



ACTS 5

ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA

In Acts 4:32, Luke records that “all the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” In chapter 5, we encounter the deceitful actions of Ananias and Sapphira regarding their personal offering to the church. They deliberately withheld a portion of the proceeds from a sale of their land and brought the rest to the apostles.

Ananias and Sapphira missed the point of the incredible things God was doing in the first-century church. By misrepresenting themselves before God and His people, they underestimated the depth of God’s disdain for hypocrisy. Jesus warned His followers of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1) who pretended to be more righteous than they actually were. It seems that, like the Pharisees, Ananias and Sapphira made a good show, pretending they were giving their all as they placed their offering at the apostles’ feet. Though they were not required to give the entire profit from the sale of the property, they misrepresented it as such. What is more, they conspired with one another in doing so.

Peter asserted that in lying to the church, they were lying to the Holy Spirit, and in lying to the Holy Spirit, they were lying to God. The apostles likely still felt the sting of Judas' deception who, according to the Apostle John, "was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it" (John 12:6). Peter also attributed Ananias and Sapphira's duplicity to Satan's influence, but they willingly cooperated with full knowledge of deception. Their decision led to disastrous consequences. They justified. They lied. They died. The likelihood of their continued hypocritical influence was snuffed out before they could take another step or say another word.

As a result, great fear seized the whole church and anyone else who became aware of their misdeeds. Why? They were fully reminded that toying with God and His church was unwise. As followers of Christ, our faith is expressed through words and deeds and reflects Him. We should never take the privilege and responsibility of being part of His body lightly. Those who are associated with Jesus' Church are accountable for their actions. As Paul reminded the Corinthians, "You are not your own, you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20). We belong to Him.

This story should cause us to shudder and tremble. At times we all fall short and fail to authentically represent Christ and His church. We all have a limitless capacity for self-deception. However, an awareness of His presence and understanding that our actions have consequences will guide us into a healthy relationship with God and His church.

Perhaps this was not the first misstep of Ananias and Sapphira. Though the Scriptures do not reveal other instances of their willful disobedience or deception, their pretense could have been representative of a pattern of hypocrisy. As the saying goes, "You don't suddenly go wrong; you're suddenly found out." In any case, God ended the charade and got everyone's attention.

