

### 30. The Lord Worked Through the Ministry of Ananias

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Saul was on his way to Damascus. We want them to understand how his life was changed when Jesus appeared to him from heaven as he came near the city of Damascus. We saw that he asked Jesus what He wanted him to do. Then, Saul spent the next three days blinded so that he could think about all that had happened. Today, we are going to see what happened to Saul after three days.

In Acts 9:10-14, we read, “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.’ 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. 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.’ Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’” Saul had been without sight, without food and without water for three days. This gave him a lot of time to think. Then, after three days, the Lord spoke to Ananias and told him to go to visit Saul.

Ananias had become a disciple of Christ. He may have been among those who had been forced to flee from Jerusalem because of the persecution that had started. However, it is more probable that he had not been forced to flee from Jerusalem but had been in Damascus for a period of time before the persecution started. When the Lord spoke to Ananias, he said that he had heard from many others how much harm Saul had done to the saints in Jerusalem. He had also heard that he had been given the authority from the chief priests to bind and imprison all of the Jews who had chosen to follow Christ.

We see that Christ spoke to Ananias in a vision. The Lord spoke to several people in Acts through a vision. The Lord called to Ananias in the vision and Ananias answered the Lord. The Lord told Ananias to go to Straight Street to the house of Judas. The street was called Straight Street because it went from the west gate of the city straight across the city to the east gate of the city. Ananias was told to ask for Saul of Tarsus when he arrived at that house. He was also told that Saul was praying. Then, he was told that Saul had also received a vision of a man by the name of Ananias coming to him and putting his hand on him so that Saul could receive his sight.

What would you have done if you would have been Ananias? As we have seen, Ananias had already heard a lot about Saul of Tarsus and had even heard why he had come to the city of Damascus. The first thing that Ananias did was tell the Lord the things that he had heard about Saul of Tarsus. Ananias told the Lord that he had heard about the evil Saul had done to the saints in the city of Jerusalem. Ananias said that he had heard that Saul had been given authority from the chief priests to arrest all those in Damascus that had placed their faith in Christ.

Acts 9:15-18 says, “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. For I will show him how many things he

must suffer for My name's sake.’ 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.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.” Here, we see that the Lord let Ananias know that He had chosen Saul for a special ministry.

Christ said that He had personally chosen Saul to speak for Christ to the Gentiles, to kings and to the Jews. Christ also said that He would show Saul how many things Saul would suffer for the name of Christ. This helps us to understand Romans 8:28-29a much more clearly. Those verses say, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son.” Suddenly, we learn why Christ allowed Saul to persecute the church so severely. Since Saul was going to suffer many things for Christ, he understood clearly why he had been motivated to persecute the church so that he could understand when he was persecuted.

Ananias immediately went to Straight Street when he heard about the plan of Christ for Saul. Ananias went with boldness because the Lord had explained His plan for Saul. Ananias saw this as an opportunity to help Saul understand the love that Christ gives to us for one another. His first words to Saul were “Brother Saul.” Saul had been persecuting the followers of Christ with great severity. Now, the very first words he heard from a follower of Christ as a new believer were, “Brother Saul.” Later, Paul wrote in Romans 8:16-17, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Saul suddenly realized that he was a part of a new family, the family of God.

The second thing that Ananias said to Saul was that the Lord Jesus had sent Ananias to Saul. This was also important. When Saul asked the question on the road, “Who are you, Lord.” The first part of the answer he was given was, “I am Jesus.” Now Ananias told Saul that it was the Lord Jesus who had sent him. This certainly confirmed to Saul that Jesus is God because He knows all things. Third, Ananias told Saul that the Lord had sent him to restore the physical sight of Paul. This happened as soon as Ananias spoke the words.

Fourth, Ananias told Saul that he was to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Many years later, Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 5:18, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” One of the first things that Saul learned as a new follower of Jesus was the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his life. Christ had said in John 14:26, ““But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”” Saul learned right from the beginning of his new life in Christ that he had the Holy Spirit as his Helper to teach him and guide him.

Saul wanted to make it clear that he had a new identity. He was now a follower of Christ. As a result, we see that the first thing that happened was that he was baptized by Ananias. Then Acts

9:19-22 says, “So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 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?’ But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.” We also see that Saul was very anxious to tell others about the new life that he had in Christ.

Saul immediately began going with the disciples at Damascus to the various synagogues in that city. As Saul taught about Christ, he was able to make it very clear from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Son of God. This certainly caused the people to be very surprised in the Jewish synagogues in the city of Damascus. Those who were followers of Christ knew that Saul had come to arrest them. Those who were not followers of Christ expected Saul to arrest those who were believers. Instead, in each synagogue, Saul used the Old Testament to prove that Jesus truly is the Son of God. As a result, there was great amazement among all of the Jews in Damascus.

The Jews began asking if this was the same Saul that had destroyed those who called on the name of Jesus in Jerusalem. They talked about the fact that he had come to the city of Damascus for the same purpose. They knew that he had permission from the chief priests to arrest those who called on the name of Jesus. Acts 9:1-2 describes what these Jews had heard about Saul. Those verses say, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 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.” This caused great confusion among both followers of Christ and those who rejected Him.

Meanwhile, Saul continued to gain strength. The word translated “strength” means *to receive strength or to become bold*. Many years later, Paul used this same word when he said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Even as a new follower of Jesus, Saul was already beginning to learn that Christ would give him strength as he depended on Him for strength. This caused the Jews that lived at Damascus to become even more confused. They did not know what to think as Saul proved from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Promised One for whom the Jews had been waiting to come.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be able to prove from the Word of God that Jesus is the Christ that was promised in the Old Testament. In order to do this, we need to help them learn how to explain the Old Testament passages that apply so that they can help others to understand that Christ is God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the Word of God to others.