

“When Christians should tremble”

Acts 5:1-11 NIV

“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.

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 just to human beings but to God.’ ⁵ When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶ Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

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.’

⁹ Peter said to her, ‘How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.’ 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.”

This text prompts bunches of questions,

1. One provoking issue is:

“Did the early church practice socialism?”

Some folks think so.

Context is vital to this matter.

Acts 2 tells of Jews from distant lands going to Jerusalem for Pentecost.

Boston held its annual Marathon last week.

Thousands of people went there to participate and to watch the event.

Suppose a small religious group held a successful evangelistic effort that brought 5-10 thousand people to Christ.

Those converts stay in Boston to learn more about God’s Word; grow in Christ; pray fervently, enjoy one another’s fellowship, and seriously honor and praise God.

Imagine trying to make sure everyone is adequately housed and properly fed.

Pentecost created similar conditions in Jerusalem.

The Apostles coordinated help.

Local believers likely took many into their homes.



Barnabas and other believers generously sold land and contributed the proceeds.

Many Polish people and western Ukrainians are helping to house and assist people today.

God’s people gave of their own freewill.

The church didn’t expect anyone to give a percentage, and they certainly didn’t vote to have the government feed their hungry.

Of all the politicians who favor the mass immigration of undocumented into this country, have you heard of one elected or unelected official who has taken a single “illegal” into his/her home or taken personal responsibility for feeding or educating anyone?



Most politicians and media people live behind protective walls or in gated communities.

No ethical person invites a stranger in but sends the invitee to a neighbor’s house expecting his/her neighbor to entertain, feed, clothe, and pay the medical bills of the invitee.

Even worse, many church and religious organizations are “getting fat” off of government payments for doing so-called charity.

The Good Samaritan didn’t ask anyone else to help him do his charitable deed.¹

¹ Luke 10:25-37

He didn’t even expect a discount at the hotel when he paid for the injured man’s lodging.

Jesus urged people to sell lands and houses to follow him, but he consistently advised them to give the money directly to the poor.²

The early church built no buildings and involved itself in no social justice initiatives.

Although they cared for widows and orphans, they followed strict guidelines.

Jesus sent us to serve, preach the Good News of his death and resurrection and warn people of the coming Judgment.

God’s church quickly dealt with two side effects of supplying food to the needy.

Problem A was the preferential treatment in distribution, which we shall deal with in Acts Chapter 6.

Problem B arose because some folks got lazy and let other people support them.

This matter became serious:

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.’ ¹¹ We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹²

² See Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33 The NASB reads, “And give to charity.” The Greek more accurately says: “and give charitably.” Charities are too often heavily weighted with high salaried directors and administrators. Low percentages of funds get to the needy.

Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.”³³

Many churches do not conduct their social programs according to God’s word, do they? In fact, many churches rely on government funding for their needy programs.

2. Today’s reading also provokes a question regarding the Holy Spirit.

Many Bible versions refer to *Acts* as *The Acts of the Apostles*.

This Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira incident, and others, show that Acts should be entitled, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*.

In church matters, we are not just dealing with human relationships.

We answer to God’s Holy Spirit, and He doesn’t mess around.

Conversations between Peter and the couple emphasize that fact.

A) Ananias and Sapphira settled on a plan.

B) People like Barnabas were receiving praise for selling property and giving money to help with this emergency situation.

C) Ananias and Sapphira also wanted glory.

D) They agreed that they would sell a property worth, say, \$50,000, but tell the Apostles that they sold it for \$25, 000.

E) They lied about the transaction.



- They owned the property and were not obligated to sell it.

- If they had given half of the proceeds and told the Apostles they were giving half, they were free to do that.

- Their deceit offended the Holy Spirit.

- By questioning them, Peter simply confirmed the truth.

In the 1980s, I was teaching *Acts* to a group of young men in Hollywood. I asked them to try to remember at least two facts from each chapter.

Of Acts Chapter 5, one of the young men tersely related his two facts:

“They lied and they died.”

Centuries before at Jericho, a like thing occurred.

Recall how God caused Jericho’s walls to fall down after the Israelites marched around the city.

The Israelites charged into the defenseless city.

Joshua and the Israelites thought that they could just as simply defeat the next town Ai. At Ai, they suffered a humiliating loss.

The people of Ai roundly defeated Israel.

³³ 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15 NIV

Joshua and the leaders couldn't figure out why they failed.

They thought God let them down.

The Lord told them that someone had sinned and He held them all responsible.

Prior to Jericho, the Lord told them that they were not to take any possessions or battle booty.

Everything was dedicated to God.

By a process of elimination, the Israelites found that a man named Achan became greedy, took a gold bar, valuable silver, and some imported clothes from Jericho, and hid them.⁴

Achan paid a high price for his dishonesty.

Ananias and Sapphira paid the same.

The Achan Ai disaster took place when Israel first entered the Promised Land.

Ananias and Sapphira lied and died in the early days of Jesus' Church.

The Lord holds all accountable for His Word.

Few elites pay attention to our Creator.

Human wisdom leads us away from God.

The world prefers intellectual, political, and scientific opinions.

The other day, a news program featured prominent folks stating that Jesus was “woke”



and would approve of teaching little children sexual information.

God's Word rebukes that idea.

What did Jesus teach?

“The things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile him. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”⁵

God's Word holds parents responsible for teaching morality to their children.⁶

No one else should assume that right.

3. God's Word and Spirit must guide believers.

Many Christians have the idea that nothing in the *Old Testament* applies now.

Later in Acts, that issue arises and God willing we'll deal more fully with it.

Lawlessness is ripping society apart.

“We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels . . .”⁷

Read on in **1 Tim. 1:9** to see *types of law breaking*.

In respect to the OT, look at this sobering statement from 1 Corinthians 10: 6-11 NIV.

In this passage, Paul refers to the consequences of Israel's failure to heed God's Word:

⁵ Matthew 15:18, 19 NIV

⁶ Deuteronomy 4:9; Ephesians 6:4

⁷ 1 Timothy 1:9 NIV

⁴ See Joshua 6:24-27; 7:1-26 for this account.

“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters (, as some of them were; as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.’ ⁸ We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died... ¹¹ These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.”



Covid19 frightens many folks almost out of their skin; others panic over a nuclear disaster.

From the evidence I see, this country and most others will more likely collapse from selfishness, dishonesty, greed, and sexual perversity.

Few give God our Creator first place.

One example of people neglecting Him:

Think of those who assume:

“Saturday is for me; I’ll fit God in on Sunday—if it’s convenient.”

This Acts 5 example shows what happens when we misplace our priorities.

God doesn’t mess around.

If you don’t place God first, step outside tonight and look up at the stars.

Our sun is an average sized star.

There are more stars in the Cosmos than there are people on the earth now and have ever lived.

God spoke all of this into existence.

He gave you life and life to all those who strut, brag, and boast of their importance. Suppose you had a computer screen as big as the front wall of this building and you had a wide display of the Universe.

Can you guess how big the earth would be on your super-giant wide screen?

It wouldn’t even show as a slight speck or blip. God deserves our continual thanks and obedience; Jesus, the Lamb, paid for our selfishness and pride.

Jesus died for us and rose again—He freed us to stop acting selfishly, praise God, and love others.

Revelation 5: 12, 13 NIV

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”

May God help us to properly honor Him!

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