



## Chapter 5: “We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit”

### Introduction and Overview:

Three vignettes in Ch. 5:

1. Ananias & Sapphira judged (verses 1 – 11)
2. Miraculous signs and wonders (verses 12 – 16)
3. The Sanhedrin vs. the Holy Spirit (verses 17 – 42)

In each instance, we will highlight the person and work of the Holy Spirit

### Ananias & Sapphira – Lying to the Holy Spirit (verses 1 – 11)

Context: what was happening with the early believers (Ch. 4:32-37)

- Believers were of one heart and mind and held all their belongings in common (4:32)
- The Apostles were witnessing about Jesus with great power (4:33)
- Owners of properties were selling them and bringing the proceeds to Apostles (4:34)
- Proceeds were distributed so that there were no needy among them (4:34-35)
- Joseph, called Barnabas (“Son of Encouragement”) sold a field (or farm) and brought the money to the Apostles (4:36-37)

Motivations of the heart

- Ananias and Sapphira also sold property and gave the proceeds to the Apostles (vs. 1-2)
- But they kept some of the money (vs. 2), a stark contrast to Barnabas and the others
- In verse 4, Peter tells them they could have kept the land. Or they could have sold it and just kept the money.
- But they \_\_\_\_\_ of selling it and giving the proceeds, like Barnabas
- What motivated them to do this?

### Lying to the Holy Spirit

- In verse 3, Peter asks Ananias, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?”
- The root word for “filled” is one of several used to describe the “filling” of the Holy Spirit. It is the same word used in Acts 13:52 – “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”
- What does this suggest about being filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Notice that lying to the Holy Spirit (vs. 3) is equated with lying to God (vs. 4)

### Why such harsh consequences?

- There is a familiarity about this passage:

*“And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death.”*  
(Exo. 19:12)

*“<sup>1</sup>Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup>And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.”* (Lev. 10:1-2)

*“<sup>6</sup>And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacch, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. <sup>7</sup>And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God.”* (2 Sam. 6:6-7)

- The Holy Spirit, after all, is \_\_\_\_\_
- The result: “And great fear came upon the whole church...” (vs. 11)

### Miraculous Signs and Wonders (verses 12 – 16)

The Holy Spirit enables the Apostles to perform signs and wonders

- Throughout Acts, Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in teaching and preaching the Gospel
- This and similar passages echo Jesus’ own ministry in many ways
- Jesus had emptied himself of his divine privileges (Phil. 2:6-7). All of the work Jesus did throughout his ministry, he did by the power of the Holy Spirit!
- The Apostles carried on his ministry after his ascension, by that same power!

### Note: Acts as Historical Genre

- Notice only a few verses (12-16) devoted to the performance of miraculous signs and wonders, reported in a very matter-of-fact manner
- In contrast, great detail is provided in historical accounts such as the Apostles before the Sanhedrin

## The Sanhedrin vs. the Holy Spirit (verses 17 – 42)

Quick summary of the episode

- The high priest and the Sadducees were jealous – angrily motivated by a zeal for the purity of the religion (vs. 17) – and had the Apostles arrested (vs. 18)
- An angel of the Lord led them out of prison and told them to go back to the temple courts to proclaim the Gospel, which they did (vs. 19-21)
- The high priest and Sadducees convened the Sanhedrin, but they found the Apostles teaching in the temple courts (much to the surprise of the temple guard), so the guard brought them without force to the Sanhedrin (vs. 21-26)
- When accused of teaching in the name of Jesus when they were forbidden from doing so, Peter replies, *“We must obey God rather than men.”* (vs. 30)
- Peter proclaims Jesus as Leader and Savior, whom the council had crucified (vs. 31): *“And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”* (vs 32)
- The Sanhedrin were enraged and wanted to kill them (vs. 33)
- But Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee (and mentor of Saul/Paul), suggested that since other rebels have come and gone, just leave these men alone (vs. 34-37): *“For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!”* (vs. 38-39)
- So the Sanhedrin took his advice, had the Apostles beaten, told them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go (vs. 39-40)
- The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus, and they kept on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Messiah (vs. 41-42)

“And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit...” (verse 32)

- This theme of being witnesses recalls Acts 1:8
- Also recalls Jesus’ words about the Holy Spirit in John 16:
- <sup>8</sup> *“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”* (John 16:8-11)

“[They rejoiced] that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” (verse 41)

- The Sanhedrin had them beaten – probably the infamous Roman 40 lashes minus one
- Jesus’ words must have been ringing in their ears as they were beaten: *“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.”* (Mark 13:9)

### The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

- Along with verse 32, verse 42 could be considered the main theme of the first several chapters of Acts:
- “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (vs. 42)
- The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to great and mighty things.
- Yet the main point of his ministry is to empower preaching and teaching about Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit, for all his mighty acts, is merely a witness to the person and work of Christ.

**Next:** *Acts Chapter 6*