

## The Quiet Hour.

### The Sin of Lying.

S. S. Lesson, 9th February, Acts 5: 1-11.  
Golden Text—Eph. 4: 25. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor.

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But . . . Ananias, with Sapphira . . . sold a possession, v. 1. We cannot miss the contrast between the conduct of Barnabas and that of Ananias and Sapphira. His was the genuine coin, theirs the base counterfeit. He acted out freely the impulse of a generous heart, they became slavish imitators. He was sincere, they were hypocrites. The existence of the counterfeit witnesses to the existence of the genuine coin. Men do not imitate that which is valueless. The anxiety of mean men to appear generous is a measure of the esteem in which generosity is held. Hypocritical profession of the Christian virtues proves the reality of these virtues. There would have been no Ananias and Sapphira in the early Church if there had been no Barnabas.

And kept back part of the price, v. 2. The action of this man and woman is described by the same word as the sin of Achan (Joshua 7: 1), and in Titus 2: 10 this word is translated "purloining." Ananias and Sapphira robbed God of more than money; they robbed Him of love and devotion. The two things which they valued most were gold and the praise of men. They were willing to give up just enough of the former to win for themselves the latter. The world had in their hearts the place which belonged to God.

Why hath Satan filled thine heart? v. 3. As hypocrites imitate good men, so Satan imitates the Holy Ghost. There is an inspiration which comes from hell as well as an inspiration which is from heaven. By their fruits we are to distinguish these two kinds of inspiration. Barnabas (ch. 4: 36), a man "full of the Holy Ghost" (ch. 11: 24), was sincere and generous; Ananias filled with Satan was hypocritical and covetous.

To lie, v. 3. "Never tell a lie. Truthfulness is the only condition on which human intercourse is possible, and it lies at the foundation of all personal character. No matter how bad a man is, there is room for hope with respect to him if he is essentially truthful and honest; but if he is a liar, there is nothing to build upon. Hence the terrible denunciations against liars and hypocrites in the Bible." (Peloubet.)

Did it not remain thine own? . . . was it not in thine own power? (Rev. Ver.), v. 4. There is nothing compulsory about Christian service. The Christian army is composed, not of conscripts, but of volunteers. The walls of the kingdom of heaven are rising, not through the forced labor of unwilling slaves, but through the loyal enthusiasm of cheerful toilers. To the Christian all service is thanksgiving. As King David won the hearts of his followers so that three of them were willing to risk their lives to bring him a cup of water from the well of Bethlehem (2 Sam. 23), or as Alexander, by sharing the privations and hardships of his soldiers, evoked their enthusiastic devotion, so that they cheerfully made their bodies his shield in the hour of deadly peril, Christ, by His life and death of matchless unselfishness, conquered the hearts of His disciples, so

that every task is easy and every burden light when taken up for His sake.

Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God, v. 4. The power which is at work in the church is not human but divine. The energy which throbs in the heart and moves in the arms of the church, is not of men, but of God. The church was born when the Holy Ghost descended from heaven, and so her's is an indestructible life, a certain growth. It is not the apostles who wrought miracles, but Christ (4: 10); it was the God of Abraham, who gave the power of healing (2: 13); it was the Holy Ghost who was grieved by the sin of Ananias. How puny are the forces of evil compared with the power of the Almighty! And what folly for man to set himself in opposition to God!

And Ananias . . . fell down and gave up the ghost, v. 5. How consuming is the zeal of God for righteousness! In the days of Noah, He sent the waters of the flood to destroy a whole race, that He might save the world from wickedness. In the days of Abraham, He poured forth fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, to cleanse the world from impurity. In the days of Jeremiah He drove the Jews into captivity, to purify them from idolatry. Forty years after the death of Christ, He hurled the Roman battalions against the Holy City and razed it to the ground, to purge away the iniquity of the murderers of His Son. In the awful judgment which fell on Ananias and Sapphira at the very beginning of the Church's history, we see the finger of God pointing to the truth written so large in the history of mankind, that God loves truth and purity and hates falsehood and uncleanness.

Ye have agreed together, v. 9. Men are emboldened by evil companions to do deeds from which they would shrink if alone. Here husband and wife, who should have stood between each other and temptation, became tempters of each other and encouraged each other in applying a profane test to the Spirit of God. Do our companions encourage us in good or in evil?

### How to Cultivate Reverence.

There are two elements in reverence, love and awe. We love God because he is our Father; we fear God because of his majesty and holiness. To reverence him as we ought we must have a child's affection and a sense of the difference between our weakness, sin, and ignorance and his infinite power, wisdom and purity. The irreverent man is ignorant both of God and of himself. It must be confessed that it is in many ways an age of little reverence. So much that men held sacred has been called in question, so confidently have the overturners of accepted beliefs spoken their own belief that Christianity has been overturned, so thoroughly has the crust of ancient prejudice and observance been broken up, that in some quarters it seems as if the fear of God and the respect for man alike have departed from the earth. Some of us who would fain be reverent find ourselves caught in eddies of unbelief from which it is difficult to escape. We feel, as all right thinking men must feel, that we must approach God with humility, but we know not how to cultivate in ourselves that spirit of reverence which we know is befitting.—Congregationalist.

### The Gift of the Spirit.

No one can read the Bible without being struck by the variety of gifts which are bestowed by the Holy Spirit. It was He, for instance, who in the beginning of the world moved like a dove on the face of the waters, and it may well be by slow and gradual processes, wrought out for us that world which in its beauty and in its order was pronounced to be very good. It was that same Holy Spirit who, in the language of Holy Writ, breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living soul. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life. Wherever we see life—life in the plant or in the bird that sings to us, or in the little child that is playing in our nursery; life natural or life spiritual, there we see the handiwork of the Holy Spirit of God. He also spake by the prophets. Prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. That same Holy Ghost makes men able to seek out cunning inventions, and gives us also what is beautiful and wonderful in art. We are told that it was the direct inspiration of the Spirit which wrought in the artisans of tabernacle and temple, and made them cunning architects to build up houses for God, fragrant with cedar, and beautiful with color, and bright with ornaments of gold; and that same Spirit which gives us our treasures of art, gives also what is beautiful in action. It was He who inspired in David his courage, and who gave to Samson his strength, and filled Gideon with his spirit of patriotism, and gave to Solo-non his understanding heart. There are diversities of gifts. To some men God gives to be able to work miracles of healing; to others He gives the power of great inventiveness; to others skill to interpret for us and discover the secrets of nature; to others eloquence: to others perhaps the best gift of all, the pure and simple heart. But in all these worketh the one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation, neither shadow that is caused by turning.—The Watchman.

### Prayer.

Our heavenly Father, our life is one crying want. We have nothing that we have not received; Thou art the Giver of every good and every perfect gift. We humbly desire to thank Thee for all the mercies we enjoy, for all the grace which has strengthened and soothed our life, for all the hope which has inspired us in the dark and cloudy day, and for the manifold comfort which has consoled us when the help of man was vain. Lift up those that be bowed down. Soothe the sorrowing, dry the tears of grief. O Thou sanctify the discipline of life to us; give us control over events and circumstances so far as to enable us to feel that Thy shaping hand is moving amid all the chaos of life, and that Thou art working out Thine own wondrous order and beauty. Enable us all, whether tottering on the brink of the grave, or looking out from earliest life upon all the wonders of existence, to know that Thou art our Father, our Redeemer, and in Thee may we have our being. Give stimulus and strength to every man in whom there is high aspiration, to every heart in which there is noble purpose. We ask all in Jesus' name. Amn.—Joseph Parker.

Do your best, but do not try to outdo yourself lest you undo yourself!