

Ananias – Given Great Privilege **Acts 9:10-18, 22:12-16**

Introduction:

1. When considering the book of Acts, if I were to ask you to fill in the blank, and I said, “Ananias and _____.” What would you say? Would you say, “Sapphira?”
2. Did you know that there is another Ananias in the book of Acts? Let’s read our text.
3. You probably wouldn’t say, “Ananias and Saul of Tarsus,” yet these two men are linked together right after Paul’s salvation in verses 1-9.
4. It was Ananias who laid his hands on Paul, which allowed Paul to regain his eyesight and receive the Holy Spirit. Ananias was the first person (outside of Christ) who told Paul that he would be a powerful witness for Christ to the world. It appears that it was Ananias who baptized Paul.
5. Can you imagine being the man chosen by God to first interact with and encourage the apostle Paul? Imagine being the guy that laid hands on Paul and saw him receive the Holy Spirit. Why did Ananias receive such a privilege? Why was he the man chosen?
6. Ananias was not a famous, well-known believer. He is not mentioned in Scripture outside of this event. Yet, Ananias was given such great privilege from the Lord. Why?
7. As we answer this question, I believe it will instruct and challenge us in our walk with God.

First, because he had a testimony of faithfulness – Acts 22:12

1. Ananias was a “*devout man according to the law.*”
2. Remember, up to this point in Scripture, the law was the only thing many believers knew. Unless they had been in Israel to see Christ’s ministry, or unless they had heard of Christ from somebody else, the law and the prophets were all they had to go by.
 - Even if they had heard of Christ, Christ didn’t abolish the law, but rather added new revelation to the prophetic program. The church was exclusively Jewish at this point, and believing Jews still kept the law.
3. Ananias was faithful in adhering to God’s law to Israel. When it says that he was devout, it means that he was very serious about his religion. He was a very godly man.
4. He not only had a faithful testimony with God, but he also had a faithful testimony with others. He had a “*good report*” of all the Jews in the area of Damascus.
5. Ananias was probably unknown to the twelve disciples and unknown by the church at Jerusalem, but God knew who he was and where he was. When it came time for a very special task that needed to be done, God chose this faithful man.

6. Let this be a lesson. God rewards great faithfulness with great privilege. Ananias may have been poor and homely, but these aren't the things God considers when He needs His work to be done. God is looking for faithful men and women. 1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 16:10-12
7. God has never looked for flashy show horses; He looks for faithful work horses. Isn't this wonderful, because it levels the ground for everybody? Not every person can be the most eloquent speaker, or the best dressed, or have the highest IQ, or have the best voice in choir. But every person can be faithful. Yet very few **are** faithful. Proverbs 20:6

Second, because he had a tender heart to listen to God – 9:10

1. When God needed a person to minister to Saul of Tarsus, God went to Ananias and said, "*Ananias.*" Ananias response was a quick, "*Behold, I am here Lord.*"
 - Today, God doesn't speak to us through visions and dreams, or in an audible voice, but He does speak to us through His written and completed Word.
2. Ananias had such a heart to listen and receive instruction from God. This is why this man received such spiritual privilege. Had he not been willing to listen to God, further instruction would have never come. vs. 11-12
3. God isn't going to throw a brick down from heaven to get your attention. You must be in His Word and have a tender heart to receive His Word, and also possess a tender heart to receive His instruction as others preach and teach it to us.
4. The opposite of a tender heart would be a cold, hard heart. Israel lost great spiritual privilege in the wilderness because of their hard hearts. Hebrews 3:7-12, 15-19

Third, because his desire to obey God was stronger than his fears – vs. 13-17a

1. Ananias was human and was prone to fear just like the rest of us. When God said the name, "Saul of Tarsus," this immediately brought trepidation to Ananias.
 - It certainly is understandable. Saul of Tarsus had made quite a name for himself, and it appears that his reputation had preceded his arrival to Damascus. The believers were bracing themselves for his assault.
2. Ananias wasn't being rebellious. He simply did not understand. Did you ever ask your parents, "Why," and they responded, "Because I told you so"?
3. God could have done this, but what a gracious God we have. He gave Ananias further insight and enlightenment (vs. 15-16). God does this with us if we truly desire to know Him and understand His Word. His Spirit will take us deeper and deeper in knowledge.
4. But after God gave Ananias his marching orders, Ananias still had to decide if he would risk his life and future and obey God, or simply ignore God's instructions.
5. I love verse 17: "*And Ananias went his way and entered into the house...*"
 - He is probably thinking, "I can't believe I am going to meet face-to-face with the ringleader of the Jewish crusade to stomp out the faith of Christ. Am I crazy?"

- No, he wasn't crazy (although others would have said that he was). He was simply obedient.
 - Can't you just see him as he is walking down the street, and another believer stops him and says, "You won't believe who is in town – Saul of Tarsus!" He responds, "I know, I'm going to meet with him and tell him what to do."
6. Ananias could have given in to his fears and justified it with excuses like, "Maybe I didn't hear God right. I just don't think I am the right man. I think I'd better pray on this for a week or so."
 7. But Ananias' desire to obey God was stronger than his fears. When you serve God and seek to obey God, sometimes it can be scary. God's way is not always the "safe" way, or "easy" way. God's will is not always the path of least resistance. In fact, it never is.
 8. If we want God to trust us with great privilege, we have to have a burning desire and thirst to obey God. Acts 5:17-18, 28-29, 40-42
 9. God sees the heart. Does He see in your heart a desire to obey Him more than anything else? What privilege this man Ananias had! But it didn't happen by luck, or chance, or through a random choice of God. It happened because he was faithful, tender-hearted, and obedient.