

Acts 5

AC 5:1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ² With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

AC 5:3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

AC 5:5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

AC 5:7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"
"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

AC 5:9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

AC 5:10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

You Lied You died.

Here we have a bizarre story. All about greed. Well that is the main issue anyway. But we have to be careful to just look at one thing, other wise we might miss something important. It would be too easy to say "It's about being greedy and we shouldn't be so there is the message for us."

It is deeper and bigger, and I think important for us here and now.

Let's have a look!!

To get a bit of background we need to look at what was happening.

The previous chapter tells us that the Christians at that time took the love your neighbor as yourself totally literally.

AC 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

A total sharing of possessions. Indicates a total **lack** of greed. This became at this time, the Christian lifestyle. It has been repeated throughout church history as a model, and realistically if we look at true Biblical Christianity it is as prominent as anything written about worship gatherings, place of women in leadership, use of gifts etc. Sharing really is a biblical principle, even if giving up everything is not as such. It is one of the few examples we have of a definite understanding of what the early church did with an issue. They shared. If we take our bible seriously, this should be our role model.

Here you may start to feel a bit uncomfortable – I did.

Notice what they did.

34 There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

They brought it to the disciples and let them divide it up. This took some thinking for me. I had to ask, is there a precedent here from the rest of the bible? Is this a principle that we need to follow in our church here and now. Bring our money to church and let the deacons divide it up as they see the need. I went looking and found something things that seem to indicate this is at least the way it was done at different times in the bible.

MAL 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

Says much the same thing as in Acts 4 but in poetic prophetic language.

It says "Bring the whole tithe into the store house" Oh. Does it really mean to bring a literal 10%, that is our understanding of a tithe, Do I bring 10% of what I earn to God, and I have to bring it to the church and let the deacons work out what to do with it.

What about the rest of the bible. Well, the laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are where we get this idea from.

LEV 27:30 " `A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. 31 If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the LORD

Wow, a tithe of everything and if you don't the value goes up. Tough rules. Some say that this was actually the tax of the country so it doesn't apply. Sorry. The Kings taxed the people as well as making the people tithe. The tithe was NEVER supposed to be for the king, although some used it.

What about this one. **Neh 10:37 And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes in all the towns where we work.**

So is it that we should bring our tithes to church and let the deacons divi it up.

Yeh I think that's what it says. This is where it is hard, some of my tithe goes to help some other ministries. What I'm finding in the bible is that gifts and offerings are 2 different things. We need to look at that another time. How does that fit in here. Well, I think there is a principle here. **A tithe is not just a 10th but the best 10th, the first 10th.** Your finances are yours to use **after** you have given to God. That is where the blessing bit here comes in. After the tithe is given you get blessed, and who doesn't want to. Interestingly, in Malachi 3:10 that we read a while ago, is the only place I can find where God says "Test me." Maybe we have to check it out, and give it a go.

Now what has this got to do with Annanias and Saphira?
Heaps.

1. They pretended to do the right thing.

V2 -With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

They wanted it to look good. Wanted people to take notice of what they did. That isn't a tithe or an offering – where I lived out at Griffith they had a word for it – a bribe. Except God doesn't fall for it. Neither does Peter and the other apostles. Now I am not saying that the deacons have this gift of financial discernment – but imagine if they did!!!!

We can't bribe God but also if we short change Him, we can't expect to get blessed. As individuals, as a church as a denomination.

We do the same thing as Annanias and Saphira don't we. Let's be frank and honest. It is nice to have people notice what we do, to get recognition for being good little Christians. It is part of our ego systems. It's not just about finance and money either. Its about our work at church, our lifestyle. We like to be seen doing the right thing.

Here is the amazing thing. Even if we justify it **God knows our real heart even when others don't.**

Look at the next verses.

AC 5:3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

Somehow, God made Peter aware of the deception. Notice that there was no issue or expectation from Peter for them to give it all, **the issue is not the money but the dishonesty.**

When I was a kid, I used to get pocket money. One day I put the money in the plate and tried to rummage around for change. I got a dollar so I wanted 90 cents change. Mum thumped me. I got into trouble. After the service I went to the church treasurer and asked for my change. He said, No way, it's in the plate now, there is no change. So, for the next 9 weeks I let the plate come past and put my hand over the top and clonked the bottom with my thumb to make it sound as if I put money in. Not long after that the church went to having bag like we do. My justification was the treasurer ripped me off. I'm not sure who was dishonest, me or the treasurer. The issue really is in the attitude. Annanias and Saphira ripped God off.

2. Wrong dealings with God has a consequence. Does God still work this way today??? Maybe, maybe not. Certainly not all the time because there have been times when I have not put the money in the bag. I think God works with us individually, and communicates to us as we need to be communicated to. With Annanias and Saphira he dealt with them in a very individual way. They had to take the consequences for the actions before God. It is not only money issues that this applies to. It is an all of life thing. We need to deal with God rightly, otherwise, He has to teach us how to deal rightly with Him. Look at the Old Testament. It is one story after another about how God teaches His people to relate to Him properly. In all areas of life. That's because we relate to a God is God of all of our life, and is interested in all of our life. Remember what it said about tithes in Leviticus. A tithe of everything.

LEV 27:30 "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

The consequence for Annanias and Saphira was instant death. But even death has an impact. Notice verses 5 & 6

AC 5:5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

Wouldn't you be a bit fazed by this? Wouldn't you be a bit fearful? How would you relate to Peter over the next few days. You would have to watch what you said.

Imagine if Peter asked how you were?

What could you say "Great Peter, well actually I didn't sleep real well and my nose is a bit runny but hey I can't complain" You would be so careful not to lie in case you dropped dead. Shouldn't we always be like that? Shouldn't we always be thinking that

our sin and lies has consequences? Yeh, but we think God will ignore the little ones. Do we?

3. What could be worse?

Agreeing to sin.

Helping someone else to sin.

Both members of this couple **agreed** to lie. Each had a chance to say it wasn't a good idea. Each had a chance to keep each other on the straight and narrow. But they didn't, they helped each other to be dishonest.

Shouldn't happen. But it does. We, as husband and wives need to **spur each other on to *Godliness and Holiness***, not to dishonesty.

Now what is the point of all this. To get our offerings up. Well no. They aren't great but that isn't my thinking. In fact, this sermon is just the next chapter in the book of Acts. It just came up. I did not choose to talk about money and such. My thinking is, if God has worked it this way, because I didn't manipulate it this way, if God has worked it this way then He must want us to look at these issues.

The challenge must be:

Are we fair dinkum with our relationship to God?

Does our relationship to God extend to our money matters?

Are we willing to Test God as Malachi states?

Or

Are we willing to risk the wrath of God?

Come tonight for a bit more of a think about it. Have another read of all of Acts 5 during the afternoon. Have a think about it.