

1-26-25 Should've, Could've, Would've

Week 4

Text: Acts 9:10–22

Topics: Regret, Hope, Future

Big Idea of the Message: Paul could have allowed his past and his reputation to prevent him from proclaiming the gospel, but he chose to follow God's call. Ananias could have allowed Paul's past to have kept him from fulfilling God's will.

Application Point: Once we have surrendered to God, we can boldly pursue his call on our lives even if others are surprised by the godly change in us.

How many have been identified with their ethnicity or heritage?

Because I am Italian, I can cook, or I am loud, speak with my hands or stubborn.

Because I am Welsh, I am cheap, frugal.

Because I am Scottish, I love whiskey, wear a kilt, throw heavy stuff, play bagpipes and love porridge.

Because I am Polish, I love kielbasa and pierogis.

Once we become born again, we garner a new identity, a new heritage, all of us, no matter our ethnicity, culture, or temperaments, we become new. We all assimilate into the life and characteristics of Christ.

In today's challenge we see it so clearly. Once an individual has surrendered to God, they can boldly pursue his call on their lives even if others are surprised by the godly changes in them.

Read Acts 9:10-19.

The obedience of one-man changes everything. And he is almost an insignificant man. In the middle of a very dramatic, miraculous story of change, a quite unknown man appears.

It's easy to miss him, and even if you've heard the story of Paul on the road to Damascus many times before, it's quite possible we've never really taken in this other fellow. I am talking about Ananias.

He is the bridge that helps connect Saul into his new life in Christ, and into God's church. His action was momentous – he prayed, and Saul received his sight, and was filled with the Holy Spirit, and baptized, and he started to eat.

God saved Saul, but God wants to use people like Ananias to help connect him to the church.

Who is this man Ananias? We don't know much, except what Paul says in **Acts 22**. Paul mentioned him while sharing his testimony. **Acts 22:12** **"A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there."**

The Lord has this simple job for him – go to a particular place and pray for this man. I think it is safe to say that Ananias was close to God, he was walking in the ways of God. How can we tell this?

I. He was observant.

• **Verses 10-11.**

- Similar words: alert, watchful, awake, focused, on guard, aware, mindful, hawk-eyed.
- When you are on the same page as God, when you are alert, focused or mindful you are more sensitive to His leading, His voice, His movement.
- Ananias was a follower of Jesus in Damascus. He had such a close relationship with God, that Jesus appeared to him in a vision.
- In that vision, Jesus instructed Ananias to go to the house of Judas where Saul of Tarsus was staying. Jesus told Ananias that Saul was expecting him to come.
- Other examples of people walking close to God and being aware of his presence are found throughout the Bible (Samuel... **1 Samuel 3:1-10**; Peter... **Acts 10: 9-16**) Visions were rare and infrequent (still are) because apostasy was rampant.
- What could happen in our world today if we were as sensitive as these people of old to God's voice speaking to us?

If we want to be close to God, know His will, be sensitive to His leading, we must be observant and...

II. Obedient

• **Verses 13-16.**

- Paul's reputation for persecuting Christians had preceded Him to Damascus.
- It was about a five-day journey from Jerusalem to Damascus, so it is thought that some Christians had made the trip to Damascus before Saul arrived to tell the believers there the reason why Saul was coming to Damascus.
- Ananias was aware of how Paul had been persecuting the Christians.
- When God instructed Ananias to go to Judas' house to help Paul regain his eyesight, Ananias only reminded God of Paul's reputation. He asked God if He really knew who Saul was. He did not argue with God or refuse to go.
- When God tells us that He has something for us to do, do we question Him? Argue with Him? Or do we accept what He commands us to do and obediently follow his commands?
- When you are close to God and walking with Him are you obedient to His commands and do not question what He tells you to do?
- How many blessings have you missed, or what vital job has been left undone because you questioned God or refused to listen to Him?
- Jonah, at first refused to do God's bidding, then later repented. Look at the result! The whole city repented.
- There is a billboard on 90 headed toward Syracuse that says Christain's are obedient to God. Are we.....?

When we are observant and obedient, right with God and doing things His way, there can be a great:

III. Outcome

• **Verses 17-18.**

- When you are close to God and walking with Him — great things are possible.
- Because of Ananias' obedience to God, regardless of what he had heard about Saul, Saul once again received his eyesight, was saved, and baptized. From that point on, look at the change in Paul's life. Look at what God did through Paul!
- Ananias put his hands on Saul and called him Brother Saul. The importance of Ananias' putting his hands on Paul was to now identify Paul with the Christians that he had been persecuting.
- Imagine what would have happened if Ananias had been disobedient to God. What would Saul have done? Ananias had a divine appointment with Saul. He did not miss that appointment, and as a result, **THE WHOLE WORLD WAS CHANGED!!**
- Because of Ananias' obedience you and I are here today!
- Have we failed to be obedient to God? Has He called us, and we have refused to answer the call?
- Has God tried to send us somewhere and we have refused to go?
- Has God instructed us to do something, and we have let it go undone?
- What will be the result of our disobedience?
- How many are in this church because of someone in this church?

There are at least three lessons that we should learn from this passage:

1. **God can use even the most obscure saint.** Were it not for the conversion of Paul, we would never have heard of Ananias; and yet Ananias had an important part to play in the early days of evangelism.
2. **We should never be afraid to obey God's will.** Ananias at first argued with God, but God had everything under control, and Ananias obeyed by faith.
3. **We must never underestimate the value of one person brought to Christ.** Peter and Phillip were witnessing to thousands, but Ananias was sent to only ONE man.
 - April 21, 1855, Edward Kimball led one of his Sunday School boys to faith in Christ. Little did he realize that Dwight L. Moody would one day become the world's leading evangelist.
 - Moody led Wilbur Chapman to Christ. Chapman led Billy Sunday to Christ. Sunday led Mordecai Ham to Christ, who in turn led Billy Frank or as we know him, Billy Graham to Christ. It is believed that Billy Graham had shared the gospel with over 2.2 billion people through his crusades, TV and radio programs.
 - This fascinating chain of events started by a Sunday school teacher's concern for his boys.
 - Next time you are tempted to give up, please remember Edward Kimball, whose persistence and faithfulness was tremendously honored by the Lord. The story would have looked very differently if Edward Kimball did not take his Saturday to seek out young Dwight Moody.

"You can count the apples on a tree, but only God knows how many apples are in a single seed."

- Why not give God a chance to prove through your life what He can do by working through you to accomplish His perfect will for you?
- Let Him use you to accomplish great things for His kingdom.

Once we have surrendered to God, we can boldly pursue his call on our lives even if others are surprised by the godly change in us.

Read Acts 9:3-9

God transforms Saul to Paul.

After Christ appeared to Paul, and Paul believed on Christ, Paul got up from the earth, but he was blinded (**vs. 8**). He was physically blind, but now he had spiritual vision. (**vs. 9**)

There was the arrogant, obnoxious, self-righteous, Pharisaical, Christ-rejecter (Saul of Tarsus), now a saved man, but sitting in a stranger's house for three days, completely blind, with no food or drink. What would he do for those three days?

Christ then commissioned a disciple by the name of Ananias to go to Paul and give him instruction (**vs. 10-11**). What was Paul doing to the end of **verse 11**? Praying!

Paul was not known as a praying man before he came to know Christ. He was a self-righteous, religious man. So, I'm sure he repeated memorized prayers. But, with all his religion, he did not know Christ and did not truly know God.

But once Paul came to know the saving love and power of Jesus Christ, it changed him completely. This once proud man now humbled himself in prayer. He used to feel very comfortable cursing, swearing, and blaspheming Christ. Now he prayed to Him!

His first prayer was, **"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (vs. 6)**. This is a great place to begin your Christian life. Begin reading your Bible and asking yourself as you read, "Jesus, what do you want me to do? How do you want me to live? What areas of my life do YOU want to change?"

Ananias visits Paul, laid hands on him, spoke God's blessing over him, the scales fell from his eyes and he was baptized.

A new man with a new mission. God gave Paul a burden to see lives changed.

Read Acts 9:20-22.

Paul was a changed man. He knew that it was Jesus Christ that had changed Him. Nobody else could have changed him the way Christ did.

Do you know what we see in Paul right away? He had a desire for others to come to Christ. He wanted others to know the truth about Jesus. He wanted them to know that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. (**vs. 20**)

He wanted the Jews to know that the one they crucified was, in fact, the very Christ, the Messiah they had been waiting on for centuries. (**vs. 22**)

It wasn't smooth sailing for Paul once he began to witness to others of Christ.

Some people were amazed and didn't know how to take it. "What has gotten into this guy? Has he gone crazy?" (**vs. 21**)

Others were simply hopping mad and angry. **"He's a traitor!" (vs. 23)**

Conclusion

Once we have surrendered to God, we can boldly pursue his call on our lives even if others are surprised by the godly change in us.

If you are a follower of God, you can boldly pursue His call on your life. You have the strength and power inside of you to live a transformed life.

We must be Observant. Where is God working? Where is He directing us?

Obedience is the first step. Ananias was obedient in the face of uncertainty, and fear. Same with Paul, his first response to Jesus was, "Lord, what will you have me do." Once Paul was commissioned, he was off, no looking back.

Maybe you don't know Jesus personally, you know of Him, but you don't know Him. Let's get that settled today.