

CHAPTER 3

Trouble Within and Trouble Without (Acts 5)

TROUBLE WITHIN

Ananias and Sapphira

Things were going very well for the early church, but as we come to Acts chapter 5 we learn that Satan attacked the church by bringing trouble *from within*.

The early Christians in the city of Jerusalem were willing to share their possessions (Acts 4:32). Some of the believers were very poor. Others were more wealthy and possessed L_____ or H_____ (Acts 4:34). The more wealthy Christians were willing to sell their houses or lands and share this money with those who were in need (Acts 4:34-35). One very generous believer was named Joses (who was called B_____ by the apostles; see Acts 4:36). We will learn more about Barnabas later in the book of Acts.

In Acts 5:1 we learn that a man named Ananias sold a possession. Was it a house or a piece of land (Acts 5:8)? _____ We are told that Ananias held back a part of the price, which he kept for himself (Acts 5:2), and that he gave the rest to the church.

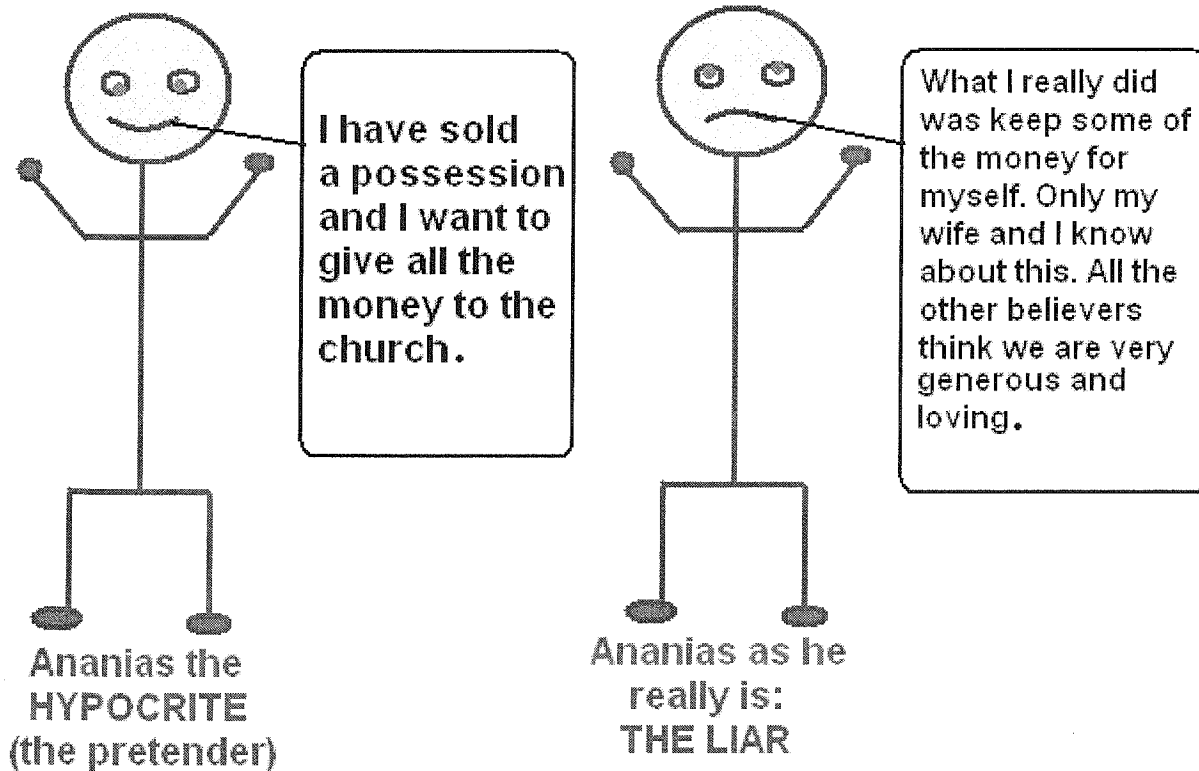
Let's just suppose that Ananias sold a piece of land for 50 thousand dollars. Then let's suppose that he kept 10 thousand dollars of this money for himself. Then he gave the rest of the money to the church and said something like this: "I sold my house for 40 thousand dollars (that would be a lie!) **and I want to give all this money to the church so that it can be used to help meet the needs of the poor believers.**"

Did his wife, Sapphira, know that he had done this (Acts 5:2)? _____ [Note: the verse says that his wife was "privy to it" which means she had full knowledge of it.]

Of what great sin was Ananias guilty? Was it wrong for him to keep part of the money for himself? That money belonged to him in the first place. (Notice what Peter said to Ananias in Acts 5:4.) The church did not have a rule which said, "Every wealthy believer must sell his possessions or must sell any land that he owns." The wealthy believers did this willingly because they wanted to (Acts 4:32,34,35). Also the church did not have a rule which said, "When you sell a possession you must give the total price to the church and not keep any of it for yourself." But God did have a rule which said this: "YOU MUST NOT LIE!" (see Col. 3:9). Did Ananias break God's rule (Acts 5:3-4)? _____

Ananias could have said something like this: "I have just sold a piece of land for 50 thousand dollars. I would like to give 40 thousand dollars of this money to the church to help meet the needs of the poor." Would this have been a lie? _____

Ananias was not only a LIAR, but he was also a HYPOCRITE (someone who WEARS A "MASK" and pretends to be someone that he really isn't):



Ananias thought that only he and his wife knew about this trick and this lie. He forgot that God knew all about it too! Somehow God made Peter realize that Ananias had kept back part of the money (Acts 5:3). This reminds us of the verse in Numbers 32:23: "Be sure your _____ will find you out." God will not let people get away with sin. We are capable of lying or doing sinful things that we think no one knows about. But sin will always catch up with us! Read Proverbs 28:13. What is the wrong thing to do with our sins? _____ What should we do about our sins? _____ What did Ananias do with his sins?

As soon as Ananias heard Peter's words, what happened to him (Acts 5:5)?
 _____ Did Peter kill him? _____
 Who do you think struck him dead? _____ Ananias never lived long enough to enjoy the money which he had lied about! Some young men took him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife Sapphira came in. Did she know what had happened to her husband (Acts 5:7)? _____ Peter may have said something like this (see Acts 5:8): "Did you sell the piece of land for 40 thousand dollars?" She may have replied, "Yes, we sold it for 40 thousand dollars!"

She lied just like her husband! She also died just like her husband (Acts 5:9-10). God judged Ananias and Sapphira because of their sin! When people heard about these things they were (read Acts 5:5,11 and circle the correct word)

- a. Angry
- b. Happy
- c. Afraid
- d. Sad

God wanted to show the early church that He was a holy God who hated sin. God wants a PURE church. God wants a HOLY church. God says, "Be ye _____; for I am _____" (1 Peter 1:16). God does not want liars and hypocrites in the church. In the beginning days of the church God made it clear that He was not playing games. Sin is a serious matter with God. Today God does not strike someone down every time they lie or do something wrong, but God wants us to know that He is still a God who hates sin. May God help us to learn a lesson from Ananias and Sapphira!

TROUBLE WITHOUT

A Miraculous Mistake

The church continued to grow (Acts 5:14) and the Jewish religious leaders became very concerned and jealous because of the great success the apostles were having (Acts 5:17). Finally they grabbed the apostles and put them into the common P_____ (Acts 5:18). Before only Peter and John were arrested (Acts 4:3,13), but now all the apostles were put in prison!

There used to be a famous American magician by the name of Harry Houdini who died in 1926. This man was able to use his skill and magical tricks to escape from almost any box, cage or prison in which men would put him. He could break out of handcuffs. People would lock him up so he could never get out, but in a few minutes he was free. He was an amazing escape artist.

In Acts 5:19 we see that God did something even better than Houdini! How did the apostles get out of prison? _____ After they were set free, what message did the angel have for them? Did he say, "Go and hide so that your enemies will not be able to find you"? _____ Do you think their enemies were surprised the next morning when they discovered that the prison was empty and the prisoners were standing in the temple teaching the people about Jesus (see Acts 5:21-25)? _____

The First Christians to Suffer

On that same day the apostles were arrested a second time (Acts 5:26-27). The religious leaders asked them this question (see Acts 5:28): *Why did you teach when we told you not to teach?*

The Jewish Leaders said:

DON'T SPEAK!

(Acts 4:18)

God said:

SPEAK!

(Acts 5:20)

Whom should they obey (Acts 5:29)? _____

A King once told Daniel not to pray, but God told Daniel to pray (see Daniel Chapter 6, especially verse 10). Who did Daniel obey? _____

Peter preached to these leaders in Acts 5:30-32. According to Peter, what did these religious leaders do to Jesus (Acts 5:30)? _____ What did God do (Acts 5:30)? _____ Peter was saying, "**The One you crucified is now alive and in heaven and He is able to save you and forgive your sins!**" Did these words make them happy and joyous (Acts 5:33)? _____

They were about to kill the apostles (Acts 5:33), but one of the leaders, named Gamaliel, talked them out of it (Acts 5:34-40). This time the Jewish leaders wanted to punish the apostles before letting them go. The Bible says that they BEAT THEM (Acts 5:40). The usual beating consisted of 39 stripes (39 blows of a whip). Once again they commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Did the apostles obey this command (Acts 5:42)? _____

As the apostles left, their backs were probably bleeding from the beating which they had received. This was the first time the believers had to suffer in a physical way. In the next chapter of these notes we will learn about the first believer who was put to death. How did the apostles react to this physical punishment (see Acts 5:41 and circle the correct answer):

- a. They said, "Preaching the gospel is not worth it. Let's go back to fishing!"
- b. They complained about the pain from the beating that their backs received, and they worried that they might be punished again.
- c. They decided that it would be better to stop telling people about Jesus. It would be better to do what the religious leaders told them to do.
- d. They rejoiced!

The early church had trouble from within (Ananias and Sapphira) and trouble from without (the religious leaders who were trying to stop them from preaching), but God was with them and in them! God was building His church (Matthew 16:18) and not even men or demons or Satan himself could stop what God was doing!