

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 30

I. Exposition of Chapter Nine (Continued).

A. **Verses 6-7 (Continued)** – After Saul asked the question “**Lord, what do You want me to do?**”, Jesus responded by saying, “**Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.**” One lesson we can learn from this is when we obey God, He will give us the next step of direction. It was necessary that Saul obey the Lord and go into the city before the Lord was going to give him more direction. In **verse 7**, it states that the men with him “**...stood speechless...**”. Dr. Stanley Horton states that this phrase is like our idiom, “**almost scared to death.**”¹ The last phrase in this verse describes the experience of the other men, that they were “**...hearing a voice but seeing no one.**”

B. **Verses 8-9** – “**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. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**”

1. The brightness of the light caused Saul to have temporary blindness. This had to be a very humbling experience for this proud Pharisee.

“**The men led Saul into the city (Acts 9:8–9), for the angry bull (Acts 9:1) had now become a docile lamb! The leader had to be led because the vision had left him blind. His spiritual eyes had been opened, but his physical eyes were closed. God was thoroughly humbling Saul and preparing him for the ministry of Ananias.**”²

2. “**And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**” – Apparently this experience shook Saul up so much that he was not able to eat or drink. Dr. Robert Utley states:

“**What a reorientation must have been occurring in Paul’s mind (theology) and heart (desire)! He was beginning the transformation from persecutor of the gospel to proclaimer of the gospel!**”³

C. **Verse 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.’**”

1. Here we have a believer by the name of Ananias. As far as we know, he was not an apostle or prophet or a preacher of any kind. He was simply a Christian man who was devoted to the Lord.

“**Ananias was a Jew of Damascus and a believer in Jesus. Here (v. 10) he is called a ‘disciple’ and presented as one who immediately recognizes the Lord Christ, who speaks to him in a vision, while in 22:12 he is called ‘a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews.’ From Ananias’s statement that he had heard reports about Saul’s persecutions in Jerusalem (v. 13), it may be inferred that he was not one of the Hellenistic Christians who had formerly lived in Jerusalem but that lived in Damascus.**”⁴

2. The fact that Ananias responded so easily with the words, “**Here I am, Lord**” seems to indicate a certain amount of intimacy or closeness he had with the Lord. There doesn’t seem to be any shock or anxiety in the fact that Ananias was having this encounter with the Lord.

D. **Verses 11-12** – **God gives explicit instructions to Ananias.** He was to go to a man name Judas’ house which was on “**Straight Street**” in Damascus. According to Dr. Stanley Horton this was the main street of the city In addition Horton states:

“**In ancient times it was about fifty feet wide, lined with Corinthian columns and went straight from the west end of the city to the east end; it is still an important street in Damascus today.**”⁵

1. **Verse 11** – Ananias was to inquire “**...for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying...**” - “**Ananias was available to do God’s will, but he certainly was not anxious to obey! The fact that Saul was ‘praying’ instead of ‘preying’ should have encouraged Ananias. ‘Prayer is the autograph of the Holy Ghost upon the renewed heart,’ said Charles Spurgeon (Rom. 8:9, 14–16). Instead of trusting himself, Saul was now trusting the Lord and waiting for Him to show him what to do. In fact, Saul had already seen a vision of a man named Ananias (Hananiah = ‘the Lord is gracious’)** coming to minister to him; so, how could Ananias refuse to obey?”⁶

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 182.

²Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 439.

³Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 122.

⁴Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 169.

⁵Horton, 183.

⁶Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 440.

2. **Verse 12** – In the vision Saul had concerning Ananias coming and ministering to him must have been a **"vision"** of the mind for he could not yet see. Take note also of the **"...putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."** The laying on of hands for healing is seen often in Scripture. (cf. **Mark 16:18**; **"...they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."**; **Luke 4:40**; **Luke 13:11-13**; **Acts 5:12**; **Acts 19:11**; **Acts 28:8**.)

E. Verses 13-14 – Ananias' response to the Lord.

1. **Verse 13** – **"...Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem."** – Obviously, Saul's reputation had proceeded him. There were many believers who had escaped Jerusalem and went to Damascus with stories about Saul, the Pharisee who had persecuted violently the church. Also note the word **"saints"** is mentioned for the first time in Acts in reference to believers. The word **"saints"** means; **"Holy (separated) dedicated ones, consecrated to the Lord and to His service."**⁷

"It is interesting to note in Acts 9 the different names used for God's people: disciples (Acts 9:1, 10, 19, 25–26, 36, 38), those of the way (Acts 9:2), saints (Acts 9:13, 32, 41), all that call on God's name (Acts 9:14, 21), and brethren (Acts 9:17, 30). We use the word Christian most frequently, and yet that name did not appear on the scene until later (Acts 11:26). "Disciples" is the name that is used most in the Book of Acts, but you do not find it used in the epistles. There the name "saints" is the most frequently used title for God's people."⁸

2. **Verse 14** – **"And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."**
- Not only was Saul's work as persecutor of the Jerusalem church known, but word had gotten out that he was headed for Damascus.

"And Ananias in a simple and natural way tells the Lord all about it. The task laid upon him seems too great and he acquaints the Lord with what he had heard about this man. This, has been declared, was a foolish thing. Of course, the Lord knew all about Saul; he knew far better the evil work he had accomplished than Ananias could ever know...While unbelief had its share in it and the weakness of the flesh is seen, it is likewise something which brings cheer to our hearts. The Lord in His graciousness does not rebuke Ananias for his unbelieving reply. He bears with the weakness of His servant and condescends to make known unto him the future destiny of the praying Saul."⁹

F. Verses 15-16 – The Lord's response to Ananias' Concerns.

1. **Verse 15** – **"...he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel..."**

a. **"...chosen vessel..."** – The word **"vessel"** means **"an implement or utensil"**¹⁰ Several translations translate this word as **"instrument"**. The idea that Saul was **"chosen"** simply means that whatever God calls us to do is NOT because we deserve it or have earned it but it's completely by the grace of God. (cf. **II Timothy 2:20-21**).

b. Saul, as the Apostle Paul, would take the Gospel to **"Gentiles"** (the nations), **"kings"** King Herod Agrippa II (**25:13–26:32**), and possibly Emperor Nero and others, and, lastly, to the **"children of Israel"**. The placing of the Gentiles first seems to show Paul's primary calling to the Gentiles.

c. The phrase **"...to bear My name..."** is an unusual phrase. It refers to the bearing witness of Jesus through presenting the Gospel.

"There is irony surrounding the name of Jesus in His dialog with Ananias about Saul. Ananias objects that Saul has persecuted those who call on Jesus' name (Acts 9:14); Jesus reveals that He has chosen and transformed Saul precisely so that he will carry that name to the Gentiles—and even suffer for it (v. 16)"¹¹

2. **Verse 16** – **"For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."** – In a reversal of roles, the Saul of Tarsus who brought suffering to Christians, would, as the Apostle Paul, endure great suffering also for the Gospel. (cf. **II Corinthians 4:7-12**; **11:24-33**).

G. Verses 17-19 – Ananias obeys the Lord and ministers to Saul.

1. Ananias goes, lays hands on Saul and immediately Saul is healed from blindness and presumably filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. Saul is baptized in water (**v. 18**).

⁷Horton, 183. (Footnote).

⁸Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 439–440.

⁹Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (New York: “Our Hope” Publication Office, 1912), 179.

¹⁰Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

¹¹John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ac 9:15.