

Part 26 – Saul and Ananias

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, March 16, 2016

† Acts 9:9-19

Last week we looked at the first 8 verses of Acts Chapter 9 and we saw our man, Saul, led out of the darkness and into the marvelous light of Christ. He submitted his will and life to the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus and Saul the Persecutor became Saul the Saved man. The last thing we read last week was verse 8 which says: **Acts 9:8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.**

So, we pick up in verse 9 of our text:

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

We see that the Lord decided to let Saul remain blinded for a full 3-days after his conversion. Most of the time when you think of blindness you think of pitch black or darkness. But remember, Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the glory of the Lord Jesus. His blindness is much like the blindness of looking at the sun too long. It is not a darkness that he is in but it a light blindness. How can we know this for sure? Well, from Saul's own testimony in **Acts 22:11: And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.**

Some people ask, "What was Saul doing for 3-days while he was without sight?" That's simple to answer, look down at verse **11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,**

What was Saul doing for 3-days? According to Jesus he was praying! Not only was he praying but he was **fasting** because it said in verse 9 "**neither did eat nor drink.**" So Saul is fasting and praying for 3-days. He's already started out his new walk with Christ the right way by communing with the Lord!

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

There is not a whole lot mentioned about this man Ananias. We read about him here and Paul mentions him again when he is giving his testimony over in **Acts 22:12: And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,**

So we gather from the few verses that mention him the following:

1. He is a disciple of the Lord (a follower of Christ)
2. He is a devout man according to the law. So he lives a clean moral life.
3. He is a Jew by race because he received a good report of all the Jews.
4. He walked close with the Lord since he is receiving visions from Him.

The name Ananias actually means: "**whom Jehovah has graciously given**" So that is pretty fitting considering the Lord Jesus graciously gave him the vision and allowed him to be instrumental in the beginning of the life of one of the greatest preachers to ever walk the face of the earth.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

The **street called Straight** runs straight through the middle of the city of Old Damascus from the Eastern to the Western gate and is approximately 3-miles long.

You can pull it up on Google maps and look at it. Just type in "Street called Straight" and click on the first link that pops up. You can even see pictures of the old Roman arches that were built over the street.

By the way, the area where this is located is right in the middle of where all of the tension is happening with ISIS and the Syrian refugees. The Christian Humanitarian Organization, World Vision, says there are over 13.5 million people in Syria that are in need of humanitarian assistance. Over 4.6 million Syrians are classified as refugees and 6.6 million Syrians are classified as "displaced." It's too bad that Christian influence did not remain in that region such as it was in the days of Saul and Ananias.

Jesus tells Ananias to go to the "**house of Judas.**" We have no more information about his man Judas that Paul stayed with. Most Bible commentators simply skip mentioning anything about Judas, I suppose because of the lack of information we have about him. Judas was a common name among the Jews so we know he was a Jew. This may have been the original destination where Saul had been instructed to go while in Damascus or it could have been an inn of some sort. There is a man named Judas named later in **Acts 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:** Perhaps this could be the same man but we don't know that for sure. Whoever he was his name was mentioned in the Biblical record for being the host of Saul of Tarsus.

for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, Jesus reveals to Ananias who he wants him to go find and it's none other than the most zealous persecutor of Christians in all of the land – Saul of Tarsus.

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

The Lord is already blessing Saul with visions. During his prayer time he has come to him and revealed to him that Ananias was going to be coming to lay hands on him so he can receive his sight.

Have you ever wondered why the Lord didn't just automatically restore Saul's sight? Why was it necessary for Ananias to come find him and lay hands on him to do it? I mean, the Lord Jesus has the power to restore his sight with just the thought but he chooses to use a man to perform the task.

I think it is obvious that the Lord is teaching Saul to rely upon Him for all of his needs. If he just restored it without giving him the vision and then seeing that the Lord goes through with what he says he will do, then Saul may not be as reliant upon him as he needs to be. The Lord wants Saul of Tarsus to rely upon him for everything he needs, even his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Ananias has certainly heard of Saul and all of the things that he has been doing to Christians. He seems a little apprehensive about it. Of course it would cause some

concern to anyone knowing they were about to approach someone that had come to kill you.

That statement that Ananias makes: “**how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem,**” just adds further to my wondering just exactly what all did Saul do that the Bible doesn’t even tell us about? Obviously it was more than just the murder of Stephen.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Here is the Lord commissioning Saul to be a preacher unto the Gentiles. Notice that he reveals that information to Ananias even before he reveals it to Saul. It has been in the Lord’s plans all along to use Saul in that way. But notice that the Lord also includes others besides the Gentiles that Paul is going to preach to: “**kings and the children of Israel.**” We know from reading our Bible that Saul eventually did preach to all of the above. However, he was chosen mainly to be a preacher unto the Gentiles. We know that again from reading Saul’s testimony in **Acts 22:21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.**

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.

And then one of the most powerful statements in all the Bible. The Lord said he was going to show Saul how great things he must suffer for His name’s sake. And did he ever suffer...

Listen to what Paul writes in his own words concerning the suffering he endured for the sake of Christ:

2 Corinthians 11:23-30:

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

How many people today would endure what Paul did for the sake of the Gospel? I dare say not very many.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

So with the assurance from the Lord that Saul was a brother in Christ now and not Saul the Persecutor, Ananias obeys him and goes to where Paul is staying.

Notice that Ananias refers to Saul as “Brother Saul.” This signifies that he has accepted him as a fellow brother in Christ. He is no longer a stranger or a lost man but he is saved and considered a brother.

Ananias also clarifies the fact that it was the Lord Jesus that appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus. **even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest,**

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Saul’s eyesight is restored immediately. It says “there fell from his eyes as it had been scales.” That don’t mean there were something like fish scales falling from his eyes to the floor, it is just an expression used to indicate that it was like something was covering his eyes and fell away from them like scales of a fish. The real miracle was that he was healed.

Then, Brother Saul is baptized into the New Testament Church and he became one of the one’s that he previously had been hunting down to persecute. Suddenly the Persecutor becomes the persecuted.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

After Saul was baptized he then ate to regain strength after fasting for 3-days. John Calvin notes that first he nourished his soul and then he nourished his body.

Then it says that he was certain days with the disciples at Damascus. This does not mean the 12 disciples but rather other believers.

We don’t know how long he stayed in Damascus but it was for some time. He didn’t return to Jerusalem for over 3-years because after he left Damascus he went into the Arabian Desert. Paul himself tells us about his in

Galatians 1:15-18:

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

So Saul communed with the Lord for 3-years and not much of anything is said about what all the Lord told him in that desert. We know that it was the Lord that taught him everything he knew because he said he didn’t confer with flesh and blood or talk with the apostles.

And we will end this section tonight and Lord willing pick back up next Wednesday night and cover verses 20-31.