

When Sin Enters The Camp (Acts 5:1-16)

I. Sin is Disciplined In The Church (1-10)

A. Sin Enters The Assembly (1-2)

1. Ananias and Saphira sell a property and hold back part of the money
 - a. They did exactly what Barnabas did but schemed to profit while telling the church they were giving it all
 - b. Perhaps they desired the prestige and praise of the assembly because of their generosity
 - c. They did not want to make the sacrifice of giving the entire amount
 - d. Both husband and wife conspired to do this
2. They “kept back” Part of the price
 - a. “kept back” is a rare word in the bible (nophorizo)
 - b. It means to embezzle or steal – the only other place it is used in the New Testament is in Titus 2:10 which exhorts servants not to steal (purloin in KJV) from their masters
 - c. The word is also used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to describe what Achan did after the battle of Jericho
 - i. Remember God told Israel to devote everything in Jericho to God after the wall fell down
 - ii. Achan “kept back” things for himself
 - iii. He was found out and executed
 - iv. Luke is comparing sin entering the new community with sin entering the community of Israel as they entered the promised land

B. Sin is Exposed in The Assembly (3-4a)

1. Satan has filled Ananias’ heart
 - a. God supernaturally reveals Ananias’ sin to Peter in the assembly
 - b. What does it mean that Satan “filled” his heart?
 - i. Is Ananias possessed?
 - ii. Is Ananias influenced or tempted?
 - iii. The word “filled” is used of the filling of the Holy Spirit in the previous chapters and later in chapter 5, the religious leaders are said to be “filled” with indignation (jealousy)
 - iv. The real question is “are Ananias and Saphira Christians, or are they false professors?” – The Text simply doesn’t say and there are arguments for and against. What do you think?
2. Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit
 - a. He kept back money from the sale

- i. The sin is lying to the Holy Spirit (i.e. God) in order to receive praise
 - ii. The sin is not how much they gave – it is being deceitful about how much they gave
 - Notice that lying to the assembly is lying to the Spirit
 - There is no profit in having the praise of the church unless it is from a genuine heart before God
 - b. It was under his authority
 - i. He could have kept the property
 - Peter says that it was his own before it was sold
 - Ananias was under no demand to sell his property
 - ii. He could have kept the money after it was sold
 - Even after it was sold, he could have kept all the money – it was under his power
 - He could have given a portion and told the church he was giving a portion
 - 3. Ananias is Responsible For His Actions (4b)
 - a. Peter asks, “why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?”
 - b. Notice that although Satan filled his heart, Ananias is responsible for his own actions
 - i. The devil made me do it is not a valid excuse
 - ii. Man sins when he is drawn away by his own lusts
- C. Sin is Judged Immediately (5-6)
- 1. Judgment Falls on Ananias Right There
 - a. Notice that Peter does not utter a word of judgment or condemnation on Ananias
 - b. The judgment upon him comes directly from the hand of God
 - c. His sin is exposed before the whole assembly and judgment is rendered before the whole assembly
 - 2. Fear Comes Upon all who heard of it
 - a. The people realize that this “church” thing isn’t something to play around with
 - b. Imagine if you were the next in line to give your offering after Ananias!
 - i. Would you be examining your own heart and motives?
 - ii. Would you be fearful about coming into the presence of ultimate Holiness?
 - c. Does this judgment seem too severe to you?

- i. At least he was willing to donate some of the money
 - ii. Think of all the people that the money could have helped
 - iii. If we try and justify or lessen Ananias' action – we have an unbiblical view of sin
 - The only reason judgment doesn't fall on everyone in this way is God's mercy
 - God would be righteous and just to bring death on any sinner at any time
 - Sin is treason against the goodness of God
 - iv. This isn't the first time God killed someone
 - God killed Abihu and Nadab for offering strange fire on the altar (Lev. 10)
 - God killed Achan for stealing (Joshua 7)
 - God killed Uzzah for touching the Ark of the Covenant when he tried to keep it from falling (1 Chronicles 13)
- 3. Ananias is Immediately Buried (6)
 - a. He is given no memorial, no ceremony
 - b. His wife isn't even told – she finds out three hours later
- D. The Opportunity To Repent is Rejected (7-10)
 - 1. Saphira Lies To The Assembly Also (7-8)
 - a. The church has obviously continued their meeting after Ananias' death – they are still there when Saphira gets there
 - b. No doubt she assumed she would be greeted with praise and acclaim for the gift they had given – just like Barnabas was
 - c. Peter asks her a yes or no question
 - i. Is this the price you received for the land?
 - Maybe the money was still on the floor in the assembly
 - ii. She is given an opportunity to repent and tell the truth – perhaps she would be spared
 - iii. She does not take advantage of this opportunity. Instead she continues the lie
 - 2. Saphira has “Tested” the Lord (9a)
 - a. By lying Peter says they tested the Lord
 - i. It reminds the reader of how Israel “tested” the Lord in the wilderness by rebelling and sinning
 - ii. They thought they could hide their sin from God and His people
 - b. Ananias and Saphira believed they could sin with impunity
 - 3. Judgment Falls on Saphira (9b-10)

- a. Like her husband, God takes Saphira's life immediately
 - b. She is taken out by those who buried her husband
- II. The Church Continues Ministering With Power (11-16)
 - A. People Realize the Seriousness of The Church (11-13)
 - 1. Fear Came Upon the Church (11)
 - a. IMPORTANT: This is the first of many times Luke uses the word "church" – (ekklesia)
 - b. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), this word is always used to describe the assembly of God's people
 - c. Luke is drawing a direct parallel from the assembly of God's people in the Old Testament and the restored remnant of God's people in Acts – the church
 - d. I'm sure people were worried that God would strike them dead at any time if they sinned
 - 2. God Continues to Minister Through The Apostles (12)
 - a. God continues to validate his message and his messengers through signs and wonders
 - b. The gospel ministry continues even though the people are more acutely aware of the seriousness of sin
 - 3. Many were Cautious About Associating with them (13)
 - a. I guess they were – this was a serious thing
 - b. This was not a light decision to make – this was life and death
 - c. Most likely these are Jewish people, not yet converted but curious about the community – but scared to join up because of the death of the couple
 - d. The church was talked about and wondered at – they are God's people and they are to be taken seriously
 - B. The Ministry of God Continues in Power (14-16)
 - 1. God Continues to Add to the Church (14)
 - a. Even though the message is unchanged and sin is not tolerated, God continues to add to the church
 - b. There is no need to dilute the message and make it more palatable for itching ears
 - c. The church didn't lower its standards to win converts
 - d. God still adds to the church by the gospel
 - 2. Many Sought Healing from God Through the Apostles (15)
 - a. People brought out their sick so that Peter's shadow would pass over them and they might be healed
 - i. Maybe some wanted healing but were scared to actually come in contact with the apostles after the death of the couple
 - ii. We are not told if Peter's shadow actually healed them

- It is possible – God can heal anyway he chooses.
 - Some people take the final statement of v. 16 to mean that the people were healed by Peter's shadow but it doesn't actually say that
- iii. Luke doesn't actually say this practice is encouraged by the Apostles but he shows that people were increasingly coming for healing
3. Many Were Healed By God's Power
- a. Now people from outside Jerusalem began coming into the city to be healed and hear the gospel
 - b. People are flocking to Jerusalem, just like the Old Testament prophesied they would

NOTES:

The assembly of believers is the place of God's presence as the holy of holies was in the Old Testament

The early church was not a perfect church as many presume – but that did not hinder their growth and ministry

The church is called to deal with sin in her midst rather than ignore it. Discipline for sin begets holiness because believers are not quick to repeat their sin if it is brought before the community – i.e. accountability