

INTRODUCTION: Chapter 5 of Acts of the Apostles spells the beginning of internal challenges in the church. The response by the Holy Spirit appears very harsh especially when examined by our generation. The judgement by the Holy Spirit clearly separates the true church from the religious Jews. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit should separate the church of today from organized religion in all things.

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."

⁵ 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*.

⁷ 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.

This story has a lot to say about the man or woman you marry as they could drag you into unpleasant experiences. I Cor 15:33

What wrong did Ananias and Sapphira commit?

Deceit: Jer 9:5-6, Psalm 24:3-4

Realize your uniqueness and do not live like the Joneses. Rom 12:4-8

Why might Ananias and Saphira have done what they did?

Gen 6:5- The culture of evil.

Jer 17:9 – The evil in the heart of a man

Why do you think the Holy Spirit responded that way?

To infuse fear into the church and all. Acts 5:11

To enhance the required purity for the expansion of the Gospel. Acts 5:13

Why does He not respond in many cases like this?

The rate of departure from the truth is exploding: Psalm 130:3

Name some things we do today in the church that is similar to the sin of Annaias and Saphira

Continuing Power in the Church

¹² And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. ¹³ Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

¹⁴ And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵ so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Why did some people find it difficult to join them? Perhaps this answer will help us with why the Holy Spirit was so hard on Ananias and Sapphira.

Vs 13 says but the people **esteemed** them highly. Is the church still esteemed highly today.

How and why has the Church lost its high place?

The creature does not seem to be there. Rom 8:19

What was causing the increase in the church, the miracles, the love, the fear or a combination of all?

Lifting up Christ: John 12:32. Everything listed above we byproducts of lifting Christ up

The focus was the kingdom of God. Matthew 6:33

How can we bring about that same increase today?

Imprisoned Apostles Freed

¹⁷ Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, ¹⁸ and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹ But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

When in the life of a believer can we mostly see sign and wonders manifesting?

In the field Acts 5:15, 19.

²¹ And when they heard *that*, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

Apostles on Trial Again

²² But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, ²³ saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside^[a] before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" ²⁴ Now when the high priest,^[b] the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. ²⁵ So one came and told them, saying,^[c] "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

²⁶ Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. ²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸ saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?"

And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Did you notice that the men that were asked to go bring out the Apostles played a fast one on the council? They did not tell the council where they found them.

²⁹ But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹ Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Compare the response of the Apostles to how the modern day believer would have responded. Notice they never referred to the prison experience in vs 19-20. Let's do some drama here. How will today's believers or preachers tell the story.

Gamaliel's Advice

³³ When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them. ³⁴ Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ³⁶ For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. ³⁸ And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;³⁹ but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God."

⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His^[d] name. ⁴²

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

What was the intention of the council and what did they eventually do? Do you know the intentions of the devil concerning your life?

Pray for a 'Gamaliel' amongst your enemies.

What sect did Gamaliel belong, and which sect took hold of the Apostles and put them in prison? Vs 17 and 34. When your enemies compete you win.

There was precedence to the work of Jesus. Why did the previous people go into oblivion? Rom 8:31,

Could a lazy person have done the work the disciples were doing? Like coming out of jail at night and be preaching the next morning.

As fake as Theudas and Judas were, they still had followers. That you have followers does not make you a true man of God.