

## Ananias and Sapphira

My name is Ananias and this is Sapphira, who was my wife on earth. Our relationship is different here and we need to explain where “here” is and how we got to where we are. She has agreed that I will speak to you first and allow her “the last word,” to which I agree.

We became Christians in the early days under the preaching of Peter who said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The experience has been called “being born again.” We repented, were baptized and received the gift. We fellowshiped with the believers, learning more every day from the Apostles. But we had not learned very much when our lives were cut short.

We have since been allowed to understand what happened and why. But let me give you the basic history. After Barnabas sold a field and donated the proceeds to the Apostles for the daily distribution of food to the believers, we decided to do the same thing. It was all my idea to keep part of the proceeds, just in case we had to be on our own again some time. The present system was clearly not sustainable. I decided that it would be simpler to just say that what we gave was the exact price rather than have to reveal our lack of faith. Sapphira was loyal to me and in this case did not object.

Our sin was serious because it happened at a crucial time. And, by the way, we each knew that it was sin when we did it. For each of us, our last conscious moment on earth was one of being sincerely repentant. We have now been shown, here in the presence of our Lord and Savior, that our lives did indeed make a huge impact on the history of the church, as it came to be known. Some others became heroes by willingly accepting martyrdom. We served the cause by being bad examples!

The Day of Pentecost had caused a great uproar in Jerusalem. Besides the many who became believers, the curiosity of the masses was aroused. Some heard about distribution of food and were inclined to join us insincerely or for the wrong reason. Also, the generous act of Barnabas and the affirmation he received from the apostles, assuring him of his reward in heaven, made some want to receive that sort of adulation – we sure did!

But! A precedent had to be set. Sincerity and honesty within the community of believers were essential for the message to be carried from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the world – as the Apostles told us was our dear Lord’s final command.

We are allowed to communicate with you in what is apparently the distant future, although time does not have that sort of meaning here. We are shown that there are aspects of our story that are intended to teach you important lessons. One is that there have been many lies, told by believers, that have not resulted in sudden death. We have been allowed to see this, because financial planning had been my forte in life -- my forte and my downfall. But if our experience had been normative for church discipline, the entire church would have already been removed from earth and relocated to the presence of the Lord and His angels.

Another lesson to be learned from this is regarding a teaching accepted by some in your time, that before death, a believer must confess sins to an authorized priest and receive a particular ceremony to assure salvation. That is not true. John later wrote that if we confess our sins we are also cleansed from **all** unrighteousness, including subsequent sins. Yes, there were consequences. When we arrived here, there were many tears to be wiped away, not only for the lost opportunity to be servants of our Redeemer, but also the sudden separation from our grown children and grandchildren, as well

as their anxiety over our eternal destiny. We were blessed to know that they are serving the Lord with joy, not fear.

I, Sapphira, want to make two comments. I stood by my husband and it resulted in the death of us both. But our wonderful Savior turned the whole thing into something beautiful, as we have learned from those who have since joined us. But to wives, let me say this. You are to be advisor to your husband. He has been burdened with the authority and responsibility of making decisions, but he cannot do it alone. And he needs the perspective and insight that only a woman can provide. To husbands, I ask that you be willing to listen to your wives. We women are not always right and need to be told when that is the case. But a secure man does not have to feel threatened or belittled when his wife disagrees, or even simply questions a course of action.

We both ask that you all learn from the lives of those of us whose stories have been recorded for your edification. As Peter later wrote, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" Long before that message, Solomon wrote of the Lord, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Does any of this apply to the world of your day?

2 Chronicles 7, Acts 5, 1 Peter 4, 1 John 1