

Ananias and Sapphira

A married couple lies to the apostles about the proceeds from their property sale, resulting in divine judgment that brings great fear upon the early church.

Acts 5:1-11

CHARACTERS: Ananias, Sapphira, Peter, The Early Church

THEMES: Honesty, Holy Spirit, Judgment, Church Purity

IN THE EARLY church at Jerusalem, believers were of one heart and soul, sharing their possessions freely. Many sold their lands and houses, bringing the money to the apostles' feet for distribution to those in need. Into this atmosphere of radical generosity came Ananias and his wife Sapphira, who sold a possession of their own.

But Ananias, with his wife's full knowledge and consent, kept back part of the price for themselves while bringing the remainder to the apostles, presenting it as if it were the full amount. This was not merely a private financial decision but a deliberate deception before God and the church. They wanted the recognition that came with generous giving without the actual sacrifice.

When Ananias laid the money at Peter's feet, the apostle, filled with discernment from the Holy Spirit, confronted him directly: 'Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?' Peter made clear that the sin was not in keeping some money, which was their right, but in lying about it. 'Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?' Peter asked. 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.'

Upon hearing these words, Ananias fell down immediately and gave up the ghost. Great fear came upon all who heard these things. Young men

arose, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him. About three hours later, Sapphira entered, not knowing what had happened to her husband. Peter gave her an opportunity to tell the truth: 'Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?' pointing to the amount Ananias had brought. Sapphira confirmed the lie: 'Yea, for so much.'

Peter pronounced judgment: 'How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.' Immediately she fell down at his feet and yielded up the ghost. The young men came in, found her dead, and carried her out to bury her beside her husband. Great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. This sobering event demonstrated God's holiness and the seriousness of hypocrisy in the community of believers.