

Ananias and Sapphira – The Danger Of Self-Glorification

Sunday AM 05/02/21

Introduction:

Earlier in Acts we see the danger to the church was from outside, in the form of persecution and intimidation. But the “church” is made up of the redeemed but not the perfect. They were men and women like us as Acts teaches. They had their faults. In **Acts 5.1-11** we have the first recorded case of sin in the church, and God’s reaction to that sin. This was after the collection for the needy saints in Acts 4 and Barnabas selling his land to help those needy saints.

Acts 5:1 *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. 7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." 9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried*

her by her husband. **11** So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

I) The Facts

A) Ananias and Sapphira

1. Husband and wife, possessed property, they sold the property.
2. Important to note, they were not commanded to do so, it was their own idea.

B) The property and its sale

1. They gave part of the proceeds to the Apostles and part they kept.
2. Implied is they lied about how much they received from the sale.
3. **4** *"While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

C) Sin begins in the heart

1. By heart we mean, the thoughts, intentions, and desires of man.
2. Jesus pointed out what proceeds from man comes from his heart.

Mark 7:21 *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22* *"thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness,*

an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 "All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

3. All of these sins are "heart problems".

C) The punishment

1. Ananias was killed first and three hours later Sapphira was killed.
2. How Ananias' death was kept secret for three hours we are not told.
3. The reason for their death is plainly stated.
 - a. ***"You have not lied to men but to God."***
 - b. ***"How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?"***
4. All sin is against God, other passages stresses this aspect.
 - a. David's confession of his sin with Bathsheba.

Psalms 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.
 - b. Joseph being tempted by Potiphar's wife.

Genesis 39:9 "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

II) Other Cases of God Punishing Sin.

A) Nadab and Abihu

Leviticus 10:1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. **2** So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. **3** And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace.

1. Their sin was the offering of strange fire. They substituted what God commanded for what they wanted to use.
2. To approach God, one must treat God as being holy.

B) Korah and 250 Israelite Leaders

Numbers 16:1 Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; **2** and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. **3** They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

Numbers 16:13 "Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the

wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us?

1. Korah and the others were complaining about God's leadership.
2. They wanted to be in charge, they wanted the glory.

C) Uzzah

2 Samuel 6:3 *So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. 5 Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. 6 And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. 7 Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.*

1. Uzzah may have acted with good intentions, instinctively in touching the ark.
2. But he did what was forbidden in touching the ark.

D) Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5.

1. Many times rebellion and temptation comes from a desire for praise and glory.
2. To impress the brotherhood, we might be more guilty of this than we like to admit.

III) Application

A) God punishes what we would often call “trivial sins” .

1. Think about the sin of Nadab and Abihu – offering strange fire; Korah – complaining; Uzzah – touching something he was not supposed to touch.
2. Do any of these seem monumental to you? Not murder, adultery, lying, etc.
3. What’s wrong with “strange fire”? Why shouldn’t Uzzah touch the ark? Why couldn’t Moses and Aaron allow more of a leadership role to Korah?
4. None of them were “heathen” or “unbelievers” they were all people of God. Nadab and Abihu – priests; Korah and Uzzah – were Israelites.
5. There is nothing trivial in the word of God, in **1 Peter 4:11** *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

B) Questions

1. All we do is to glorify God. Am I glorifying Gods when I disobey Him? When I discount His word?
2. Was God glorified when Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire?
3. Was God glorified when Korah complained? When Uzzah touched the ark?

C) Obedience, with the motive of personal glory, is disobedience.

1. Ananias and Sapphira were seeking personal glory.
2. Jesus warns us of our motives in serving God.

Matthew 6:1 "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. **2** "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. **3** "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** "that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Conclusion:

While God does not strike people down today for their error, we must learn the principles that God was trying to establish among His people. In our pursuit of holiness and godliness, let us not discount what God has told us we must do for Him.