



## Acts: Ananias & Sapphira

February 15

**INTRODUCTION:** Acts: *Jesus' work, through the Apostles and disciples, by the Holy Spirit, to fulfil Acts 1:8.* The 2 cycles of sign/sermon/response/picture in Acts 2–4 both end with a cameo of the Jerusalem church (Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–37). In an extension of this we arrive at one of the oddest passages in Acts. However, as we study it in context all becomes clear.

**KEY POINT:** hypocrisy, greed, accountability, fear, discipline

### A.M. SERMON RECAP (Acts 4:32–37)

- How was the Gospel at the centre of this Church?
- What were the amazing effects of the Gospel?
- What [radical] implications does this passage have for MBC and the wider church today?

### P.M. SERMON RECAP (Prov 18:13)

- What is this verse saying in context?
- What is the broader application of this verse?
- What folly is produced when we do not apply this in evangelism? (Give examples).
- What benefits come in evangelism from its application? (Give examples).

**READ:** (c.f. Acts 4:32–37) Acts 5:1–11

### QUESTIONS:

1. *V. 1- "But." This conjunction can be used positively (e.g. Eph 2:4) or negatively; a warning as it is here. A cameo has just been given as to the unity and generosity that the Gospel has produced. Barnabas is given as a positive example of this (4:36–37); Ananias & Sapphira continue as a negative example and warning. The chapter division in the middle of this wider story blurs the connection.*
2. **Explain the plotline of this passage in your own words. What is going on?**

3. *Given the perplexing nature of this passage it might be best to answer a series of questions.*

### What Was Their Sin?

4. *One phrase differentiates their action from Barnabas': "kept back [to steal, Tit 2:20] some of its price." The practice of giving was voluntary (v.4). From v. 3a it appears they have committed beforehand to give the entire portion.*
5. **What sins did they commit?**
  - a. P\_\_\_\_e (generally)
  - b. H\_\_\_\_\_y (4b)
  - c. L\_\_\_\_\_g (2b, 3a, 4b)
  - d. G\_\_\_\_\_d (2b, 3b)
6. *Peter probably learned of it through direct revelation.*
7. *Why did they want to be seen to be like Barnabas? What was the heart difference between them? How does Jesus warn against hypocritical acts of piety (Mt 6)?*
8. *Unlike Barnabas, they didn't live up to their names (Ananias- God is gracious; Sapphira- beautiful).*

### Were They Saved?

9. *Centred between two attacks from without (ch. 4 & ch. 5/8), here the church is attacked from within.*
10. **While the generosity of the previous passage stems from being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (4:31) where does their action stem from (3a)?**
11. *Though the text doesn't really answer, and Mt 6:21 reminds us not all professors are genuine, what evidence is there that they were or were not genuinely saved?*

### Why Was The Judgement So Severe? (v. 5 and 10)

12. **Like the other miracles in Acts, what evidence is there that this was not a natural death but a miraculous judgement of God?**
13. *V. 6- Why was he buried so quickly?*
14. **Read: Josh 7:1.** *"Achan and Ananias each illicitly appropriated portions of that which had been devoted to the Lord and did so at the beginning of a new phase in the life of God's people."<sup>1</sup>  
**Comment. How does this help us understand the absence of God's <sup>2</sup> longsuffering?***

<sup>1</sup> Keddie, Acts, p. 97.

15. Notice Peter gave her a chance to repent (v. 8).
16. Acts 5:11 is also the first instance of the word “church” in Acts
- What Was the Effect of the Judgement?
17. **Had God not judged this sin, what negative effect would such a flagrant sin have had upon the young Church?**
18. **V. 11- [not terror and panic] How did this make believers and unbelievers alike be spiritually sober?**

What Does This Teach Us?

19. How does the contrast between encouragement (Barnabas) and judgement show that grace and truth are not contradictory principles? (Jn 1:17; 1 Jn 4:12)
20. How does this passage prove Prov 1:7 true?
21. *Like other miracles in Acts, we don't see this oft repeated!*  
**However, how is the spirit preserved in the practice of church discipline?<sup>3</sup>**
22. Other lessons...?
23. *A&S are our warning; Barnabas is our example. Returning to the front story of this two part episode, how can we ensure that we are exemplifying Acts 4:32 and not Acts 5:1–11?*

**NEXT:** Feb 22-Acts 5:33–42, Gamaliel

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<sup>3</sup> See our Handbook 10.0; see also Blog: [Why We Practice Church Discipline](#) (including resources).