

I. *Ananias and Sapphira (vv. 1-11)*

5 But there was a man named Ananias, ^a who with his wife Sapphira ^b sold some property that belonged to them. ² But with his wife's agreement he kept ^c part of the money for himself and turned the rest over to the apostles. ³ Peter said to him, "Ananias, why did you let Satan take control of you ^d and make you lie to the Holy Spirit ^e by keeping part of the money you received for the property? ⁴ Before you sold the property, it belonged to you; and after you sold it, the money was yours. Why, then, did you decide to do such a thing? You have not lied to men – you have lied to God!" ^f ⁵ As soon as Ananias heard this, he fell down dead; ^g and all who heard about it were terrified. ⁵ The young men came in,

wrapped up his body, carried him out, and buried him. ⁷ About three hours later his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, was this the full amount you and your husband received for your property?" "Yes," she answered, "the full amount." ⁹ So Peter said to her, "Why did you and your husband decide to put the Lord's Spirit to the test? The men who buried your husband are at the door right now, and they will carry you out too!" ¹⁰ At once she fell down at his feet and died. The young men came in and saw that she was dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ The whole church ^h and all the others who heard of this were terrified.



Interesting Stuff

^a 'Ananias' means 'God is gracious' in Hebrew.

^b 'Sapphira' means 'beautiful' in Aramaic.

^c Luke's language here seems to draw a parallel between the sin of Achan (Jos 7), who kept back some of the spoil from Jericho just as the Israelites began their conquest of Canaan, and the sin of Ananias and Sapphira as the church began its mission. Both incidents came under the immediate and drastic judgment of God and taught the people a sobering lesson. This was probably how the early church saw this incident. It served as a warning to them that God cannot be mocked (Gal 6:7), i.e., no one can make a fool of God.

^d The Holy Spirit gave Peter the spiritual insight to see into people's hearts and to recognise what Ananias had done. He saw that Satan had a part to play as well in Ananias' action.

^e Peter's words made it clear that Ananias was entirely at liberty to keep or sell his property as he saw fit. That was not sinful. His sin lay in his lie to the Holy Spirit. It was not that he gave only a part of the money but it was his trying to deceive others into thinking that he was giving all of it. In lying to God's community, he was essentially lying to God.

^f A comparison with v. 4 shows that the Holy Spirit is regarded as God Himself present with His people.

^g Like the act of Achan, this act was very critical in the life and mission of God's people. If no drastic consequences had followed this act of deceit, the results on the early believers would have been serious once the deceit was found out. People would think not only that dishonesty was profitable but that the Spirit of God could be deceived. It was important for God to show clearly from the beginning that He would not tolerate such hypocrisy and deceit.

^h This was the first time Luke uses the word 'church' to designate

the Christian community. The word was used in the OT to refer to an assembly or congregation of God's people. The Christians took over this word and used it to describe themselves as the people of God or of Christ. Later in the book, this word would be used for both the universal church and local congregations.



Questions (vv. 1-11):

1 Describe what happened when Ananias and Sapphira sold their property and brought the money to the apostles (v. 1-11).

How did their action differ from that of Barnabas?


2 What warnings does this incident give us?



Hmmm...

Although God does not judge us so immediately or drastically for our sins now, it does not mean that we are to take our sins lightly.

* Think of one area of sin in your life that you are not dealing with. What do you think you should do about it?



Takeaway

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing.

1 John 1:8-9