

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon December 11, 2022

Acts 9: 10 – 19 “Faithful Ananias”

1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. 23 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. 24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

I. Introduction

a. Introduction: Acts 9: 10 – 19 “Faithful Ananias”

- i. About Ananias v10
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- b.
 - II. About Ananias v10
 - a. 10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias;
 - b. One man bearing this name has served as a cautionary tale when he and his wife Saphira dropped dead after lying to God and His Church. But, the Ananias of Damascus is a good example for us to consider.
 - c. We also learn about Ananias in Acts 22 as Paul recounts his testimony to the Jewish mob in Jerusalem:
 - i. Acts 22:12 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there"
 - d. Ananias of Damascus
 - i. A disciple, a follower of Jesus
 - ii. A devout man following God's Law
 - iii. Lived in Damascus long enough to have a reputation among the Jews
 - iv. Had a good testimony with all the Jews who lived in Damascus
 - v. So, it appears that Ananias was a faithful Jew living in Damascus for some time, who had heard the Gospel and become a follower of Jesus Christ, believing Jesus to be the foretold Messiah. Perhaps Ananias had become

a believer during the time of Christ's ministry in northern Galilee, which we know had such great influence it spread throughout Syria:

1. Mt 4:23-25 "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him--from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan."
- vi. In the Lord's perfect wisdom, He brought His Kingdom to Damascus, to Ananias, and it was apparently known as a place where Christians dwell because Saul and the Jerusalem leadership knew the town to be so full of Christians it would be worth the effort to travel that far north. Also, the Lord has prepared Ananias ahead of time for this important work. Think of how this would strengthen Ananias and all the disciples at Damascus. Finally, think of this prior unknown Christian, not an apostle, being used by Jesus in such an important job.
- vii. "The person employed is *Ananias, a certain disciple at Damascus*, not lately driven thither from Jerusalem, but a native of Damascus; for it is said (ch. 22:12) *that he had a good report of all the Jews who dwelt there, as a devout man according to the law*; he had lately embraced the gospel, and given up his name to Christ, and, as it should seem, officiated as a minister, at least *pro hac vice—on this occasion*, though it does not appear that he was apostolically ordained. But why were not some of the apostles from Jerusalem sent for upon this great occasion, or Philip the evangelist, who had lately baptized the eunuch, and might have been fetched hither by the Spirit in a little time? Surely, because Christ would employ variety of hands in eminent services, that the honours might not be monopolized nor engrossed by a few—because he would put work into the hands, and thereby put honour upon the heads, of those that were mean and obscure, to encourage them—and because he would direct us to make much of the ministers that are where our lot is cast, if they have ordained mercy to be faithful, though they are not of the most eminent."¹

III. The Lord calls Ananias to go to Saul v10-12

- a. 10 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 "And in a

¹ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2102.

- vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."
- b. We know from verse 17 that Jesus is speaking to Ananias. Like Paul had a vision of Jesus, Ananias is now also brought into Christ's Presence to hear His Voice.
 - c. "In a vision"
 - i. Acts 12:7-9 gives us help to understand this "Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision."
 - ii. So, a vision is like a dream in that you're seeing something that is not within this realm that can be perceived by our senses. Rather, when seeing a vision, we are made able to see, to perceive beyond this natural realm into the spiritual dimension.
 - iii. Acts 2:17, Peter's 1st sermon: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams."
 - d. "Ananias" – Jesus speaks to Ananias by name. Being a disciple is based upon being brought back into favor with God by Christ's blood, so that we can each have an individual relationship with Christ. Jesus knows us each by name.
 - e. Ananias replies, "Here I am, Lord."
 - i. Luke shares this detail. What can we learn? Ananias is ready to hear His Lord's voice. Ananias' instant reply suggests he has been in close fellowship like this with Jesus before.
 - ii. "It is probable it was not the first time that he had heard the words of God, and seen the visions of the Almighty; for, without terror or confusion, he readily answers, "*Behold I am here, Lord,*"²
 - f. Jesus gives Ananias very specific instructions, telling him to go to a specific street, to a specific house, with a focused message for Saul.
 - i. "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus,"
 - ii. How comforting. The Lord Jesus knows where we are, knows our needs, our blindness. Jesus sees us clearly when we cannot see at all and can only pray.
 - iii. "Note, Christ very well knows where to find out those that are his, in their distresses: when their relations, it may be, know not what is become of them, they have a friend in heaven, that knows in what street,

² Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2102.

in what house, nay, and which is more, in what frame they are: he knows their souls in adversity.”³

- g. And, Jesus tells Ananias that he is being sent as an answer to Saul’s prayer.
 - i. “for behold, he is praying.”
 - ii. First, note Saul is a new man. Jesus begins to help Ananias understand that Saul is a new man, no longer the dangerous persecutor.
 - 1. “Note, Regenerating grace evermore sets people on praying; you may as soon find a living man without breath as a living Christian without prayer; if breathless, lifeless; and so, if prayerless, graceless.”⁴
 - iii. Next, note the Lord Jesus Christ answers prayer. How comforting! Note, this man, Saul, who has been breathing out murder and insults toward Christ and His Church, this man has been brought near by Christ, and now the Lord Jesus hears Saul’s prayers and answers them wondrously, with a vision of Ananias, and then with the arrival of Ananias.
 - 1. “Christ was so pleased to find Paul praying that he must have others to take notice of it: *Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep which I had lost.* It denotes also the strangeness of it: “Behold, and wonder, that he who but the other day breathed nothing but threatenings and slaughter, now breathes nothing but prayer.”⁵
 - h. Next, Jesus tells Ananias that blind Saul has been granted a vision as he prays, a vision where he “sees” a man named Ananias arrive and touch him unto healing. Not only does Jesus encourage Ananias with details of Saul’s location and with the knowledge that Saul is in genuine prayer, but Jesus tells Ananias he will be used to answer Saul’s prayer.
 - i. "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."
 - 1. Note, also, the encouragement this would be to Saul. The detailed vision will be precisely fulfilled.
 - i. How does Ananias respond?
- IV. Ananias voices concern v13,14
- a. 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

³ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2102.

⁴ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2102.

⁵ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2102.

- b. Ananias is a fallen human being saved by grace, with limited faith, just like all of us followers of Jesus. And, Ananias has such a relationship with the Lord Jesus that he can voice his concerns to Christ.
 - c. “heard from many...how much harm he has done to Your saints” ...
“authority...to bind all who call on Your Name”
 - i. Saul’s infamy precedes him. He is not known as a man who calls on Jesus’ Name. Saul is known as one who harms the saints of God, who imprisons all who worship Christ. Ananias sees Saul as a major threat to his life.
 - ii. Also, can such a one truly be changed so suddenly? Can one so filled with hatred be worth the evangelistic effort?
 - iii. “[1.] Will it be safe for Ananias to go to him? Will he not throw himself like a lamb into the mouth of a lion? And, if he thus bring himself into trouble, he will be blamed for his indiscretion. [2.] Will it be to any purpose to go to him? Can such a hard heart ever be softened?”⁶
 - iv. Note, Jesus has only informed Ananias that Saul will be healed of blindness. Yes, Saul is praying, but Jesus does not explicitly inform Ananias of Saul’s spiritual state.
 - d. How does Christ respond to Ananias’ concern?
- V. The Lord commands and graciously explains v15,16
- a. 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."
 - b. First, the Lord Jesus repeats His commandment: “Go”
 - i. The Lord, our Creator and Redeemer, is our Master. We are not our own. He purchased us with His Precious Blood. We are His glad bondservants. He repeats His command BEFORE He graciously explains more to Ananias. We are to obey Him no matter what. Our understanding doesn’t matter because He understands. Our fear doesn’t matter because He is our Protector. Our doubt doesn’t matter because He is the Almighty One Who created all things and who calls souls into new life by His infinite power.
 - c. Next, the Lord Jesus Christ gives Ananias more information about Saul.
 - i. Saul is a chosen vessel of Christ’s
 - 1. Saul no longer belongs to Gamaliel or any of the chief priests. No longer will the rebellious Jews control Saul with their lawless ways. Saul belongs to Jesus now. Jesus is Saul’s Master now.
 - ii. Saul is to bear Jesus’ Name before Gentiles, kings and Jews.
 - 1. Saul no longer carries out the will of the rebellious Jews. Saul will now do the will of Christ just like the apostles before him.
 - iii. Jesus will take Saul through much suffering for Jesus’s sake

⁶ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2102.

1. Saul will no longer bring persecution upon Christians. Saul will be a persecuted Christian as he does Jesus' will.
2. "Those that bear Christ's name must expect to bear the cross for his name; and those that do most for Christ are often called out to suffer most for him. Saul must suffer great things. This, one would think, was a cold comfort for a young convert; but it is only like telling a soldier of a bold and brave spirit, when he is enlisted, that he shall take the field, and enter upon action, shortly. Saul's sufferings for Christ shall redound so much to the honour of Christ and the service of the church, shall be so balanced with spiritual comforts and recompensed with eternal glories, that it is no discouragement to him to be told how great things he must suffer for Christ's name's sake."⁷

VI. Ananias obey the Lord & goes to Saul v17

- a. 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
- b. Ananias obeys Jesus and goes to the house and lays his hands on Saul, just like the vision said. Then, Ananias speaks to Saul.
 - i. "The purpose of the laying on of hands (v. 17c) is the healing of Saul and the conveying of the Holy Spirit, not a commissioning or ordination for ministry.²¹¹⁶ While it is surprising that Luke reports direct speech of Ananias but not of Saul, the focus on Ananias's message to Saul underscores Saul's passive reception of Jesus' revelation, of Jesus' healing, and of Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit. Saul will be active soon enough"⁸
- c. "Brother" – Ananias has believed Jesus' report of Saul's conversion. Why else could he call Saul "brother"? At some point during his blindness, Saul has been born again from above.
 - i. "Thus, the term "brother" probably suggests that Ananias greets Saul as a fellow believer who belongs to the group of followers of Jesus"⁹
- d. "the Lord Jesus" – spoken in a way that Jesus is not only Ananias' Lord, not only Saul's Lord, but THE Lord.
- e. "who appeared to you on the road" – good messengers leave no room for uncertainty.

⁷ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2103.

⁸ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [*Acts*](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 9:17.

⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [*Acts*](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 9:17.

- f. “has sent me” – Ananias wants Saul to know that this blessing is from the Lord Jesus, not from Ananias or any power in him.
 - g. “that you may receive your sight” – another miraculous healing
 - h. “and be filled with the Holy Spirit” – what gifts might Saul have received from the Holy Spirit at this time?
 - i. “He assures him that he shall not only have his sight restored, but be filled with the Holy Ghost: he must himself be an apostle, and must in nothing come behind the chief of the apostles, and therefore must receive the Holy Ghost immediately, and not, as others did, by the interposition of the apostles; and Ananias’s putting his hands upon him before he was baptized was for the conferring of the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰
- VII. Saul’s sight restored v18
- a. 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once;
 - b. The power of God is demonstrated here by an immediate healing, even including some physical falling away of something like scales from Saul’s eyes. We can also safely infer that Saul is filled with the Holy Spirit of God.
 - c. “Christ’s commission is to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the prisoners from the prison. Saul is delivered from the spirit of bondage by receiving sight (v. 18), which was signified by the falling of scales from his eyes; and this immediately, and forthwith: the cure was sudden, to show that it was miraculous.”¹¹
- VIII. Saul arose and was baptized v18
- a. and he arose and was baptized.
 - b. Saul begins His Christian service by obeying Christ and receiving Christian baptism. Baptism as an act of obedience is very important.
 - c. “He was baptized, and thereby submitted to the government of Christ, and cast himself upon the grace of Christ. Thus he was entered into Christ’s school, hired into his family, enlisted under his banner, and joined himself to him for better for worse. The point was gained: it is settled; Saul is now a disciple of Christ, not only ceases to oppose him, but devotes himself entirely to his service and honor.”¹²
- IX. Saul eats and stays with Damascus disciples v19
- a. 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.
 - b. Now, we Saul begin his new journey with the Lord. He needs to eat to recover from his fast. We are not gnostics. The body is important to God.

¹⁰ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2103.

¹¹ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2103.

¹² Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2103.

- i. “The Lord is for the body, and therefore care must be taken of it, to keep it in good plight, that it may be fit to serve the soul in God’s service, and that Christ may be magnified in it, Phil. 1:20.”¹³
 - c. Even more, he needs Christian fellowship to recover from so much spiritual starvation amidst his former Jewish masters.
 - i. “Note, Those that take God for their God take his people for their people. Saul associated with the disciples, because now he saw an amiableness and excellency in them, because he loved them, and found that he improved in knowledge and grace by conversing with them; and thus he made profession of his Christian faith, and openly declared himself a disciple of Christ, by associating with those that were his disciples.”¹⁴
- X. Questions to know, love and obey God

¹³ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2103.

¹⁴ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2103.