

Sharing All Things

Key Verse: “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

Selected Scripture:
Acts 4:34-5:10

status, this was an impressive way of demonstrating their full support for the work of preaching the Gospel.

The personal seriousness of this effort to support witnessing to the Gospel of Christ was demonstrated by the actions of a certain husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira. They sold a possession to contribute to the common care of the brethren, but kept back part of the price for themselves. Peter quickly discerned their dishonesty, saying they had not lied to men, but to God. He declared that Satan had filled their hearts with the spirit of covetousness. When confronted with their sin, both Ananias and his wife fell to the ground and died. Their deaths resulted in a great swelling of reverential fear among the brethren. (Acts 5:1-11) This account provides us with a powerful spiritual lesson concerning the importance of fully keeping our vows of consecration,

FOLLOWING THE ANSWER

to prayer recorded in Acts 4:31 considered in our previous lesson, the brethren were drawn closer to one another to the extent of declaring all they possessed was not their own, but belonged to the church in common. (vs. 32) This was evidently an acknowledgement that all they owned came not from their own talents and abilities, but were the gifts of God. In a world where riches are often a barometer of one's

and not holding anything back from the Lord. “Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.”—Eccles. 5:5

This arrangement of communal living soon ended, being demonstrated that it was not feasible in an imperfect world. However, it points out the important lesson that the entire body of Christ is “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,” and “maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Eph. 4:16) It also corroborates Paul’s description of the members of the body of Christ as all being equal in God’s sight. He says, “There should be no schism in the body; . . . the members should have the same care one for another.”—I Cor. 12:25

Although we do not live communally with the brethren, we are to assist with their spiritual and temporal needs whenever possible. The Apostle John states, “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” (I John 3:17,18) Those who fail to live up to this required “fruit of the Spirit” are like those described by our Lord: “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”—Matt. 7:19,20

James also speaks of this principle with these words: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:15,16) Such was the case with Ananias and Sapphira, and it resulted in not only the loss of temporal gain, but also of their very lives. Let us be ever careful to examine the needs of our brethren and live up to the principle of sharing from a heart of sincere generosity. ■