

Ananias & Sapphira: Giving Gone Wrong

Acts 5:1-11

Icebreaker—*When is a time you were tricked and how did that feel?*

We keep reading about victory after victory in the early church—mass conversions, miracles, and bold preaching. Acts 4 ends with another generous act on the part of Barnabas that sets the stage for this week's lesson.

Acts 4:36-37

In the spirit of Acts 2:44-45 when the disciples were selling their possessions and giving to those who had need, Barnabas sold a field and gave the money to the church. This act of generosity was encouraging to the early church as people were giving up so much to support each other. However, anything God can use for good, Satan can try to use for evil. Probably having seen or heard of this act by Barnabas and the attention that was gained for it, Ananias and Sapphira come up with a plan.

Acts 5:1-4

What was wrong about what Ananias and Sapphira did with the money?

- They presented it as if it were the total amount to make their giving seem more sacrificial and make themselves look good.

Peter said, "What made you think of doing such a thing?" What do you think drove them to act like that?

- They probably wanted attention and affirmation from others.
- They wanted a pat on the back.

When we help others it should be out of a loving heart that is focused on someone else and their needs and not about what we can get out of it or how it will make us look. **Read Matthew 6:1-4** *Why is it hypocritical to announce our giving to others?*

- Because we should not give in order to receive. When you give expecting to get something in return (praise, attention, etc) that is not done through a spirit of generosity but out of a spirit of selfishness and greed and that is hypocritical.

Acts 5:5-11

They paid the price with their lives for their sinful attitudes. While God had claimed victory in the lives of thousands to this point in Acts, Satan has been successful with these two. But just as Satan turned giving, which is normally a good thing, into something used for evil, God used this event to build the church. *How did God use these events to strengthen the church?*

- The people were filled with fear.

How do you balance a reverent fear of God with a healthy love for God?

- There is a lot to respect and fear about God as he is the ultimate determination of our eternity.
- God also has consequences for immoral acts that may not always be as direct as in this story but are just as real.
- We talk so much about how God loves us that we need to remember there is also a proper respect and fear of the Lord that we need to remember.

What would you have expected Peter to say to someone who had just sinned?

- You might expect that he would call on them to repent just as he had done with those who had sinned in Acts 2.

Why did this sin result in something so different?

- Just as God started the church through his own power and spirit in miraculous ways, so he sends a warning to his church in a miraculous way that gave the church a healthy respect for God.
- God is protecting his church and reminding them that holiness is essential.

God does not want us to be terrified of him but he does want the best for us and living holy lives is always the best for us. Some times we need to be reminded that the fear of the Lord can be a powerful force to lead us to holiness.

Application

Why is it challenging to live obedient to God even though he often doesn't immediately punish us for our sins?

How has Satan tempted you to take a good thing and turn it into something sinful?

How can a healthy respect and fear of God help us grow closer to him?

In what healthy ways can we give back to God?