

Ananias and Sapphira

Acts 5:1–14

For the love of money is the root of all evil:
(1 Timothy 6:10)

In sharp contrast to the example of benevolence shown by the believers, was the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira . . . They had been present with other believers when, after the apostles had prayed, “the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” Acts 4:31. Deep conviction had rested upon all present, and under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Ananias and Sapphira had made a pledge to give to the Lord the proceeds from the sale of certain property. (AA 71.2)

With others, Ananias and his wife Sapphira had the privilege of hearing the gospel preached by the apostles. The power of God attended the word spoken, and deep conviction rested upon all present. **The softening influence of the grace of God had the effect upon their hearts to cause them to release their selfish hold upon their earthly possessions.** While under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, they made a pledge to give to the Lord certain lands; but when they were no longer under this heavenly influence, the impression was less forcible, and they began to question and draw back from fulfilling the pledge which they had made. **They thought that they had been too hasty,** and wished to reconsider the matter. Thus a door was opened by which Satan at once entered and gained control of their minds. (4T 463.1)

- ❑ In Judea and Jerusalem during the first century, the standard daily wage for a common worker was 1 denarius. Over a working year, a common laborer typically earned between 200 and 300 denarii.
- ❑ Basic food necessities could take roughly 0.5 denarius per day. Lodging, such as in the Parable of the Good Samaritan where two denarii (two pence) were paid to an innkeeper (Luke 10:35), indicates that modest or short-term shelter accommodations cost roughly a quarter to a third of a denarius per day.
- ❑ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, (Acts 4:34)

Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of **primitive godliness** as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. (GC 464.1)

In sharp contrast to the example of benevolence shown by the believers, was the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira . . . They had been present with other believers when, after the apostles had prayed, “the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” Acts 4:31. Deep conviction had rested upon all present, and under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Ananias and Sapphira had made a pledge to give to the Lord the proceeds from the sale of certain property. (AA 71.2)

They began to regret their promise . . . They thought they had been too hasty, that they ought to reconsider their decision.

They talked the matter over, and decided not to fulfill their pledge. They saw, however, that those who parted with their possessions to supply the needs of their poorer brethren, were held in high esteem among the believers; and ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated to God, they deliberately decided to sell their property and pretend to give all the proceeds into the general fund, but really to keep a large share for themselves.

(AA 72.1)

But God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. Ananias and Sapphira practiced fraud in their dealing with God; they lied to the Holy Spirit, and their sin was visited with swift and terrible judgment.
(AA 72.2)

This judgment testified that men cannot deceive God, that He detects the hidden sin of the heart, and that He will not be mocked. It was designed as a warning to the church, to lead them to avoid pretense and hypocrisy, and to beware of robbing God. (AA 73.4)

It is God who **blessees men with property**, and He does this that they may be able to give toward the advancement of His cause.

He sends the sunshine and the rain. He causes vegetation to flourish. He gives health and the ability to acquire means. All our blessings come from His bountiful hand. In turn, He would have men and women show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in **tithes and offerings**—in thank offerings, in freewill offerings, in

trespass offerings. Should means flow into the treasury in accordance with this divinely appointed plan, —**a tenth of all the increase, and liberal offerings**,—there would be an abundance for the advancement of the Lord's work. (AA 75.1)

But the hearts of men become hardened through selfishness, and, like Ananias and Sapphira, they are tempted to withhold part of the price, while pretending to fulfill God's requirements.

Many spend money lavishly in self-gratification. Men and women consult their pleasure and gratify their taste, while they bring to God, almost unwillingly, a stinted offering. They forget that God will one day demand a strict account of how His goods have been used, and that He will no more accept the pittance they hand into the treasury than He accepted the offering of Ananias and Sapphira. (AA 75.2)

From the stern punishment meted out to those perjurers, God would have us learn also how deep is His hatred and contempt for all hypocrisy and deception. In pretending that they had given all, Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, and, as a result, they lost this life and the life that is to come. The same **God who punished them**, today condemns all falsehood. Lying lips are an abomination to Him. He declares that into the Holy City “there shall in no wise enter ... anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.” Revelation 21:27. (AA 75.3)

In the meantime the high priest and those with him had “called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel.” The priests and rulers had decided to fix upon the disciples the charge of insurrection, to accuse them of **murdering Ananias and Sapphira**, and of conspiring to deprive the priests of their authority. They hoped so to excite the mob that it would take the matter in hand and deal with the disciples as it had dealt with Jesus. (AA 80.2)

This case should be a warning to all to guard against the first approach of Satan. **Covetousness was first cherished**; then, ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated and pledged to God, **deception** was practiced. They talked the matter over together and deliberately decided to withhold a part of the price of the land. When convicted of their **falsehood**, their punishment was instant death. They knew that the Lord, whom they had defrauded, had searched them out; for Peter said: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to **lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." (4T 463.2)

Although no visible marks of God's displeasure follow the repetition of the sin of Ananias and Sapphira now, yet the sin is just as heinous in the sight of God and will as surely be visited upon the transgressor in the day of judgment, and many will feel the curse of God even in this life. **When a pledge is made to the cause, it is a **vow** made to God and should be sacredly kept.**

(4T 469.2–470.1)

Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the gospel. Of the means which is entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion—a tithe; **but He leaves all free** to say how much the tithe is, and whether or not they will give more than this. They are to give as they purpose in their hearts. (5T 149.1)

But when the heart is stirred by the influence of the Spirit of God, and **a vow** is made to give a certain amount, the one who vowed has no longer any right to the consecrated portion. He has given his pledge before men, and they are called to witness to the transaction. At the same time he has incurred an obligation of the most sacred character to co-operate with the Lord in building up His kingdom on earth. Promises of this kind made to men would be considered binding. Are they not more sacred and binding when made to God? Are promises tried in the court of conscience less binding than written agreements with men? (5T 149.1)

When a pledge is made to the cause, it is a **vow** made to God and should be **sacredly kept**. In the sight of God it is no better than sacrilege to appropriate to our own use that which has been once pledged to advance His sacred work.

When a verbal or written **pledge** has been made in the presence of our brethren to give a certain amount, they are the visible witnesses of a **contract** made between ourselves and God. The pledge is not made to man, but to God, and is as a written note given to a neighbor. No legal bond is more binding upon the Christian for the payment of money than a pledge made to God.
(4T 469.2–470.1)

Each of us has a case pending in the court of heaven. Shall our course of conduct balance the evidence against us? The case of Ananias and Sapphira was of the most aggravated character. In keeping back part of the price, they lied to the Holy Ghost. Guilt likewise rests upon every individual in proportion to like offenses. **When the hearts of men are softened** by the presence of the Spirit of God, they are more susceptible to impressions of the Holy Spirit, and resolves are made to deny self and to sacrifice for the cause of God. It is when divine light shines into the chambers of the mind with unusual clearness and power that the feelings of the natural man are overcome, that selfishness loses its power upon the heart, and that desires are awakened to imitate the Pattern, Jesus Christ, in practicing self-denial and benevolence. (4T 470.3)

The disposition of the naturally selfish man then becomes kind and pitiful toward lost sinners, and he makes **a solemn pledge to God**, as did Abraham and Jacob. Heavenly angels are present on such occasions. The love of God and love for souls triumphs over selfishness and love of the world. Especially is this the case when the speaker, in the Spirit and power of God, presents the plan of redemption, laid by the Majesty of heaven in the sacrifice of the cross. (4T 470.3)

When the divine light is shining into the heart with unusual clearness and power, habitual selfishness relaxes its grasp, and there is a disposition to give to the cause of God. None need expect that they will be allowed to fulfill the promises then made without a **protest** on the part of Satan. He is not pleased to see the Redeemer's kingdom on earth built up. He suggests that the pledge made was too much, that it may cripple them in their efforts to acquire property or gratify the desires of their families. The power Satan has over the human mind is wonderful. He labors most earnestly to keep the heart bound up in self.

(5T 149.2)

The only means which God has ordained to advance His cause is to bless men with property. He gives them the sunshine and the rain; He causes vegetation to flourish; He gives health and ability to acquire means. All our blessings come from His bountiful hand. In turn He would have men and women show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in tithes and offerings —in **thank** offerings, in **freewill** offerings, in **trespass** offerings.

(5T 150.1)

In every church there should be established a treasury for the poor. Then let each member present a **thank** offering to God once a week or once a month, as is most convenient. **This offering will express our gratitude for the gifts of health, of food, and of comfortable clothing.** And according as God has blessed us with these comforts will we lay by for the poor, the suffering, and the distressed. I would call the attention of our brethren specially to this point. Remember the poor. Forgo some of your luxuries, yea, even comforts, and help those who can obtain only the most meager food and clothing. In doing for them you are doing for Jesus in the person of His saints. He identifies Himself with suffering humanity. Do not wait until your imaginary wants are all satisfied. Do not trust to your feelings and give when you feel like it and withhold when you do not feel like it. Give regularly, either ten, twenty, or fifty cents a week, as you would like to see upon the heavenly record in the day of God. (WM 272.2)

The payment of the tithe was but a part of God's plan for the support of His service. Numerous gifts and offerings were divinely specified. Under the Jewish system the people were taught to cherish a spirit of liberality both in sustaining the cause of God and in supplying the wants of the needy. For special occasions there were **freewill offerings**. At the harvest and the vintage, the first fruits of the field—corn, wine, and oil—were consecrated as an offering to the Lord. The gleanings and the corners of the field were reserved for the poor. The first fruits of the wool when the sheep were shorn, of the grain when the wheat was threshed, were set apart for God. So also were the first-born of all animals, and a redemption price was paid for the first-born son. The first fruits were to be presented before the Lord at the sanctuary and were then devoted to the use of the priests. (AA 336.3)

For the building of the sanctuary great and expensive preparations were necessary; a large amount of the most precious and costly material was required; yet the Lord accepted only **freewill offerings**. “Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take My offering” was the divine command repeated by Moses to the congregation. Devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice were the first requisites in preparing a dwelling place for the Most High. (*CIHS* 35.1)

The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth, and to sacrifice for God and His cause. The angel said: "Think ye that any will be compelled to **sacrifice**? No, no. It must be a **freewill offering**. It will take all to buy the field." I cried to God to spare His people, some of whom were fainting and dying. Then I saw that the judgments of the Almighty were speedily coming, and I begged of the angel to speak in his language to the people. Said he, "All the thunders and lightnings of Mount Sinai would not move those who will not be moved by the plain truths of the word of God, neither would an angel's message awake them." (*CET* 107.3)

Let everyone have a **self-denial box** in his home, and when he would spend pennies and shillings in self-gratification let him remember the needy and starving in Africa and India and those close by his own door. There are poor among us. Practice economy, and in every line present your case to God. Ask Him to give you the spirit of Christ, that you may be in every sense of the word Christ's disciples and receive His blessing. As you turn from the worship of self and try to relieve suffering humanity, pray that God will give you a true missionary work to do for souls. Then those who come to worship in the house of God will see a people clothed in modest apparel in harmony with the faith and Word of God. It is these things that steal away the love and trust and confidence of God's people in Him, that mar the religious experience and develop **a selfishness that God cannot look upon.**—
Manuscript 52, 1898. (WM 273.1)

We profess a great and holy faith; and our character must be in accordance with that faith, with God's great moral standard. Let us shun every **mean action**, all **dishonesty**, all **overreaching**; and if any one is guilty of wrong in this respect, let him confess his sin, and make restitution to the one whom he has wronged, and in addition bring a **trespass** offering to God, that when the times of refreshing shall come, his **sins may be blotted out, and his name retained in the book of life.** (GW92 432.1)

- ❑ Mean action—despicable, contemptible, lacking in dignity
- ❑ Dishonesty
- ❑ Overreaching—To deceive by cunning, artifice or sagacity; to cheat
- ❑ Cunning—Wiliness or trickery
- ❑ Artifice—Clever or cunning device
- ❑ Sagacity—having the quality of being discerning or wise

Bring to God a trespass offering and a thank offering because He has not allowed the enemy of souls to do with you as he has done with some who have had light and truth, but did not walk therein. He did not, after a time, “rebuke the devourer” [Malachi 3:11], but let him do his will with those who have thus placed themselves on his ground, and they were cut off by disease or instant death, without any time for repentance. (*5LtMs*, Lt 46, 1888, par. 19)

Have they used the precious gift of God, the voice, to bruise the soul of saint or sinner? If they have done this, let them put all things right by removing the poisonous sting. Then let them bring their trespass offering to God. Let them bring their soul, their tongue, their words, to the altar of God, to be used to glorify Him; and He will accept the offering. (*13LtMs*, Ms 93, 1898, par. 9)

THE trespass-offering was a sin-offering, and many Bible students make no distinction between it and the regular sin-offering. In some places the terms “sin-offering” and “trespass-offering” seem to be used synonymously, as in Lev. 5:1–13, but in other places they are spoken of as being two separate offerings. (Ezekiel 46:20) (Stephen Haskell, *The Cross and Its Shadow*, p. 87)

A close study of the passages that speak directly of the trespass-offering, shows that it was offered more especially for sins “in the holy things of the Lord,” (Leviticus 5:15) as when a person had trespassed by not following God’s instructions in regard to the holy things. He may have withheld his tithe (Leviticus 27:31), eaten the first-fruits (Exodus 34:26), or sheared the first-born sheep (Deuteronomy 15:19); whatever the trespass, he was to bring a ram for an offering (Leviticus 5:15; 6:5). This offering was disposed of much the same as the ordinary sin-offering, except that the blood was sprinkled “round about upon the altar,” (Leviticus 7:1–7) instead of touching the horns with the blood as in the sin-offering.

(Ibid.)

It would seem from this that the trespass-offering did not always represent sins as public as the common sin-offering represented, but was often used for sins known only to the individual himself. If the person had taken any of the holy things for his own use, had been dishonest in his dealings with his neighbor, or had appropriated articles that had been lost, etc., he was not only to restore the full value, but was to add one fifth to the estimation by the priest (Leviticus 5:16; 6:5). (*Ibid.*)

The restitution was always made to the one wronged. If the individual had dealt dishonestly with the holy things of the Lord, the restitution was made to the priest as the representative of the Lord. If he had wronged his fellow-men and the one wronged had died, then the restitution was made to his kinsman; but if there was no kinsman, the restitution was made to the Lord (Numbers 5:7, 8).
(Ibid.)

There was no virtue in offering the ram for a trespass-offering, unless the restitution was made in full for the wrong done. One special object of the trespass-offering was to atone for dishonest dealings with either God or man, and always required the restitution of the wrong besides the ram for the offering. It taught very clearly that wherein we have dealt falsely with God or man, simply confessing the sin and bringing an offering will not suffice; we must make amends for the wrong. (Ibid., pp. 87–88)

Zacchaeus understood the law of the trespass-offering, and as soon as he surrendered his life to Christ, he was ready to go even beyond the requirements of the law, and restore “fourfold” to all whom he had wronged (Luke 19:8). (Ibid., p. 88)

Lie to the Holy Ghost

□ John 11:33, 38

□ Acts 5:3–4

Isaiah 41:10, 13, 17–
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