

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 367
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 5:1-11
Topic: Telling Lies To God
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Acts 5:1-11 ISV But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold some property. (2) With his wife's full knowledge he kept back some of the money for himself and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. (3) Peter asked, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the money you got for the land? (4) As long as it remained unsold, wasn't it your own? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? So how could you have conceived such a thing in your heart? You did not lie to men but to God!" (5) When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized everyone who heard about it. (6) The young men got up, wrapped him up, carried him outside, and buried him. (7) After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. (8) So Peter asked her, "Tell me, did you sell the land for that price?" She answered, "Yes, that was the price." (9) Then Peter said to her, "How could you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you outside as well." (10) She instantly fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in, they found her dead. So they carried her out and buried her next to her husband. (11) And great fear seized the whole church and everyone else who heard about this.

The two great tragedies of the early church were Judas Iscariot and Ananias & Sapphira - and there are considerable similarities:

1. The issue in both cases was covetousness.
2. In both cases Satan "filled their heart".
3. They both did so in a context of the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit – Judas with Jesus, Ananias & Sapphira with Peter and the apostolic assembly.
4. In both cases they died as a direct result.

The problem was not that they only gave part of the proceeds. The apostle Peter said: "And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?" indicating that there was no compulsion to give the entire amount. They could have given half and kept half – and no-one would have objected. Our money is ours to freely use for God.

What was wrong is that they lied about the matter: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the money you got for the land? And later...So Peter asked her, "Tell me, did you sell the land for that price?" She answered, "Yes, that was the price." (9) Then Peter said to her, "How could you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?

They were lying to God's servants and they were testing God and testing the

prophetic gift that was upon the apostles. This is no small matter; especially in the midst of revival and the powerful manifest presence of God. Revivals are characterized by an awe of God that keeps people on the straight and narrow. In the face of this Ananias & Sapphira were trying to be smart – and get all of the spiritual kudos without making the full financial sacrifice. They were trying to trick God.

Financial deceit leads to all sorts of dodges and self-deceptions as the believer attempts to rationalize their behaviour. “Borrowing” becomes pilfering and pilfering becomes covered by lies and takes us out of the light. Satan enters in at our weak points, especially those where we shut down our conscience. We tend to only shut down our conscience when we want to do something else – have an affair, tell a lie, be greedy, or pursue an ungodly option. Money is a powerful incentive to betray Christ - and it will be the choice we have to make in the last days. (Revelation 13)

Thus the New Testament is very stern about financial matters:

1 Timothy 6:5-11 ISV ...They think that godliness is a way to make a profit. (6) Of course, godliness with contentment does bring a great profit. (7) For we did not bring anything into the world, and surely we cannot take anything out of it. (8) So as long as we have food and clothes, we will be satisfied with these. (9) But people who want to get rich keep toppling into temptation and are trapped by many stupid and harmful desires that plunge them into destruction and ruin. (10) For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, in their eagerness to get rich, have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with much pain. (11) But you, man of God, must flee from all these things. ..

Matthew 6:24 ISV "No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate one and love the other, or be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches!"

Luke 14:33 ISV In the same way, none of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions.

We can cling to cash - and end up trying to serve two masters. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira the master they chose to despise was the Lord!

Money should be our servant and God's servant, doing His will in His Kingdom.

There are at least five financial priorities given in Scripture:

1. Providing for one's family including aged parents. (1 Timothy 5:8)
2. Providing for the poor neighbor, widows and orphans in their distress, especially once brothers and sisters in Christ. (James 1:27, 1 John 3:16-18)
3. Providing for God's servants who teach you the Word. (Galatians 6:6)
4. Providing for missionaries and itinerant workers. (3 John 5-8).
5. Providing international relief especially to Christians. (2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9)

The first two of these are very high priority items!! Those who do not provide for their family “worse than an unbeliever and have denied the faith”. While those who help the poor practice “pure religion” and are assured they possess “the love of

God". The other three do not carry the same weighty spiritual imperatives but are still strongly recommended for believers.

A good balance is provided by Paul: 1 Timothy 6:17-19 MKJV Charge the rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, He offering to us richly all things to enjoy, (18) that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to share, to be generous, (19) laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Here Paul makes clear: 1. It is OK to be rich if you are generous. 2. God has given us all things richly to enjoy. 3. But we should be humble and remember our treasure is in heaven.

Blessings,

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