

## The Spirit Of Barnabas And That Of Ananias And Sapphira.

Acts 4:36-5:11

Sunday morning, October 18,2009.

The picture thus far described about the early church is one of great health. There was oneness of heart and soul; there was a prayerful courage that possessed them in the face of opposition and even persecution; and there was great power, great grace and great generosity at work among them, an example of which comes to us in the person of Barnabas. But sin is never very far away...

### I. Barnabas.

- A. The significance of Barnabas, and his introduction at this time, is twofold:
  1. He, and his generosity, are singled out for mentioning because of the role he would play as Paul's companion on his missionary journeys.
  2. He is singled out for mentioning because of the reaction his generosity provoked in two other wealthy members of the early church, Ananias and Sapphira, his wife.
- B. Three things are mentioned about Barnabas giving us insight into his character and usefulness for ministry:
  1. Barnabas was a Levite.

Levites were set apart for the ministry of the Lord's house. They did not inherit a territory in the promised land. Instead they lived in designated cities throughout the territories of all twelve tribes. They were to have the spiritual well being of the people as a special concern. Barnabas appears to have been a true Levite.
  2. He was from the country of Cyprus; he belonged to the Jews who had been dispersed. As such he was very familiar with the language and culture of the Greeks and various other ethnic groups, making him a suitable companion for the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys.
  3. He is re-named Barnabas (Son of encouragement) by the apostles because of the generous spirit by which he encouraged others. Barnabas was a true servant. His heart had been set free from his worldly possessions, and it was bound up in the needs of the people of God.
    - After Saul's conversion and return to Jerusalem it is Barnabas who takes him under his wing when the other apostles are reluctant. Acts 9:26,27.
    - Barnabas became a teacher and encourager in the gentile church of Antioch in Syria. Acts 13:1.
    - Barnabas is sent out from this church with Paul of his first missionary journey. Acts 13:2,3.
    - It would be Barnabas who would give John Mark another chance after John Mark had left them earlier in Acts 13:13, and Paul refused to take him along again. Acts 15:37-41.

### II. Ananias and Sapphira.

Being surrounded by many in their church who demonstrated great selflessness and concern for their brothers and sisters in need, Acts 4:34, Ananias and Sapphira also

sell a piece of land, bringing part of the proceeds to the apostles and keeping part for themselves, while pretending they had given the whole amount.

A. What the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not:

1. Ananias and Sapphira were not required to sell this piece of land in order to be members in good standing in the church. Peter says as much in Ch. 5:4.
2. Having sold the land, Ananias and Sapphira were not required to give all of the proceeds to the apostles. They had every right to give part of it as they

did.

This much is again implied in Peter's words of Ch. 5:4.

Application:

The grace of Christian giving, like all other Christian graces, is tied to our union with the living and reigning Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of giving is found first and primarily in the Lord Jesus, and flows from him through the lives of the members of His body. The Lord Jesus made Himself freely and willingly poor, and so out of His free compassion He chose to make others rich. The grace of Christian giving has two components: 1. The freedom to give or to withhold, and 2. Compassion on those in need as a motive.

B. What the sin of Ananias and Sapphira was.

1. It was their testing the Holy Spirit. How far could they go? What could they get away with? The Holy Spirit who is zealous for truth and integrity.
2. They wanted two benefits and were torn between them. They wanted to be thought of as the caliber Christian like Barnabas and many others. But they also wanted to enjoy the benefits and enjoyments that money holds out to us in this world.
3. So they come up with a scheme in which they hope to reap both benefits from the same action. They pretend to be giving the whole amount.

C. What Ananias and Sapphira should have said to themselves and to the Lord and to others.

1. We are not the caliber givers like Barnabas.
2. Our hearts are as yet entangled in the things of this world.
3. We have the freedom to give a portion of the proceeds of the land, but we also want to hold part for our own security and enjoyment.
4. We do desire to develop greater measures of compassion and freedom in our giving.

D. What Ananias and Sapphira would have gained this way.

1. Faith and confidence in God's grace to help them grow.
2. Fear of God's holiness to keep them from sin.
3. A full and free forgiveness for where their love for others fell short.
4. A new freedom and fellowship in their walk with their fellow Christians.

Applications:

1. Do you see why we have a confession of sin in our approach to God?
2. Do you look to the Lord to develop in you the qualities of freedom and compassion in your giving, or do you base your giving on a legalistic approach?
3. Do you know what it is to fellowship with your brothers and sisters on the basis of your shortcomings. Do you stand with them in their shortcomings?