

Scripture Lesson Text

ACTS 9:10 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.

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,**

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.

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.

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:

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

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.**

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

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

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

NOTES

Ananias Heals Saul

Lesson Text: Acts 9:10-20

Related Scriptures: Isaiah 6:1-8; Acts 26:1-23; 10:1-16

TIME: A.D. 32

PLACES: on a road between Jerusalem and Damascus; Damascus

GOLDEN TEXT—"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" (Acts 9:15).

Lesson Exposition

THE ROLE OF ANANIAS— Acts 9:10-14

His call (Acts 9:10). The early Christian church spread rapidly. But Saul of Tarsus, who was determined to exterminate this sect wherever it spread (8:3; 26:9-11), set out on a mission to apprehend Christians in Damascus (9:1-2).

As Saul journeyed to Damascus, however, he himself was apprehended by the Lord Jesus in a most forcible and spectacular way (vss. 3-7). Blinded and totally shaken, he was led to Damascus, where he waited three days for further direction (vss. 8-9). As he waited, the Lord was also preparing another man, Ananias, to instruct him.

Ananias is described as "a certain disciple" in Acts 9:10, that is, as a believer in Jesus Christ. We learn elsewhere that he was also a law-keeping Jew who had a good reputation among the Jews of Damascus (22:12).

His task (Acts 9:11-12). The Lord instructed Ananias to "go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus." Straight Street ran generally east and west the length of the city.

The Lord informed Ananias that Saul was praying at that time. This reveals a complete transformation in him.

Moreover, the Lord told Ananias that Saul was expecting him. In a vision of his own, Saul had seen a man named Ananias come in and place his hands on him in order to restore his sight.

His reservations (Acts 9:13-14). To Ananias, the vision was both surprising and disturbing. The name Saul of Tarsus was enough to stir his greatest fears. Saul's ferocious reputation had preceded him.

The many reports Ananias had heard must have come from the believers who had fled Saul's wrath. They testified of how much harm Saul had done to the Lord's saints in Jerusalem.

Ananias also knew that Saul had been authorized by the chief priests to arrest Jesus' followers.

Saul's alliance with the chief priests is curious, for he was a Pharisee and they were of the Sadducean party. Normally these two sects were at odds with each other, since they differed widely in theology and politics. But they had found common ground in their opposition to Jesus and the church.

THE COMMISSION OF SAUL— Acts 9:15-20

His mission (Acts 9:15-16). Although we can appreciate Ananias's reticence, the Lord's command was not to be turned aside. He said, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me." The Saul Ananias feared was gone; a transformed Saul had replaced him.

Christ had chosen Saul to carry His name before the Gentiles and their kings, as well as to the people of Israel. Saul's primary mission was to carry Jesus' name to Gentiles. God would use Saul to influence powerful people. He would eventually stand before a number of earthly rulers—Roman governors Sergius Paulus, Felix, Festus, Gallio, as well as King Herod Agrippa II and Emperor Nero. Finally, he was chosen to bear Christ's name before the people of Israel.

The Lord told Ananias that Saul's future ministry would be costly. Jesus Himself would reveal to Saul what he would have to suffer for the sake of His name. While the Lord would not reveal all of Saul's sufferings ahead of time, He would make it clear that they were to be expected.

His preparation (Acts 9:17-19a). Reassured by the vision and the Lord's words, Ananias now obeyed and went to the house where Saul waited. Placing his hands on him, he addressed him as "Brother Saul." What a transformation is implied in this tender greeting! No longer was he the feared inquisitor; he was a beloved member of the Christian family.

Ananias revealed why he had come, saying that the same Jesus who had appeared to Saul on the road outside Damascus had sent him.

At Ananias's touch, something like scales instantly fell from Saul's eyes, and his sight was restored on the spot. This was a visible sign that the blind-

ness supernaturally imposed had now been supernaturally removed. We may also assume that he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Saul's preparation ended on a mundane note: Ananias saw to it that his physical needs were cared for.

His transformation (Acts 9:19b-20). The change in Saul was immediately apparent. He spent several days fellowshipping with the disciples in Damascus.

But Saul's transformation became even more evident when he immediately began preaching in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. His saving encounter with Jesus had changed his mind about Him completely.

—Robert E. Wenger.

QUESTIONS

1. What had happened to Saul prior to his encounter with Ananias?
2. How much do we know about Ananias?
3. What task did the Lord assign to Ananias?
4. Why did Ananias hesitate to follow the Lord's command?
5. Why was Saul's previous alliance with the chief priests remarkable?
6. What tasks would Saul have as a chosen vessel of Christ?
7. In what way would Saul's future ministry be costly?
8. How did Ananias address Saul? Why was this significant?
9. What was signified by the removal of the "scales" from Saul's eyes?
10. How did Saul's transformation immediately become clear to believers in Damascus?

—Robert E. Wenger.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. As Christians, we must receive new converts, no matter what they may have come out of (Acts 9:10-12).
2. The power of God can transform the toughest sinner (vs. 13).
3. Earthly kingdoms are all subject to God's sovereign authority (vs. 14).
4. We have a responsibility to encourage new Christians (vs. 15).
5. Spreading God's Word may include suffering (vs. 16).
6. The Holy Spirit enables us to live right and spread God's Word (vss. 17-20).

—Valante M. Grant.

Golden Text Illuminated

“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” (Acts 9:15).

Having faith in the Lord includes doing what He wants us to do even if we can think of some very good reasons why it does not seem like a good idea.

Ananias had just told the Lord about his concerns over going to see and minister to Saul, the hater of Christians. God does not rebuke us when we share with Him our doubts and fears. But He does not necessarily heed our recommendations! After listening to Ananias's fears, the Lord just tells him to go do what He told him to do.

Christ shares His plans with His friends (cf. John 15:15), so He shows His friendship with Ananias by offering some words of explanation for His command to go to Saul. Knowing how important the situation was would be an encouragement to Ananias as he faced this test of faith and obedience.

The Lord refers to Saul as “a chosen vessel.” What does that mean? That Saul would be a “vessel” for God? The Lord is again making it clear that His will is supreme. Saul would be the means of carrying the good news of Christ.

The list of the groups that Paul would reach with Christ's message covers just about everybody—Gentiles and Jews, with kings thrown in for good measure!

Ananias had received his marching orders, and he would proceed to carry out his mission.

—Stephen H. Barnhart.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What does the way that we treat our fellow Christians say about our relationship with Christ?
2. Describe the power of prayer. How does it affect our relationships with God and other Christians (Acts 9:11)?
3. How do we respond to suffering and persecution for Christ's sake?
4. How do we move beyond our reservations about those who have bad reputations? How do we know that it is safe to embrace them when we know they have hurt others (vss. 13-16)?
5. Why is it so important to be filled with the Holy Spirit before we go out and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ (vs. 17)?

—Valante M. Grant.