

# Acts 9:10-19a

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/acts/acts-9/acts-910-19a/>

*Jesus speaks to a believer in Damascus named Ananias, telling him to go to Saul and heal his blindness. Ananias understandably hesitates, since this Saul is famously persecuting the church, and had arrived in Damascus with the intention to arrest believers, bind them, and take them away to Jerusalem. Jesus tells Ananias that Saul has been chosen to spread the gospel and suffer for His sake. So Ananias obeys. He puts his hands on Saul, and Saul's sight returns. Saul is baptized.*

When the “great persecution” of the church in Jerusalem began (Acts 8:1), the believers scattered into Judea and Samaria. Eventually some made it to *Damascus* in Syria, roughly 140 miles from Jerusalem. This was why Saul had journeyed to *Damascus*, to hunt down followers of “the Way” of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Acts 9:2). He was breathing “threats and murder” against the church (Acts 9:1). *Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.* We know this *disciple, Ananias*, would likely have been arrested and dragged back to Jerusalem for execution by *Saul*, had Jesus not appeared to *Saul* on the road and blinded him, calling him away from his hostility toward the church, into faith in the true Messiah.

And while *Saul* sat in a house in *Damascus* for three days, blinded, fasting from food and drink, *the Lord* spoke elsewhere in the city to *Ananias*.

Jesus, *in a vision*, calls him by name, “*Ananias.*”

*Ananias* replies, “*Here I am, Lord.*”

*And the Lord* said to him, “*Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.*”

Luke, the author of Acts, provides us with a few details about where Saul ended up, in a house owned by a man named *Judas* on a *street* named *Straight*. Saul is not only fasting from eating and drinking, but he is in constant prayer. Surely he is *praying* for his eyesight to be restored, as well as reflecting on the appearance of Jesus, the call to ministry, and how wrong he had been in persecuting believers in Jesus. His entire world has changed. His life has changed. His future has changed.

Jesus reveals to Ananias what is happening to *Saul*. He is *praying*, and Jesus has promised him *in a vision a man named Ananias will come in and lay his hands on him*, helping him to *regain his sight*. It is as if to say, “Saul is expecting you, Ananias. He knows you’re coming.”

*But Ananias* answered, “*Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.*”

This is a perfectly reasonable response to God, from a human perspective. From his point of view, *Ananias* is being commanded to visit the scourge of the church, to walk into the cave where the lion waits. *Ananias* has *heard from many believers about this man*. Saul was present at and agreed with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1). He took the initiative to begin persecuting the church en masse, breaking its foothold in Jerusalem and scattering it to other parts of the country, even into Syrian Damascus. He comes with the *authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Jesus's name*.

There appears to be nothing he and his hired men will not do to drag all disciples back to Jerusalem, perhaps ultimately to put them to death (Acts 9:1). It may have even been a relief to *Ananias* to hear that *Saul* had lost *his sight*. The great enemy of the church was now profoundly impaired. Perhaps the persecution would decrease now that its leader was blind.

The *Lord* doesn't chastise *Ananias* for his hesitancy. He doesn't demand blind obedience either. He repeats the command, *Go*, and then provides further information about this man *Saul*, and why it is that *Ananias* must visit him: *for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel*. *Saul* the persecutor is a *chosen instrument of God*. The *Lord* has conquered this enemy and changed him into a member of the team.

This alone must have surprised *Ananias*. Never mind that *Saul* was going to become a witness to *Gentiles*, all the people of the world outside of Israel, to *kings*, rulers and authorities, as well as *the sons of Israel*, the chosen people. The *Lord* adds one last insight which may have comforted *Ananias*, at least in terms of divine justice: *for I will show Saul how much he must suffer for My name's sake*.

We can speculate what is in *Ananias's* heart, "This man *Saul* should be crucified himself. He's persecuting your church. He participated in the murder of Stephen. Why am I going to heal him? He should be suffering, not us." Perhaps this is why Jesus tells *Ananias* of the future sufferings of *Saul*, as though to say, "I know what is in your heart, *Ananias*. *Saul* will suffer plenty, but he will suffer for Me. For *My name's sake*." *Saul* will endure from others what he wished upon them, but in the process will gain great treasures in heaven (2 Timothy 4:8).

Indeed *Saul* will suffer. He will be imprisoned many times, beaten many times (sometimes nearly to death), stoned (perhaps to death, from which he will raise), whipped, shipwrecked, hungry, thirsty, cold (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). Jewish zealots will pursue him, chasing him out of towns where he establishes churches (Acts 17:5-10). Gentile zealots will do the same (Acts 19:23-20:1).

Many of his friends will betray him (2 Timothy 4:10). Throughout his ministry, *Saul* is in a constant state of trouble, and he rejoices in these sufferings (2 Corinthians 12:10). He lives by faith, setting his hope on life with Christ after death, after this brief life ends,

"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."  
(Romans 8:18)

Before Christ, Saul lived in enmity with God, in the name of serving God. After Christ he lives a life of pain, yet his eyes are set on the job Jesus has given to him, and rejoices in the privilege he has been given to serve His Lord:

“forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”  
(Philippians 3:13)

*So Ananias obeys God, understanding that Saul is no longer an enemy, that the Lord has use of him, and that he will live a life of suffering for Jesus. Having departed and entered the house where Saul was staying, the house of Judas on Straight street, Ananias meets Saul. Ananias wastes no time. He approaches Saul and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*

Ananias’ courage and faith is noteworthy here. He believed God to the point that he goes to this man who came to arrest him, even calling him, *Brother Saul*. Ananias believed what God had told him, and obeyed in faith. *Ananias* also shows Saul that he knows what happened to him and why he has lost his *sight*, establishing that they serve the same *Lord*, that he is here to help. He knows that *the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul on the road* and has commissioned him to spread the gospel to *Gentiles, kings, and the Jews*. Ananias lays *his hands* on Saul, perhaps touching his eyes, as Jesus did when He healed blindness (Mark 8:25). But not only had *Ananias* come to help *Saul regain his sight*, he also came so that *Saul would be filled with the Holy Spirit*.

*Saul* had believed in Jesus at this point, but had not yet received the *Holy Spirit*. There was a gap for many of the Jews between their initial faith in Jesus as Messiah and when they received the *Holy Spirit*. The apostles did not receive the Spirit until some ten days after Jesus ascended to Heaven (Acts 2:4).

Why was this the pattern with the Jews, where the Jews had a lag time between when they believed and when they received the *Holy Spirit*? What was the case there in Jesus's time? The nation was full of exploitation. Worse than that, exploitation in the name of keeping the law. This is why Jesus went and turned over the tables in the temple, saying in so many words, “You’ve turned the house of prayer into a den of thieves, because you’re just here making money off of the sacrifices. You’re not blessing the people and loving your neighbor; you’re exploiting.” He called Israel a “perverted generation,” a generation that lacked faith and was gone astray, crooked, corrupt (Matthew 17:17).

There is a transition for Jews of that generation; they are being called out of the perverse generation to a new generation. There is a call for repentance first, as John the Baptizer preached, as did Jesus, “Repent for the kingdom is at hand.” Before beginning His ministry, Jesus went to John and asked to be baptized. John said it needed to be the other way around, and Jesus replied, “Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus was setting an example. He was baptized, and then what happened? The Holy Spirit came down on him in the form of a dove (Matthew 3:16).

This was the progression in Peter's exhortation to the thousands of Jews listening to him preach at Pentecost, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) This would not only put them in right standing with God, it would help save them "from this perverse generation!" (Acts 2:40)

Repent, be baptized, and receive the Spirit. This was the order of things for the Jews. As we will soon see, this was not the case for Gentiles. The Gentiles will receive the Holy Spirit upon initial belief in Jesus.

After Ananias laid his hands on Saul, *immediately there fell from Saul's eyes something like scales*, some sort of visible sign that the blindness was gone, *and he regained his sight*.

Luke tells us the visible manifestation of Saul regaining his sight, but it is only inferred that he was *filled with the Holy Spirit*. Apparently this filling of the *Holy Spirit* had no visible manifestation to the witnesses. But Paul's life hereafter shows the impact of Saul's filling of the *Holy Spirit* powerfully, as he will begin proclaiming Jesus, with full knowledge of the hostility he might endure as a result.

Nothing else is known of this *Ananias* of Damascus, though later *Saul* describes him as "a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there" (Acts 22:12). So Ananias was Jewish, like Saul. But unlike Saul, Ananias had believed in Jesus as Messiah without having to encounter Jesus in a special appearance. Ananias was a Godly man, practicing the Jewish law and living among his neighbors with an admirable reputation as a Jew. He also was a seeker of God who recognized and believed in Jesus, and had received the Holy Spirit.

Later in Acts, *Saul* also reveals something else *Ananias* said, which was an emphasizing echo of Christ's mission for *Saul*,

"The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."  
(Acts 22:14-16)

Immediately *he got up and was baptized*, presumably by *Ananias*, *and he took food and was strengthened*. His time of fasting and prayer was ended. *Saul* had his mission, his sight, and the *Spirit* of God leading him. It was time to get to work. Unlike the prophet Jonah, who ran from God when sent to preach to his enemies, Paul obeyed immediately.

### **Biblical Text**

**10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man**

from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.” 13 But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; 19 and he took food and was strengthened.