

## LESSON SIX

# ALL THINGS IN COMMON

TEXT: Acts 4:31-37; Acts 5:1-16.

### A. **BARNABAS:**

Barnabas was one of the noblest characters in the Bible. One of the favorite characters of the writer of these Bible lessons is Barnabas. His name means "son of consolation," and his name certainly expresses the true character of this fine Christian Brother.

He was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, and apparently quite wealthy. In Acts 11:24 he is described as being a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. He was the uncle of John Mark, the brother of Mark's mother, Mary. Mary also was apparently quite prosperous, and it was in her home that the church met (Acts 12:12).

It was Barnabas who introduced Paul to the Apostles (Acts 9:27). It was Barnabas who went to Tarsus to fetch Paul when they needed a teacher at Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. Barnabas was determined that John Mark be given a second chance and so parted company with Paul.

Barnabas was a generous man who was completely dedicated to the work of God. He loved the Lord and saints to such a degree he sold land and brought the money and laid it at the feet of the apostles.

### B. **COMMUNAL LIVING:**

It is a mistake to believe that it was God's plan that the early apostolic church has communal living. God did not plan that they should live in a commune, but rather God's plan was that the early Christians should go everywhere and evangelize the world. This they could never do if they practiced communal living. In fact, God permitted persecution to come to break up this style of living.

Why then did they share their possessions and have everything in common? We have to remember that thousands had gathered from all over the Roman Empire and had received the Holy Ghost. It was like a great Camp Meeting. Their needs had to be met. It was the newfound love that caused the saints in Jerusalem to sell their possessions and bring the money to the Apostles that the material needs of everyone would be taken care of. It was an example of Christian love, hospitality, and generosity displayed at its best. But nowhere is it suggested that the right of possession was abolished.

### C. **ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA:**

Ananias, and his wife, Sapphira, are examples of many Christians today who desire the blessing without paying the price.

Undoubtedly, the church had applauded Barnabas for his act of generosity and dedication. Also it would be quite evident just how much Barnabas was blessed by God.

Ananias and Sapphira saw this and desired the same blessing from God and the same acclaim from the church. Therefore, they agreed to sell a property but to give the church only part of what they received. Peter told Ananias that it was Satan who placed this thought in their hearts (verse 3). It was a sin of hypocrisy.

#### **D. THE SIN OF LYING TO THE HOLY GHOST:**

Judgment did not overtake Ananias and Sapphira because they kept back part of the price. Judgment overtook them because they said they brought all when they were keeping back part of the price. If they had been honest and had confessed that it was only part of the price they would never have dropped dead. This was definitely an act of hypocrisy and Peter called it a sin of lying to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3).

This sin had to do with their consecration. They said that they were bringing all when they were not. The very same sin may be committed today when one professes to lie all upon the altar when they know that they are holding back. A person should never sing, "I surrender all" when they know that they are not surrendering all. A person should never make a dedication to the Lord unless he is prepared to pay the price and go all the way. Otherwise it is the same sin as committed by Ananias and Sapphira.

#### **E. JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD:**

Persecution from the world cannot hurt the church. It is when the devil gets on the inside that the church suffers. Corruption from within is far more dangerous than opposition from without. It is possibly for this reason the Lord dealt so severely with this first evidence of corruption from within.

Judgment must begin at the house of God (I Peter 4:17). God does not judge sinners now, but He does judge His own people. This first act of judgment taught the church a great lesson, which was never forgotten.

The name, "Ananias" means "the Lord has shown grace." This lesson teaches that grace is never any license for sinning. The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:12). This Ananias did not do and judgment was the result.

Judgment here teaches a few truths of which we should take note:

1. No sin is little; all sin will be judged.
2. God hates hypocrisy. Real love and a true spirit of sacrifice was being replaced by hypocritical pretense. This God hates.
3. Sin in the church is always far more serious than among the unsaved.
4. A pretended obedience is disobedience. In the life of King Saul a partial obedience was disobedience (I Samuel 15:22).

#### **F. WHAT WERE THE RESULTS?**

There were three main results, which followed this purging in the church:

1. The purity of the church was preserved.
2. A wholesome, godly fear came upon everyone (verse 11).
3. The believers experienced new power. Signs and wonders were performed and many believers were added to the Lord, "multitudes both of men and women" (verse 14).

LESSON SIX

SELF HELP TEST

A. Write a brief character sketch of Barnabas.

B. Why is it a mistake to believe that communal living was God's plan for the Apostolic Church?

C. Name THREE truths that God's judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira teaches us:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

D. What were the THREE main results which followed the judgment of God upon Ananias and Sapphira?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_