

5/14/06 "You want me to do **WHAT?**" or "What would my Mother say?"

In a nutshell, here is what happened. God called...Ananias said YES?...God told him what He wanted... Ananias said NO WAY!...God said again: "GO!"... Ananias went...did what he was to do...Saul got sight...Holy Spirit...baptized...ate...regained strength...fellowshipped with the Way.

Luke told this story three times; (22:6-16; 26:9-18).

Retold of a remarkable turn-around in a life! Worth repeating.

Damascus was up to a week's journey from Jerusalem. It was plain that some Christians from Jerusalem had gotten there first to warn *the Way* of Saul's intentions.

Different names for the believers are used in Acts: *Disciples, those of the Way, saints, all that call on God's Name, and brethren*. As today, some are true followers of the Lord and some are only connected by a Name but not by the Life / relationship with Jesus.

Act 22:12 *And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,*

Ananias; a Jewish name, and means "*Jehovah is gracious.*"

Ananias was very open to be used by His Lord, to His will, BUT not so anxious to obey. Saul was now **praying** with the Church not **preying** upon the Church. *That was comforting to Ananias, I am sure.*

Charles Spurgeon once wrote: "*Prayer is the autograph of the Holy Spirit upon the renewed heart.*" God was sealing Saul to Himself. Saul's world of **self-trust** was now at an end and prayer was helping him see that. He started NOW to **trust God**. He started to **KNOW GRACE!**

Saul had seen a vision of an Ananias "*God is gracious*" coming to minister to him. How could an obedient Ananias refuse to obey?

Acts 9:15 is **the key verse** here as we talk about **GRACE**. Saul's summary is found here. As Paul wrote those letters to the young Church, this theme grows as does his understanding of Grace grows. It was all by **GRACE**; he did not choose God.

a. it was God who chose him. 1Tim 1:14. *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

b. Saul was God's vessel 2Tim 2:20-21; *In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. Repentance/*

1. agree with God

2. turn from sin and seek after God. 2 Chro. 20:

c. God would work in and through him to accomplish God's purposes Eph 2:10; *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Phili 2:12-13. *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed --not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence --continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. ...according to His Grace~*

Getting back to Ananias: Ananias protests. He has misgivings based in Saul's past reputation. All the Lord has told him is that this Saul is blind and praying. When Ananias puts that together with the harm Saul has carried out against the saints (9:21; 26:10) in Jerusalem, he is not sure he wants the assignment. Besides, Saul's mission in Damascus, with the authority of the high priests is to arrest all who call on [the Lord's] Name. By negative example, at this point, Ananias teaches us that reluctant Gospel Messengers must not only love their enemies but also trust that the Gospel has such

redemptive power that a praying converted persecutor is a persecutor no more; he is family.

The Lord does not directly answer Ananias' misgivings; He simply repeats His command: **"Go!"** **The Sovereign Lord has spoken.** That is all the rationale Ananias or we need. (Read later Jer. 18:1~11)

From now on, this Way was not only going to be Jewish. It was going to the Gentile world. Now, the plan was in motion to graft the believing Gentiles into the Trunk of True Jewish Faith. **Rom 10: 23~24** *And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!*

- Saul heard Ananias' voice and felt his hand on him.
- Saul was blinded and received sight.
- Ananias called him "Brother". **Received into the Fellowship**
- He ate. **Being filled with the Things of God.**
- He was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- He was baptized. **-obedience & ID with Jesus [Belief first-Baptism next step of obedience...in every case that is the Biblical flow.**
- He joined the brethren in Damascus.
- JUST LIKE CONVERSION!

Saul had called on the Name of the Lord. God heard it.

Important small things to remember:

- God can use even the most obscure saint; not fame but faithfulness
- We should NEVER be afraid to follow God's Will; obey by faith
- God's work is always balanced; ordinary are as important as grand.
- Never underestimate the value of one person brought to Christ; **numbers really don't count, faithfulness does.**
 - Does not mean we should settle for little effort.
 - Work hard
 - Look for God's leading in life.
 - Be faithful

- Expect God to bring His increase in His time.

April 21, 1855, **Edward Kimball** led one of his SS kids to faith; **Dwight L. Moody**—world evangelist. **Norman Harrison** during a small out-of-the-way Bible conference—lead **Theodore Epp**, who started "*Back to the Bible Ministries.*" **Mordecai Ham**, a temperance preacher in 1934 led a young **Billy Graham** to the Lord in a tent meeting.

God's Grace: Def. = His favor toward fallen man.

List of the Means of Grace in the local Fellowship; the Church ~All this is found in the Church~

• Teaching of the Word	• Giving-tithe
• Baptism	• Spiritual Gifts
• Lord's Supper-Communion	• Fellowship
• Prayer for one another	• Evangelism-missions
• Worship	• Personal ministry to individuals
• Church discipline	

So this starts Saul's—Paul's understanding of **Grace**.

Salvation was totally given to him NOT because of his good deeds or for his loving heart toward people. He hated the Church/Christ and he killed Her people. His salvation was his not because of his works. He had to depended on **God's Grace**. While he sat there, blinded, he was being reminded of his lost state and that his **only way out** was to humble himself before God and lean on Him and not on Gamaliel, or on the teaching of the Pharisees. Trust and Obey. A blind guide now being lead by God's Way.

Christ knows where to find out those that are His. He heard the cry of a blind guide. He sent help in the person of Ananias.

Ananias ministers to Saul as a convert. He heals him--sight is regained. He instructs Saul, confirming that the Jesus whom Saul saw on the road is indeed the Lord. He comforts Saul, addressing him as a Christian brother. He baptizes Saul, formally incorporating him into the Body of Christ. Finally Saul knows full physical restoration as he takes nourishment. In all,

Ananias' ministry models for us the supportive, restorative role the church is to play in the lives of newly converted Christians.

Two reasons are given him why he must go and offer him his service:

(1.) Saul had a Repentive heart: as in Jer 31:18~20 "I have surely heard Ephraim's moaning: 'You disciplined me like an unruly calf, and I have been disciplined. Restore me, and I will return, because You are the LORD my God.'" After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.' Is not Ephraim My dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore My heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the LORD.

(2.) Christ overrules the objection: **God knows the heart.**

"Do not tell me how bad this vessel has been, I know it very well"

Chosen vessel-a word used by Paul to illustrate God's Sovereignty in election:

Ro 9:21~23 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath--prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for Glory--

2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing **power is from God and not from us.**

2 Tim 2:20~21 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. **"man cleanses himself"-REPENT**

To be converted means to move from **self-centered independence** to **total dependence** on the Lord and **interdependence** with fellow disciples. Saul, the convert, needs the support and encouragement of the Church. Today too the

Gospel witness should emphasize by word and deed that being born again is being born into the Family of God, the church.

How much does it cost? Every convert then and now needs to know *"it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him"* (Phil 1:29).

This verse was used to charge seekers in Russian churches in the days of active persecution under atheistic communism.

All Christians must know that discipleship is purposeful and costly. It will cost; *When God calls a Man, He bids him come and die.*—Dietrick Bonhoeffer. *"Unless a seed dies..."*

Again, from Charles Spurgeon: A large sum of money was given to (a man of some means) to dispense to a poor pastor. Thinking that the amount was too much to send all at once, the man forwarded just a portion along with a note that said simply, "More to follow." In a few days the man received another envelope containing the same amount and with the same message, "More to follow." At regular intervals, there came a third, and a fourth. In fact, they continued, along with those cheering words, until the entire sum had been received. C.H. Spurgeon used this story to illustrate that **the good things we receive from God always come with the same prospect of more to follow.** He said: *"When God forgives our sins, there's more forgiveness to follow. He justifies us in the righteousness of Christ, but there's more to follow. He adopts us into His family, but there's more to follow. He prepares us for heaven, but there's more to follow. He gives us grace, but there's more to follow. He helps us to old age, but there's still more to follow."* Spurgeon concluded, *"Even when we arrive in the world to come, there will still be more to follow."*

Hang on **for more is to follow** as you trust Him. The condition of the people in Damascus was one of open heartedness; perfect for a new, growing church. Everything is now in place for the church's next great advance: taking the gospel to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth.

How is our heart's openness? Are we ready for the next chapter in His Acts in our life as this Church moves on or are we ready to sit down and not listen to His call to go to work with others who are calling on His Name? We need to be open to His calling and GO!