nine gifts: Tongues (Acts 2:4), Miracles (Acts 2:43), Faith (Acts 3:6), Healing (Acts 3:7-8), and, in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, the gift of a Word of Knowledge.

This story is the first record of Divine judgment in the Church. Note that Peter did not execute the judgment. The judgment was executed by the Holy Spirit and resulted in the death of both Ananias and Sapphira. Why did this happen? Perhaps there was so much purity and power in the New Testament Church that sin could not dwell there where the Presence of God the Holy Spirit was. At any rate there was no division in the Church or criticism of Peter. Instead, a godly fear of grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit came on the Church. How we need this godly fear today!

Apostles' Mighty Miracles

12. And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.
13. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.
14. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,
15. So that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.
16. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

This passage tells us that the apostles met in the Temple area. At this time they were Jews who happened to be Christians, not Christians who happen to be Jews-this came later-,and they wanted to learn as much about God as they could and to be regularly in the House of God. They had no fear and met where everyone could see them. They were highly thought of by the people, and they had the power of the Holy Spirit and were able to heal and bring deliverance to people. Unlike many of today's churches, they did not have a form of godliness without the power. Peter was so anointed that even his shadow supposedly healed people.

Apostles Are Miraculously Freed from Prison

17. Then the high priest rose up and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,
18. And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.
19. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said,
20. "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."
21. And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22. But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,
23. Saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"
24. Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.
25. So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men who you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching people!"
26. Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.
27. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,
28. Saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

These hardened, blind, and unrepentant religious leaders were threatened by the power these common followers of Jesus had. The Sadducees were especially threatened in their beliefs by the miracles, signs and wonders, and appearance of angels. Apparently, this was a time that all the apostles were imprisoned together. I would think that this supernatural deliverance from prison in such a way that even the guards did not know the men had escaped would frighten the religious leaders, but they were so full of envy and jealousy that their hearts were hardened.

Ironically, they themselves brought the curse of Jesus' blood upon themselves when they spoke at Pilate's Judgment Hall, "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matthew 27:24-25).

Apostles preach to the Council

29. But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.
30. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.
31. "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
32. "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

These were not “mealy mouth” Christians. The apostles spoke with boldness, with truth, and with power. They were sold out and were determined to obey God rather than men. What if the Christian body in America had this conviction? What a different nation we would be!

Gamaliel’s Advice

33. When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.
34. Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.
35. And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.
36. “For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about our hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.
37. “After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.
38. “And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing:
39. “But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”

Gamaliel may have been a secret follower of Jesus at best, who was speaking a word of wisdom from the Holy Spirit, or perhaps more likely he was a politician pushing for tolerance and wanting the approval of the crowd and desiring to exercise control over the council. Most assuredly, in any case, he was a brilliant teacher of the law and counted Saul of Tarsus as one of his students. He also was a Pharisee and had dedicated his life to the keeping of every little detail of the law and apparently was loved and well-respected. The Pharisees were few in number. There were only about 6000 of them, and they lived in such a way that the general population highly respected them, much like we would respect someone who gave everything away to serve the Lord on the mission field. This last verse in this passage has to do with the belief that God foresees everything that is going to happen but also give man a free will. Gamaliel was saying that if these men were not of God, then their movement would die out anyway. Yet if they were, then the Council would be going against God to try to stop them.

Apostles are Beaten

40. And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

41. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

42. And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

The apostles were beaten for one reason: They preached in the Name of Jesus. You are going to find that Name hated more and more as we approach the end of the age, even in a country like America whose pledge says we are one nation under God. Notice that the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Him and did not discontinue what He had told them to do: *Go into all the world and preach the Gospel!*

SPIRIT BREAK OUT TIM HUGHES

**SPIRIT BREAK OUT, BREAK OUT WALLS DOWN
SPIRIT BREAK OUT, HEAVEN COME DOWN (X2)**

**OUR FATHER, ALL OF HEAVEN ROARS YOUR NAME.
SING LOUDER, LET THIS PLACE ERUPT WITH PRAISE.
CAN YOU HEAR IT? THE SOUND OF HEAVEN TOUCHING EARTH.
THE SOUND OF HEAVEN TOUCHING EARTH. (X2)**

**AND JESUS, WOULD YOU SHINE AND LET THE FATHER'S GLORY
FILL THIS LAND OF MINE. BLAZE, SPIRIT, BLAZE.
AND SET OUR HEARTS ON FIRE 'TIL WE ROAR YOUR PRAISE.
AND FLOW, RIVER FLOW NOW. LET THE SPIRIT BREAK OUT TO
BREAK OUR WALLS DOWN. AND HEAVEN COME DOWN,
HEAVEN COME DOWN, HEAVEN COME DOWN.
SPIRIT BREAK OUT.**

**SPIRIT BREAK OUT, BREAK OUR WALLS DOWN.
SPIRIT BREAK OUT, HEAVEN COME DOWN.**

**KING JESUS, YOU'RE THE NAME WE'RE LIFTING HIGH.
YOUR GLORY SHAKING UP THE EARTH AND SKIES.
REVIVAL-WE WANT TO SEE YOUR KINGDOM HERE.
WE WANT TO SEE YOUR KINGDOM HERE.**

**SPIRIT BREAK OUT, BREAK OUR WALLS DOWN.
SPIRIT BREAK OUT, HEAVEN COME DOWN.**