

CONTRAST: UNITY VS. COMPROMISE — ACTS 4:32 - 5:11

1 INTERNAL UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Ac.4:32-37

A Had Everything in Common, Ac.4:32-35

³²Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (Ac.4:32-35)

- It was a free-will arrangement for the support of the church, used only temporarily.

B Generosity of Barnabas, Ac.4:36-37

³⁶And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Ac.4:36-37)

- Barnabas evidently sold some of his land to provide cash for the needs of the church members. He humbly presented the proceeds of the sale to the apostles for their distribution.



2 INTERNAL COMPROMISE IN THE CHURCH

Ac.5:1-11

- Luke shows how Barnabas and the rest of the church contrasted with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).
- The generosity of the church and especially Barnabas differed markedly from the selfishness of that husband-wife team.

A Death of Ananias, Ac.5:1-6

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ²And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." ⁵Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. ⁶And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. (Ac.5:1-6)

- "But" introduces another sacrificial act that looked just as generous as Barnabas' (Ac.4:37), but with a different motive.
- The story of Ananias is to the Book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God.
- The fact that believers had the right to keep their money shows that this was not Christian socialism which is an oxymoron.

B Death of Sapphira, Ac.5:7-11

⁷Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." ⁹Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. ¹¹So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things. (Ac.5:7-11)

- Sapphira, not aware of her husband's sudden death, also lied about the amount they got for the land. Peter graciously gave her an opportunity to tell the truth, but she did not. They gave an appearance of commitment that was not true of them.