

Acts 5 | "Don't Let Hypocrisy Kill You!"

I. THE HYPOCRISY OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. (v. 1-11)

ANANIAS (v. 1-6)

A. (v. 1)

1. "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,"

a. "But" - contrast with Barnabas (4:34-37)

1) Acts 3-4 = Attacks from WITHOUT

a) Satan's first tactic was to come against them from the outside. However, that didn't work. So now, Satan changes tactics and will attack the Church from within.

2) Acts 5 = Attacks from WITHIN

a) The Church has never suffered from outside persecution, but has often lost its effectiveness because of inside impurity.

i. A study of Church history will confirm that the Church has thrived under persecution.

b) Sometimes the greatest threat to the Church is success.

3) In the context of chapter 4, there was an atmosphere of love and excitement in the Church, and now Luke gives a contrast to that in chapter 5.

a) **Illust.** - **Leviticus 9:22—10:3** - Nadab and Abihu acted wrongly in the midst of the outpouring of the glory of God.

b. "Ananias" - Heb. *Hananiah* - "the LORD is gracious"

1) Cf. **Daniel 1:6** - same name as one of Daniel's 3 friends.

c. "Sapphira" - Gr. Hellenized form of Hebrew *Shaphirah* - "Beautiful"

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- d. **NOTE:** Outwardly, this couple looks great! You have a rich husband and a good-looking wife. However, it was all an outward show.

B. (v. 2)

1. **"And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet."**

- a. "kept back" - Gr. *nosphizó* - "set apart for himself; embezzled; purloined; withdrew covertly"
- 1) Cf. **Joshua 7:1** - In the LXX, this same word is used for when Achan "took" something he was not supposed to keep.
 - a) What Achan was to Joshua, Ananias and Sapphira were to the early church. Just as Achan interrupted Israel's process and progress in the conquest of the Promised Land, Ananias and Sapphira's act of deceit interrupted the process and the progress of the program of God.¹
 - b) **NOTE:** In the midst of this environment of love and excitement, the people were bringing the proceeds of their sale and setting it at the Apostle feet (**4:35-37**), Ananias and Sapphira are involved in FINANCIAL FRAUD, while still trying to look very spiritual and be part of the crowd.
 - c) **KEY:** Whenever there is a genuine move of God's Spirit among His people, we need to be aware that Satan will try to disrupt it, sometimes by using people that are part of the group.
 - 2) **NOTE:** Holding back part of the proceeds was NOT the problem (**v. 4**). It was a SYMPTOM of the real problem!
 - a) This system was not compulsory. It was not mandatory as a member of the Church to sell everything and give it to the church.

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum. "Commentary Series: The Book of Acts", p. 228.

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C. (v. 3)

1. **"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"**

a. THEIR PROBLEM:

1) **Their hearts were controlled by Satan rather than controlled by the Holy Spirit.**

a) "filled" - Gr. *filled completely; filled to capacity* with the idea of "being controlled by"

i. They let Satan control them rather than the Holy Spirit.

b) Cf. **John 8:44** - Jesus said to the religious leaders, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own nature: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

2) **They lied to the Holy Spirit.**

a) "to lie to" - Gr. "speak falsely; willfully misrepresent; mislead; cheat; to show oneself deceitful"

i. Middle Voice - means that a person is doing it "for oneself"

a. This means that:

i. They were responsible for this action.

ii. They did it for self-benefit.

b. **NOTE:** They were intimating that they were giving all, when in reality they were holding back a part of the money.

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- c. **KEY:** They were trying to appear to the congregation that they were more committed than they were.
- 1) Cf. **Matthew 6:1-4** - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."* (Matt 6:1-4)
 - a) "Hypocrite" - Gr. "actor; pretender"
 - i. Hypocrisy is a horrible evil that has plagued the church through the years. Pretending to be something that your not.
 - ii. There are many people today who are guilty of this very sin.
 - 2) So many will say, "Man, I wish the Church today was as powerful as the early church!" Well, it is COSTLY!
 - a) **NOTE:** We want the power of the early church, but if we would stand and sing that old hymn, *"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee, Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love, at the impulse of Thy love,"* but I wonder how many would still be standing after the 3rd verse, *"Take my lips and let them be filled with messages for Thee, Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold, not a mite would I withhold"?...* There'd probably be a lot of people slain by the Spirit at that point!!!

D. (v. 4)

1. **"Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?..."**

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- a. The selling of their land was not obligatory, but purely voluntary. Even after selling it, they did not have to give any part of the profit away.
 - b. **NOTE:** The property, and the profit from selling it, was theirs to do what they wanted to with it. In other words, they had individual ownership of their property.
 - 1) They could give all of it to the Apostles.
 - 2) They could give part to the Apostles.
 - 3) Or, they could have just kept it for themselves.
 - c. **KEY:** America was founded with this Biblical principle of individual rights and personal property. Personal ownership of property and possessions is a God-given freedom that we need to hold onto. Sadly, there are those that want to get rid of individual liberties and ownership of personal property in favor of socialism and redistributing other people's money.
2. **"...why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."**
- a. This was an issue of the HEART!
 - 1) (v. 3) "*Why hath Satan filled thine heart?*"
 - 2) (v. 4) "*Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?*"
 - a) Cf. **Jeremiah 17:9-10** - The prophet Jeremiah said, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*"
 - b) Cf. **Proverbs 4:23** - Solomon wrote in the Proverbs, "*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*"

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- b. **NOTE:** They lied to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) and they lied to God (v. 4), thus the Holy Spirit is God.

E. (v. 5)

1. ***"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost:..."***

- a. God is PURGING hypocrisy from the Church, and purging involves DISCIPLINE.
- 1) God did not mess around. He dealt with this sin SWIFTLY and SEVERELY!
 - a) Some might say, "What's the big deal? It was just a little lie. It was just hypocritical. Who cares?"

2. ***"... and great fear came on all them that heard these things."***

- a. The Progression of the Early Church:
- 1) "great power" (4:33a)
 - 2) "great grace" (4:33b)
 - 3) "great fear" (5:11)

SAPPHIRA (v. 7-10)

F. (v. 8)

1. ***"And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much."***

- a. Peter gave her the opportunity to come clean, but she chose rather to continue the conspiracy. #PropertyGate

G. (v. 10)

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1. "Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband."

a. "buried by her husband"

1) Lit. "*buried toward* [facing] *her husband*"

a) She was *buried face to face with her husband!*

b. Q = Why was this discipline so SEVERE?...

1) To show **THE SEVERITY OF THE SIN** of hypocrisy.

a) God needed to keep the purity of the Church while in its infancy.

i. As one commentator put it, "Either Ananias or the Spirit must go."²

ii. This was a critical juncture for the early church, and such impurity, sin, scandal, and satanic infiltration could have corrupted the entire church at its root. (Guzik)

b) Too often, we don't view sin as a horrible crime - a deep and dreadful act of iniquity!

i. Jesus was nailed to a cross, and shed His blood, for our "*smallest*" sins!

2) To give us an **EXAMPLE** of the reality that sin leads to death.

a) Cf. **Romans 6:23** - "*the wages of sin is death...*"

b) God has dealt severely with His people in times past as an example for us.

i. **Illust.** - Nadab and Abihu (**Lev 10**); Achan (**Joshua 7**); Uzzah (**2 Sam 6**)

² William MacDonald. *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 1598.

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- ii. Cf. **1 Corinthians 10:11** - Paul the apostle wrote to the church in Corinth, "*Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*"
- iii. Cf. **Romans 15:4** - Paul also wrote to the Romans, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*"
 - a. God wants you to know how serious sin is!
- c) **KEY:** God wanted to deter the Church from repeating that offense.³

3) **To CONFIRM THE AUTHORITY AND MESSAGE OF THE APOSTLES in the establishment of the Church.**

- a) This is the beginning of the Church, and the fact that they could detect hypocrisy hidden in the heart, confirmed that they were sent by God and their message was really from Him.

THE RESULT (v. 11)

H. (v. 11)

- 1. "***And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.***"
 - a. **NOTE:** A Major Application of this narrative for us: BE YOURSELF!!!
 - 1) You don't need to be somebody you're not.
 - 2) You don't need to put on an act.

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- 3) You don't need to be some hyper-spiritual saint.
- 4) Just be humble and honest!
- b. **KEY:** God wants you to be GENUINE!
 - 1) You don't need lofty prayers to impress people.
 - a) You don't need the "Thou arts" and "Thee's".
 - 2) You don't need the Hyper-spiritual talk.
 - a) Don't say, "I'll be praying for you" if you're not really gonna do it, just so you seem more spiritual. You'd better do it, or you might as well be honest and say, "Good luck. Be warmed and be filled."
 - 3) You don't need to worry about your self-image.
 - a) Let's be *real* and *genuine* people of God.

II. THE SECOND PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH. (v. 12-42)

THE POWER OF THE APOSTLES (v. 12-16)

A. (v. 15)

1. ***"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."***
 - a. I believe that there was no power in the shadow of Peter, but it was a point of contact for the people to release their faith.
 - 1) **Illust.** - The woman with the issue of blood released her faith when she clutched the hem of Jesus' garment. (Mark 5)

THE ARREST AND EXAMINATION OF THE APOSTLES (v. 17-33)

B. (v. 17)

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1. ***"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,"***
 - a. The High Priest was Annas (4:6).
 - b. The Sadducees were the liberal theologians of the day.
 - 1) They didn't believe in miracles.
 - 2) They didn't believe in the resurrection from the dead.
 - c. **Q** = Why were they "*filled with indignation*" and so angry?...
 - 1) They were AFRAID OF ROME.
 - a) Whenever there were uprisings, the Romans would come in and smash it and bring Roman order.
 - b) The former high priest was deposed and the current one was appointed by the Roman government.
 - 2) They were AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR POWER AND MONEY.
 - a) If the people started following Christianity, they were afraid that the people would leave the synagogue and Temple, thus losing their influence and financial resources.
 - 3) They had ALREADY THREATENED THE APOSTLES (4:17-22).

C. (v. 20)

1. ***"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."***
 - a. "*words of this life*"
 - 1) This expression is a Hebraism that means "*resurrection life*," which is what the Sadducees denied.

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D. (v. 28)

1. **"Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."**
 - a. **Q** = What was the *doctrine* with which they were filling the city of Jerusalem?...
 - 1) Some might sincerely say, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," (1 Cor. 2:2), but they'd be wrong! And for TWO very good reasons:
 - a) Everybody already knew that Jesus was dead (Luke 24:18).
 - b) There is nothing that would have served the interests of the high priest and Sanhedrin more than to go around proclaiming, "Jesus is dead! Jesus is dead! Jesus is dead!"
 - i. They organized His death.
 - ii. They engineered His death.
 - iii. They wanted Him dead.
 - 2) The Apostles were filling the city of Jerusalem with the message that "Jesus is ALIVE!!! He is RISEN FROM THE DEAD!!!"
 - a) **NOTE:** Imagine how these men felt:
 - i. **Illust.** - Have you ever been tempted to kill someone with a .22? Imagine you and your friend shooting this guy and killing him. And you and your friend go and bury the body in this quiet field where nobody was around. You dig a hole and bury the body so that nobody will know. I imagine you wouldn't sleep to well that night. Every time you see a policeman, you get nervous. Well, after a couple of days, you hear a knock on the door, and with relief, you see that it's your

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friend. So you let him in, but he looks nervous. You lock the dead bolt and chain, and ask him, "What's wrong?" And he says, "You know the guy that you killed? I went to the field, and the body wasn't in the hole... And I saw him a little while ago downtown... and he's walking this way!"

a. **Q** = Wouldn't that give you the creeps?!?! That's how the high priest and the chief priests felt! They had killed somebody that the whole city of Jerusalem knew to be alive!

b) The disciples were preaching, "You killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead!"

b. *"and intend to bring this man's blood upon us"*

1) It was not the Apostles who brought the blood of Jesus upon them, but they brought it upon themselves ([Matt. 27:25](#)).

E. (v. 29)

1. ***"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."***

a. *"ought to" - Gr. deí - "must; it is necessary to; absolutely need to"*

1) Like we mentioned in chapter 4, there are times for godly, civil disobedience against the government.

F. (v. 30)

1. ***"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree."***

a. *"raised up" - Gr. lit. "brought to the forefront"*

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- b. "hung on a tree"
 - 1) Peter will repeat this phrase later ([Acts 10:39](#); [1 Peter 2:24](#)), and he's not emphasizing the symbol that he died on (the Cross), but he's emphasizing what the Cross *meant* (i.e. the Messiah died in a horrible way)!
 - 2) Under the Mosaic Law, to be *hung on a tree* was a cursed way to die ([Deut. 21:22-23](#); [Gal. 3:13](#)).

G. (v. 32)

- 1. **"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."**

- a. "obey" - Gr. "follow; hearken unto"
 - 1) **NOTE:** This does not mean you have to *earn* the Holy Spirit by works, but it means that you hear the witness of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus Christ and follow Him in that witness.
 - a) The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus Christ as the Savior ([John 15:26-27](#); [16:7-11](#)), and those that *follow* or *obey* the witness of the Spirit concerning Jesus, God will give them the Holy Spirit!
 - 2) **KEY:** In other words, those that come to faith and believe in the Jesus Christ (i.e. obeying the witness of the Spirit) will be given the promise of the Holy Spirit. It is an obedience of faith!

DR. GAMALIEL'S INTERRUPTION AND ADVICE (v. 34-39)

H. (v. 34)

- 1. **"Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;"**
 - a. BACKGROUND of Gamaliel:

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- 1) Member of the Sanhedrin ("one in the Council").
 - a) In Jewish sources, he was known as Gamliel the Elder, Gamaliel I, or Rabban Gamliel.
 - i. Most rabbis were simply called Rav or Ravi, which means "teacher" or "my teacher," but Gamaliel was called Rabban ("our teacher"), which is a title above rabbi.
 - b) This title Rabban ("Our Teacher") was given to the head of the School of Hillel, and Gamaliel was Hillel's grandson and student.
 - i. Gamaliel had been Paul's teacher before he became an Apostle ([Acts 22:3](#)).
- 2) A Pharisee.
 - a) He was a conservative theologian, believing in the supernatural, miracles, angels, the resurrection, the sovereignty of God, etc.
- 3) A Doctor of the Law.
- 4) A man of high reputation in society, even among the Sadducees.

b. *"and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space"*

- 1) He wanted to have a "closed-door" session so that they could privately talk about the matter.

I. (v. 36)

1. ***"For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought."***

a. *"Theudas"*

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- 1) We know that Theudas rose up *before these days* (i.e. before this meeting around A.D. 32-35), and even *before* A.D. 6, because he predates Judas of Galilee (v. 37).
 - a) **NOTE:** Josephus also mentions a guy named Theudas, so critics claim that Luke made a mistake because the one mentioned by Josephus died between A.D. 44-46, and this Theudas mentioned by Gamelial must have predated this meeting, which was between A.D. 32-35.
 - b) **KEY:** Luke could not have made a mistake because his writing was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, the critics' interpretation must be wrong. The Theudas that Luke records Gameliel speaking of must be a different Theudas than Josephus did.
 - i. Luke wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and Josephus didn't.
 - ii. There were many people in Israel's history named Theudas.

J. (v. 37)

1. **"After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed."**
 - a. "After this man"
 - 1) "this man" = Theudas (v. 36)
 - 2) "after" = Judas of Galilee came *after* Theudas, which means Theudas' insurrection PREDATES Judas of Galilee, who revolted "*in the days of the taxing*" (A.D. 6).
 - b. "*in the days of the taxing*" = ~6 A.D.
 - 1) This *taxing* ("enrollment") was the second census given by Quirinius (ca. 51 B.C.—A.D. 21) in the year A.D. 6.

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- a) The first census was given in 2 B.C. (Luke 2:2).
 - i. It was the first census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for Jesus to be born.
 - b) Quirinius passed a second enrollment law in the year A.D. 6, when he became the Roman governor of Syria.
- 2) The purpose of the census was to determine the amount of taxes that needed to be paid to Rome, and this is what caused the revolt by Judas of Galilee.
- c. *"he also perished"*
 - 1) Josephus⁴ gives more details about how this revolt ended:
 - a) The Roman Procurator Cuspius Fadus crushed the revolt with 5,000 horsemen.
 - b) Judas was beheaded, but his movement survived in the Zealot Party.
 - i. Eventually, the Zealots did lead a major revolt against Rome (A.D. 66-70), and this was the party that made the last stand at Masada (A.D. 73).

THE RESULT (v. 40-42)

K. (v. 40)

1. ***"And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."***

a. *"beaten them"*

- 1) The Apostles were punished for disobedience to the previous order of the Sanhedrin not to preach (Acts

⁴ Josephus, J.W. 2.4.1.; Ant. XV: 11.4; XIX: 9.2; XX: 1.1-2, 5.1.

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4:18), and they received "forty stripes save one", which was based on [Deuteronomy 25:2-3](#).

- a) Cf. [Deuteronomy 25:2-3](#) - *"And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee."*
- 2) **NOTE:** This is the first time in the history of the Church that believers suffered physically because of their faith.

L. (v. 41)

1. **"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."**

- a. RESULT #1: GREAT JOY!
- b. "his name" - Gr. lit. "the Name"
 - 1) The name of God is YHVH or YHWH, which is often translated as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" in English, is so holy to the Jewish people, that they won't even try to pronounce God's name, so they just say, "HaShem" ("the Name").
 - 2) Now, the Apostles are referring to Jesus as "the Name," thus equating Jesus with Jehovah/Yahweh!
 - a) **NOTE:** The Sanhedrin dishonored Jesus by not mentioning His name (v. 28 - "this name"; "this man"), yet these Jewish believers were proud of it and were willing to pay the price for it!

M. (v. 42)

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1. *"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."*
 - a. RESULT #2: RENEWED ZEAL!