

Episode #1147 Acts 9 Part 3-The Ministry of Ananias

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. The persecutor Saul had been on his way to Damascus to arrest all those who followed the Way of the Lord Jesus when he was arrested by a glorious vision of Christ from heaven. Blinded by the great light he had seen, he was led into the city and awaited what the Lord would have for him next. That was brought about by the Lord's agent Ananias.

III. Ananias and Saul. Acts 9:10-19.

A. Verse 14. Ananias also knew of Saul's current mission to Damascus. Probably the believers there were struggling with fear and doubt, not knowing what would happen to them when Saul came. Many perhaps were already hiding, or had fled the city. Yet Ananias had bravely stayed. Yet now the Lord was sending him right to this persecutor? As we read this, we cannot help but be fascinated by the simple openness of Ananias as he tells the Lord what he has heard from many about this man Saul. Saul's reputation has preceded him to Damascus. Probably the "many" from whom Ananias had heard this were the fugitive Christians who had fled from Jerusalem when the persecution arose about Stephen. Of course, Ananias has no knowledge of Saul's conversion. In his ignorance of the true facts, he sees in him only the man of evil reputation. We also learn here that you can talk to the Lord. As long as you are sincere and honest and you make sense, you can talk to the Lord. That is what Ananias did here.

B. Verse 15. The Lord does not become angry at our questions when we ask them with an honest and seeking heart. He explains to Ananias that He had chosen Saul.

1. Chosen is Greek *ekloges* meaning election, does mean chosen, as it is translated here. Not elected to be saved, but elected to the service he would perform. Whenever in the Scriptures when you find election, *ekloge*, you will find it has to do with the service a man performs. When a man is elected President or Senator, he is chosen in regarding to the service they are to perform as President or Senator. Every election we have, we are making choice of men related to the service they perform.
2. Vessel is what we would call a container or vessel, to carry the Lord's name. Not just to go out saying, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," but to make a full report on His character as to Who He is and what He is. A name is not just the word used to designate him, but His reputation based on His character.
3. Gentiles is Greek *ethnon*, and means nations. There are those who would like to say this means the Jews among the nations, for such could be at times, but not here, for you have the sons of Israel coming in here later, and it would not be simply a repetition. It is not apposition, for you have kings before it. We will see this starting in Acts 13.
4. Kings are absolute rulers, like Sergius Paulus in Acts 13:6-12, Felix in Acts 24:10-26, and King Agrippa and Festus in Acts 26:1-29, and Caesar in Acts 27:24.
5. The children of Israel, actually sons, the Greek *huios*, meaning the representatives of God's nation then alive on earth. Someday, He will deal

with all Israel, every member from all time. In that day, He will send them on a mission to carry His name before the nations. Right here we can draw another comparison between Saul and Israel. Saul was a chosen instrument unto God, and Israel is a chosen instrument. Israel is yet to carry the truth concerning God's name before the nations, and this will be done by the twelve apostles in the day when they will disciple nations and identify nations with the character of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and here Saul is to do the same.

C. Verse 16. The persecutor is to become the persecuted!

1. The Lord told Ananias that He would show Saul the great things he would suffer for His name, and there cannot be any doubt but that the time soon came when God gave Saul a preview of the whole course of his life. This is amazing when we consider all the things he did suffer. II Corinthians 11:23-28 lists those just up to that time, and he still had a long way to go.
2. What kept him going? The Lord caught him away to paradise, to the third heaven, and allowed him to hear and see unspeakable things that were intended for his eyes and ears alone, things that were not lawful for him to utter. II Corinthians 12:1-4. In seeking not to boast Saul speaks as if he was speaking of someone else, but he is telling us a great revelation that he himself received: he saw paradise, the way the earth will be, and he saw the third heaven, that "new heaven." This caused him to see and to know the purpose and the goal for all of his sufferings. This was a personal thing for Saul. After God showed him the things He would suffer, He gave him this preview, catching him away to the third heaven, which has to do with the new heaven and the new earth, the new condition of things, and thus he knew all that his sufferings would be related to. He was willing to suffer so greatly because he knew what the end, the reward, would be.
3. Every time Saul suffered, he had seen in advance that it would happen. Yet consider his conclusion in Romans 8:18. He did not suffer just a little! The reward he saw at the end must have been greater than we can imagine. Through his testimony, we can know it is worth it.

D. Verse 17. Ananias is satisfied and obeys.

1. In this record we have before us, all Luke the writer gives us is the pertinent facts.
2. For this service which he was to perform, Ananias acts as the apostle of Jesus Christ. Our English versions miss an important truth. "Has sent" is the Greek *apestalken*, a past tense form of the verb *apostello*, from which we get the noun apostle. Ananias had been apostled by Jesus Christ. This proves that the twelve and Paul were not the only apostles. Anyone who was sent authoritatively by the Lord to do any task for him had been apostled. Ananias' commission was very short. It was over once he did this for Saul. Being an apostle was not so much an office that you held as it was a job that you did. This helps us see what the Acts of the Apostles are all about: the deeds of those sent by God with His authority to do things. Here we have the most definite fact that Ananias becomes the apostle of Jesus Christ, for every element required to make a man an apostle was present in the case of Ananias.

Ananias was an apostle, a commissioned one, of Jesus Christ, only in result of this commissioning. There was no permanency whatsoever in regard to the work of an apostle. A man could be an apostle in regard to one thing for a short time, and once that thing was over the commission ended and we might say his apostleship ended. The next day the Lord might recommission him for another task, and then he would be an apostle until that work was fulfilled. Ananias was given this work as an apostle, and when this work was finished, he ceased to be an apostle. We should note this in order to realize that what he did, he did it as a commissioned one of Jesus Christ.

3. We see that Ananias laid his hands on Saul's head. This was not ordination; this was simply God working through a mediator, as we saw in Acts 8 when Peter and John went down to Samaria. Here Ananias did it.
 4. Then he speaks the words that acknowledge Saul as a brother in very tender words. He acted in faith when he called Saul "brother." Ananias shows companionship by using his Hebrew name *Saoul*. He tells Saul it was the Lord Jesus Who sent him.
 5. Then he reveals what Saul is to do. His sight is to be restored and he is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is *pneumatos hagiou* or spirit holy, refers to the power, not the Person of the Spirit.
- E. Verse 18. Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he received his sight at once.
1. This is just a symbol of what was already true. Saul's mind and heart had been blinded by traditions, opinions, his culture and upbringing, and even his own pride. Now he saw clearly the truth.
 6. He arose and was baptized. Of course, if people believe baptism is a water ceremony performed on a person, they will probably take this to mean that Saul stood before Ananias, and then he sprinkled water on him while he spoke some ritualistic words. That would be if they believe that baptism is the sprinkling of water on a person. Of course, if they believe baptism to be immersion, they will probably imagine Ananias and Saul heading off to the Abana River, where after speaking the ritualistic words they will tell us Ananias plunged Saul in the water. But if we see in baptism far more than a water ceremony, if we see in this not just a ritual but a reality, if we see in this word the truth of one being identified with Jesus Christ, then we will probably see Ananias acting on the full authority he was given by the risen Lord and speaking the word that identifies Saul with Jesus Christ, and from that moment on this man is sworn into the army of the Lord, and from then on there is no way out. Saul must preach the gospel, and woe be to him if he does not! If any ask how Saul became identified with Jesus Christ, the answer is Ananias identified him. If any ask further, "But what did he do?" the answer is we do not know. John identified the repentant ones of Israel by means of a water ritual God had given him. There is no evidence that Ananias used a water ritual on Saul that identified him with Jesus Christ. All this happened in a home, and the fact remains that at that moment in the house of Judas, Saul was by Ananias identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, he was received into the army of the Lord, and there was no way out now for the man Saul. He was in,

and now all the responsibilities of a follower of Jesus Christ are now on the head and shoulders of this man Saul. The one who had been a persecutor is now part of the Lord's Own!

- F. Verse 19. Saul had been fasting since his arrival in Damascus, and was weak, so now he eats. It is a good thing for new believers at first to cling to others who have known the Lord for a longer time.

IV. Conclusion. Ananias acted as God's apostle to bring Saul his message, tell him his mission, and heal him of his blindness. Then Saul is identified with the Lord and His work, and from now on he is bound to it and cannot get out. Saul immediately acts boldly and proclaims the Word. Are we bold for Christ? Yet his job is to work, not to die, and so this bold proclaimer must sneak out of the city. Are we willing to be bold when need be and humble when need be? The faithful servant of God must at times learn to be both.