

STORY

Ananias and Sapphira - Acts 4:31-5:11

TEACHER PRAYER

Almighty God, heavenly Father, by the work of Your Holy Spirit I have been brought to Jesus. I enjoy the unity of faith in the fellowship within the visible assembly of the church. Teach me to resist the traps set by Satan, the peer pressures of the world, and my own weak flesh with Your word. Day by day, keep me in a child-like faith that trusts the power of Your word for absolute security all the way Home. In Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Levite - One of the descendants of Levi (descendant of Leah, Jacob's wife), also the distinctive title of that portion of the tribe which was set apart for the service of the sanctuary subordinate to the priests. A Levite's period of service was from age 25—50, after which he became an overseer. The function of the tribe was to preserve the Law of Jehovah in all its integrity and purity.

OUTER AIM

Ananias and Sapphira lied to Peter and to the Holy Spirit.

* We use terms such as the "visible assembly of believers", "visible congregation", "visible church on earth", etc, to distinguish them from the "Holy Christian Church" which is made up of all believers in heaven and on earth; they are known only to God who knows the hearts of all. (I know if I believe, but beyond that I only know of others who profess to believe. I take their word concerning their faith, but I cannot read another's heart. It may therefore happen that there are hypocrites in the visible Christian church on earth.)

INNER AIM

God, the Holy Spirit, gives us the power to be truthful in our dealings with one another.

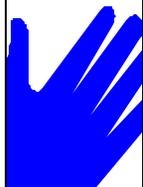
BACKGROUND

(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 2, pp. 480-486)

Every believing child of God confesses that despite the good he desires to do, he sins. The wages of sin is death. The Lord does not wish to have the sinner die, but to repent of his sin, believing that in Jesus he has forgiveness.

In our lesson, we are told about a husband and wife who posed as Christians, but lied to the Holy Spirit. They did not repent of their sin, believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. They, therefore, suffered instant death. This was a warning to the early church and to us of the fatal folly of a worship of God and a following of Jesus that is only a pretense.

- ▶ The Holy Spirit produced a unity of spirit and a boldness of witnessing among the early Christians.
- ▶ Their faith and unity were such that they shared all things in common.
- ▶ The people brought what they had, and this was distributed as each had need.
- ▶ This communal sharing was an expression of the oneness of faith of the believers.
- ▶ This "system" of care for one another in the church worked for a while, but did not last for long.
- ▶ Part of the reason for its short life is found in this record.
- ▶ Note that this was not an enforced "communism," but a love - prompted voluntary sharing with others in need.
- ▶ Joses (Barnabas) had set a good example of such Christian charity in the congregation.



- ▶ We are told that also Ananias and Sapphira sold their property and brought the money to the Apostles.
- ▶ They claimed that they were bringing the entire amount of money.
- ▶ Their sin was not that they kept back part of the money for Peter pointed out that the property and money always were theirs.
- ▶ But in pretending to bring the entire amount, they were lying, not just to the congregation, but to the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Satan had turned their hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ The consequences show that death is the wages of sin.

STUDENT PRAYER

Lower: Holy Spirit, You have called me unto faith in Jesus. Keep me in that faith, by my use of God's word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Upper: Holy Spirit, You have called me unto faith in Jesus and to be His witness. The devil, the world, and my flesh are against my listening to Your voice and following You. Keep me in the faith that trusts in Jesus and His word. Remind me of what my God has said, whenever I am tempted to sin. I ask this in the name of Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Tell the story with the same emotion and excitement as if you were there. Tell the story in your words, but be faithful to the account that God wrote in Acts 4:31—5:11.

APPLICATIONS

1. Let us daily examine our hearts, that we do not fall into sins of unbelief or self-deception or hypocrisy. Lip service to God is a mockery of Him; He will not allow that. Being a Christian, means that the Holy Spirit has given us a heart that repents of sins and trusts in Jesus for forgiveness. Such a heart will ask the Holy Spirit to cause us to follow our Good Shepherd, faithfully listening to His voice.
2. To warn the believers that there can be hypocrites in the visible church* on earth. In like manner, to warn against the fatal danger of lying to the Holy Spirit.
3. To remind us that the church on earth is made up of those who profess to believe. We are yet in our weak flesh, in a world of unbelieving peers, and subject to Satan who constantly seeks to devour us. All these we are to resist by clinging to our Savior in child-like faith, and to grow in our relationship with Jesus by using God's word, which is "our trusty shield and weapon."

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Proverbs 19:5b - He who speaks lies will not escape.

TLH #323, stanza 1: With broken heart and contrite sigh, A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry. Thy pardoning grace is rich and free, O God, be merciful to me!

Middle any of the above and...

Ephesians 4:25a - Putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor.

TLH #323, stanza 2: I smote upon my troubled breast, With deep and conscious guilt opprest; Christ and His

cross my only plea, O God be merciful to me!

Upper any of the above and...

Matthew 15:8 - These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

TLH #323, stanzas 4 and 5: Nor alms nor deeds that I have done Can for a single sin atone. To Calvary alone I flee, O God be merciful to me!

And when, redeemed from sin and hell, with all the ransomed throng I dwell, My thankful song shall ever be, God has been merciful to me!