

Exegesis of Acts 5

- (1) Verse 2 - Kept back - "to set apart for one's self;" hence, "to appropriate wrongfully."

I Verse 3 - lie to - "to deceive." The design of Satan was to deceive the Holy Ghost. Satan fills the heart to deceive. The result of the attempt is merely to lie.

II Verse 4 - conceived - put or fixed - "resolve upon it."

Verse 8 - "The woman, whose entrance into the assembly of the saints was like a speech."

II → Verse 9 - Agreed together - Your souls were attuned to each other respecting this deceit.

III To tempt - To put it to the proof whether the Holy Spirit, ruling in the Apostles, could be deceived.

IV Verse 14 - were added - Imperfect: "kept being added." (Vincent)

- (2) ^{III} *Pretence* In striking contrast to the unreserved self-sacrifice of Barnabas, Luke places the selfishness and hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. It is in itself no small proof of the truth of the narrative that the writer should not hesitate to introduce this episode side by side with his picture of the still unbroken love and fellowship of the church. He makes no apology for the facts, but narrates them simply and without comment.

- It was a deliberate and aggravated offence. "laid at feet of apostles." A further aggravation since the money was brought ostentatiously to gain a reputation for the donors.

Verse 3 - Why? "how is it?" The force of the Greek seems to emphasize the fact that Ananias had it in his power to have prevented such a result.

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The sin of Ananias was much more than mere hypocrisy, much more than fraud, pride or greed - hateful as these sins are - the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit had been manifested in the church, and Ananias had sinned not only against the human brotherhood, but against the divine light and leading which had made that brotherhood possible. In the words there lies an undeniable proof of the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit.

The sin before us was not one sin but many, and in its deliberateness it came perilously near that sin against the Holy Ghost which, whatever else it may mean, certainly means a wilful hardening against divine guidance.

III
Pretense
V

Verse 11 - Great fear - evidently one purpose in the infliction of this stern penalty was at once obtained.

Verse 14 - The favor of the people which still protected the church resulted in further increase of believers, "were the more added." - imperfect, signifying the continuous growth of the church.

(EGT)

(3) The sin within the Christian community is more painful than the persecution from without. (God didn't destroy the persecutors on the outside, but the pretenders on the inside.)

Purged IV

The basic sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that of hypocrisy or unreality; they were living a lie. Their attempt to win praise through deception was by deliberate plan, for they had "agreed together".

II
II

Some defense may be made for sins of ignorance or weakness, but none can be made for willful blindness to truth or willful rejection of light.

III

Lie - "falsify." The charge would not be simply that he lied to the Holy Spirit, but that he falsified the Spirit as he sought to represent his fraudulent deed as something inspired by the Spirit. Thus he tried to make the Spirit a party to his own crime.

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The many signs accomplished in those days gave all the believers an awareness of divine power operative in their midst and struck awe and fear in their hearts.

Fear and Growth

V ~~IV~~
The rest (v. 13) may be non-Christians who were afraid to join the disciples, lest they become liable to the fate of Ananias and Sapphira.

IV ~~III~~
Clearly there was a new release of power through signs and wonders with two results: even greater numbers were drawn into the movement, and all had a greater respect- or fear - for the movement, and especially for the disciples. (Stagg)

IV
(4) 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.

Achan "committed a trespass" by retaining for private use property that had been devoted to God.

Intro
What this narrative emphasizes is the reality of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in the church, and the solemn practical implications of that fact. So early was it necessary to enforce the lesson later formulated by Paul in I Cor. 3:16 f.

The incident shows us, too, that even in the earliest days the church was not a society of perfect people.

III
Verset 3-4 - Peter uses words which conveyed to the wretched man the enormity of his sin. Sharp practice in the ordinary commerce of life was as common then as now, but a higher ethical standard must prevail among the followers of Christ. Ananias, in the effort to gain a reputation for greater generosity than he actually deserved, tried to deceive the believing community, but in trying to deceive the community he was really trying to deceive the Holy Spirit, whose life-giving power had created the community and maintained it in being.

This was a lie told to God, something suggested by none other than the great adversary of God and man.

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The voluntariness of "having all things common" made Ananias' deceitful behaviour all the more gratuitous.

IV
Be careful: the temptation to seek a higher reputation than is our due for generosity or some other virtue is not so uncommon that we can afford to adopt a self-righteous attitude towards poor Ananias. Let us rather take warning from his example.

IV
Verse 5 -6 - As Peter spoke, Ananias' sin came home to him and he died. It was an evident act of judgment - the judgment that begins first at the house of God - and it is no wonder that great fear came on all who heard about it. But it may have been an act of mercy as well.

It was not Peter's personality that stopped Ananias' heart from beating, but the sudden realization of the sacrilege that he had committed.

Verses 7 - 11 - Peter recognized in the sudden death the divine judgment for an attempt to deceive the church, and the Spirit in the church.

Sapphira had an opportunity to tell the truth, but when she brazened it out and repeated her husband's falsehood, Peter had no doubt that she would share her husband's fate, and he told her so bluntly.

III
They had been detected in a deliberately conceived plan to see how far they could go in presuming upon the forbearance of the Spirit of God (for that is what is meant by "trying" Him - cf Ex. 17:2; Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12); and they had gone too far.

The fear which fell upon the whole community suggests that many a member of it had reason to tremble and say to himself, "there but for the grace of God, go I."

(Bruce)

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Over against this true exhibition of the spirit of Christian self-denial in fellowship (chapter 4) we have an effort to play a double role (5:1-10).

III Ananias and his wife wanted the credit for a generosity which they lacked the faith and consecration to practice.

III Ananias had dealt falsely not with man merely, but with God. It was the Holy Spirit who was suggesting these sales and gifts.

It was the lying effort to get credit for whole-hearted giving that constituted the sin.

XIV By this act the Holy Spirit shows for all time what he thinks of such hypocrisy, and he thinks no better of it that he now delays its punishment.

Peter had pronounced no judgment on Ananias.

V Verse 11 - The effect of it all was great, reverent dread upon the entire church and upon all others who heard the facts.

V Verse 12 - 16 - the growing power of the gospel was the result of this purging out of the leaven of hypocrisy.

The people got to be so afraid of them that no unbeliever dared join their company. Their growth was not only not hindered but increased.

When the purity of the church and the obvious presence of the Lord in it make people afraid to join, then there is no way to prevent growth.

(Carver)

John (6) Acts 5, first real difficulty within the church. It developed in the greatest ~~home~~ hour of fellowship and unity. Satan assails

I ↙

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I
an aggressive and healthy church. He spends little effort on a weak and faltering church. When the church is strong and poses a threat to him, it generally occasions his most subtle attack.

Fellowship and self-denial describe the state of the Jerusalem church. At this point Satan launched his attack. The devil hates unity and unselfishness.

I
Here is an illustration of ambition and avarice - a story of Satan's attempt to corrupt the early church. Satan is an enemy of purity. He would defile the blood stream of the Early Church by injecting elements foreign to pure Christianity.

The motive of Ananias and Sapphira was twofold: A desire to receive praise, applause for generosity which was undeserved, and plain selfishness. They were ambitious.

Ananias was determined to be equal to any in the ministry of love.

Verse 4 - He had cherished the design to deceive God in his heart. His motive degenerated into plain avarice.

III
The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was pretense. They pretended to give all when they only gave a part. The sin was not in the amount of the gift, but in the spirit of the gift.

Verse 3- They did not speak a lie, but they acted a lie. It is fatal to converse with Satan.

III
One is guilty of the sin of Ananias when he tries to make it appear that he is something which he is not.

I
V
Satan was trying to corrupt the pure fellowship and spirit of the Early Church through injecting hypocrisy (envy and jealousy). Jesus was extremely severe on religious hypocrites. He was patient with thieves and harlots

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V who rolled in their spiritual corruption and made no pretense at being anything, but He was severe with religionists who claimed to be something other than what they were.

V The Early Church was following the example of the Savior in its severity on hypocrisy. The one thing which most repulsed the Spirit of Jesus and the infant church was hypocrisy.

I It was Satan's attempt to corrupt the inner life and spirit of the people of God.

Their sin was one of three dimensions: it stemmed from vanity. It lapsed into idolatry. Their sin in some respects was kindred to the sin of Achan (Joshua 7:1) and the sin of Gehazi (II Kings 5:10-27). Gehazi let the cankering sin of covetousness make a liar of him.

The administration of the judgment of God for the sin and its effects on all involved: (1) The sin brought the swift judgment of God upon the offenders. Sin kills. One must die with his sins or be separated from them.

(2) The church was affected (5:11). This fear was a reverent dread and it gripped the entire church membership. The purity of God was magnified. The majesty of God stood in bold outline against the background of the entire picture. They became keenly aware that God was in the doings of the church. They saw the awful penalty of taking liberty with the things of God and for corrupting the purity of the church.

V They had witnessed the ability of the Holy Spirit to illumine and empower, but now they were taught that He also burns out the dross and purifies. The soft, illuminating fires of the Holy Spirit are also swift, hot fires which cleanse and purge.

V Progress in evangelism depends upon inner purity. This experience was preparation for a mighty thrust in evangelism.

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(3) The effects of this judgment were seen on the outside world. Verse 13 - This incident halted the number of mere joiners. The church had entered a great period of growth. When the news spread that the wealthy members of the church shared their possessions with the Christians who had lost their homes and property by persecution, many unconverted were attracted. Some such were no doubt joining the church for unworthy reasons.

This serves as a caution to the careless evangelism of our day. The evangelism that would emphasize a membership drive rather than conversion could get a lesson from this.

It had another affect on outside world. V. 14 - When reverence for God increased and when mere joiners ceased to unite with the church, the number of believers increased. Here is a timeless lesson for evangelism. When the atmosphere and program of the church are such that the unconverted no longer join the church, the greater will be the number of converted. This is not a theory but a Biblical fact. vss 13, 14.

(Autrey)

(7) One of the consequences of the believer's infilling with the Spirit was a striking unanimity of spirit.

"But" - this is the first word of chapter 5. The devil despises harmony. He is the arch-promoter of discord.

Chapter 5 is the record of the manner in which God filtered out the foulness.

Their sin, against the background of disinterested devotion revealed in the case of Barnabas, appears particularly heinous.

III
(They professed liberality while practicing a lie.)

Hypocrisy is a foul but prevalent species of corruption.

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Vs 13, 14 - When the victims of Divine wrath were struck dead, it was a demonstration to all that God was the Ally of His church.

V → The Holy Spirit was teaching the church a basic lesson, one of which she needs often to be reminded. The lesson is this: Purity is a condition of power. The church must be clean to be conquering, disciplined to be daring, holy to be happy.

Ananias and Sapphira were blots on the church's escutcheon. They had to be removed.

Pure first, then powerful. Pure first, then peaceable. Pure first, then progressive.
(Woodbridge)

(8) The opening word of this section, "But," at once suggests a contrast. In chapter 4, we have a wonderful picture of the fellowship of spirituality.

In this passage (5:1-16) we are faced with a new peril, and a new manifestation of power. It opens with tragic story of deception but closes with triumphant story of healing, etc.

All that is here recorded of judgment and of blessing is the outcome of the One Presence in the church. The blasting and the blessing were the acts of the Holy Spirit in His administration of the work and the will of Christ.

Notes Story of the first discipline - its occasion, its operation, and its outcome.

T 1 - This was a sin within the fellowship of the church. The perils without we have seen, but this peril was within, and was far more insidious, far more subtle, far more dangerous, than all those from without. The church has never

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harmd or hindered by opposition from without;
it has been perpetually harmed and hindered
by perils from within.

III 2 - The sin was not of refusing to
contribute, nor refusing to give all. There
was no wrong in keeping back part of the price.

III 3 - It was the sin of pretending that
part was all. It was the sin of hypocrisy,
of attempting to appear what they really
were not, of endeavoring to make it appear
that they had done what they really had not.

III - singing "My All is on the Altar".

(God doesn't immediately act as he did
then or we'd spend all our time carrying out
corpses.)

The one thing that made Christ really
angry was hypocrisy. He had no attitude
toward the hypocrite but that of un