

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 63

Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 4:23 - 5:11

There was in the early church a man by the name of Barnabas. He owned a piece of land. The Bible tells us that he sold it, and then took the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.



He wasn't the only one who did that. Others did it too. Why? This was their way of helping the poor. Those who had *more than they needed* would give money to the apostles. And the apostles would then give it to those who *did not have enough*.

That's the way it should be in the church. People should think about, and care for, *each other* ... not just *themselves*.

How about *you*? Are you like Barnabas?

Maybe you think: "I'm too

young." Or: "I have only a little bit of money." Or: "There aren't any apostles in our church, so we can't put money at their feet."

Well, you're not too young. And *Jesus* said that two mites, two pennies, are enough.

Let's think about that for a minute, before we hear about Ananias and Sapphira. Barnabas laid the money at the feet of the *apostles* ... because there were no *deacons*. In our churches today we *have* deacons. You see them every Sunday when they pass the collection plates. One of those plates is for the "benevo-

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the "off" season.

lence fund.” That’s the collection that is for the *poor*. The plate goes up and down the rows — right past *you*.



Maybe Dad gives you some money to put in that collection plate. That’s good. Maybe you take some coins out of your piggy bank. That’s good. The important thing, though, is *how* you give. Do you look at the money in your hand and think, “Sure wish I could put this in my pocket.” Or: “Sure hope *other* people see me put this dollar bill in the plate.”

Or do you think, “Sure am glad that I can help the poor.”

The people in the early church thought, “Sure am glad that I can help the poor.” God saw that ... and He was *pleased*.

Someone else saw it too. And he was *displeased*. He hated the church — because he hated Christ. It was Satan. He didn’t like it when he saw that the people in the church were *Christ-like*. “I’ll fix *that*,” Satan thought. “I’ll get the people in the church to start thinking more about *themselves* than about *others*.”

And that’s what he tried to do. In our story for today, Satan enters the hearts of Ananias and his wife Sapphira.

It all started when the two of them saw Barnabas put money at the apostles’ feet. Barnabas gave money, not because he wanted to be *praised*, but because he *cared about God’s poor*. People knew that about Barnabas. They *liked* it. And

they told him so. Ananias and Sapphira saw that, and they thought, “That must feel really good, to be admired by other people. *We* should try that.”

Like Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira had a piece of land that they could sell. So they sold it. They had the money in their hands. And then they started thinking, “Sure wish we could just put it in our own pockets.” They hated to part with the money — just for the poor. But, if they keep it, they will not get the praise of men. And they wanted *that* too.

Already we see the work of Satan in their hearts. No matter, now, what they do with that money, *God* will not be pleased. That’s because they were not thinking about the *poor*, but only about *themselves*. They were *selfish*.

Nor were they thinking about *God*. They had a plan — a plan to fool *men*. They didn’t stop to think that they couldn’t fool *God*.

Here’s what they decided. They would *keep back*, for themselves, part of the money. And they would bring the rest to Peter, and *pretend that it was all*.

Pretty clever, they thought. People will admire *them*, just like they admire Barnabas. And they’ll still have money in *their pockets*. And *no one will ever know*.

But God knew. And He told Peter. Ananias came with his gift. He laid it at the apostles’ feet. And he heard not one word of praise. “Why,” Peter asked, “has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?” You didn’t *have to* sell your land, Peter said. And, after you

sold it, you could have done whatever you wanted to with the money. But to do *this*, to give part of the money and pretend that it's all, is to *lie* — not to *men*, but to *God*.

Right then and there, God smote Ananias. Ananias fell down ... dead. Some young men came forward, picked him up, carried him out, and buried him.

And three hours later Sapphira arrived, not knowing what had happened to her husband. Peter pointed to the bag of money and said to her, "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much." Her answer was quick. And just like her husband's, it was a lie. "Yes," she said, "for so much."

"How is it," Peter asked, "that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." The words were barely out of Peter's mouth, and Sapphira also fell dead at his feet.

Satan had *lost*. He tried to work selfishness, like a poison, into the church. But God, by a mysterious, awesome power, had kept it *out*.

And what a lesson it was, and is, about *giving*. The God who is pleased by a widow's mites is a God who *hates* a bag full of a hypocrite's gold. Ponder that.



How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did Barnabas do to get money to help the poor?

2. After Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land, what did they decide to do with the money?

3. How did Peter know that Ananias was lying? Who, did Peter say, had entered the heart of Ananias?

4. What happened both to Ananias and to Sapphira?

Suffering for Christ's Sake

Acts 5:12-42

Satan is a fearsome foe. Fearsome — like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And, like a roaring lion, he doesn't give up easily. Satan had tried to bring poison into the church through Ananias and Sapphira — and he had failed. But he has a big bag of wicked tricks. He will try again to stir up the hatred of the Jews against the followers of Jesus. Especially the *apostles*. If he can get rid of *them*, then maybe the church will fall apart and come to nothing. Let's see how he tries to do that.

The Jewish Sanhedrin had already tried to silence the apostles. They had locked up Peter and John in jail for a night, and then warned them not even to *mention* again the name of Jesus. The apostles knew that, if they disobeyed, they could expect to be put in prison, or to be whipped, or to be stoned to death. So much did the rulers of the Jews hate the name of Jesus!

When Peter and John were let go, they went right away back to the other apostles to tell them what had happened.

And then they did what the people of God should always do in time of trouble. They *prayed*. They turned immediately to *God*. And what did they ask? Did they ask that God would keep them from getting *hurt*? No. Did they pray that God would *destroy their enemies*? No. Listen: “Grant unto thy servants,” they prayed, “that with all boldness they may speak thy word.”



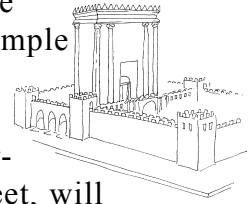
That was it. “Give us boldness.” Give us boldness so that we may hold high the name of Jesus — no matter what *men* may say or do. That was a beautiful prayer. And do you know what? *God liked that prayer*. He answered it immediately by shaking the house in which the apostles were praying. Can you even *imagine* that? There was not an *earthquake* — an earthquake that made all of the houses in the land shake. Just this one house! It was as if God, when He heard that prayer, took the house in His almighty hands and shook it. Yes, His almighty hands. The apostles need not be afraid of mere *men* — when *God* is on their side. With new courage, the apostles went out and *preached* — in the *name of Jesus* ... right in the temple.

Their enemies were *watching*. They saw people, by the hundreds, crowding around the apostles. To hear them. And to have their *sick healed*. Yes, the apostles were doing *miracles*. People would bring their sick on little cots and put them along the street, so that Peter’s



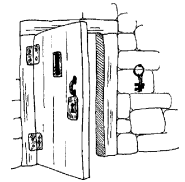
shadow would pass over them, and heal them. This was *astounding*. And all of it was being done in the name of ... Jesus!

How dare the apostles disobey the orders of the chief priests and elders — right under their noses, in the temple. The leaders of the Jews are *furiously*. They order the temple police to round them all up. *All* of the apostles. And lock them up. Tomorrow the Sanhedrin will meet, will haul them out of prison, and show them who is boss.



Ah, yes, who is boss — that was the question. The apostles will learn who is really in control. So will the Sanhedrin.

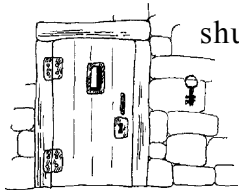
In the middle of the night, something amazing happened. An angel of the Lord came and opened the prison doors. He led the twelve out of the prison, right past the guards, who didn’t see or hear a thing. “Go,” the angel said, “stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”



Early in the morning the Sanhedrin comes together. There they all are, in their big meeting room. They will show the apostles that they mean *business*. The mighty Sanhedrin will not let a bunch of ignorant fishermen from Galilee defy their orders. As soon, therefore, as they are all seated, ready to pass judgment, they send the temple police to fetch the apostles out of the prison.

But what’s *this* that we see? The

temple police return ... empty handed!
What has gone wrong?



“The prison truly found we shut with all safety,” say the temple police, “and the keepers standing without before the doors. But when we had opened them, we found no man therein.”

Yes, doors *locked*. Guards *armed*. But prisoners *gone*. What can this be ... but a *miracle*. And what can this mean ... but that *God is on the side of the apostles*, and He is able to deliver them whenever and however He pleases. We do well to remember that!

Just then a messenger arrived, to tell the Sanhedrin that those apostles were (can you believe it?) preaching again, right in the temple. Arrest them! Bring them to us!

So the temple police go again and, quietly for fear of the people, lead the apostles away, and bring them before the Sanhedrin.

Caiaphas, the high priest, has a question for them. Does he want to know how they got out of the prison? No, the Sanhedrin doesn't want to hear anything about *that*. Just *this*: “Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine!”

It was Peter who answered. “We ought to obey *God* rather than men.” And then this: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his

right hand to be a Prince and Savior.”

There it was again — that hated name of *Jesus*. How it *enraged* the Sanhedrin! Their first thought was to *kill the twelve*. They will destroy the church of Christ by murdering all of its leaders. But God held them back — by their fear of the people.

What, then, did the Sanhedrin do? They gave orders that the apostles be *beaten*. *Whipped!* Good and hard! So that they will learn, this time, that the Sanhedrin means what it says when they warn the apostles, one more time, not to speak at all in the name of Jesus.



Once more, the apostles are let go. They leave, with backs bleeding, but with hearts rejoicing. Rejoicing?? Yes, they did rejoice. They rejoiced to know (now listen closely) that Jesus had thought them “worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

Stripes on the back. Do they hurt? Oh, yes, how they hurt! But what are stripes, when we suffer them for *Christ's sake*? Badges of honor! Think about *that*.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. What did the apostles do after the Sanhedrin warned them never again to mention the name of Jesus?
2. How did God answer their prayer?
3. What did the rulers of the people do when they saw that the apostles kept right on preaching in the name of Jesus?
4. What did *God* do when the apostles were in jail?

5. What did the apostles do early the next morning?
6. How did the Sanhedrin punish them for disobeying their command?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. Barnabas gave his money for the poor *to the apostles*. How do we give money for the poor in our churches today?
2. What do you think — did God like the gift of Barnabas because it was so *large*?
3. Why did God *not* like the gift of Ananias and Sapphira?

4. The devil, Satan, worked in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira. Do you know what he was trying to do?

5. What did the apostles pray for, after they were threatened by their rulers?

6. An angel of the Lord let the apostles out of prison. What important lesson can we learn from that?

7. Why did the apostles *rejoice* after they were *whipped*?

Memory Verse

Acts 5:29b “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Color the Picture

Color the picture of the open prison door and guard.

