



Series: Unstoppable (Part 9)

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Acts 5:1-11 tells the cautionary tale of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple who pretended that they were giving a larger sum of money to the Church than they actually were. Their pretense resulted in their deaths. What might this mean for us today?

## **DISCUSSION**

1. Where did Ananias and Sapphira go wrong? Read Peter's rebuke of the pair in Acts 5:3-4.

*"3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."*

- a. To whom did Ananias and Sapphira lie to? What was their lie?

- b. What was Satan's role? How were Ananias and Sapphira affected?
  - c. It was entirely up to Ananias and Sapphira to sell (or not sell) the land, and to give (or not give) the money to the church. What does this say about God's expectation of our attitude in giving? Read Deuteronomy 15:10.
  - d. Why might it be hard for us to maintain a good attitude in giving? How do we keep Satan from filling our hearts?
2. Whilst it is speculation whether Ananias's and Sapphira's deaths were an outright smiting by God or caused by a sudden heart attack, the more pertinent question is why God allowed the deaths to occur in such a dramatic fashion.
- a. Why did the Holy Spirit reveal to Peter the lies that Ananias and Sapphira had told?
    - i. If Ananias and Sapphira had been allowed to 'get away' with their lies, how might this have impacted the authority of the leaders of the early Church?
    - ii. If this culture further festered internally within the Church, how might this have affected the early Church's ability to withstand the external pressures that were to come (Acts 5:17-18)?
  - b. How seriously should we treat lying in the Church today? What might this look like in practice?
3. If the story of Ananias and Sapphira is an example of what not to do, the account of the Acts also provides an example of what to do.
- a. Read Acts 4:32-37 on how believers in the early Church shared their possessions.

*"32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need."*

- i. Compare and contrast the two scenarios. What similarities and/or differences can you identify?
  - ii. What do these two scenarios tell us about how genuine generosity must be displayed? How were the believers able to give so generously (Acts 4:33)?
- b. Read Matthew 25:31-46 on what our acts of generosity mean to God, paying attention to verses 40, 45-46.
  - i. How do we encourage each other to give generously to the cause of the Kingdom? What will it take for our hearts to align with God's?

### **WHAT WOULD YOU DO**

We are the stewards of our possessions. We have been given the freedom and autonomy to decide how to dispose of all that we own. At the same time, we have also been called to be generous in spirit just as we have received generously from God. We can take action by meeting a need (however small!). Who can you offer a listening ear to? Are you able to help provide food or shelter to someone else? Where can you serve in God's community?

Remember, though, that the story of Ananias and Sapphira tells us that God requires our generosity to be genuine. Let us listen to our hearts first, and work with the purposes of the Kingdom foremost in our minds.

### **MEMORY VERSE**

“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34 that there were no needy persons among them.” - Acts 4:33-34a NIV