

Acts 5 Supplement #1

Chapter Five – First Church Discipline, 2nd Arrest.

ACTS 5:1-11:

As we enter into the **fifth chapter** of **Acts**, we cannot proceed without remembering the last thoughts of **chapter four**:

Acts 4:36-37 “**And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.**”

Joses (the Greek form of ‘Joseph’), who the Apostles have named Barnabas (Son of Encouragement, Consolation), has been offered by Luke, through the Spirit, as an example of predetermining an offering for the benefit of brethren (needy saints), and then giving that offering to the Apostles for proper distribution (the heart of a giver); later to the elders of the local bodies for the same purpose – **Acts 11:30**.

This establishes a representation of proper giving; “**First gave themselves to the Lord**” – **2 Corinthians 8:5**; “**For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.**” – **2 Corinthians 8:12**; “**For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but is also abounding by many thanksgiving to God.**” – **2 Corinthians 9:12**.

As we now enter into the **fifth chapter**, we will see the flip side of the coin. Two things will be brought forth in this narrative; **first**, what is an acceptable offering, which is first rendered in the heart of those doing the giving (as God knows our hearts).

Second, although selling and giving was their right; even to keep part back if they desired, as long as they did not lie concerning the offering. Ananias and Sapphira purposed to keep some back, but to lie to the Apostles in order to receive the same praise as others.

The Apostles of Jesus Christ have claimed to engage in their work by the power of the Holy Spirit. Had this lie in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira gone unchallenged at a later date they could have used this lie to denounce the claim of power by the Apostles.

Just as Jesus knew the hearts of men, the Apostles of Jesus Christ would have to establish the credibility of the Spirit of God in them as well.

To this end, just as Lot’s wife becomes an illustration for all time of not looking back, Ananias and Sapphira will for all time be the illustration of doing something to be seen of men, but lying to God in their heart!

Text #1:

Acts 5:1-4 “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.”

Sold a Possession: This was a piece of land that belonged to them (**Vs. 8**). They were not commanded to sell this property, nor give the entire proceeds. It is inferred that their love of money and desire to be recognized among men have caused Ananias and Sapphira to plot the lie together and then share it with the Apostles.

Satan Filled Your Heart: This is not establishing the old adage; “*The Devil made me do it!*” Quite the contrary! Why ask Ananias if this has transpired if indeed, he does not have any control?

The fact of the matter is that this is a descriptive statement. That is, “why have you chosen to fill your heart with Satan’s work?” This is the same descriptive style statement that the Lord used when He spoke to the Jews, note:

John 8:44 “You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

The Jews were not literally born of Satan; however, because they chose to embody him in their deeds and denial of the Lord, they were literally exhibiting his characteristics.

Lie to the Holy Spirit: Ananias lied to the Apostles of Jesus Christ, but in doing so, he actually lied to the Holy Spirit of God, who was given to the Apostles to guide them into all truth (**John 16:13**). If this had not been dealt with, as a demonstration that the Apostles could through the Spirit know the hearts of men, they would have been discredited and the testimony of the Spirit would have had no validity, including the claim of inspiration.

This establishes a secondary truth; we may fool men concerning our service and giving to the Lord, but we will never fool God!

Hebrews 4:12 “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

2 Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Text #2:

Acts 5:5-6 “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*.”

When the Holy Spirit through Peter revealed the hypocrisy of Ananias; God, not Peter, met out this righteous judgment and struck him dead. God will not tolerate hypocrites or liars and this incident serves as a lasting example and warning to all the servants of God through Christ, for all time.

Breathed His Last: In the original text, it means that he expired or died. Note that they didn’t even have a service, or took time to mourn his departure. This is very reminiscent of Nadab and Abihu – read: **Leviticus 10:1-7**.

In like fashion, Aaron was not allowed to mourn their deaths at the hand of the Lord, because they had offered a profane sacrifice to God. We as royal priesthood must be holy, for He is Holy (**1 Peter 1:15-16; 2:9**).

Fear: This carries with it the concept of reverent respect and awe. All that heard of the incident, whether members of the body of Christ or not, would realize that God was at the source of the works being performed (**vs. 11**). This also tells us that like miracles, this was not done in a closet, but out in the open for all to see, giving true confirmation of the work of the Apostles.

Text #3:

Acts 5:7-11 “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 carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. ¹¹ So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”

Three Hours: The significance of the amount of time is actually a demonstration of the seriousness and fearful nature of all those who were aware of what had transpired with Ananias. Think of how quickly gossip spreads under normal conditions. Now consider that for three hours Sapphira had heard not one word concerning the demise of her husband; now that is reverent fear!

In a secondary thought, it also gives support to the fact that those who were of the body of Christ supported this church discipline, knowing that God had exposed the true heart of Ananias.

Test the Spirit: Peter stated the result of the plotted agreement and not the purpose. It was obvious that they did not think they were trying the Spirit directly, just the Apostles as men; but, in doing this they actually establish the Spirit of God in the Apostles of Christ.

In all of this, the result is given in a unified church, which in turn demonstrated the reverent fear of God and Jesus as the Christ to all the brethren and all those on the outside. Think of the Gospel that would be continued to be preached after this to those on the outside, then look at **verse 14** (which we will look at in the next lesson).