

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?

1. *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.*
2. **What sins did they commit?**
   1. P\_\_\_\_e (generally)
   2. H\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_y (4b)
   3. L\_\_\_\_\_g (2b, 3a, 4b)
   4. G\_\_\_\_\_d (2b, 3b)
3. *Peter probably learned of it through direct revelation.*
4. 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)?
5. *Unlike Barnabas, they didn’t live up to their names (Ananias- God is gracious; Sapphira- beautiful).*

Were They Saved?

1. *Centred between two attacks from without (ch. 4 & ch. 5/8), here the church is attacked from within.*
2. **While the generosity of the previous passage stems from being “filled with the Holy Spirit” (4:31) where does their action stem from (3a)?**
3. 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)

1. **Like the other miracles in Acts, what evidence is there that this was not a natural death but a miraculous judgement of God?**
2. V. 6- Why was he buried so quickly?
3. **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.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Comment.****How does this help us understand the absence of God’s [[2]](#footnote-2) longsuffering?**

1. *Notice Peter gave her a chance to repent (v. 8).*
2. *Acts 5:11 is also the first instance of the word “church” in Acts*

What Was the Effect of the Judgement?

1. **Had God not judged this sin, what negative effect would such a flagrant sin have had upon the young Church?**
2. **V. 11- [not terror and panic] How did this make believers and unbelievers alike be spiritually sober?**

What Does This Teach Us?

1. 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)
2. How does this passage prove Prov 1:7 true?
3. *Like other miracles in Acts, we don’t see this oft repeated!* **However, how is the spirit preserved in the practice of church discipline?[[3]](#footnote-3)**
4. Other lessons…?
5. *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

1. Keddie, *Acts*, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See our Handbook 10.0; see also Blog: [Why We Practice Church Discipline](https://www.markdalebaptist.org/drippings-from-the-honeycomb/why-we-practice-church-discipline) (including resources). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)