

them all. By "grace" some understand the good-will of the people towards the Christians, because these were so liberal; others, the favor or kindness of God, of which this liberality was an effect.

Vs. 34-37. *Neither was there any . . . that lacked.* There were always a great many poor in Jerusalem, who depended on the charity of the richer residents of the city and on chance employment during the great feasts, when the city was full of visitors. Many of these poorer people, in becoming Christians, would lose the help they were wont to receive from the better-off Jews. *Sold . . . and brought the prices.* They did not dispose of their property all at once and put into the common fund; but, whenever need arose, some one would come forward and offer his property. *Laid them down at the apostles' feet;* entrusting to them the distribution of the funds contributed. *Barnabas;* afterwards to be famous as the companion of Paul. The friendship of the two may have had its origin before Paul's conversion, at school in Tarsus. His surname, *son of consolation* (Rev. Ver., "exhortation") was given for his power as a preacher (see ch. 11: 23), or for his sympathy and general helpfulness. *A Levite, . . . of . . . Cyprus* (see Geography Lesson), *having land.* Originally, Levites, including the Israelitish priesthood, were not allowed to own property, Deut. 10: 8, 9. This law seems to have fallen into disuse, since Jeremiah, a priest (Jer. 1: 1) purchased a "field . . . in Anathoth", Jer. 32: 7-9.

II. Falsehood, Ch. 5: 1-11.

Ch. 5, vs. 1, 2. *Ananias, with Sapphira.* Over against Barnabas, the outstanding representative of the spirit of brotherhood amongst the early believers, Luke sets the wretched pair who sinned grievously against that spirit. *Sold a possession* (a piece of land, v. 3) . . . *kept back part.* Zeal had in part overcome Ananias' greed, but this was met by the selfish spirit of evil. "It was an attempt to serve God and mammon: to gain the reputation of a saint without the reality of holiness." Compare the case of Gehazi, 2 Kgs. 5: 20, etc.

Vs. 3-5. *Why hath Satan, etc.?* People may be inspired by the evil one, as well as by

the Holy Spirit. *To lie to the Holy Ghost.* Just as it is Christ who works the miracles, and the God of Abraham who gives the power of healing, so it is the Holy Spirit who is grieved by such sins as that of Ananias. The personality of the Holy Spirit is pre-supposed in this passage. *Remained, . . . thine own? . . . sold, . . . in thine own power?* Ananias was in no way forced to make the gift. *Why hast thou conceived this thing...?* The suggestion of the sin came from Satan, but Ananias made the sin his own by his willing consent (compare James 4: 7). *Lied . . . unto God;* in lying to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. (Compare Ps. 51: 4.) *Ananias hearing . . . gave up the ghost* (literally, "breathed out his life"); a medical expression for death, which fell naturally from the pen of Luke the physician. So severe a punishment was needful, in order to preserve the young church from the dreadful sins of hypocrisy and greed.

Vs. 6-11. *The young men;* literally "the younger men". It is not likely that a special class is meant, who had a definite office; but the reference is to a distinction that was prevalent in the organization of the church, by which responsibility and deference belonged to age, and hard work to youth. *Wrapped him round* (Rev. Ver.); in the robe he was wearing. *Carried . . . out.* Burial follows upon death very quickly in the East, and graves are outside city walls. *About . . . three hours after, . . . wife, not knowing.* There had been time for the burial of Ananias, but the news had not reached Sapphira. *Peter answered unto her, etc.;* replying to her salutation. An opportunity is given Sapphira, who had been a partner in the crime, to make confession. *Agreed together.* The crime was all the worse because it had been deliberately planned and carried out. *Straightway, etc.* The death of Sapphira, like that of Ananias, was evidently a supernatural act. The writer makes no reference to the ultimate future of these two; but read 1 Pet. 4: 6. *Great fear . . . upon all the church, and upon as many as heard.* Alike upon those within and those without the church, came an awful sense of the Spirit's Presence amongst them, and a trembling dread of incurring His displeasure.