

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #42b

#### COMMENTARY ON: 9:10-19

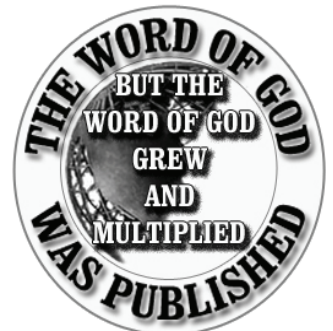
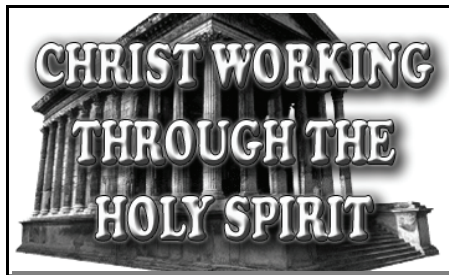
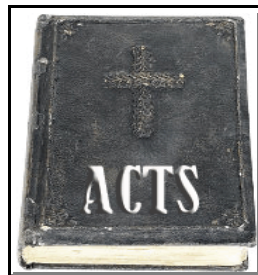
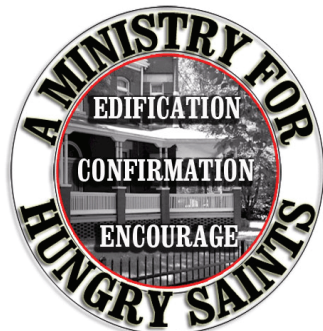
#### ANANIAS SENT TO SAUL - #2

Having testified to the instant obedience of Saul, and to his undistracted devotion to waiting on the Lord, the narrative now turns to the one chosen by God to restore Saul's sight, usher him into Christ, and be the one through whom Saul will be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is arresting to consider the way of the Lord in this matter. He does not choose an apostle to perform this ministry – not even the one who had been given the keys to the Kingdom. He does not choose a significant disciple like James, the Lord's brother, or Barnabas, who will be instrumental in promoting the acceptance of Saul and his initial involvement in preaching Christ. Choosing to ignore more prominent leaders in the church, the Lord sends "a certain disciple at Damascus" – not from the hub of Kingdom activity, Jerusalem, but from Damascus. This was a city that is not mentioned in the New Covenant Scriptures until Acts 9:2, where it is identified as the target for Saul's initiative against the church. This is also the first and last mentioning of this "certain disciple." Yet, in all the world there is not an informed believer in Jesus who does not know of this man.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

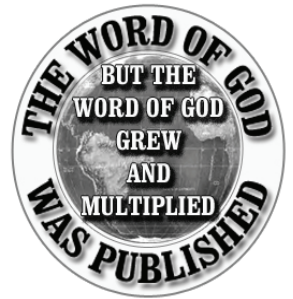


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 42b



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# ANANIAS SENT TO SAUL, Part Two

<sup>9:10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, <sup>12</sup> And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. <sup>13</sup> Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: <sup>14</sup> And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. <sup>15</sup> 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: <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. <sup>19</sup> And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus." (Acts 9:9-19)

## INTRODUCTION

Having testified to the instant obedience of Saul, and to his undistracted devotion to waiting on the Lord, the narrative now turns to the one chosen by God to restore Saul's sight, usher him into Christ, and be the one through whom Saul will be filled with the Holy

Spirit. It is evident that the Lord is orchestrating this entire set of events. There is not so much as a minuscule thought originating with men that enters into the procedures that are reported in this text. So far as we know, there was not even a prayer raised up to God for

which this record could be considered an answer. The apostles as a group, nor Peter who had been given the keys to the Kingdom were in any way instrumental in the events that are now reported. They were not the result of prayers offered by Saul himself, for the arrangements had

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- HE RECEIVED HIS SIGHT AND WAS BAPTIZED (9:18)
- HE WAS STRENGTHENED, AND WAS WITH THE DISCIPLES (9:19)
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already been made by the Lord, as He had announced to Saul: *“it shall be told thee what thou must do”* (Acts 9:6).

All of this is another confirmation that it is ever true, *“the heavens do rule”* (Dan 4:26). Those who are currently propagating the heresy that God cannot do anything until men ask Him to do so, could not possibly be more wrong. This should not be difficult for any professing Christian to accept. Jesus taught us to acknowledge the superiority of Divine rule in our prayers: *“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”* (Matt 6:13).

While men often make an issue out of human choice, the Scriptures make an issue out of Divine choice and the implementation of God’s purpose. Without fear of contradiction God declares, *“I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure”* (Isa 46:10). The best of men, and even the generally acknowledged most advanced person among the saved, Paul the apostle, confessed, *“to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”* (Rom 7:18). However, you will never hear of the God of heaven being frustrated in His revealed purpose, or coming short of what He has determined to do.

### WHAT ABOUT LIMITING GOD AND QUENCHING THE SPIRIT?

Those who are lacking in their acquaintance with Divine manners draw our attention to the fact that Israel *“limited”* the Lord by their recalcitrance. And, indeed, this is revealed to have been so. *“Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel”* (Psa 78:41). The idea is not that a restriction was placed upon God Himself, but that the benefits flowing to the generation of unbelievers was restricted. God did not remove or void His promise to give Israel the land of Canaan, but excluded the ones who *“believed not”* from entering into it. They, and they alone, are the ones who *“could not enter”* (Heb 3:19). Their children entered (Deut 29:22), but those who refused to believe expired in the wilderness – even though their children had to wander for forty years in the same wilderness until they did so (Num 14:33).

In the record of Israel, we see the principle of Divine intent carried out in meticulous detail.

**PURPOSE OR INTENT.** First, God’s purposes are conceived independently of any human involvement. His purposes – particularly as they regard His multifaceted salvation, are conceived *“in Himself.”* As it is written, *“Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself”* (Eph 1:9). And again, *“According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Eph 3:11). God’s purposes are not reactions to human circumstances. They are not a response to conditions perceived by prescience, or seeing what was going to happen. Divine purposes are not driven by human need or desires. They are conceived within the circumference of God’s Person – *“according to His good pleasure,”* and *“in Himself.”* That is why His purpose is referred to as being *“eternal”* (Eph 3:11), conceived *“before the foundation of the world,”* or before its *“creation”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Eph 1:4). It was actually put into motion *“before the world began”* (1 Tim 1:9), being *“promised before the world began”* (Tit 1:2). An understanding of this is fundamental to sound theology. A proper understanding must both commence and conclude with God and Christ. It is not

possible to arrive at a correct conclusion concerning the things of God apart from this manner of thinking.

**IMPLEMENTATION.** The revealed purpose of God, which finds its ultimate expression in the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, is implemented within an arena of competition. This is in order to the glory of God, for there is no Divine purpose that is not driven by the objective to glorify God. The fact that Divine intention is carried out within the framework of competition has no ultimate bearing on the fulfillment of that purpose. God does what He intends, and does not fail to fulfill His good pleasure. Thus He declares, *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isa 46:9-10). In this case God’s *“counsel”* equates to what He has purposed. It simply is not possible for God to purpose something and it fail to be fulfilled. Such a circumstance would cause His Godhood to come into question. Thus He declares, *“I have purposed it, I will also do it”* (Isa 46:11). He hurls the challenge into the domain of conflicting personalities, *“I work, and who will reverse it?”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Isa 43:13). Again, the Psalmist affirms, *“The counsel of the Lord standeth forever”* (Psa 33:11). If this was not true, His promises could not be trusted, and thus could never be



guaranteed as the means of becoming a partaker of the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). That is why it is affirmed without qualification, *“Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places”* (Psa 135:6). Even though men contradict the counsel of the Lord, oppose it, and doubt it, *“the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand”* (Prov 19:21). Should men choose to oppose the Lord, they must know, *“There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD”* (Prov 21:30).

**FULFILLMENT.** There is a level at which it is not possible for the purpose of God to fail. As it is written, *“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isa 46:10), and *“I have purposed it and I will do it”* (Isa 46:11). This is precisely why the *“purpose of God”* stands *“according to election,”* or what He has determined (Rom 9:11). Examples of the fulfillment of Divine determinations are the flood (Gen 7:11-24), Abraham and Sarah having Isaac (Gen 12:3; 18:14), the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Gen 15:14; Ex 12:41,51), the birth of Jesus (Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; 9:6; Matt 1:22-25), and the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:33; 17:3). It simply is not possible for purposes such as these to come short of fulfillment. Furthermore, the *“exceeding great and precious promises”* of God are in this category of Divine intention. This is confirmed by the fact that they are the appointed means through which we become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Pet 14). If there was the slightest chance that they could fail, it would not be

possible to have such a guarantee.

**PARTICIPATION.** The variable factor has to do with the level of participation. Even then, the Divine purpose itself will not fail. Only those who fail to believe will be excluded. For example, the commitment of God to give Canaan to the Israelites did not fail of fulfillment. It was those who did not believe that were excluded – but that had no effect upon the promise itself. The same is true of the



commitment of God to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Contrary to the teaching that God has abandoned Israel, thereby voiding His commitment to them, *“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace”* (Rom 11:5). Only *“some of the branches”* were removed from the natural olive tree (Rom 11:17). The tree itself remains, together with its root and

its fatness. In fact, the Gentiles are presently being sustained by *“the root and fatness of the olive tree”* of Israel (Rom 11:17). Salvation is still *“of the Jews,”* just as Jesus announced (John 4:22). At no point has it become *“of the Gentiles.”* That fact alone confirms that God’s promise concerning Israel has not been voided. If that was the case, a new olive tree would have been required.

**WHAT BEARING DOES THIS HAVE UPON OUR TEXT?**

It might appear as though we have journeyed down an unrelated tributary – but that is not the case at all. The apprehension of Saul of Tarsus was **not** a response to his quest for God – regardless of how ardent it may have been. Saul was an enemy of Jesus, not a seeker of Him. He had no notions of Him being the Messiah, but eagerly sought to do everything he could *“contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”*, all the while maintaining a good conscience toward God (Acts 26:3; 23:1). Notwithstanding, the very fact that Saul was breathing threatening and slaughter against the church of Jesus Christ confirms that he felt he had found the truth pertaining to God. There is no evidence that he was seeking further enlightenment as David did (Psa 119:34,73,125,144,169).

In Saul of Tarsus we have a fulfillment of the remarkable affirmation, *“So then it is not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy”* (Rom 9:16). How else can you possibly account for the apprehension of Saul?

**A CERTAIN DISCIPLE NAMED ANANIAS**

*“<sup>10</sup> 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.”*

**THE DIVINE MANNER**

It is arresting to consider the way of the Lord in this matter. He does not choose an apostle to perform this ministry – not even the one who had been given the keys to the Kingdom. He does

not choose a significant disciple like James, the Lord’s brother, or Barnabas, who will be instrumental in promoting the acceptance of Saul and his initial involvement in preaching Christ. Choosing to ignore more prominent leaders in the church, the Lord sends *“a certain disciple at Damascus”* – not from the hub of Kingdom activity, Jerusalem, but from Damascus. This was a city that is not mentioned in the New Covenant Scriptures until Acts 9:2, where it is

identified as the target for Saul’s initiative against the church.

**A CERTAIN DISCIPLE**

*“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias . . .”* Several later versions eliminate the word *“certain”* (NIV, NRSV, RSV, Amplified, etc.). All of the accepted Greek manuscripts contain this indefinite pronoun (Greek, *τις*), that means *“a certain one.”*<sup>THAYER</sup> The point here is that there

was not only a Divine appointment of the one to be an apostle, but of the one who would be used to initiate his entrance into the Kingdom as well. All of this was under strict heavenly supervision. Nothing was left to human discretion. This has been a pattern throughout the book of Acts.

- ⇒ The choice of the apostles by Jesus (Acts 1:2).
- ⇒ The selection of one to fill the office vacated by Judas (Acts 1:24).
- ⇒ The one who spoke on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14).

church. Instead key people and institutions imagine themselves to have seized control. However, they are not governing the Kingdom of God, but are only administering their own private agenda – and it will be short-lived. Of old time the Lord revealed that every competing kingdom would be decimated by the Kingdom of the Lord’s Christ, and no place will be found for them (Dan 2:35). Jesus Himself spoke of those on whom He would fall, saying they would be “ground to powder” (Matt 21:44).

Within an institutional setting, it is generally known that those with a spiritual mind and understanding are not accepted. This has been the case

his role in the Kingdom. It is clear from the record that Saul would never have been set apart to the apostleship, had it been left up to men to do so.

**The First and the Last**

This is also the first and last mentioning of this “*certain disciple*.” Yet, in all the world there is not an informed believer in Jesus who does not know of this man. How marvelous to consider the works of God! **Those who are enamored with career building will find no fuel for their lusts in the record of Ananias.** The work to which he was called ushered another person into prominence. Such is often the Lord’s manner.

**THE LORD CALLED AND ANANIAS ANSWERED**

“... and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.”

We learn a lot about Ananias from his response to the Lord. Like all people of faith, it was an instant response, for faith puts one in a ready and waiting posture.

**Those who are enamored with career building will find no fuel for their lusts in the record of Ananias. The work to which he was called ushered another person into prominence. Such is often the Lord’s manner.**

- ⇒ The one who delivered the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26,29).
- ⇒ The choosing and calling of Saul of Tarsus (9:4).
- ⇒ The one who through whom Saul as officially called into the apostleship (Acts 9:10).
- ⇒ The separation of Barnabas and Saul to a special work (Acts 13:2).
- ⇒ The choice of who first delivered the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:7).

The prophet Isaiah affirmed that the government would rest upon the shoulders of the Messiah, and that He would administrate it in an ever increasing manner. The record of the book of Acts confirms that this is precisely what took place, and that it was characteristic of the Lord’s manner of ruling,

In our time there has been an alarming distortion of Kingdom manners presented and embraced. Jesus is no longer perceived as the Head of His

throughout history, and sadly continues until this very day. It can be said of the Gentile church just as it was said of the institutionalized Judaism: “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?” (Acts 7:52). Jesus said of Jerusalem, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). **It is the manner of religious organization to eventually come against those who carry the message of the Lord.** This tendency reached its apex in the rejection of the Lord Jesus Himself.

This is why the government has been placed upon the shoulders of the Lord Jesus, and not upon the church itself. Jesus told those holding the highest position in His church that they would **not** exercise authority over the other people, like the kings of the Gentiles (Lk 22:25-26).

Thus Ananias is summoned by the Lord to the work of informing Saul of

- ⇒ When Abraham was about to offer Isaac, an angel called to him and he answered, “Here am I” (Gen 22:11),
- ⇒ When an angel called to Jacob, he answered, “Here am I” (Gen 31:11).
- ⇒ When God spoke to Jacob he replied, “Here am I” (Gen 46:2).
- ⇒ When the Lord called to Moses from the burning bush he replied, “Here am I” (Ex 3:4).
- ⇒ When the Lord called to young Samuel, he responded “Here am I,” thinking that Eli had called him (1 Sam 3:4,5,6,8). When Samuel perceived it was the Lord, he instructed Samuel to reply, “Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth” (1 Sam 3:9).
- ⇒ When the Spirit told the brethren at Antioch to separate Barnabas and Saul to the work to which He had called them, they did so immediately (Acts 13:2-3).
- ⇒ When a directive vision was given to

Paul instructing him to go into Macedonia, he, and those with him, immediately “endeavored to go into Macedonia” (Acts 16:9-10).

Particularly in Christ, this confirmed the nature of the New Covenant. **A marvelous accord is wrought between the Lord and His people that makes for an acute sensitivity to Divine**

**direction.** This is seen in makeup of the covenant: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know

Me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:10-11). **The absence of an keen sensitivity to the Lord belies, or contradicts, any profession of identity with God through Christ Jesus.** It simply is not possible for a person to be a part of the New Covenant while lacking its essential elements. We are under no obligation to receive anyone in Jesus’ name in whom they are not found.

## INQUIRE FOR ONE CALLED SAUL OF TARSUS

**“<sup>11</sup> And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, <sup>12</sup> And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.”**

The specificity of this word is most remarkable.

- ⇒ A specific street: “Straight.”
- ⇒ A specific house: “the house of Judas.”
- ⇒ A specific man: “Saul of Tarsus.”
- ⇒ A specific activity in which the man is engaged: “he prayeth.”
- ⇒ A specific vision given to the man naming the one who would come to him: “a man named Ananias.”
- ⇒ Precisely what this man would do when he came to Saul: “putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.”

Those who tend to think only in broad generalities do well to take note of this direction. **It teaches us that there is such a thing as Divine instruction that is complete in all of its details.** Other remarkably detailed instructions were given for the observance of the first Passover, that would conclude with Israel being delivered from Egypt (Ex 12), and the day of atonement (Lev 16). Although some affirm that God leaves matters in the hand of men, instances such as the one before us confirms that this not the case – particularly in matters relating to the salvation of God and its implementation among men. When it is stated that the government is upon the

shoulder of Jesus (Isa 9:6), and that He has all power in heaven and earth, it is to be understood that the rule is both precise and total. **There is a level of Divine involvement among the sons of men in which the human will and choice are not revealed factors.** In such cases we do well to avoid making any attempt to blend the text with our perception of the

years before our text. Confirming it was a significant city, David put military garrisons there (2 Sam 8:6). From ancient times it was a city of remarkable commerce (Ezek 27:18). Therefore, finding a street named “Straight” was no small task, to say nothing of finding “the house of Judas” that was located on it.

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Lord and His ways. Suffice it to say, our text is dealing with a man who was separated unto the Lord before he was born (Gal 1:15). Further, he will be “called” in strict conformity with that Divine appointment.

### A SPECIFIC STREET AND HOUSE

*“And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus...”*

The directions are certainly specific, yet general enough to require diligence and inquiry. I do not know the size of the city of Damascus at the time of our text. However, it is one of the most ancient and important cities in the world. Located in Syria, it was an established city during the time of Abraham (Gen 14:15; 15:2) – that was more than 3,000

**The point to be seen here is that Divine direction and involvement in the will of God does not eliminate the need for deliberate and thoughtful activity.** The Lord did not say He would tell Ananias when he had come to the designated street and arrived at the specified house. He would even have to “inquire in the house of Judas,” asking for “a man from Tarsus named Saul.” <sup>NIV</sup>

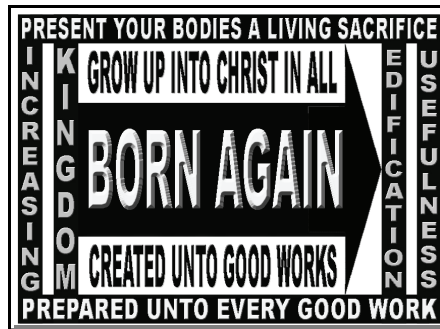
In Romans 12:1-2, a salient point is made of being usable to God. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* We may safely assume that

Ananias had done what Romans twelve admonishes. This is, in fact, what made him usable in this critical situation. There also can be no doubt that he had separated himself from defiling influences, as Paul enjoined Timothy to do: *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus: Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim 2:19-21).

Within a lifeless institutionalized setting, where the wisdom of men and their strategies are exalted, there is a necessary loss of this perspective. **An overestimation of the human intellect and reasoning aptitude causes Divine requirements to receded into the background.** They actually become inaccessible to the mind that is shackled to the institutions of men.

I am saying that it is highly unlikely that a suitable man could be found within the average church of our land who could have been directed as Ananias – *“a certain disciple”* who resided in the Syrian city of Damascus. To me, if this assessment is correct, it reveals a most deplorable situation. God has revealed that it is the nature of the Kingdom into which we have been translated to grow, increase, and mature. The prophets declared that the Kingdom administered by Jesus would be one of unending increase (Isa 9:7). Jesus revealed that the Kingdom of God was like a mustard seed, beginning small, and eventually outgrowing all other kingdoms (Matt 13:31-32). Daniel also declared this to be a characteristic of the kingdom over which Jesus presides (Dan 2:44). Additionally, the Lord has so

equipped the church as to promote its edification and maturity (Eph 4:8-16). Also, the Scriptures themselves are designed to make *“the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work”* (2 Tim 3:16-17). This is in perfect keeping with the nature of the new birth itself. As it is written, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph 2:10).



In today's *Christian* setting Ananias would be an unusual disciple. However, in our text he is appropriately described as *“a certain disciple”* – not a certain leader, but a *“certain disciple!”* He was representative of the common believer – for *“disciple”* is a common designation, not a unique one like *“apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers”* (Eph 4:11). He was not described as one of those placed *“first,”* second or third in the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:28). He is not described as an elder who had *“labored in the word and in the doctrine”* (1 Tim 5:17), but simply as *“a certain disciple.”*

We hear no more of him as we do of Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Luke, and others. **Precisely how would someone like Ananias fit into the patterned structure of the institutionalized church.** How would he fit into the average Bible College or Seminary? Precisely what would be his role in the average Christian convention, or television ministry, or missionary organization? Is Ananias the kind of man that the average pulpit committee, missionary board, or religious conference would have sent to usher the premier apostle into his work?

**Precisely what is the difference between the church of Ananias' day and**

**the one of our time? Surely you can see that there is a significant difference – so much so that we appear to be reading about a church that is altogether different than what is paraded as “the church” today.** Indeed, it is my studied opinion that the church of the book of Acts is radically different from the professed church of our time. The difference can be traced to the variance existing between life and death, and reconciliation and alienation. It can be accounted for by the difference between being alive unto God and dead to sin, and being free from righteousness and dead toward God. Jesus does not have two bodies, or two churches. There are not differing branches of His church that have contradicting characteristics. All of this is involved in the expression, *“there is one body”* (Eph 4:4). It is Christ's *“body”* because it is the intended recipient of His *“fulness”* (John 1:16; Eph 1:23; 3:19; 4:13). Just as *“all the fulness of God”* dwells in Jesus (Col 1:19; 2:9), so all the fulness of Christ dwells within His church. Just as Jesus bears the traits of God, so the church possesses the traits of Jesus. I know of no way to successfully contradict these statements.

If the professed church is fundamentally unlike Jesus, then, if it is to be accepted, it has no alternative but to change. That is precisely why Jesus solemnly warned the wayward churches of Asia to *“repent”* (Rev 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19), *“do the first works”* (Rev 2:5), and *“buy”* from Him things that would make them acceptable to Him (Rev 3:18). Things like leaving one's *“first love”* (Rev 2:4), tolerating members that hold to erroneous doctrines (Rev 2:14-15), allowing the propagation of damaging teaching (Rev 2:20), and having a name of being alive when actually death reigns (Rev 3:1) are intolerable circumstances. The presence of such qualities thrusts the church into a spiritually backward motion. **They are why the professing church is so unlike the church reported in the book of Acts.** They are conditions that cause men like Ananias to appear dominant and in the minority, while, in truth, he was appropriately described as *“a certain disciple.”*

**BEHOLD, HE PRAYS**

*“... for, behold, he prayeth...”*  
Up to this time, we have not been told

what Saul of Tarsus was actually doing – only that he was blind and was neither eating nor drinking. Now, however, the Lord tells Ananias that Saul “*is praying.*”<sup>NKJV</sup> On one occasion Jesus said to a woman from the city of Samaria, “*If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water*” (John 4:10). Now, Saul knows the One he has met, and there is no doubt that he has correlated that experience with the Scriptures concerning the Messiah. There is no question in my mind that Saul was experiencing an extraordinary measure of the godly sorrow that “*worketh repentance,*” or that “*produces repentance*”<sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Cor 7:10). **If David’s sin with Bathsheba, and treachery that led to her husband’s death produced the expressions of the fifty-first Psalm, one can scarcely imagine what the knowledge that one had been persecuting the Son of God must have produced.** Behind the scenes, it was the goodness of God that was leading Saul to repentance (Rom 2:4) – Divine forbearance was productive.

#### AN INTERESTING TRADITION

This street (“Straight”) extends now from the eastern to the western gate, about three miles, crossing the whole city and suburbs in a direct line. Near the eastern gate is a house, said to be that of Judah, in which Paul lodged. There is in it a very small closet, where tradition reports that the apostle passed three days without food, until Ananias restored him to sight. Tradition also says that he had here the vision recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:2. There is also in this street a fountain whose water is drunk by Christians, in remembrance of what, they suppose, the same fountain produced for the baptism of Paul.

(Robinson, Calmet, reported by Albert Barnes)

Praying is set forth as a point of change. The captivity of Job was “*turned*” when he “*prayed for his friends*” (Job 2:10). Jesus Himself was transfigured while He was praying (Luke 9:29). Christ’s great triumph over the temptation to draw back from drinking the bitter cup appointed to Him took place while He prayed (Luke 22:44). The powerful prayers of Elijah caused the rain to cease for three and a half years, and to rain again after the famine that was imposed upon the land (James 5:17-

18). **In seasons of prayer such as the one described in our text, there is a clarity of understanding ministered that cannot be otherwise obtained.** It is as though the individual was being exposed to Divine light – the light in which “*all things are naked and opened,*” not only to God Himself, but to those who are lingering in His presence (Heb 4:13).

#### SAUL ALSO HAD A VISION

“<sup>12</sup> *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*”

We are being exposed to Divine manners, and we do well to take note of it. Not only is the Lord preparing Ananias to confront Saul, He is also preparing Saul to confront Ananias. We have already been exposed to this manner in the book of Acts.

- ⇒ Devout men were present in Jerusalem, focusing their thoughts on the things of God (Acts 2:5). It was then that the Spirit filled Peter to deliver an exegesis of Christ’s death, and the Divine intent that caused it to happen (Acts 2:14-36). The outcome was that three souls were added to the church.
- ⇒ The Ethiopian eunuch was being prepared to hear the Gospel while reading the prophecy of Isaiah (Acts 8:32). Philip was being prepared to preach to him by means of angelic direction and the Spirit’s guidance (Acts 8:26,29). The outcome was that the eunuch was baptized into Christ and went on his way rejoicing.
- ⇒ In the next chapter, the Lord will give coordinated visions to both Cornelius and Peter, preparing the way for Cornelius and his household to be added to the church (Acts 10:3-23). The outcome was that Cornelius and his household were “*saved.*”
- ⇒ Later, some women in Macedonia will be drawn to a riverside where they will pray. Just prior to this, Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia who said, “*Come over into Macedonia, and help us*” (Acts 16:9-15). The outcome was that Lydia and her household were baptized, and a

church was launched in that area.



#### The Reign of Jesus

In this text we are being exposed to the reign of the Lord Jesus and its manner. Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah, “*Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness*” (Isa 32:1). He further declared that from the throne of David the Messiah would establish the kingdom “*with judgment and with justice*” (Isa 9:6). Peter boldly proclaimed that the prophecy of Jesus sitting upon David’s throne was fulfilled when Jesus was raised from the dead. Now, enthroned in the heavens, God has made Him to be both “*Lord and Christ,*” fulfilling His promise to David (Acts 2:30-36). Now, we are being exposed to the way in which Jesus is ruling.

The book of Acts provides several behind-the-scene glimpses of the work of the Lord. These are introducing us to the government of Jesus which is active at all times, though it is not always apparent. **There is no valid Kingdom activity in which Jesus Himself is not active, else He could not be appropriately called “King of kings and Lord of lords.”**

In our text, King Jesus arrested a persecutor of the church, forcing Himself into his life, and choosing to elevate him to the highest office in His body – an apostle (1 Cor 12:28). He then chooses to induct him into Christ by means of a “*certain disciple*” who does not have the slightest idea that Saul of Tarsus has been chosen for this office. In the whole arrangement Jesus coordinates two preparatory visions that were not sought, and came to the men completely independently of their wills. All of this was done in strict comportment with righteousness – for that is the kind of rule Jesus is executing. The whole matter also confirms that man’s goings are,

indeed, “of the Lord” (Prov 20:25), and that “it is not in man that walketh to dirt his steps” (Jer 10:23).

This is the only reference to this vision – the knowledge of which was vouchsafed to Ananias, and to Luke, the writer of this book. Paul refers to Ananias and his role in his calling, but makes no reference to the vision to which our text refers (Acts 22:12-16). In the account he delivered to Agrippa, Paul made no reference to Ananias, only mentioning the commission of Jesus (Acts 26:13-18). It appears as though, before Agrippa, Paul puts together the words of Jesus on the road to Damascus

with the words delivered to him by Ananias, who probably elaborated on the commission Jesus had delivered to Saul (Acts 9:3-6,17;18; 22:6-16; 26:13-18). We should have no difficulty with this, for Ananias delivered the word of Jesus to Saul, calling him into the office of an apostle. He was not speaking for himself, but for the One who sent him.

**A Needed Perspective**

In this regard Paul embraced the same perspective for which he commended those who heard him. **He received the word delivered by a messenger of the Lord as the word of the Lord Himself.** Thus he wrote to the

Thessalonians, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, **ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe**” (1 Thess 2:13). It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to react in this manner to the word of God. Whether the commission delivered to Saul came from Jesus Himself on the road to Damascus, or through the lips of Ananias, a “*certain disciple*,” it was accompanied with Divine certitude, and was to be received as being from heaven. The Word of God is not diluted by the fact that a messenger brings it.

**I HAVE HEARD OF THIS MAN**

<sup>43</sup> *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.*

It is important that we approach

and now ages that are quite unreal. These observations will become apparent as we proceed through this text.

**I HAVE HEARD OF THIS MAN**

*“Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man . . .”* Other versions read, “I have heard many

praying. He has simply told Ananias to “inquire” at the house of Simon for “one called Saul of Tarsus” (9:11). He has also told Ananias that Saul has “seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight” (9:12). So far as the record is concerned, Ananias has not been told why Saul’s sight was lost in the first place. Nor has the Lord divulged to him anything pertaining to Saul confronting Christ and fasting for three days. With the sparse amount of information that he has received, Ananias begins to reason with the Lord.

This “*certain disciple*” admits that he has some knowledge about the man to whom he is being sent. He has been the subject of many reports. In fact, the followers of Jesus had been speaking considerably about him – and the reports were not encouraging ones.

**HOW MUCH EVIL HE HAS DONE**

*“ . . . how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem . . .”* Other versions read, “*all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem,*”<sup>NAB</sup> “*the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*especially the great sufferings he has brought on your people in Jerusalem,*”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and “*especially how much evil and what great suffering*

**The response of Ananias to the Lord may appear to the novice to be a form of rebellion, stubbornness, or unbelief. This, however, is emphatically not the case. It is not unusual for pretentious preachers and teachers to attempt to parallel those of Scriptural record with the shallow professing Christians of our time.**

this text with sobriety and without unbecoming simplicity. The response of Ananias to the Lord may appear to the novice to be a form of rebellion, stubbornness, or unbelief. This, however, is emphatically not the case. It is not unusual for pretentious preachers and teachers to attempt to parallel those of Scriptural record with the shallow professing Christians of our time. **This is not a wise practice, for it presumes levels of similarity between the people and circumstances of these differing then-**

*reports about this man,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*I have had accounts of this man from a number of people,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*I have heard from many sources about this man,*”<sup>NAB</sup> and “*many people have told me about this man Saul.*”<sup>IE</sup>

At this point, the Lord has not provided many details concerning Saul of Tarsus. He has revealed that Saul is in Damascus, on a street called “*Straight*,” and in the house of a person named “*Judas*.” He has also told him that Saul is

he has brought on Your saints at Jerusalem.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Word had gotten all the way to Damascus about what Saul had been doing to the Lord’s “saints” in Jerusalem. **Notice how Ananias refers to the people of God:** “Thy saints,” or “Your holy ones,”<sup>NAB</sup> for that is the meaning of the word “saints.” The word “saints” is translated from the Greek word *ἅγιοις*, which has the following lexical meaning: “set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively His . . . pure, upright, holy,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “holy, pure, consecrated to God,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “holy, morally pure, upright,”<sup>UBS</sup> and “pure, upright, worthy of God.”<sup>GINGRICH</sup> Therefore, Ananias confesses that he had heard from various sources about Saul of Tarsus, how he had been on the initiative to do evil and harm to God’s holy, pure, and upright ones in Jerusalem – people who were dedicated to God, living lives that were worthy of God (as all believers are enjoined to do (1 Thess 2:12). These were not a special category of believers, but was a spiritually generic way of referring to them all. **Saul had not targeted a segment of the Christian community, like the radical points. It was the community itself that was being attacked.**

Of course, it is one thing to read this account concerning God’s holy ones in Jerusalem. It is quite another to conceive of such a report being delivered in our time and place. What if the report was circulated in your home town that God’s holy ones in Chicago were being oppressed? Or His saints in Joplin? Or His dedicated ones in London? Precisely how would such a report be viewed? I can even conceive of a considerable amount of confusion following such a report – particularly in our country where professing Christians are not noted for being dedicated to God, holy, pure, or upright. **It is exceedingly rare to find a professing Christian that equates the words “Christian” and “saint,” or “church” and “holy ones.”**

Men may attempt to build a case for people being saved, yet unholy; or being Christians, yet not being pure. **But how will they substantiate their case.** It is said of everyone who is in the New Covenant: “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall

not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11).

In this text, we are reading about the real church, not one of man’s creation.

**WHO CALL ON YOUR NAME**

“. . . that call on thy name.” Other versions read, “*invoke* Your name,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “*who give worship to Your name,*”<sup>BBE</sup> and “*who trust in Your name.*”<sup>IE</sup>

And, how does Ananias describe these people. Does he refer to them as

**Is there any person of sound mind who can imagine any church creed or humanly-devised theological position being the foundation of the day of judgment? And if such will not be case then, what will be the Divine pronouncement toward those who have made such things the basis of judgment, acceptance, and rejection in this world?**

**HE HAS AUTHORITY**

“<sup>14</sup> And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all . . .” Other versions read, “*And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*He has come here with a warrant from the chief priests to arrest everybody,*”<sup>NJB</sup> and “*Now he is here and has authority from the high priests to put in chains all.*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Saul has been in Damascus no more than three days, and word of his presence has already circulated among the disciples: “*he has come here!*”<sup>NJB</sup> The word had apparently quickly spread from the moment Saul had received letters of authority to put believers in chains and bring them to Jerusalem for punishment. He was not seeking selected people within the body of believers, but had come to “*bind all,*” “*arrest all,*”<sup>NIV</sup> and “*put in chains all.*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The self-created religious authorities had given official authority for the synagogues to be invaded by Saul, and every person following Christ to be bound and brought to Jerusalem. **Like Satan himself, who was animating these religious leaders, they had arrogated to themselves authority that did not belong to them.** That, of course, is the manner of religious bigotry.

“Christians,” or “church members,” or “people from our movement?” Exactly how do you describe those who are the brunt of an aggressive persecution? Do you refer to them by a denominational name? Is it possible to describe them by some theological persuasion? How would it appear if the text said the persecution had been launched against Catholics, or Protestants, or Fundamentalists, or Conservatives? How would it sound to hear such people described as members of the Reformed Movement, the Restoration Movement, or the Charismatic Movement? What if they were described as Lutherans, or Methodists, or Baptists, or Episcopalians, or Quakers? How would you react to them being called Pre-millennialists, or Post-millennia lists, or Amillennia lists? **What would such terms do for the text?** You already know that they would pull the power out of the text. And why is this so? **Because none of those terms, or any others similar to them, have anything at all to do with God, Christ, or the Gospel.** They all have to do with identity with human conceptions and perceptions – all of which are worthless before the Lord of heaven and earth.

Is there any person of sound mind who can imagine any church creed or humanly-devised theological position being the foundation of the day of

judgment? And if such will not be case then, what will be the Divine pronouncement toward those who have made such things the basis of judgment, acceptance, and rejection in this world?

**Something to See**

There is something else to be seen here. **The church to which we are being exposed in the book of Acts consisted of people who were selfless.** They were frequently described as being “with one accord” (Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12), and “of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). The community of selfless saints. When something happened, the word was spread among the disciples (Acts 4:24; 5:5,11; 8:14).

Now, in our text, the believers in Damascus have heard of an initiative launched against them from Jerusalem.

They knew who authorized it, and the name of the one who was carrying it out. They also knew that he had arrived in their city.

**This kind of communication is virtually unknown in our time.** Even though there are several aggressive attacks being made against believers throughout the world, it is not common knowledge among the churches. In fact, those who are reporting such things have formed an organization that is devoted to delivering such reports. It is not something the church itself is doing. Within any given city, if anything of significance is taking place in another body of believers, it is not commonly known. **What we have on our hands is a religious environment that promotes self-interest, not body-interests.** There is a spirit extant in the professing Christian

community that has led the people to arrange their priorities something like this: (1) Self. (2) One’s own family/relatives. (3) One’s private circle of friends. (4) Those with similar worldly interests. (5) Interests pertaining to one’s place of employment/education. (6) Certain community interests. (7) Possibly matters relating to one’s preferred local congregation.

**Oh, the blight of a Christianity that leaves people satisfied to be uninformed, and unaware of what is happening around them.** It is not likely that such people will ever enjoy Divine employment, for that is not the kind of people God uses. They are not “prepared unto every good work,” nor are they “meet for the Master’s use.” That simply is not the kind of society from which laborers are chosen.

**HE IS A CHOSEN VESSEL**

*“<sup>15</sup> 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: <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”*

Because Ananias’ heart was right,

described by Isaiah: “For he said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Savior” (Isa 63:8). These are the kind of people that can be trusted with the truth, else it would be hidden from them (Matt 13:11). It is still true that there are certain people who are never able to perceive the truth

NRSV “a special vessel for Me,” BBE “an elect vessel to Me,” DARBY and “I’ve chosen this man.” GWN

What Jesus had told the other apostles was true for Saul also: “Ye have not chosen Me, **but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain**” (John 15:16). **It is also the Divine manner to select who is to work in His behalf, and labor in His vineyard.** Men may, while basking in His glory, say “Here am I, send me” (Isa 6:8). Yet, every spiritually educated person knows that only those whom the Lord sends are approved to labor in His vineyard. As it is written, “how shall they preach, **except they be sent?**” (Rom 10:15).

**He has a mind that will not discard revelation, but will rather throw aside misconceptions as soon as the light of the Lord shines upon them. Once the mind of the Lord is discerned concerning Saul of Tarsus, Ananias will proceed with no further concerns.**

and his priorities were proper, the Lord will provide a further explanation. **He has a mind that will not discard revelation, but will rather throw aside misconceptions as soon as the light of the Lord shines upon them.** Once the mind of the Lord is discerned concerning Saul of Tarsus, Ananias will proceed with no further concerns. **That is the way a “disciple” thinks.** Such people are

because they do not have a heart for it. Ananias was not such a person!

**HE IS A CHOSEN VESSEL**

*“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me . . .”* Other versions read, “chosen vessel of Mine,” NKJV “chosen instrument of Mine,” NASB “My chosen instrument,” NIV “an instrument whom I have chosen.”

With such a plethora of evidence on this subject, it is difficult to believe how any one could not see it. Yet, the traditions of men blind men to things that are otherwise quite obvious. Ponder the men that were chosen by God.

- ⇨ Noah – Gen 6:8
- ⇨ Abraham – Neh 9:7
- ⇨ Isaac – Gen 26:2-5

- ⇒ Jacob – Rom 9:11-13
- ⇒ Joseph – Psa 105:17
- ⇒ Moses – Ex 3:7-10
- ⇒ Aaron the high priest – Num 16:7
- ⇒ Israel – Deut 7:7
- ⇒ David – Psa 78:70
- ⇒ Solomon – 1 Chron 28:6.
- ⇒ Jeremiah – Jer 1:5
- ⇒ Zerubbabel – Hag 2:23
- ⇒ The twelve apostles – Luke 6:13
- ⇒ The seventy disciples that were sent out – Luke 10:1
- ⇒ Matthias to replace Judas – Acts 1:24
- ⇒ Barnabas and Saul – Acts 13:2

This is the manner in which the Lord governs His kingdom. **He is not looking for volunteers!** His eyes are rather ranging throughout the whole earth, looking for a man “*whose heart is perfect before him*” (2 Chron 16:9). Even then, however, that is a secondary activity. There are Divine choices that were made “*before the foundation of the world*” (Eph 1:4), and before the person chosen was born (Jer 1:5; Rom 9:11; Gal 1:15).

**In his letter to the Galatians Paul reveals that he had been chosen to be an apostle from the moment of conception.** “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace*” (Gal 1:15). The “*call*” which to which he refers commenced on the road to Damascus when Jesus “*apprehended*” Saul. Here the NIV totally misrepresents the text, stating “*God, who set me apart from birth.*” However, Paul is saying that he was set apart **before** he was born, as the New Revised Standard Version states: “*But when God, who had set me apart before I was born.*” The point that Paul is making is that he was born to be an apostle – set apart as was Jeremiah. God said to the prophet, “*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations*” (Jer 1:5). I realize that this encroaches on certain theological views. However, the texts are plainly stated, and are to be believed.

Paul also reveals another factor that pertained to his appointment. **This related to the Lord viewing him as faithful – one that could be trusted with**

**the remarkable revelations that would be given to him.** “*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry*” (1 Tim 1:12). The Amplified

think of Paul as being sent only to the Gentiles who had never heard the Gospel. However, this is a complete misrepresentation. **The truth of the matter is that his primary ministry was**

**There could hardly be any people more varied in their natures than Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Yet, Paul was called to minister to all three of them. He did not have a special Gospel for each of them. Nor, indeed, did he sift the Gospel through some special intellectual filter when he declared it to these different audiences.**

Bible reads, “*because He has judged and counted me faithful and trustworthy, appointing me to [this stewardship of] the ministry.*”

**THE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN TO HIM**

“*. . . to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel . . .*”

The scope of Paul’s ministry is most arresting to consider. It strikes a decisive blow against the very concept of *specialized ministries* – a modern-day fabrication. **There could hardly be any people more varied in their natures than Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Yet, Paul was called to minister to all three of them.** He did not have a special Gospel for each of them. Nor, indeed, did he sift the Gospel through some special intellectual filter when he declared it to these different audiences. **The message of the Gospel is itself adapted to all people,** dealing with them at the point of their commonality: “*for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23).

**TO BEAR MY NAME BEFORE GENTILES.**

Paul was, in fact, “*the apostle of the Gentiles,*” or “*apostle to the Gentiles*” <sup>NKJV</sup> (Rom 11:13). He also described himself as “*an apostle . . . and teacher of the Gentiles*” (1 Tim 2:7). Too, he is described as “*a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles*” (2 Tim 1:11). In this capacity, men often

**to the Gentile church.** He wrote to the believers in Rome, “*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also . . . For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office*” (Rom 1:15; 11:13). He also wrote to the Colossian brethren (whom he had never seen), “*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints*” (Col 1:25-26).

The fact that the majority of the New Covenant Scriptures were written by Paul to the churches confirms that his **primary ministry was to the body of Christ.** This is why he chose to correct the Corinthian church rather than enter an open door to preach to others at Troaz (2 Cor 2:12-13). The mystery that was opened to him was intended to be expounded to those who believed – to the “*saints.*” Thus it is written, “*Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col 1:25-27).

Paul also clarified this aspect of his ministry to the Ephesians, testifying that God's purpose involved making known His diverse wisdom to heavenly principalities through the church. *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be*

- ⇨ That the stabilization of the family unit is the primary work of the church.
- ⇨ That ministering to the needy is the preeminent work of believers.
- ⇨ That reaching the youth as the church of tomorrow is the main work.
- ⇨ That becoming involved in politics and various social issues is to be the thrust of spiritual activity.
- ⇨ That majoring on the signs of the

*"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"* (Acts 26:8).

- ⇨ Announcing why Jesus had chosen him: *"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:18).
- ⇨ That men should repent and turn to God: *"that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"* (Acts 26:20).
- ⇨ That Christ should suffer, and be the first to rise from the dead: *"That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles"* (Acts 26:23).

**The irony of the situation is that of all the writings of Scripture, the professed church is most uninformed concerning the writings of Paul. In view of the pivotal role assigned to Paul to "make all men see," this is a transgression of monumental proportions.**

*known by the church the manifold wisdom of God"* (Eph 3:8)

The irony of the situation is that of all the writings of Scripture, the professed church is most uninformed concerning the writings of Paul. In view of the pivotal role assigned to Paul to "make all men see," this is a transgression of monumental proportions. Paul is not being duly honored and heeded by the Gentile church. He is being treated with the same practical contempt that he received from the Corinthian church, and from others who maligned his name (Rom 3:8).

If the message delivered by Paul is intended for the church, in order that principalities and powers might become more thoroughly acquainted with the "manifold wisdom" of God, then we have a most serious problem on our hand. **What will be said on the day of judgment to those who have redirected the attention of the church to their own agenda. Some examples follow.**

- ⇨ That reaching the lost and increasing the numbers of the church is the fundamental work of the body of Christ.

last times is the emphasis for today.

All of these may appear quite innocent, and even noble. However, if what Paul said is true concerning the revelation given to him, and if this is what God intends for the saints to know, then why are His people so ignorant of the thrust of Paul's message? If Paul was, in fact, appointed by Jesus to bear His name to the Gentiles, then it is time for the Gentiles to start paying attention to him.

**TO BEAR MY NAME BEFORE KINGS.**

Paul was chosen to testify of the Lord and His purpose before kings – rulers of the Gentiles. He testified before king Agrippa, speaking the following.

- ⇨ The promise made by God unto the fathers: *"And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers"* (Acts 26:6).
- ⇨ Living by hope: *"Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come"* (Acts 26:7)
- ⇨ The resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Jesus also told Paul; he would be brought before Caesar (Acts 27:24). The effectiveness of his witness is confirmed in his writings. He wrote to the Philippians concerning certain brethren who were in "Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22). It is also generally understood that Paul referred to his appearance before Nero in 2 Timothy 4:16-17: *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."*

**TO BEAR MY NAME BEFORE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.**

Paul's primary ministry was to the Gentiles. However, this did not exclude a ministry to the Jewish people. He was also sent to testify of the name of Jesus to them. This is why Paul, when entering a city, went first to the local synagogue, testifying of the Gospel of Christ (Acts 9:20; 13:5,14-15,42; 14:1; 17:1,10,17; 18:4, 8; 18:19; 19:8; 24:12).

Paul himself confessed that the Gospel of Christ is *"the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first"* (Rom 1:16). He also acknowledged that his

ministry to the Gentiles was actually the appointed means of reaching the Jews. *“For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them”* (Rom 11:13-14). This, Paul affirms, was according to Divine purpose: *“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy”* (Rom 11:11). Through Moses, God said this is what He was going to do. Paul refers to that word in Romans 10:19: *“But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you”* (Rom 10:19). This prophesy is found in Deuteronomy 32:21: *“They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.”*

This confirms the utter foolishness of those who teach that Israel has been altogether abandoned by God.

### I WILL SHOW HIM

<sup>16</sup> *For I will show him how great things he must suffer . . .* “Other versions read, *“how many things he must suffer,”* NKJV *“how much he must suffer,”* NASB *“what troubles he will have to undergo,”* BBE *“the great sufferings he must pass through,”* WEYMOUTH *“how great are the sufferings he must endure,”* WILLIAMS *“how much he will be afflicted and must endure and suffer,”* AMPLIFIED and *“how many [things] it is necessary [for] him to suffer.”* ALT

The word “show” is an interesting one. As used here, it means “to show by placing under (i.e. before) the eyes,” THAYER “give a glimpse of,” FRIBERG “Make known,” UBS “to make known,, to demonstrate.” LOUW-NIDA This does not refer to speech, but to experience. **Jesus would make known the matter revealed – that he must suffer – through Saul personally undergoing certain things.** This is not a generic statement, suggesting that some suffering may take place, or that it can be averted by taking certain actions. **Jesus will lead Paul**

**through the desert if trial, and it will be extraordinary.** In his own writings Paul explains WHY this suffering was required. It was because of “*the abundance of the revelations*” that were vouchsafed to him (2 Cor 12:7).

**It is a principle that when a lot is received from heaven, a corresponding sacrifice concerning the things of this world is experienced.** Any deviation from

- ⇒ Was cast down, or thrown down (2 Cor 4:9b).
- ⇒ Fought with beats in Ephesus (1 Cor 15:32).
- ⇒ Alexander the coppersmith did him much evil (2 Tim 4:14).
- ⇒ Forsaken by all men when called to defend himself before his enemies (2 Tim 4:16).
- ⇒ Experienced afflictions, necessities, and distresses (2 Cor 6:4).

**It is a principle that when a lot is received from heaven, a corresponding sacrifice concerning the things of this world is experienced.**

this norm is the exception to the rule, and is not to be considered normal. One might cite Moses, Joseph, and Daniel as exceptions to the rule. However, all three of those men endured sufferings while they were in land of their exaltation.

The word “must” is also significant. Jesus is not simply revealing what he sees ahead in Saul’s life – for foretelling the future, so to speak. As used here, the word “must” means “is necessary, there is need of, behooves, is right and proper,” THAYER “inevitability of an event,” FRIBERG “must necessarily take place,” LOUW-NIDA “it is binding on one to do a thing, one must, one ought,” LIDDELL-SCOTT “it is needful to,” LEH and “one must, or has to.” GINGRICH **These sufferings were an appointment, and were the designated accompaniments of his apostleship.** All of them would be experienced while Paul was engaged in the ministry to which he was appointed. They would not be a prelude to his work, but experienced during which he would fulfill his work.

Paul wrote of his sufferings. Though there was a certain generality that characterized his descriptions, there is a staggering amount of specificity in them.

- ⇒ Was troubled on every side (2 Cor 4:8a).
- ⇒ Experienced perplexity (2 Cor 4:8b).
- ⇒ Was persecuted (2 Cor 4:9a).

- ⇒ Experienced stripes, imprisonments, and tumults (2 Cor 6:4).
- ⇒ Called to strenuous labors, watching, and fastings (2 Cor 6:6).
- ⇒ Experienced dishonor, had evil reports circulated about him, was reported to have been a deceiver (2 Cor 6:8).
- ⇒ Although a spiritual prince, endured being unknown, was sorrowful, was subjected to death, and had nothing (2 Cor 6:9-10).
- ⇒ Had stripes laid upon him above measure (2 Cor 11:23a).
- ⇒ Was frequently imprisoned (2 Cor 11:23b).
- ⇒ Was repeatedly subjected to death (2 Cor 11:23c).
- ⇒ Was beaten five times by the Jews with forty stripes save one (2 Cor 11:24).
- ⇒ Was beaten with rods three times (2 Cor 11:25a).
- ⇒ Was stoned once (2 Cor 11:15b).
- ⇒ Experienced at least three shipwrecks (2 Cor 11:15c).
- ⇒ Spent a day and night abandoned in the sea (2 Cor 11:15d).
- ⇒ Made frequent difficult journeys (2 Cor 11:16a).
- ⇒ Experienced perils of robbers, from his own countrymen, by the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren (2 Cor 11:26).
- ⇒ Experienced weariness and

painfulness in frequent watching, hunger and thirst, fastings, cold, and nakedness (2 Cor 11:27).

⇒ Was given a grievous thorn in the flesh, from which he sought deliverance, yet was denied his request (2 Cor 12:1-9).

Child of God, do you want a lot

given to men in that capacity until Jesus was glorified (John 7:37-39). We do not have a single example of someone noted for the understanding of God's eternal purpose who was also noted for having an abundance of this world's goods. That does not mean that such a condition is sinful or wrong. **However, it does mean there is nothing particular noteworthy**

lives foolishly. Thus Peter writes, *"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?"* (1 Pet 2:20). And again, *"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters"* (1 Pet 4:15). There is also a suffering that is experienced through the chastening of the Lord (Heb 12:11). That is a suffering that can be avoided, for, as it is written, *"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"* (1 Cor 11:31-32).

**Valid suffering is not an end of itself. The fact that people endure all manner of hardship may awaken sympathy within the tender of heart, but of itself, such suffering does not make one better, nor is it a reason for Divine commendation. It is the cause for the suffering that makes it commendable, and worthy of being logged in the books of heaven.**

The suffering to which Saul would be subjected was an appointed suffering. Peter referred to this kind of suffering as suffering *"according to the will of God"* (1 Pet 4:19). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about afflictions that were appointed: *"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto"* (1 Thess 3:3). **There are some sufferings through which greater and more effective measures of grace are dispensed** – sufferings that actually enhance an ordained ministry. Paul refers to his own sufferings as being in this category, stating that when he was weak (through sufferings), he was actually made more strong (2 Cor 12:10).

from God? An abundance of understanding, spiritual insight, and the privilege to communicate the truth effectively? Do you imagine that such an honor comes without price? **It does not appear that it is possible to flourish in the knowledge of God and in this present evil world simultaneously.** Some will sight Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Daniel as examples of the faithful flourishing in this world. But how will they compare them with Paul, or those who traffic in the knowledge of the Lord? Are not all of those men among those who died *"not having received the promise?"* Is it pointedly stated that God has *"provided some better thing" for us,* and *"that they without us should not be made perfect"* (Heb 11:39-40). **And, where in all of the Scripture are these men said to be examples of worldly wealth for us?** Is not their faith that is their consistent treasure? And was not their standing with God set forth as their premier possession? Where is there a person of understanding who does not know this?

**If men want to know how those in Christ are blessed, then let them sit at the feet of those who are expert in life in the Son.** Such men did not exist prior to Christ's exaltation! The Holy Spirit who confers such understanding was not

about it, not is it something that is to be pursued. Instead of Paul boasting in wealth, he preferred to glory in his *"infirmities,"* stating that in such a circumstance *"the power of Christ"* would rest upon him. We conclude, therefore, that not only did the Lord *"show"* him *"what great things"* he must suffer for the same of Jesus, but Paul acquiesced with that Divine arrangement. It is obvious that the revelations he received from the Lord were considered of greater worth. That evaluation perfectly comported with the truth.

**FOR MY NAME'S SAME**

*"... for My name's sake."* Other versions read, *"for My name,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"for the sake of My name,"*<sup>NRSV</sup> *"for Me,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"on account of My name,"*<sup>CJB</sup> *"for My sake,"*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *"for worshiping in My name."*<sup>CEV</sup>

Valid suffering is not an end of itself. The fact that people endure all manner of hardship may awaken sympathy within the tender of heart, but of itself, such suffering does not make one better, nor is it a reason for Divine commendation. It is the cause for the suffering that makes it commendable, and worthy of being logged in the books of heaven. Some people, for example, suffer because they have conducted their

Here, Jesus states that Saul's sufferings would be for His own *"name's sake,"* or because of Saul's identity with Christ. **This kind of suffering goes beyond merely enduring insults because of a religious stance.** This is suffering that reflects the hatred of the world for Christ, and the fact that the suffering one is clearly associated with Christ. It is also referred to as suffering *"for righteousness sake"* (Matt 5:10; 1 Pet 3:14). Peter referred to this as something that is *"thank worthy,"* when *"a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully"* (1 Pet 2:19).

**In the case of Saul, Jesus was going to reveal more of Himself and His purpose to him, which, in turn, would provoke more enmity from men.** This is owing to the hostility of the carnal mind against the things of God (Rom 8:7). The mind and ways of Christ are not in harmony with the ways of the world.

They rather represent the pinnacle of opposition to the ways of the world.

There is an obvious comparison made here between the coming experiences of Saul and the suffering that he caused among believers. While there is a sense in which he would be reaping what he sowed, it seems to me that this is not the specific point that is being made here. The believers that were persecuted by Saul had exhibited an obvious association with Jesus, and for that reason Saul had vigorously opposed them. However, Jesus was now going to divulge greater measures of truth to Saul than He had to others before him. He would later refer to a unique knowledge that he possessed – *“my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.”* declaring that God had, *“by revelation . . . made known”* to him *“the mystery”* (Eph 3:3-4). **It was this unique understanding, that would be vouchsafed to Saul, that would awaken the activity of the devil among his children.** Because of this understanding, more of the effect of Christ would be registered upon the kingdom of darkness, thereby provoking more hostility against Saul.

There is an unbecoming naivete

**There is an unbecoming naivete extant in the professing church about suffering for Jesus. Simply claiming to love Jesus, have traditional moral values, and be devoted to the family structure can easily be tolerated by the world. It is not unusual for such words to be perceived as just a different way of looking at things.**

extant in the professing church about suffering for Jesus. Simply claiming to love Jesus, have traditional moral values, and be devoted to the family structure can easily be tolerated by the world. It is not unusual for such words to be perceived as just a different way of looking at things. No real threat is perceived in such a stance. However, Jesus made clear what actually awakens the opposition. He once said to His half-brothers, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil”* (John 7:7). Jesus elsewhere said that the condemnation was that *“light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). **That light exposed what the people opposed to Jesus really**

were. He did not leave the matter to be concluded by His enemies, but spoke plainly to them about their condition. *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will it”* (John 8:44). He referred to them as *“a generation of vipers”* (Matt 12:34), *“blind guides”* (Matt 23:16), *“hypocrites”* (Matt 15:7), and *“ye are as graves which appear not”* (Matt 11:44).

**The sufferings of Saul would also come because of His testimony of the truth.** He would identify both errors and hypocrites, powerfully and clearly. He would give no allowance to flesh. Suffering would come from the Jews, and even from some churches who doubted the authenticity of his message. Saul would learn by experience how to suffer.

## THE LORD, EVEN JESUS, HATH SENT ME

***“<sup>17</sup> 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.”***

Once again, I want to draw your attention to the response of Ananias to the word of Jesus. **Although the circumstance with which he was confronted was, according to appearance, a life-threatening situation, yet a word from Jesus was sufficient to bolster his confidence and move him to instant obedience.** Once the explanation was given – and only once – all fears were removed.

### AND ANANIAS WENT HIS WAY

*“And Ananias went his way and entered into the house. . .”* Other versions read, *“Ananias departed and entered into the house,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“Ananias went and entered the house,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“Ananias went out and came to the house,”*<sup>BBE</sup> and *“Ananias set out and went to the house.”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

I prefer the rendering *“went his way,”* as compared with *“departed,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“went,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> and *“went out.”*<sup>BBE</sup> The expression *“went his way”* is translated from a single Greek word – *ἀπῆλθεν*. There is intention in this word – in this case, intention to do precisely what Jesus had said. Lexically, and as used in this text, the word means *“to go away in order to follow anyone, go after him figuratively, i. e. to follow his party, follow him as a leader,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> *“of discipleship go after, follow, go with,”*<sup>FRIBERG</sup>

*“departure from one place and arrival at another is implied,”*<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup> and *“go in search of.”*<sup>GINGRICH</sup> This rather complex meaning is accurately conveyed in the translation, *“went his way.”* Several versions translate the phrase in this way (King James Version, New King James Version, Douay-Rheims, Geneva, Bishop’s New Testament, Tyndale).

**Prior to Jesus’ explanation, this was not the way of Ananias. Now, however, his faith embraced the word of the Word, and the way of Jesus became the way of Ananias.** This is the manner of a *“disciple”* – to willingly and eagerly follow the direction of his Master. Therefore, Ananias departed with the determination to find the house to which he was sent, and perform the work for which he was Divinely dispatched.

Many professing believers have never participated in such a response. Their hearts have never really acquiesced with the will of the Lord. At the very best, their feigned obedience is to avoid punishment, or to fulfill a rather grievous obligation – but their hearts are not in the matter. Let it be clear that such responses are **not** acceptable to God. In fact, they are a cause for His judgment. Jesus spoke of this kind of thing in these words: *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matt 15:8-9).

When it is the manner of people

**When it is the manner of people to withdraw from the Lord in their hearts, unwilling to pursue His will and gladly receive what He says, it voids any religious claim they have.**

to withdraw from the Lord in their hearts, unwilling to pursue His will and gladly receive what He says, it voids any religious claim they have. Psychologists and motivators may make a valiant effort to defend such a posture, saying it is “just the way we are,” but their efforts are in vain. A denial of the Lord in one’s manners is a very real denial, and is so recognized in heaven. Therefore it is written, *“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate”* (Titus 1:16). In other words, such people are incapable of doing anything “good,” as defined by the Lord, for that is the meaning of “reprobate” – “disqualified for any good work,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “worthless for any good deed,”<sup>NASB</sup> and “unfit for doing anything good,”<sup>NIV</sup> This is an alarmingly strong statement.

This throws to the ground the modern heresy that says praise ushers us into the presence of the Lord. People are being left with the impression that “praise and worship” is a kind of end of itself, divorced from the way in which

men live and the manner in which they respond to the Lord. Those who are not duly “prepared unto every good work” will **not** be employed in the doing of such (2 Tim 2:21). Those whose hearts are “far from” the Lord, immersed in the affairs of this present evil world, are not capable of worshiping the Lord. Their status voids their pretentious worship, so that it becomes nothing more than “noise” (Amos 5:23).

Ananias was a man of faith, and that is why he was employed for this work. **He was not living at a distance from the Lord, and his will gravitated to conformity with the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.** Some time later, when Paul stood before a Jewish council,

he referred to Ananias as *“a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there”* (Acts 22:12). This did not make Ananias unusual among other *Christians* – although that would surely be the way he would be viewed today. This man was representative of the body of believers. He was one of the many – *“a certain disciple.”*

#### JESUS SENT ME

*“ . . . 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 . . . ”*

Our text does not tell us how long it took Ananias to find the house of Judas. Perhaps he knew the man already, we do not know. The point to be seen here is that he arrived where he was sent. **That arrival was owing to the determination of faith, which never comes short of its intended objective.**

#### Putting His Hands on Saul

The Lord had already shown Saul a vision in which he saw *“a man named*

*Ananias coming in and putting his hand upon him”* (9:12). Now, that is precisely what happens, confirming the authenticity of Saul’s vision.

In the book of Acts, the first example of the laying on of hands is Acts 6:6, where the first deacons were set aside to their work by the laying on of the apostles’ hands. There is an allusion to this kind of action in Acts 5:12, where it is written, *“by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.”* In Acts 8:17 Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritan believers, *“and they received the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>NKJV</sup> Now, for only the third time, this practice is mentioned – and it does not concern the “hands” of an apostle. What is more, this text will also state by this means Saul was *“filled with the Holy Spirit”* – by the laying on of non-apostolic hands. Apostolic hands were required when the Samaritans turned to the Lord, but not when Saul of Tarsus was being inducted into Christ. Those with a penchant for patterns will find this most confusing.

#### Brother Saul

Of the sixty times the word “brother” is used in Acts through Jude, fifty-five of them apply to a “brother” in Christ – as compared to a flesh-and-blood relation (as in Acts 1:13; 12:2; Gal 1:19; 1 John 3:12; Jude 1:1). The remaining references (used in the singular) always refer to an individual in Christ (Acts 9:17; 21:20; 22:13; Rom 14:10,15,21; 16:23; 1 Cor 1:1; 5:11; 6:6; 7:12,15; 8:11,13; 16:12; 2 Cor 1:1; 2:13; 8:18,22; 12:18; Eph 6:21; Phil 2:25; Col 1:1; 4:7,9; 1 Thess 3:2; 4:6; 1 Thess 3:6,15; Phile 1:1,7,16,20; Heb 8:11; 13:23; James 1:9; 2:15; 4:11; 1 Pet 5:12; 3:15; 1 John 2:9,10,11; 3:10,14,16,17; 4:20,21; 5:16).

There is no reason to think this is not the way in which Ananias used the word here. While Saul had not yet obeyed the Gospel, the Lord had already revealed that he was a “chosen vessel” unto the Lord. That was reason enough to refer to him as a member of the household of faith. Of course, this does not comport with the view that one is technically not to be viewed as “saved” until they have met all of the requirements for entry into Christ. Discerning souls should be able to

perceive the proximity of a person to an entrance into the Kingdom, and when all that is required is for them to be told what they are to do. For those who are not able to perceive such things, they should step back from the controversy and deal with matters concerning which they have more understanding.

Saul recounts the words of Ananias in his defense before the Jewish council: *“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul”* (Acts 22:12-13).

#### Jesus Hath Sent Me

The precise manner in which Ananias speaks of Jesus was confirming to Saul: *“the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest.”* The record of Jesus’ words to Ananias does not include an account of the Lord’s appearance to Saul. These words surely stirred Saul deep within, for Jesus had appeared to him on the road as the One whom he was persecuting.

Jesus had told Saul that when he was located in Damascus, someone would tell him what he *“must do.”* Now Saul knows that Ananias has been chosen for that task. I do not doubt that all of his senses were elevated to their highest level as he awaited the directive word.

#### TO RECEIVE SIGHT AND BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

*“. . . that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”*

Jesus told Ananias that Saul had a vision of him coming in and putting his hand on Saul *“that he might receive his sight”* (9:12). Paul also recounted this in his defense before the Jewish council (Acts 22:13). Paul did not recount this part of his experience before king Agrippa (Acts 26:12-19).

This is the only one of the three accounts that mentions that say Ananias was also sent in order that Saul might be *“filled with the Holy Spirit.”* I gather that this was a filling after the order Jesus promised to the disciples – an endowment with power from on high (Lk 24:69). This was the *“promise of the*

*Father,”* conferred on Saul to empower him for the work he was being sent to do.

In his testimony before Agrippa, Paul provided more details concerning the objective of his calling. He represents these words as being spoken to him on the road to Damascus: *“Choosing you out [selecting you for Myself] and delivering*

*you from among this [Jewish] people and the Gentiles to whom I am sending you. To open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may thus receive forgiveness and release from their sins and a place and portion among those who are consecrated and purified by faith in Me.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> What a remarkable commission! : *“To open their eyes that they may.”*

⇨ **TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.** Turn their attention from the domain of darkness to the domain of light. This involved delivering them from the power of darkness, so that they were no longer dominated by a fundamental ignorance of God and His will.

⇨ **TURN FROM THE POWER OF SATAN TO GOD.** This is release from the dominion of sin. In this, they were no longer debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. They would be able to resist the devil and draw close to God. Now, being alive unto God, they could walk in the light as He is in the light.

⇨ **TURN SO THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS, BEING RELEASED FROM THE GUILT AND POWER OF SIN.** They would no longer be bludgeoned with the guilt of sin, for their conscience would be purged from dead works to serve the living God.

⇨ **RECEIVE AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL WHO ARE SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN CHRIST.** Now, being delivered from this present evil world, they would be saved by their hope – the expectation of an eternal inheritance that is reserved in heaven for them.

**There is no such thing as a valid work for the Lord Jesus in which the influence of Divinity is not present. Any work that is governed by mankind is destined to failure, for the work of the Lord demands more resources than men possess by nature.**

All of these benefits would result from the opening of their eyes – the *“eyes of their understanding”* (Eph 1:18).

Such as ministry could only be fulfilled under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus, prior to His ascension, told His disciples *“not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father”* (Acts 1:4).

**There is no such thing as a valid work for the Lord Jesus in which the influence of Divinity is not present.** Any work that is governed by mankind is destined to failure, for the work of the Lord demands more resources than men possess by nature. Those who deny this are simply wrong, and there is no need to hold dialog with them about the matter.

Because Saul could embark on a life of service, he had to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that no vestiges of the fallen nature were resident in the work. This, of course, is a requirement for all of the people of God. Solemnly we are admonished, *“Be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph 5:18).

This exhortation has never been withdrawn, and is to be taken seriously. The context in which this word was delivered had to do with intelligent communication that yielded edification and profit – teaching and admonishing. Oh, that there was a more lively awareness of this things today!

**HE RECEIVED HIS SIGHT, AND WAS BAPTIZED**

**“<sup>18</sup> And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”**

I find it difficult to leave this section without once again drawing your attention to the person through whom, all of this was taking place. It was Ananias, “a certain disciple” from Damascus. Saul is filled with the Holy Spirit through his instrumentality – through the laying on of his hands. **Not only is the incident itself most**

*received sight forthwith . . .”*

Upon the word of Ananias, “something like scales”<sup>NKJV</sup> fell from the eyes of Saul. Speaking physiologically, in the brightness of the light that flashed around and upon Saul, the structure of the eyeball had probably been severely damaged, for nature cannot stand the sight of glory.

However, having made these observations, there was more to the restoration of Saul’s sight than the

*away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). This was not a spiritual baptism, for that is not something a man does. It does not refer to being baptized by Jesus with the Holy Spirit, for that is not something that men are commanded to do. This is baptism in water, just as occurred shortly after this at the house of Cornelius. It was there that Peter said, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:47-48).*

This is now the seventh time we have read about baptism in the book of Acts.

⇒ Peter told the penitential inquirers, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

⇒ On the day of Pentecost, “they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

⇒ Those who believed in Samaria “were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

⇒ Simon and sorcerer “believed also,” and was “baptized” (Acts 8:13).

⇒ The Ethiopian eunuch asked what hindered him from being baptized, and was told if he believed with all of his heart, he could be baptized (Acts 8:36).

⇒ Upon his confession that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him (Acts 8:38).

⇒ Now Saul, upon receiving his sight, and in response to the direction of Ananias, is “baptized” (Acts 9:18;

**Although he was appointed to the greatest office in the body of Christ, and was given a commission that is unmatched, yet he entered the Kingdom like everyone does, being born of “water and of the Spirit”**

remarkable, but the person who is the object of the benefit is probably the premier preacher and teacher of all time. At least, he is the one through whom we have received the greatest amount of insight concerning the objectives and accomplishments of God’s great salvation. And, there was not so much as one apostle that had anything to do with Saul’s initiation into the Kingdom, him being filled with the Spirit, or him being tutored in the wisdom of God and the realities of redemption. **I had to ask myself how this meshed with what I had been taught about the exclusiveness of the twelve apostles.** I will tell you candidly, that the record to which we are now being exposed contradicts that entire mindset – and it was all orchestrated by the Head of the church Himself. Admittedly, this is an exceptional incident, and there is nothing about it that is common. However, that is the whole point behind the government of King Jesus. He operates according to His will, not our perception of how He works.

**IMMEDIATELY**

*“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he*

removing of some covering or growth that had formed upon his eyes. Later, Paul described the experience in these words: “And the same hour, I looked upon him” (Ananias) – Acts 22:13. When he was on the road, he opened his eyes “and saw no man.” This time he opened them and saw Ananias, “a certain disciple” who had been sent that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

**HE WAS BAPTIZED**

*“ . . . and arose, and was baptized.”* Other versions read, “he got up and was baptized,”<sup>NIV</sup> and “he got up and was immersed.”<sup>CJB</sup>

Although he was appointed to the greatest office in the body of Christ, and was given a commission that is unmatched, yet he entered the Kingdom like everyone does, being born of “water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5). There was no question about whether or not he should be baptized, or if it was optional. In his account to the Jewish council he stated that his action was a response to clear word from Ananias – who was sent by Jesus to him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash

22:16).

It is difficult to comprehend how anyone could read texts such as these and make statements concerning baptism

not being necessary, or having nothing to do with salvation. That such statements are frequently made, I do not deny. However, they are not made by those with honest and good hearts. Else, they

would not speak in contradiction of revelation. God has inspired these words, and we are to receive them as such. If we cannot speak about baptism as the Scriptures do, we ought not speak at all.

## HE WAS STRENGTHENED AND WAS WITH THE DISCIPLES

**“<sup>19</sup> And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.”**

Having obeyed from the heart the form of the doctrine delivered to him (Rom 6: 17), Saul is ready to resume his life. Now, however, he will not continue where he left off. His conscience has been purged (Heb 9:14), his stony heart has been removed, and he has received a new heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26). He has been reconciled to God (Col 1:20-21), and the law of God has been written upon his heart and mind (Heb 10:16). He is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), and is God’s own workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph 2:10). He has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13). He is dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 6:11). He was not the same man, for old things had passed away and all things had become new (2 Cor 5:17). We will certainly not expect someone experiencing such changes to conduct his life in the same way he did before.

### HE WAS STRENGTHENED

“And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.” Having been weakened by three days and nights without taking food or water, Saul now ate something. He had no mind for eating during those three days. Something more important had been occupying his mind.

But now, he has obtained a good conscience, seeking one from God in obeying the form of the doctrine, and being baptized (1 Pet 3:21). He has received the love of the truth (2 Thess 2:10), and has been taught by God to love the brethren (1 Thess 4:9). Now, therefore, he receives food and is

strengthened in the body.

What does a person do when he

fallen from his heart. He did not have to grow accustomed to these people, but was at once one with them, remaining with

**What does a person do when he has been joined to the Lord, becoming “one spirit” with Him. We will behold a response in Saul that is perfectly consistent with the nature of “newness of life.” He will “walk” in the newness of life, just as those who have been buried with Christ by baptism into death do.**

has been joined to the Lord, becoming “one spirit” with Him (1 Cor 6:17). We will behold a response in Saul that is perfectly consistent with the nature of “newness of life.” He will “walk” in the newness of life, just as those who have been buried with Christ by baptism into death do (Rom 6:4).

### HE WAS WITH THE DISCIPLES

“Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.” Other versions read, “Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,”<sup>NASB</sup> “And for some days he kept with the disciples who were in Damascus,”<sup>BBE</sup> “Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days,”<sup>NLT</sup> and “For several days [afterward] he remained with the disciples at Damascus.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

What marvelous fellowship must have taken place during those few days! Saul had come to drag these brethren off to prison, but now he was remaining with them rather than taking them bound with him. How drastically his life had changed! Not only had scales fallen from his natural eyes, but a crust of stone had

fallen from his heart. He did not have to grow accustomed to these people, but was at once one with them, remaining with

them as their brother in Christ. What lofty conversations they must have enjoyed!

Keep in kind that we are being exposed to the working of the Lord. Here is what really happens when a person is saved “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8). This is a report of someone who really died with Christ, being planted together with Him, and raised up by God the Father to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-5). He was placed within the body of Christ precisely where God wanted him – just like every other believer. As it is written, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him” (1 Cor 12:18).

No believer is an island unto himself. He is part of a family – “the whole family in heaven and earth” (Eph 3:15). Now, Saul was at home among those whom he was seeking to persecute just a few days earlier – “the disciples.” That is, the ones who were taking up their cross, following Christ, and learning from Him. Saul did not identify with a mere institution – as when he was a Pharisee, but with the true saints of God.

## CONCLUSION

We have read the account of a man who personally experienced what Jesus was sending him out to do: “*turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them are sanctified by faith*” in Christ (Acts 26:18). **His change was not one of habit – learning to do things differently than he had before.** His change was the result of a new creation. God had shined into his heart with “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus*” (2 Cor 4:6). He had a new heart and a new spirit, being dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 6:11).

Of course, there is no other kind of conversion. Where these kind of changes do not occur, men have simply subscribed to a lifeless routine. It is most unfortunate that the Christian community is regularly subjected to a

form of religion in which change is not required. Now, instead of being born again, receiving a new heart and a new spirit, the professed church has a battery of psychological experts to assist people with working out their problems. Nearly every city has a number of counselors, ready to teach people new habits, and talk with them about weaknesses with which they were born. **When religion comes wrapped in such an absurd package, a great falling away has taken place.** The truth of the matter is that the contemporary church at large sees no need for Christ, for His presence would render obsolete much of what they are doing.

I do not mean to be overly critical, but it appears to me that someone has to come to grips with the glaring absence of the kind of conversion and life to which we are exposed in the book of Acts. We are faced with a situation where the profession of Simon the Sorcery is more

common than that of the Samaritans. Peter told him, “*Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*” (Acts 8:21-23). **In my judgment, that is the kind of judgment that needs to be articulated against those professing Christians who are conducting their lives in practical alienation from God.** It is time to stop treating people who are carnal as they as though they are accepted. They are not, regardless of their profession. Carnality and friendship with the world puts one at variance with God (Rom 8:7; James 4:4). There is provision for forgiveness and renewal, both of which are effective. However, men must be apprised of their absolute necessity. Where this is not done, the professing church has failed.

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/4/2008. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Forty-Third lesson will cover verses 20 through 31 of the ninth chapter: “SAUL’S CONVERSION AND HIS INITIAL WORK.” Immediately following his conversion, Saul begins preaching Christ in the local synagogues. This greatly surprised all who heard him, for it was evident that a sudden and dramatic change had taken place in him. Saul lives out the manner of the Kingdom, increasing in spiritual strength. It was not long until the Jews took counsel to kill him. However, their efforts are thwarted and Saul is delivered through the instrumentality of the brethren. At that time, the churches throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were granted a period of rest, and were multiplied. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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 <p><b>The Word of Truth Radio Broadcast</b> WITH RADIO EVANGELIST GIVEN O. BLAKELY <b>91.7<sup>F</sup> M</b> KNEO RADIO MONDAY THRU FRIDAY AT 4:00 PM. Clarifying the nature and content of the Gospel</p>		<p><b>THE WORD OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST</b> <b>KNEO, 91.7 FM</b> <b>4:00 - 4:15 PM</b> <b>Monday thru Friday</b> The purpose of this program is to clarify the nature and content of the Gospel of Christ. Our target is the body of Christ, and our aim is to strengthen their faith and enhance their hope.</p>
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