

Ananias of Damascus

Acts 9:10-19

9:10 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. **9:11** And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, **9:12** And hath seen in a vision a man named **Ananias** coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

9:13 Then **Ananias** answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: **9:14** And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

9:15 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: **9:16** For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

9:17 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. **9:18** And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. **9:19** And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Acts 22:12-16

22:12 And one **Ananias**, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, **22:13** Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. **22:14** And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. **22:15** For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. **22:16** And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Overshadowed by Paul

Ananias of Damascus is the early church leader who first approached and ministered to the Apostle Paul, as reported in Acts chapters nine and 22. Because of his association with Paul, he is better known than many others in this “neglected people” series. However, because of this connection, the ministry of Ananias is overshadowed by that of the great Apostle. So Ananias is still being overlooked.

Another problem is that Ananias of Damascus, a godly man, is sometimes confused with the notorious Ananias in Acts 5:1-11 who lied about his offering and was instantly judged by God along with his wife.

negatives

We know little about Ananias of Damascus, but is he really as obscure character? At first he is, as just “a certain disciple” in Acts 9:10. This tells us nothing about his background, other than that he was a Christian in Damascus. (Luke was more focused on Paul than on Ananias in chapter nine.) Later, however, when Paul gave his testimony before a hostile crowd in Jerusalem (22:12-16), we learn that Ananias was a devote messianic Jew with a good reputation among the other Jews who lived in Damascus.

It is easy to criticize Ananias for questioning the Lord’s command to go to Saul (9:11-14). Yes, he was hesitant to do so—but with good reason. Did Jesus correct him harshly for being reluctant to go (9:15-16)? And was Ananias still reluctant to help Saul after the Lord explained the situation to him? The answer to both questions is “no.”

We don’t know why Ananias is only mentioned once after Acts chapter nine. Maybe he died, but it also may be because most of the rest of Acts is focused on more distant places.

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

A () **Ananias is obscure.** (He is an obscure character.)

A-1 () None of his background is given (22:12).

A-2 () He was just “a certain disciple” (9:10, 22:12).

A-3 () It doesn’t say that he was the pastor of the church.

B () **Ananias hesitated (9:13-16).**

B-1 () He was afraid of Saul at first.

B-2 () He did not obey immediately.

B-3 () He was like Peter in Mat. 14:29-30.

B-4 () He was corrected harshly by the Lord.

C () **Ananias disappeared.**

C-1 () Only this one incident is recorded.

C-2 () Saul began to minister instead (9:20).

C-3 () Probably he died soon after he baptized Saul.

C-4 () In 9:19, he was one of the disciples in a group.

C-5 () He is not an important character in the Book of Acts.

positives

It is often said that the greatest ability is availability. Ananias well illustrates this. Though he was probably a gifted man and, for sure was one of the elders in the Damascus church, Acts 9:10-19 does not directly tell us this. Instead the focus is on his availability and obedience.

Was Ananias a good speaker? His words, quoted by Paul in 22:14-16, suggest that he was. (Notice his great exhortation in 22:16.) But we do not know for sure. What we do know with certainty is that he was available and obedient.

Since Ananias was obedient to the Lord's command, he was a great blessing to others. The "F" subpoints below will help us think about the various ways he blessed Saul and future churches through him. Though most of these subpoints are correct, not all of them are.

In addition, Ananias was himself blessed while being a blessing to others. How thankful he must have been for being chosen to play a key role in the life of Paul! How much better his legacy is from that of the selfish Ananias in Acts 5:1-11!

Mark the points below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲).

D () **Ananias was available.**

D-1 () He was living in Damascus.

D-2 () He was not too busy with other things.

D-3 () He believed in Jesus and what Jesus said.

E () **Ananias was obedient.**

E-1 () He was surprised but open.

E-2 () He repented and went (9:13-17).

E-3 () He did what he was told to do (9:12, 17).

E-4 () He was like the repentant son in Mat. 21:28-31.

F () **Ananias was a blessing.**

F-1 () He restored Saul's sight (9:18, 22:13).

F-2 () He probably baptized Saul (9:18, 22:16).

F-3 () He acknowledged Saul's conversion.

F-4 () He was like Barnabas (9:26-27).

F-5 () He taught Saul many things.

conclusions

worksheet answers

About two-thirds of the lines on the worksheets in this study are correct, including most of the main points shown in bold type on the two previous pages.

Point “A,” about Ananias being an obscure character, however, is only partly correct. Thanks to Paul’s testimony in Acts 22:12-16, we know far more about this devout Jewish believer from Damascus than we would have otherwise.

In addition, some might object to saying that Ananias was obedient (point “E”) because he was hesitant at first. But his attitude was quickly changed and he did as commanded. Thus, Ananias sounds somewhat like the repentant son in Mat. 21:28-31. However, Ananias illustrates the repentance of a believer, whereas the parable in Matthew 21 calls for unbelievers to change their minds.

The line which is most obviously incorrect is B-4. The Lord did not harshly correct Ananias. Also, speculating that he died soon after (C-3), is not good. Line F-5 is incorrect, since Paul did not receive his gospel or his apostleship from men (Gal. 1:12).

So what?

Since there are so many good points about Ananias, applying them all may seem overwhelming. Perhaps this summary chart will help.

Be like Ananias of Damascus.

Be available.

- Believe & work in a good church.
- Seek God’s will. (Look & listen.)
- Don’t be distracted (too busy).

Be obedient.

- Believe in the Lord’s work.
- Go, do, and / or speak.
- Don’t hesitate because of fear.

Be a blessing.

- Believe and help others.
- Be humble. (Do humble things.)
- Don’t be selfish.

These points soon appeared in Paul’s life as well, since he knew from the beginning that he was called to serve (Acts 22:14-15).

Which point or points seem most needful in your life at this time?

applications

Apply the points which you believe are most important or seem most needful.
