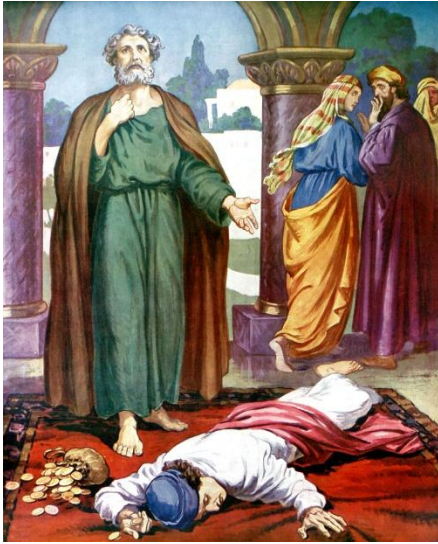


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 8



HYPOCRITES AMONG THE CHURCH

Scripture Text: Acts 5:1-16

After the great answer to prayer following the threats to the Apostles, the unity in the church was so great that it extended to the holding of possessions in common. Barnabas sold land and added the money to the common fund. Perhaps the approval won by his act excited the envy in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira.

How did Peter know this was not all the money and that Ananias and Sapphira were lying? Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gave him discernment, a gift of the Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:10**). Keep in mind that these hypocrites were not in the church, but were among the church.

MEMORY VERSE: *And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*

—Acts 5:11

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Isaiah 52:7-15** God's servants deal prudently.

Tue.—**Job 8:8-22** Hypocrites' hope shall perish.

Wed.—**Job 20:4-19** Hypocrites' joy is momentary.

Thu.—**Isaiah 33:7-16** Hypocrites live under fear.

Fri.—**Job 27:7-23** Hypocrites are lost.

Devotional Reading: **Matthew 23:1-33** Woes put on hypocrites.

Lied Unto God

Acts 5:1-4 Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession of land and kept back part of the price. They laid some of the money at the apostles' feet, claiming it was all. His wife was privy to it—in on the plan, privately knowing, admitted to knowledge of a secret transaction. Peter said, **why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?** Peter touched the vital point. He traced their sin from its source—Satan—to its target—the Holy Spirit. The land—**was it not thine own?** The money—**was it not in thine own power?** They were not forced or pressured to give it. It was voluntary. Not force without but Satan within caused them to sin. Lying is sin. They had **not lied unto men, but unto God.** It was God's work and God's church. God's Spirit dwelt there. Ananias and Sapphira were pretending to give all the money to Him. He was the One sinned against, not man. How did Peter know? God gave him discernment—insight, power of seeing differences between things.

Was it in keeping part of the money? No, they rightfully could have kept it all. Their sin was the lie. It came from selfishness, living for self, living after the flesh (**Romans 8**). They wanted glory for themselves rather than God. There was pride, which is not of God (**1 John 2:16**). Underneath the lie was deceit and hypocrisy. All came from Satan who filled their hearts. If sin is in our hearts, we do not know what we may do. The remedy is in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira were blinded, to some extent, to the enormity of their sin. Satan is a deceiver. He does not let us see where sin will lead us. We must watch lest he deceive us. We need to realize that our daily acts are unto God.

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LESSON 8

Sin Is Dangerous

Acts 5:5-10 Ananias hearing ... gave up the ghost—died. God took a sudden hand. He wanted no mixing of hypocrites with saints in His church. He desires that people be either sinners or saints. The power of God was present in the church and God's plan was to keep it that way. Outside sources cannot diminish the power of the church, but sources from within can. **Great fear came on all.** Great Power was present, and that Power would not compromise with sin. **The young men arose, wound him up**—in grave clothes (a custom then as in **John 19:40**). **Buried him** speedily. Then came Sapphira. She revealed the same deceit, the same sinful heart as Ananias. God sent the same judgment upon her. She died and was buried **by her husband**.

Great Fear Came

Acts 5:11 Great fear came upon all the church—the fear of God, respect and awe, fear to displease Him. **And upon as many as heard**—outsiders, or sinners, feared also. They lost their indifference. It is good for the church to fear the power of God. Then they will not mix worldly people and activities into the holy life of the church.

The trouble is not so much the hypocrites (who never are really in the church), but the attitude of the church toward them. These two hypocrites neither weakened the church nor lowered it in the esteem of the public. They were allowed no influence. No hypocrite today can harm a church indwelt by the Holy Spirit and using His gifts. It is when a hypocrite or other sinner is allowed to have influence in the church that harm is done. It is good for the world to fear the power of God. Then they will not seek to assume the name of the church with no change of heart.

God is never too severe. Behind His every act is His love and mercy. His church must be kept clean. See **Ephesians 5:27**. Many a sin as great as this one has been committed with no dropping dead or visible punishment. But be sure that the spiritual punishment is always the same—spiritual death. In the beginning of the church, God was setting the standard, making His will known. He expects us to uphold His standard. The church that knowingly allows a sinner to assume the position of a saint is presenting a false picture of Christ, for the church is His body.

Acts 5:12 By the hands of the apostles—as tools of God—**were many signs and wonders wrought**—healing and other miracles. **They were ... in Solomon's porch.** They had no building, so used a convenient meeting place. They continued **with one accord**—agreement, harmony. Disagreement and contention tend to close the avenues between God and man. Powerful agreement in prayer is the lifeline of man's help from God.

Not Peter's Power

Acts 5:13-16 Of the rest—the unsaved—**durst no man join himself to them.** Sinners were afraid to mingle with the church as a part of it. **The people magnified them**—spoke well of the church. **Believers were ... added to the Lord**—people were saved, paid the price to be one of them in the church. **Brought ... the sick ... that at the least the shadow of Peter ... might overshadow ... them**—if he could not lay hands on them, his shadow might touch them. **A multitude ... bringing sick ... and them ... with unclean spirits**—demon possessed—**they were healed.** It was neither Peter's power nor his shadow that healed. It was God's power. Peter's faith reached God and brought His power down.

JUST A THOUGHT

We owe to both the church and the world to keep the dividing line between them plain.