

Acts 5**Lesson 5
The Apostles Imprisoned,
Beaten, Kept Preaching****Outline****I. Ananias and Sapphira Lied and Were Punished** (vv. 1-11)

- A. *Kept part of the money they claimed to give* (vv. 1-2)
- B. *Peter rebuked them for lying and they fell dead* (vv. 3-10)
 - 1. Ananias (vv. 3-6)
 - 2. Sapphira (vv. 7-10)
- C. *Their punishment caused the church and others to fear* (v. 11)

II. The Apostles Performed Miracles (vv. 12-16)

- A. *Miracles and signs were done by the apostles* (vv. 12, 15-16)
- B. *Caused many to believe and obey* (vv. 13-14)

III. Apostles Imprisoned, Questioned and Beaten (vv. 17-40)

- A. *Imprisoned* (vv. 17-21a)
 - 1. Cast into prison (vv. 17-18)
 - 2. Released by an angel to go preach (vv. 19-21a)
- B. *Questioned by the council* (vv. 21b-39)
 - 1. Council gathered and sent for apostles (vv. 21b-26)
 - a. Council gathered (v. 21b)
 - b. Sent to prison for the apostles – they were not there, but preaching (vv. 22-25)
 - c. Brought the apostles to the council (v. 26)
 - 2. Apostles questioned about their continued teaching (vv. 27-28)
 - 3. Peter's defense (vv. 29-32)
 - a. Ought to obey God rather than men (v. 29)
 - b. God raised Jesus and exalted Him to give repentance and forgiveness (vv. 30-32)
 - 4. Gamaliel's advice (vv. 33-39)
 - a. Council wanted to kill them (v. 33)
 - b. Gamaliel said: leave them alone (vv. 34-39)
 - 1.) If of man – come to nothing (vv. 34-38)
 - 2.) If of God – cannot overthrow it (v. 39)
- C. *Beaten, commanded not to teach and then let them go* (v. 40)

IV. Apostles Continued to Preach Christ (vv. 41-42)

- A. *Rejoiced, being counted worthy to suffer* (v. 41)
- B. *Did not cease preaching Christ* (v. 42)

Key Verses That Summarize the Chapter

Acts 5:41-42

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.

Chapter five gives us a clear picture of God's intent for the early church: Sin and hypocrisy are not to be tolerated (vv. 1-11), the gospel is to be preached (vv. 19-21, 41-42), and God's people are to press on with courage (v. 29).

Ananias and Sapphira Lie and Are Punished (vv. 1-11)

The situation with Ananias and Sapphira is the first case of church trouble, the first record of sin among God's people, and the first case of hypocrisy.

They kept back part of the money they claimed to give (vv. 1-2). This chapter begins with "but" which shows a contrast between the previous example of Barnabas and the present example of Ananias and Sapphira. "The two illustrations here were intended to be brought in contrast, as the conjunction 'but' introduces the sentence."¹ Ananias and Sapphira sold some land (as Barnabas and others have done). Ananias kept part of the money, but said he was giving the full amount when he brought it to the apostles. Sapphira was fully aware of what he had done.²

Peter rebuked them for lying and they fell dead (vv. 3-10). When Ananias brought the money, Sapphira was not with him (v. 7). Peter rebuked Ananias for allowing Satan to fill his heart (v. 3). However, he had conceived this plan on his own (v. 4). He allowed Satan to influence him by yielding to the temptation to lie about the money.

In his hypocrisy, Ananias was focusing on how he appeared before men. Peter pointed out that his lying was not just to men, but to God (vv. 3-4). There was no reason for this sin. He voluntarily participated in it (v. 4). There was no compulsion to sell. There was no pressure to give what he gained from selling. There was no demand to give all or even a certain amount. The whole matter was willfully planned (v. 4). Consequently, he was miraculously struck dead (vv. 5-6).

Three hours later Sapphira came in being unaware of what had happened to her husband (v. 7). Peter gave her the opportunity to come clean and correct her part of the sin. He asked her about the amount they claimed to give. She said the amount they received from the land was the amount they gave (v. 7-8)³. She was an accomplice to Ananias' sin⁴. Though

¹ H. Leo Boles, *Acts*, Gospel Advocate Commentary series, 77.

² She was an accomplice with him and was just as guilty as he was (cf. v. 10).

³ They pretended to be doing more than they were. "We too may be pretending with a few outward deeds to be giving the Lord the best we have, when in reality we are holding back (Gal. 6:7-8)" (Robert Harkrider, *Acts*, 53).

⁴ Though we may not participate in another person's sin, we may well be an accomplice by consenting, advising, or tolerating it.

the idea was conceived by Ananias (v. 4), she was well aware of it (v. 2). She was not present when he lied about the amount (vv. 2-7). However, she was just as guilty and was struck dead just like her husband (v. 10).

Their punishment caused the church and others to fear (v. 11). This is a case of church discipline, though not a case of withdrawing. Sin was confronted. Some of the same results were obtained.⁵ The rest of the church feared (vv. 5, 11). They learned that sin would not be tolerated. They had to be stirred to sincerity. It also caused some outside of the church to fear (v. 11).

The Apostles Perform Miracles (vv. 12-16)

Miracles and signs were done by the apostles (vv. 12, 15-16). The apostles worked miracles among the people. The miracles were called "signs" because they served to confirm the message the apostles preached (Mark 16:17-20). They were called "wonders" because of the effect of amazement. They were all⁶ gathered in Solomon's Porch (v. 12).⁷

The healing done by the apostles became so popular that the sick were brought into the street so that at least the shadow of Peter might come over some of them (v. 15).⁸ In contrast to the efforts today to perform miracles, *all* those that were brought to be healed were healed (v. 16).

Caused many to believe and obey (vv. 13-14). Those not gathered with the disciples (v. 12) didn't dare join them, even though they esteemed them highly (v. 13). They didn't join them for one of two reasons, or both: One, they didn't feel that they fit in with those who were associated with such power as displayed in the miracles. Two, they had just witnessed the hypocrites being exposed (vv. 1-11). There were multitudes that were obedient and turned to the Lord (v. 14). Here we have another progress report.

Apostles Imprisoned, Questioned and Beaten (vv. 17-40)

Imprisoned (vv. 17-21a). The popularity of the apostles was more than the leaders among the Jews could take. The high priest (a Sadducee) along with other Sadducees (who denied the resurrection) took the apostles and put them in prison (vv. 17-18). However, an angel released them and commanded the apostles to go preach "all the words of this life" in the temple (vv. 19-21a).

5 The church was purified or cleansed of its hypocrisy (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-7).

6 This may refer to all Christians and not just the apostles.

7 Solomon's Porch "was on the east side of the court of the Gentiles (Josephus, Ant. XX. 9, 7) and was so called because it was built upon a remnant of the foundations of the ancient temple. Jesus had once taught here (John 10:23)" (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright (c) 1985 by Broadman Press).

8 "The sacred author does not tell us that any of the people upon whom Peter's shadow fell were healed; and from this it would appear that the purpose of including this is to emphasize the overwhelming popularity that attached to the Twelve" (Burton Coffman, *Acts*, James Burton Coffman Commentaries, 109).

Questioned by the council (vv. 21b-39). Once again the apostles were brought before the council for questioning.

1. **The council gathered and sent for the apostles** (vv. 21b-26). The Sanhedrin council officially gathered and had the apostles brought to them (v. 21b). However, when the officers came back to the council they reported that the prison was secured tight with guards outside, but the apostles were not inside (vv. 22-23). The main concern the officials had was the effect of their escape (v. 24). They were fearful that this may cause a greater following. To make matters worse for the council, someone reported that the apostles were preaching in the temple (v. 25). This time when the officers took them they didn't use force⁹ because they were afraid of being stoned by those who held the apostles in high esteem (v. 26).
2. **The apostles questioned about their continued teaching** (vv. 27-28). The high priest asked, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?" (v. 28).¹⁰ He charged them with violating the prohibition to the point of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine, which included indicting them with the death of Christ (v. 28).
3. **Peter's defense** (vv. 29-32). Peter (and the other apostles) responded with two points. First, they would obey God (who commanded them to preach), rather than man (who had forbidden them to preach) (v. 29). Secondly, God raised up the same Jesus whom you murdered (v. 30). The apostles did not back off, but pressed the charge that these Jews had killed Jesus. Three things are stated about the resurrection: (a) Christ is now exalted to the right hand of God (v. 31). (b) He is Prince and Savior who forgives those who repent (v. 31). (c) There is evidence of this resurrection. The apostles were eyewitnesses (v. 32). The Holy Spirit gave testimony by way of the miracles (v. 32b).¹¹
4. **Gamaliel's advice** (vv. 33-39). The council's reaction was anger to the point of planning to kill the apostles (v. 33). Gamaliel (a Pharisee, a council member, a teacher of the law and well respected)¹² had the apostles removed so the council could talk privately (v. 34). Gamaliel's advice was to leave them alone. If what the apostles are doing is of men, it will come to nothing (vv. 34-38). He gives two cases (Theudas and Judas) where men led in movements that amounted to nothing. If, however, what these men are doing is of God, it cannot be overthrown (v. 39).

Gamaliel was not acting in defense of the apostles or showing any support for the doctrine of Christ. His only concern was how the council should handle the matter for its own benefit.

The apostles were beaten, commanded not to teach and then let go (v. 40). The rest of the council agreed with Gamaliel. So they beat the apostles,¹³ commanded them not to teach in the name of Jesus and then let them go.

9 NIV and ESV.

10 The ASV renders this as a statement rather than a question, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

11 The Holy Spirit being given to those who obey him refers to the apostles. They would have the power of the Spirit as long as they obeyed God and not bow to the pressures of men (cf. v. 29).

12 Paul was a student of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 26:5).

13 Usually the beating was 39 stripes (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24).

The Apostles Continue to Preach Christ (vv. 41-42)

They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer (v. 41). The beating and threats of the council didn't stop the apostles. They viewed it as an honor to suffer for Christ.

They did not cease to preach Christ (v. 42). The apostles had the boldness they prayed for because of the attitude described in verse 41. They continued to daily preach Christ.

Questions

1. What contrast(s) can be drawn between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira? _____

2. Did Ananias and Sapphira have to sell their land? _____
3. Did Ananias and Sapphira have to give all of the money they received from the sale of the land? _____
4. What drove Ananias and Sapphira to lie about the money they gave? _____

5. In what ways can we become an accomplice to sin? _____

6. Why did some not join the disciples (v. 13)? _____

7. What was the progress report found in this chapter? _____

8. Why was the council so concerned when they heard that the apostles had escaped from prison? _____

9. What was Peter's defense to the charge the council had made? _____

10. What was Gamaliel's advice and why did he give it? _____
