

Acts, Week 29

Paul accepted into the Church

We left off last week as Paul was about to stand up after having been confronted by the risen Christ. His conversion has now begun, however, there are some struggles yet ahead. Paul can't see, Look at our verses again, **8-9, Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**

Paul stood up but he saw no one. John Stott says, "To sum up, the cause of Saul's conversion was grace, the sovereign grace of God. But sovereign grace is gradual grace and gentle grace." Paul received God's grace even if this may look as punishment, God would use grace to guide and correct the most dedicated persecutor of the church. God does not give up on us very easily, we see His great patience with His people continually throughout the Scripture. We do not find any signs that Paul was frightened or upset about his blindness, instead we see surrender and obedience.

It would be the others with him who would see him to town. **Verses 9:10-11; Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."** "Hear I am" is used 122 times in 32 verses, This includes 27 times in the exact phrases. In first Samuel it is used six times in the exact phrase in chapter 3 as God talks to Samuel. I think the most famous use of it is found in Isaiah 6:8 when God says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." This was Isaiah's calling to become a prophet, he would immediately face difficult challenges with the people.

I am amazed how willing most are to serve our God when asked, we find it again and again hearts willing to sacrifice everything to serve God, and we don't even want to give up a few hours on a Sunday to go and fellowship our brothers and sisters in Christ. I have felt this many times in my life before surrendering. I just want to stay by the fire, it's cold out, or it's too hot, I don't want to go outside. But here we find men willing to sacrifice all in order to spread God's teachings to a stiff-neck people.

Let's reverse the verses here for a second and see what Ananias is going through. God is telling him to go, pray and put your hands on this man called Saul. **Verse 9:13; Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem."**

I don't think this would be an easy task, to hear of this man who stood and held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. Yet Ananias was there and willing, just a bit frightened.

Verses 9:11-12; So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. “And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”

The use of "straight" in reference to the street's name seems unusual, I have never in my life witnessed a street called straight. As it is used in our verse it implies a straight and level street, it's just that simple. But later in the lexicon we find it described as this, [Luke 3:5](#); **εὐθεῖα ὁδός** the straight, the right way, is figuratively used of true religion as a rule of life leading to its goal, i. e. to salvation, [2 Peter 2:15](#); **αἱ ὁδοὶ κυρίου**, the right and saving purposes of God, [Acts 13:10](#) (Song of the Three Children, verse 3).¹

So Ananias has a questionable task ahead of him, to be obedient to God's calling and possibly become Paul's next victim. I think I would have been extremely frightened to have done such but he does. I might have asked, can't we just leave him without his sight until we know his motives? We often see the struggles people have with being obedient to what God asks of us, it is nothing new but it is good that we find hesitation in the Bible to show us we are not alone nor have we violated any laws or God's assignments in being so questionable and fearful. But we can look at these incidents and see how patient God is with us and that He would not ask us to do or go without first preparing us then guarding us.

Isaiah 45:2; ‘I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron.

Deuteronomy 31:6; “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.”

We can read this over and over, say we believe it but do we really? Have we learned to set aside our fears and hesitation trusting fully in our Lord? Until we are placed in such a situation I don't know if we can say with all confidence, “yes, I am trusting in the Lord.” But Ananias is our example along with many others including Jesus who exhibit certain fears of what is to come.

Matthew 26:39; He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

Verses 13-16; 13 Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”

¹ THAYER'S GREEK LEXICON, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2002, 2003, 2006, 2011 by BibleSoft, Inc.
All rights reserved. Used by permission. BibleSoft.com

15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

There are two issues going on I think we need to ponder as we look toward our own trust and security in God. Anaias has a very good reason to be afraid of Paul and Paul has good reason to be very afraid of Anaias. So we have two men strong in their beliefs, one who has previously embraced the grace of God and placed his full trust in Him. But now he is tasked with helping Paul become a brother in our Lord. Next, we have Paul who was full of hate and resentment toward the Way, but is now blind and having to place his life in the hands of others. Think of having been out persecuting people and not your eyesight is gone, you don't know if it is temporary or long lasting and you have to place your trust in those around you. You are going into a town where you know the people have heard of you and God has blinded you, every voice you hear must seem terrible not knowing what these people will do to you.

Anaias could have ended Paul's history right there, but we can thank our Lord that He had a different plan and Paul would come to be a powerful image of grace and salvation. Salvation is an interesting word, on this side of history we see it as that which Jesus died for that we may be saved from eternal condemnation. But salvation is also used in overcoming battles, plagues, starvation, and other situations. It can be used both in the context of eternal salvation or salvation from suffering in this life. Anaias may not have received full credit throughout history for his actions and dedication to our Lord's calling. But he sets an excellent image of trusting in God and for us to see the impact such trust can produce.

Verse 9:17-18; And Anaias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Something like scales - λεπής, λεπιδος, ή (λέπω to strip off the rind or husk, to peel, to scale), a scale: Acts 9:18. (the Sept.; Aristotle, others (cf. Herodotus 7, 61).) λεπής lepís, lep-is'; from λέπω lépō (to peel); a flake:—scale.

Take notice of the actions and responses here. Anaias enters the room and lays his hands on Paul, validates his being sent by our Lord by affirming the account on the road, and now tells Paul, this is what the Lord has told me to do, to lay hands on you that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And so it was just as the Lord had said. There must have been great joy in all that transpired as we see Paul immediately going to be baptized.

Salvation. Strong's Definitions [?](Strong's Definitions Legend) yesh-oo'-aw

ישועה yeshûw'âh, yesh-oo'-aw; feminine passive participle of H3467; something saved, i.e. (abstractly) deliverance; hence, aid, victory, prosperity:—deliverance, health, help(-ing), salvation, save, saving (health), welfare.

Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon

STRONGS H3444:

Abbreviations

ישועה noun feminine salvation; — יש Psalm 119:155 18 times; ישועתה Psalm 3:3; Jonah 2:10; ישועתה Psalm 80:3; construct ישועת Exodus 14:13 4 times; suffix ישועתי Job 30:15; ישועתי Psalm 62:2 12 times, + 25 times suffixes; plural ישועות Samuel 22:51 6 times; 2 ישועת Sam 42:12 3 times; 2 ישועות Sam 53:7; —

1. welfare, prosperity: ישועתי Job 30:15 as a cloud my prosperity passed away.
2. deliverance: ותהיה לי לישועה and thou wilt be to me for deliverance 2 Samuel 10:11 = 1 Chronicles 19:12.
3. salvation by God, primarily from external evils, but often with added spiritual idea: Genesis 49:18 (poem), Isaiah 33:2; Isaiah 52:7,10; Isaiah 59:11; Isaiah 60:18; Jonah 2:10; Psalm 3:3; Psalm 3:9; Psalm 14:7 = Psalm 53:7; Psalm 22:2; Psalm 35:3; Psalm 62:2; Psalm 69:30; Psalm 70:5 (= תשועה Psalm 40:17), Psalm 78:22; Psalm 80:3; Psalm 91:16; Psalm 96:2 = 1 Chronicles 16:23, Psalm 106:4; Psalm 140:8; Job 13:16; with verbs of rejoicing 1 בישועה Samuel 2:1; Isaiah 25:9; Psalm 9:15; Psalm 13:6; Psalm 35:9; ישועה וישית חומות Isaiah 26:1 salvation will he set as walls; compare phrase אלהי יש Psalm 88:2, אל יש Isaiah 12:2, צור יש Deuteronomy 32:15 (song), Psalm 89:27, compare צורי וישועתי Psalm 62:3; Psalm 62:7; יש יום Isaiah 49:8; יש מעיני הישי Isaiah 12:3 wells of salvation; plural ישועות (intensive), of ישועות מני יי Psalm 42:6; the salvation of my face (person; פניו MT error, פני Greek Version of the LXX Syriac Version), Psalm 42:12; Psalm 43:5; כוס ישועות Psalm 116:13 cup commemorating saving acts (of drink-offering); further Psalm 119:123; Psalm 119:155; Psalm 119:166; Psalm 119:174; || ישועתי עדקצה Isaiah 51:6,8; Isaiah 56:1; Isaiah 62:1; Psalm 98:2; Psalm 98:3; ישועתי עדקצה Isaiah 49:6 my salvation unto the ends of the earth; בכללגוים ישועתך Psalm 67:3 among all nations thy salvation.
4. victory: with עשה work victory 1 Samuel 14:45; Isaiah 26:18: elsewhere of victories wrought by Yahweh for his people Exodus 15:2 (song) Isaiah 12:2; Habakkuk 3:8; Psalm 20:6; Psalm 21:2; Psalm 21:6; Psalm 44:5; Psalm 68:20; Psalm 118:14; Psalm 118:15; Psalm 118:21; phrases: פעל ישועות Psalm 74:12; חסן ישועות Isaiah 33:6 store of victories; 2 מגדול ישועות Samuel 22:51 Qr tower of victories (Kt מגדיל and so || Psalm 18:51); מעוז ישועות Psalm 28:8 stronghold of victories; י ראו את ישועתי Exodus 14:13 (J) see the victory of Yahweh, 2 Chronicles 20:17; כובע ישועה Isaiah 59:17 helmet of victory; יפאר עניים בישועה Psalm 149:4 he will beautify the meek with victory. — compare the synonym תשועה below

Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, Unabridged, Electronic Database.
Copyright © 2002, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
BibleSoft.com