

ANANIAS RELUCTANTLY BEFRIENDS, THE WORST OF ALL SINNERS!
ACTS CH9:10-19a

INTRODUCTION

ANANIAS BEFORE JESUS' DIVINE COMMAND! V10-12

There are three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts, the first is here the second in **Ch22:1-16** and thirdly in **Ch26:12-18**, Luke employs such repetitions only when he considers something to be extraordinarily important! Along with more details of what happened to be found in **Acts Ch9:27; 1st Cor Ch9:1, Ch15:8-10; Gal Ch1:15-16; 1st Timothy Ch1:15-16**. In these verses Paul says **he has seen Jesus, was commissioned to be an apostle for Jesus, that Jesus set him apart before his birth, and that he received mercy from Jesus as the chief or worst of all sinners!**

Ananias' name is mentioned 5 times in 10 verses – v10x2, v12, v13, v17. He is referred to 7 times in 10 verses – v10x2, v11, v12, v15, v17x2. And we see Ananias talking to Jesus on 2 occasions in 10 verses – v10 + v13.

So, although this passage reveals something about Saul's calling and commission (mission for Jesus) in verses 15, 16 + 18, the main story that Luke is telling relates primarily to Ananias!

What do we know about Ananias? - His name is based on the Hebrew name, Hananiah – meaning – **“Yahweh has dealt graciously.”** We know from v1 that he is a “born again” Christian, a disciple living in the City that Saul was heading to, Damascus, 150 miles or so from Jerusalem, a large and thriving commercial city at the foot of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. It was part of the Roman province of Syria and was granted certain civic rights by Rome as one of the ten cities of eastern Syria and the Transjordan called the Decapolis (**Mark Ch5:27; Ch7:31**). It also had a large Jewish population.

We know that he was well up for Jesus' mission, as he answers Jesus in the vision/dream “Here I am”, revealing his presence and his readiness to carry out the Lord's will! As were, Abraham – Gen Ch22:1 + v11; Jacob – Gen Ch31:11 + Ch46:2; Samuel - 1st Samuel Ch3:4-8; Isaiah – Isaiah Ch6:8.

We know that he knew the city really well and didn't need Google Maps v11!

And if we look at Acts Ch22:12-16, we also know that Ananias:

1. was a devout man according to the Law!
2. was well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there!
3. told Saul/Paul to be baptised!
4. probably baptised Saul/Paul!

Finally, we know that Ananias was chosen by Jesus v10, had to greet Saul v17, lay hands on Saul v17, and pray with Saul v17!

ANANIAS AFTER JESUS' DIVINE COMMAND! V13-16

However, despite all the things that Luke records for us, we also learn that Ananias has issues in his Christian walk! He's initially up for mission “Here I am Lord”, and is happy to journey to Straight Street, visit Judas' house and to look for a man from Tarsus, until he realises it's Saul! Arghhhhhh!

Once Ananias knows that Jesus' mission involves danger, with dangerous Saul, he then wants to re-negotiate the terms and conditions of mission. **Resonate with any of us? Ananias had an understandable fear that needed to be overcome, before he could fulfil his Jesus centred task!** Look at what Ananias says to Jesus in verses 13+14 – I've heard from many how evil he is to Christians! I've heard he has the backing of the Law and can arrest and handcuff any Christians he finds and take them to Jerusalem! Now, in light of this

Jesus however speaks into this fear – v15! **You see, Saul has become a Christian, but how well will he be received into the local Gospel Community, given his past? And, Ananias is afraid! Jesus uses the conversion of the worst sinner, to reveal Ananias' fear, that also must be converted, from fear to faith in Jesus, so that the Gospel Community can continue to grow in the heart of Jesus' Mission, to reach and save sinners!**

ANANIAS FULFILS JESUS' DIVINE COMMAND! V17-19a

What are the first words that Saul hears from a disciple of Christ? What are the first words uttered from the lips of a disciple of Christ? V17 "Brother Saul" or literally "Saul, my brother!" **John Stott puts it this way "They must have been music to his ears. What? Was the arch-enemy of the church to be welcomed as a brother? Was the dreaded fanatic to be received as a member of the family? Yes, it was so" (John Stott, Commentary on Acts, pg 176).**

What two reasons does Ananias give to Saul for why Jesus had sent him?

1. To lay hands on Saul, so that he can receive his physical sight! v17

Miracle-working – Literally, the sick are healed by the laying on of hands! The touch of a person's hands was held to communicate authority, power or blessing. According to Wayne Grudem **"The methods used by Jesus and the disciples to bring healing varied from case to case, but most frequently they included laying on of hands. In the verse just quoted, Jesus no doubt could have spoken a powerful word of command and healed everyone in the large crowd instantly, but instead, 'he laid hands on every one of them and healed them' (Luke Ch4:40). Laying on of hands seems to have been the primary means Jesus used to heal, because when people came and asked him for healing they did not simply ask for prayer but said, for example, 'come and lay your hand on her, and she will live' (Matt Ch9:18)" (Systematic Theology, pg1065).**

2. To lay hands on Saul so that he can be filled with the Holy Spirit for mission! V17

We cannot understand the power of the Holy Spirit apart from the life of Jesus. There's no example of what it means to live a **Spirit-empowered life** unless we look at the life of Jesus. And so, that's what Luke is telling us. He says, "OK, Jesus lived by the power of the Holy Spirit." He lives without sin, He dies for our sin, He rises for our sin, He evidences it for forty days, and He tells His people, "Don't go do ministry yet. Wait. You need power. The Holy Spirit's coming to cause you to be like me." That's why the former book and the latter book go together.

So, in the book of Luke, what is the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

- Jesus was **conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit** in his mother, Mary. Jesus'

conception, his entrance into human history as a man, was by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Luke Ch1:35)

- At Jesus' baptism, God the Father speaks from heaven. The whole Trinity is there. "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here's Jesus, the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity coming up out of the water. Who descends on Jesus? ***The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.*** This is to show publicly that Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit, that he's indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that he's filled by the Holy Spirit, that he's empowered by the Holy Spirit, that his whole life is by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why this was public, so everybody could see it. See, Jesus already knew it. This wasn't for Jesus' understanding; this was for our understanding. (Luke Ch3:21-22)
- The book of Luke, then, goes on to say that Jesus was ***"full of the Holy Spirit."*** How many of you have heard, "You should live a Spirit-filled life." That's true. You know what that looks like? Jesus. Any time we lift someone else up and say, "Well, there's the Spirit-filled person, be like them," wrong person. None of us sinners are perfectly, continually full of the Holy Spirit. ***We resist (Acts Ch7:51), grieve (Eph Ch4:30), we quench (1st Thess Ch5:19), and we insult the Holy Spirit at times (Hebrews Ch10:29). But Jesus was, "full of the Holy Spirit"—continually, perfectly.*** (Luke Ch4:1)
- The Gospel of Luke says that he was ***"led by the Spirit."*** So, Jesus goes here because that's where the Spirit is directing him. He teaches these people, he leads these people, he casts out these demons, he prays over this crowd. Why? Because he's led by the Holy Spirit. (Luke Ch4:1)
- We read in the Gospel of Luke that he came ***"in the power of the Spirit."*** How did he teach? In the power of the Holy Spirit. How did he cast out demons? In the power of the Holy Spirit. How were those who were blind given sight? Because he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. He came with, by, for, through the power of the Holy Spirit. See, ministry has programs, but it does nothing without power. (Luke Ch4:14)
- The Gospel of Luke says that he ***"rejoiced in the Holy Spirit."*** When he had joy, when he celebrated, it was because the joy of the Lord was his strength. It was the Holy Spirit in him, causing him to glorify, to worship, to enjoy, to adore, to thank, to bless God the Father. (Luke Ch10:21)
- Early on in his ministry, he walks into a synagogue, he opens the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 61:1-2, and he reads it. Do you remember what he reads? He reads this: ***"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news and to set captives free." And then he closed it up, and he said this: "Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*** Isaiah wrote seven hundred years prior and said, "There's one who is coming, and the Spirit of the Lord will reside on him so that he could preach good news and set captives free from sin and death. ***"And Jesus says, "I'm here. That's me. I'm the one you've all been waiting for, and the Spirit of the Lord is upon me."*** (Luke Ch4:16-21)

What is the essence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit? Is it the sound of wind, the tongues of fire, the other languages, the words of praise, the prophecies and dreams and visions? Can we get at the essence of what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, or does it have to include all these things?

I think the essence of being baptized with the Holy Spirit is ***when a person, who is already a believer, receives extraordinary spiritual power for Christ-exalting.*** There are good reasons for believing that these disciples were already born again and converted and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (John Ch13:10; Ch15:3; Romans

Ch8:9). But even more important than that is the fact that the issue of the new birth and conversion of the disciples is simply not in view at all in Acts Ch1 + Ch2. Jesus doesn't say, "Wait in Jerusalem until you are born again or converted or put into the body of Christ." He says, "But you will receive power....." He doesn't say, "You shall receive membership in the body of Christ when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." He says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you."

So filling with the "Spirit" is a special empowering for ministry that is described as ".....baptised with the Holy Spirit." and this idea of "baptism" is almost always associated with this extraordinary power for ministry in the book of Acts. Notice that when the baptism with the Spirit happens in Acts Ch2:4, Luke says, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" The effect of that filling was a powerful and even miraculous testimony to the truth of Christ that resulted in 3,000 people being converted (Acts Ch2:41).

So, my conclusion is, that being baptized/filled with the Holy Spirit is when a believer in Jesus Christ receives extraordinary power for Christ-exalting ministry!

Saul now a Christian Ch9:6-9, is healed physically Ch9:18, is probably baptised by Ananias Ch22:12-16, and fully accepted into the Gospel Community in Damascus, at least!

APPLICATION

All new Christians, benefit from a befriending disciple!
What can that look like here?