

# A Certain Disciple

By Paris Reidhead\*

Acts 9:10 – “And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias.”

God uses unknown, little known people to accomplish great purposes. And as you are turning to the text, in order that it might be further impressed upon your mind, remember that all we know about this man, Ananias, is said in this one clause:

“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. 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 prayerth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy Name. 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: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake. 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. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus” (Act. 9:10-19).

I would have you see this evening that there are some things that God can do, apart from known human agency, some work that is dependent entirely upon the Holy Spirit, some ministries that He performs irrespective of human agency. And for these we are grateful, and we are grateful that we have this testimony of God’s working in the life of Saul of Tarsus, an arrogant, proud, haughty man that was committed to the task of exterminating Christianity, because he felt it was a threat to Judaism, and because he felt Jesus Christ was an imposter, and because he was convinced that it was for the good of his people, and the whole nation and world if this heresy should cease. Saul, of Tarsus, dedicated all of his energy, all of his strength, all of his talent, every waking moment to the one task of ridding the world of this blight of Christianity as he viewed it then. And God had ministries that came to him, the ministry of the Word through those whom he apprehended, those whom he arrested, and against whom he brought accusation, and then there was the testimony of those who had been healed through the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the ministry of the apostles. There was also added to this the testimony of Stephen, and the exhibition of grace in the life of Stephen, asking for forgiveness of those who were in the act of stoning him. And also his affirmation that he saw Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of the Throne. But all of these did not dissuade this fanatical man from his task of persecuting the church. He continued, determined that he would succeed.

And so it was that our Lord, on the road to Damascus, overshadowed him, surrounded him with his presence, seen as light by both Saul and those journeying with him, and spoke. Saul heard the meaning of the words, the articulation. Those with him heard only a noise, only thunder. But the effect of it was that he had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ; being convinced that Jesus Christ was alive from the dead, then he had to admit in his heart that everything said about him was true, and all the claims that he made were so. This is the logical answer to the proof of the resurrection, that if Jesus Christ is risen from the dead then everything that He said Himself is so, and all said about Him was so. This is why through the years the antagonists of Christ have done everything they could to attack the resurrection, because upon this one historical fact stands or falls our faith. And thus you will recognize that the enemies of our Lord and of His truth have always sought to attack at this point, some saying it did not make any difference, the historicity was not important, and other devious types of argument. And yet still another kind coming out and blatantly declaring that they did not believe He was risen from the dead. We know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, we that have been born into His family. For like Saul of Tarsus we have seen Him, we have felt Him, we have met Him, we have known Him. And this becomes the ultimate, final proof. It was the proof that Paul required. It isn’t the proof that you secure. Certainly the Lord does not deal with you, or very unlikely that He will, in manner similar to His dealing with Saul. I believe that He fits the revelation of Himself to the needs of the heart and to the purpose for the life.

But the point of interest to us at the moment is this, that Saul of Tarsus became convinced that Jesus Christ was alive, and that there were logical imperatives flowing out of this. And thus, when he asked the question, "Who art Thou, Lord, he received the answer, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Act. 9:5).

Then the next words express his total surrender, his utter abandonment to the Person of Jesus Christ. Not to a scheme, not to a doctrine, not to an idea, not even to the argument for salvation, but to a person and all true conversion is a surrender to a person. This is what we mean by faith, a commitment to a Person of all we are, and all we have. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This is repentance, this is faith, and it resulted in a revelation of Jesus Christ in Paul, for he said, "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:16). And this is the logical consequence of true repentance, and true faith, a revelation of Christ in the believer's heart. You know Him, because He has been revealed in you. Oh, there has been a revelation to you, through the Word, through the truth, but the reason that you can say tonight that you are a Christian is that there has been a revelation in you. It is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Now obviously He is in you in other manner than He is in Heaven. He is there in His resurrection body, and if you are His He is in you by His Spirit. But none the less real, none the less personal is this matter of our meeting with Him. And we are grateful for this because it establishes the fact that there is much that the Lord does at this point of repentance and faith. It is my conviction, shared I am sure by many of you, but not by all is this that when from the moment of regeneration we are in – we have the Spirit of God in His regenerating life. The Word says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). But you understand that you can be born, when you are born again, you are born of the Spirit. This is true. But you were not necessarily born full of the Spirit.

Now you are going to argue and say, "But I know that Cornelius was born again at this time, that salvation had come to his house this day, and he was filled with the Holy Ghost." That is why I said, usually, generally, because at the moment that one dogmatizes in respect to the working of God they are caught in the dilemma that God doesn't always do things the way we propose and suggest, and affirm that He does. He is the God of infinite variety, and we delight to have it so and would not change it. And I am so grateful that He cannot be compressed into any formula. It is marvelous to see as someone recently used in a group meeting the spontaneous, wonderful, irregularities of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that we should be grateful for these Divine irregularities, these Heavenly interventions into the pattern and plan that we have established. But this much we do know, that if any man is born of God, he has the Spirit of God. Born of the Spirit, but not born full of the Spirit. And it was possible for this work to be done apart from any human instrumentality.

But you know, this man, Saul of Tarsus was a very confident man, self-confident. We might even be so bold as to say he was egotistical, to some degree, at least. At least he had set himself an enormous task to exterminate the church. And he felt he could do it, and probably he was on a fair way to do it, humanly speaking, until he encountered the Lord. And so God gave him a revelation of Himself, a revelation that Saul needed, and he had to have. But isn't it wonderful that he was led by the hand, blind. I am so grateful that this man met the Lord in such a way that he had to be conducted as a little child. I think it was typical. You see when you are born again; you are born as a babe. However adult you might have been in certain respects, the moment that you are born into God's family there is a whole new world relationship that begins in your infancy. This is the reason why in the New Testament they established a pattern called, having god parents.

You know most things that are here in ceremony had a beginning in need and in fact. And it was true shortly after this that we find the first occurrence in the writings of god parents. A person would be born again through a revelation of Christ, but however magnificent that revelation was, and however certain they were of the fact that they had met Christ, they were babes. And so the fellowship would assign to this babe in Christ parents. It ought to be that way, hadn't it? And it was in trust, the responsibility of these god parents to instruct the babe of Christ in the things of God, because after all the teaching in the church and the preaching of the Word was going to be addressed to the needs of the greatest number of people. And the instruction that would be given by the teachers could not go for the whole group, back over all of the basic principles of Christianity every time some new person was born again. This was necessary if there was to be a mature group. So the assembly would appoint god parents, someone that was probably congenial in age and temperament and background, probably in geographical locality. And it was the responsibility of these spiritual parents to nourish the babe in Christ in the

things of the Lord. And when the young convert would be presented to the elders, they didn't question him in a sense if he had not matured properly. It wasn't his fault. It was the fault of his god parents. We know if an infant is suffering from spiritual malnutrition, don't spank the baby; spank the ones responsible for the diet of the child. Deal with them. And so it was the double responsibility of the babe in Christ to study and the god parents to nourish. And I think it is necessary for something like this to be reestablished if there is to be an early maturation. So often when people are born again they come into the congregation and they are like a person trying to get on a train when it is going 50 miles an hour. They are just sort of running along behind, panting and out of breath, and only touching the ground about every quarter of a mile or so. And it isn't fair. There ought to be personal instruction. And this I believe was part of the sharing plan of the early church so that they could be nourished in the things of the Lord. We understand that.

But the point before us is that Paul was a babe. He had to be led by his hand, picturing that state of spiritual infancy by which we are brought into the Christian life. All of his learning at the University of Tarsus, all of his personal study, all of his expert knowledge of the Torah and of the Rabbinical writings, good as it might be at some future time, wasn't enough. And so they brought him into the city of Damascus, leading him by the hand, and indicating that from then on he had to be nourished, and taught, and instructed. But, the fact here is that he had to learn his relationship to the Body I said he was a very self-confident man, and probably enormously egotistical naturally. We find evidences of it as he deplores it in his writings. And so he had to learn that he was part of a body. And you know it is wonderful. I am so thrilled that the Spirit of God did it just this way.

You know, if he'd been setting it up, he'd have said, Well, since I am such a notable character in Israel, and since I have converted to Christ, certainly they ought to send down to Jerusalem for Peter and John, or at least one of the apostles to meet with one of as such importance to the whole cause as I will be. This would have been thinking, natural thinking. But isn't it marvelous how the Holy Spirit deals with us in terms of our greatest need in His most loving purpose? I am confident that in the city of Damascus there were teachers. I am confident that there were leaders, there were elders. Undoubtedly there were some well-known, well established, that God might have spoken to. But isn't it sweet, He spoke to a certain disciple. That is all we know about this man. You see, Saul of Tarsus had to learn that he was dependent upon the least of God's children, the least known, the least recognized, that everyone could make contribution to him, and the fellowship into which he was coming did not have the hierarchical structure that he was leaving. Oh, there you had the Chief Priest, and then the members of the Sanhedrin, and the Pharisees, and the lawyers. You had a whole structure. And this he was leaving. Now he is coming into an entirely new relationship, and the most important event in his Christian life, assuming he was a Christian there, the most important even in his Christian life is to be shared by a certain disciple.

And you know, the other thing is wonderful when Apollos, this very brilliant, personable, eloquent young man needed help, a certain disciples, Priscilla and Aquila, instructed him in the way more perfectly. God seems to delight to meet our need from unexpected sources, and He usually seems to find great joy in not only meeting our need, the need of which we are apparent, but needs which we may not be apparent, and there was a need that Paul had not recognized. He needed to realize that this first beginning of fellowship in the Body that everyone was important. Saul of Tarsus, notwithstanding, was utterly dependent upon a certain disciple, and that in God's economy everyone was important.

But there are some things that you must understand about Ananias, if you are to liken yourself to him. First, he was a disciple. Do you know what the word disciple means? It means a learner. And you are only a learner when you are learning, and you are only a learner when you are doing what you have been taught. And discipleship, therefore, is not a matter of membership in some organization, but it is an attitude toward the teacher. You may have been a disciple yesterday, but are you a disciple today? Is this matter of discipline a matter of current attitude toward God, or can you say, Well thank goodness, I have completed that short course from the—that correspondence course, and now I don't have to study again for another six months. Then you have six months when you are released from discipleship. The attitude of a disciple is one that is continually being taught by the teacher, and so Ananias, however long he'd been in the way, we do not know whether he was established for years, whether he was one of those at Pentecost, oh, there is much that we do not know about him; but we do know that at this time his attitude was one of utter submission to the teacher. And this is why he was usable.

Far be it from me to suggest that some of the elders, some of the leaders, some of the teachers weren't in an attitude of discipleship at the time. But the fact is that Ananias would not have been usable if he had not been in that attitude of learning, of submission to the teacher, and obedience to what he was taught. A certain disciple.

Now you may not have any greater recognition by the world, or by history than this man had. But the degree to which you will be useful to God is determined entirely not upon the past, but upon your present attitude of submission and obedience. Now let me say it again. The degree to which you are going to be useful to God tomorrow is not determined by the accomplishments of some yesterday, whether it be in school earning a degree, or whether it be in church performing work. The degree to which you are going to be useful to God tomorrow is the degree to which you approach tomorrow with the attitude of discipleship, of submission to the Heavenly Teacher, because tomorrow will of course depend upon the past, but it will also depend upon that moment—for an attitude of indifference, or of callous unconcern can keep God from using you tomorrow, using me. It is imperative, therefore, that we recognize that the attitude of discipleship isn't something that happened in the past, and we can put, and we can put a lapel button, and say, Now I am a disciple because back there I enrolled and paid my tuition, and I will learn for a little while. It is a current attitude. You see, if he had been indifferent, if he had been preoccupied, if he had been out of fellowship he never would have heard when God spoke to him. For the first thing that He did was to get his attention, Ananias.

Do you know when God is speaking to you? Are you in sufficient tune with Him, in sufficient communion with Him? that God can speak to you and say your name, and know that the Lord has something that He wants to say? How often God has to use crisis of one kind or another to interrupt us, to get us quiet enough to hear Him, and how pathetic it should be that way. Why can we not right at this juncture say, "The purpose of my heart tomorrow is to obey the Lord, to be available to the Lord, to be taught of the Lord." Why cannot we insure tonight that we are in close enough communion with Him that if He speaks your name you are going to be aware of it. Ananias was, and what of you?

The next thing that we will notice about this is that Ananias could distinguish the voice of God from the voice of His own imagination, from the voice of his own enthusiasm, from the hallucinations that might have come from some outside force, he was sufficiently grounded in his relationship with God that he could know that it was God speaking to him. I do not believe for a moment that this need be restricted to anyone. You can know the Lord well enough. But you see, the trouble with most of us is that we have not specialized in fellowship with God. We have not taken time enough with Him, so that when God speaks we know it is God speaking. We have been content to listen to others speak to us about God for so long, and we have spent so little time talking to Him, that when He speaks to us we are not quite sure that it is God, or if there is some other intrusion we cannot distinguish between the two.

Now the relationship of a man to God, called the Christian life, is a vital, personal relationship in which it is quite possible that God will speak as definitely as He did to Ananias. He knows your name, and He is able to speak to you. And there ought to be a sense in which you can recognize His voice. You know the Word well enough. You know the truth well enough that when God speaks you are in that close fellowship with Him that you can test it and be absolutely certain that it is the Lord. And the third thing is this, Ananias was instructed that his ministry in behalf of Saul should be to further relate him to the Lord Jesus, to establish him in the faith, and unite him to the fellowship. Now you can believe, therefore, that when God speaks to your heart, the effect of that is going to be to nourish the believer, to establish him in the faith, and to deepen his relationship to the fellowship, to the body of Christ. There are some certain patently clear rules here, set forth concerning the speaking voice of God. And you will understand that when Ananias heard God speak, he was prepared to recognize it was God, because of what God asked. Now if the voice that had spoken to him had said, Now I want you to go out and buy a farm, make a down payment, and then ask the church to support it, or something, why then there would have been a sense in which he would have been wrong to go out and buy a 4 story building here, and you have nothing but \$10.

You want to be awfully sure when you buy a school the way R. A. Forrest did that God is telling you to do it. Otherwise you may be stuck with 25 thousand dollars to pay. Now God led Dr. Forrest to do it. But he had been many, many years with the Lord. Many, many years with God. So when he gave the man \$10 on a 25 thousand dollar investment and said, Will you trust me? Trust me and the Lord? The man said, Well I can trust the Lord, and I'll get better acquainted with you as we go along, and I am

prepared to learn about you. We'll see. And he was able to buy that hotel and that land, and establish the School (Toccoa Falls).

But you know, if you come to me and tell me that God is doing that through you, I am going to question it very seriously. I do not mean to be skeptical. It is just that I think that you need a little practice with the Lord before you go out buying any hotels. You ought to at least have a little, a little — get your feet under you, you see. But you can be absolutely certain, when the Spirit of God says to you, Mary, John, whatever your name might be; over here is someone that I want to have established in the faith, that He is speaking, because He wants them established in the faith. And when He says to you, I want them to come into a closer, fuller relationship with Me, and then you can understand that God is speaking, because this is what He wants for His children, that they should come into a closer, fuller, relationship with Him. And then when He says, I want them to be bound more closely to the Body of believers that they will understand their place in fellowship with others in Christ. And you can be sure that the Spirit of God is speaking.

So this wasn't an unreasonable thing that God asked of Ananias. It was in accord with principles. The manner with which He is going to lead you will be in accord with these principles. Oh, it isn't the only way. But it is the general way of the Lord's direct leading. You may find for instance when you go home tonight and as you give yourself to rest, and you say, Lord, I want to be utterly available to you, the Lord may bring to mind someone, Speak your name, or even interrupt you, awaken you, and press upon your heart someone. And the first thing you are to do is to start to pray for that person, and perhaps then to seek them out and to find if there is not some way that you can minister to them and share with them their need, and then to seek to establish them in the faith, and encourage them to be more perfectly instructed and united to the Lord, and then brought into closer fellowship with the church. This is good guidance you know. This is something that you can confidently rest on. There is not any fanaticism in this at all, particular, definite, specific, but the principles are so patently clear that, however unknown you may be as a disciple, you can believe that when God burdens you in these regards, in these particulars, that your burden is from Him.

Now the next thing that is so important is that Ananias was specific in what he did. He went directly to the person whom he was instructed to help. He did it because his desire was to be useful to the Lord, and he realized that the complaint that he gave, and it was a specific complaint, and incidentally the person to whom you may be directed to may have as great a need, and as bad a background as Saul had from the Christian standpoint. But you see, when you find yourself incorporated into a ministry as for instance some of you are laboring in the afternoon Sunday School, and some young girl in your class is pressed upon your heart by the Holy Spirit, and maybe they have got a very bad home life, and a difficult background, and there is not a thing in the world to commend them to you, you know something, my dear. You'd better be faithful, because only God knows what He wants to do with that person. I have told you, and I believe it bears repeating, because you see most of God's work is done by certain disciples, not by the famous or the well-known. It is by certain disciples, unknown.

We all are acquainted with the fact that missions, as we know it, is rather recent. Oh, about 150 years is the longest. Before that time the Moravians had done a great work. There had been others, but it has been roughly say 150 years of modern missions. It was very difficult at one time for women to go to the mission field, almost impossible. And whereas I have related this before, I do it with apology; nevertheless I believe it presses the point.

There was a woman in Edinburgh, Scotland, that wanted to go to China and couldn't, desperately concerned that she should be able to be used of God in China and couldn't. And she had to work, stay home, and care for her family. But one day she was walking down the street, certain errands, responsible, on a Saturday afternoon. And as she crossed a little alleyway a little boy, 7 or 8 years of age, maybe 9, somewhere around there, dirty, ragged, disheveled hair, runny nose, dusty, muddy, dashed out, bumped into her, and because she was the larger, he fell down and lay there sobbing. She picked him up, wiped his face, and said, "What is your name, laddie?" He said, "Bobby." So, she said, "Bobby, where are you going?" "Oh, I am running. My father is a drunkard, and he has been chasing me, and I thought he was after me, but I don't see him." And she said, "Well, Bobby, do you ever go to Sunday School?" "No, ma'am, I don't." "Would you like to?" "What is it?" And she explained it to him. And so he said, "Well, I can't go. I have nothing to wear." She said, "Bobby, next Saturday you meet me right here. I can't today, but next Saturday you meet me right here, and we'll buy you some clothes so you can go to Sunday School." So she was there, and he

was there, and they bought him everything he needed. He had neither shoes, nor stockings, nor under clothing, shirt, trousers, anything. Just bought it all. And he took it home, and he came, and he came the second Sunday, and he came the third Sunday, but the fourth Sunday he didn't come. And she went looking for him. And she found him, and he scooted off like a rabbit that had been frightened. And she caught up with him, "Bobby, why are you running?" He said, "Because you will be angry with me." "Why?" "Well, my father found my clothes under the bed, and he pawned them, and he bought a drink, and I can't come to Sunday School, and they were your clothes." "Oh," she said, "that's all right, Bobby. Meet me here next Saturday, and we'll buy you another suit." And that was done. And the second time. But this time he came to her and said, "My father has found my clothes. I hid them, but he found them, and he sold them for drink." She said, "Bobby, we'll buy some more Saturday. But now we are going to keep them at my house." And so Sunday morning you come early and you clean up and put the clothes on here and go to Sunday School, and then we'll come home and take them off. And so, this was done week after week, after week. And about six, seven months after this had started, one Sunday morning Bobby came and said, "Last night I asked Jesus to save me, to come into my heart, and I've given my life to Him, and I believe that He wants me to be a missionary, and I am going to go." And so he went on, learning the Word, studying year after year. This woman, his benefactor, prayed, helped him, tutored him when he needed it, guided him in his school work. Well, the years past and she has never been known. Her name is not known. But one day in China, one night, late midnight in a little barren room, with a candle in a dish against a wooden table, with a pack of paper on it, kneeled a man, his hands folded over the paper, tears streaming down his cheek, as he is dedicating the first manuscript of the Chinese Bible. For it is the same Bobby of Edinburgh, Robert Morrison, the first missionary to China.

We do not know who it was, but we know a certain disciple, a disciple was the instrument of opening all of China to the Gospel. Just as Ananias, a certain disciple was an instrument of God in accomplishing His purpose through Saul of Tarsus.

Now I cannot guarantee that if you surrender your entire being to the Lord Jesus Christ, embrace the Cross with all its slaying, cutting edge, that you name will be in the magazines, and you will become well known. I cannot guarantee that at all, because at Pentecost you see there were 120 people in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost. But we only heard of four or five of them afterward. Peter, John, James, possibly Stephen was there, and Philip, and some of the others. But very few of the people in the Upper Room ever did anything notable, they never have gotten their names in the record, Matthew isn't mentioned again. It is surprising how few of that number ever accomplished anything. When I find some of my preacher friends making such pragmatic statements as, Well being filled with the Spirit, they ought to be successful. You know, the success God seeks for is not measured statistically. It is measured in availability. And it may be that if you are successful in just touching one little Bobby somewhere on the path, that is all God asks of you. And so the thing that we are concerned about is that you should recognize that your place is just to be a certain disciple, in utter submission, in close fellowship, walking in the fullness of the Holy Ghost, and available. We have no evidence at all that Ananias was ever sent on another errand. Oh, to be used of God, and to be content not to be, not to have it become a habit, and an obsession. To be useful, and then to wait until we are used again, and not have to create for ourselves tasks. This I submit to you is that which He is asking for, utter availability, and constant worship, constant worship. You have a task, you have a responsibility: It is to be available to the Lord for what He has for you.

Now notice something else. Ananias was the human instrument of leading Saul into a relationship with Jesus Christ which was normative to the New Testament. He had had a glorious revelation of Christ on the road to Damascus, unquestionably the Son had been revealed in him, he had been born of God. But you see he needed to be introduced to fellowship with the believers, and so this was a Body matter, a matter of the group. And Ananias represented that group. And he came to him and said, Brother Saul, you are now a part of a company of people. You are one of many. Brother Saul. And then he related to him, because the Lord had shared with him what had been done, and he said, "The Lord has sent me that thou mightiest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

Now the point I want you to see is this, that everything that had happened to Saul had, wonderful as it was, necessary as it was, had stopped short of his being filled with the Holy Ghost. Do you follow? Born of the Spirit, yes. But he was not born full of the Spirit. And so it was necessary for there to come into his life a participation with the church in which participation he should be drawn into the fullness of the Spirit. And I would submit to you, therefore, that part of your responsibility as a — just

a certain disciple is to be in a relationship that is normative in order that you can lead others into that same relationship with the Lord. For you cannot take anyone where you have not gone. If Ananias had not known the fullness of the Holy Spirit, he never could have been used to lead Saul into the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Do you follow? It was absolutely imperative that Ananias should have been where he wanted Saul to go. And he therefore had to come to Saul as one who had shared. Now this had not made him famous. This had not made him lots of things. But it had made him available to the Lord, and it made him to speak with the authority that he could do exactly what God told him to do. And after all, this is that which God asks of you. For you see, everyone that is born again, as wonderful as it is to have passed from death to life, ought early be led into a relationship of identification with Christ and the fullness of the Spirit.

I am greatly grieved that we have left this matter up to individuals. Some time, soon I hope, we will be able to return again to Biblical principles. And when people testify to repentance and faith, the eldership, the church, will feel it is their responsibility to conduct and lead such into the relationship described here as being filled with the Holy Ghost. I believe this is coming, I believe this is the way God wanted it. I do not believe that it ought to be associated with meetings, or with Summer Conferences, or with Revival Campaigns. I believe this ought to be a matter which is shared by the eldership, shared by the church. They ought to be conducted, and guided, and instructed, and led, just as you see in a chapter or so when Philip went down to Samaria and prayed for them, and Peter and John came down, instructed them, and guided this whole company of believers into that basic relationship upon which all participation in the church depends, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, all wise and useful participation.

So, Ananias was instrumental in the hands of God of initiating Saul into a relationship that was God's will and God's purpose, — and hear me, I cannot dogmatize, but I would like too — would not have been experienced by Saul apart from Ananias' participation. That it was necessary for Ananias to obey the Lord, if Saul was to be where God wanted him to be. And I believe that this speaks to the problem that we confront in the community of believers such as this, with many of you hungry for God, longing to know Him in His fullness, and whereas I cannot for a moment excuse any by saying to you that the time will come and perhaps it is nearer than we think when we shall be able as a company to share one with another, — Certainly Ananias shared Saul's need, and Saul's concern. And this I think ought to characterize believers everywhere. You ought to be concerned, of course, whether or not you know the fullness of the Holy Spirit, but you ought to be concerned that every other believer knows the fullness of the Spirit of God. This life of identification with Christ, death and burial with Him, and union with Him in His resurrection life.

Now a certain disciple. God uses the nameless saint. He uses the unknown servant, and He is quite prepared to use you if you are prepared to be used by Him. Will you see this? Will you recognize this? And will you put yourself in the way where God can?

Now let me ask you. If there were someone in New York that God wanted to reach, could he be reached through you? First, are you living in the attitude of discipleship? Utter obedience to His Word, and learning from Him? If you are not, then there is an issue here of sin that you ought to deal with tonight. You ought to deal with the thing that is standing in the way, because you know full well, if there is known disobedience to the will of God, you are not in the state of a disciple. Regardless of what you may have been last week, or the month before, brokenness, confession, and a conscience void of offence toward God are the inescapable requirements for discipleship.

Then secondly, let us allow that as far as you know, your heart tonight there is nothing standing in the way.

Are you walking the fullness of the Holy Spirit? I didn't say, "Were you filled with the Holy Spirit?" I said, "Are you walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit?" Secondly, is there in your heart tonight a concern for the spiritual maturity and wellbeing of the children of God. Someone might say, "Well, why was not Ananias out there on the street witnessing?" I think it was Vance Havner that said, "If I had a choice in a week's meeting between seeing thirty people born again and three Christians brought into a union with Christ in His death and His resurrection, releasing His resurrection life in them, I would rather spend that week with the three, for far more than the 30 would have been brought to Christ by those three in a right relationship with the Lord."

Now the question then that comes is this, are you concerned about the spiritual maturity and normal life of believers? You ought to be about yourself, and you ought to be about others. Are you? These are the prerequisites for being useful to God in the way and place He'll put you. And so the question we come to tonight is this, Are you part of the fellowship? You say, Well I'll never be a well-known teacher. I do not have the gift of teaching. I may never be a great exhorter. I do not have the gift of exhortation. I am not a preacher. What is there for me? What was there for Ananias? Obedience to the will, and plan, and purpose of God. This is for you and God will use you, and God will bless you, and through you God will bless the world, if you are willing to find His place and fill it to His glory. There is no such thing as an unimportant Christian. The only thing there are unusable Christians, not unimportant Christians. Now you determine whether you are going to be usable. If you are usable, you are important, for God has some life that He can touch through you better than anyone else He has. He could use Ananias with Saul better than anyone else He had, and He can use you with someone better than anyone else He has.

Let us bow our hearts in prayer. Our Father, we verily believe that most of Thy work is done by the unknown saints. We believe that when the records are unveiled and the books are opened, those of us that have stood in the public eye, carried responsibilities for Thee, are going to have been shown that ours was but a partial task in comparison to the unknown Ananias's that Thou hast, the Priscillas and the Aquilas, these men that are little known and little recognized, but Thou has been pleased to find them available and use them. Show us tonight, our Father, that we determine whether or not we have a ministry by our brokenness before Thee, the confession, cleansing of all that would stand in the way of using us, the embrace of the cross, our union with Him in His death, and the experience of the fullness of His Spirit, the attitude of discipleship, submission to His Word and will, the ear of our hearts tuned to hear Him speak, a great concern for the spiritual well-being and development of the saints, and a longing to see all have the best that Thou hast for them. We believe, our Father, that these are the qualifications for usefulness to Thee and we would ask that somehow the Holy Spirit would give us a measure tonight of our usefulness, of our availability, and give to us, Lord, the realization that it is infinitely better that the people that are here should go out into this needy community, each being but an Ananias, available, than that there should be some one person prominently doing the work for all the rest. Show us that this is Thy plan, the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry. This was His ministry, and something similar in Thy will and plan can be the ministry of each of us. Lord, none of us know whether the life we touch tomorrow may be the one that in Thy plan will be the instrument of deliverance to our nation and land and day and generation. Give to us sensitive hearts. Give to us that calm confidence that is, even though we are perhaps not being used at the moment, Thou hast asked for availability. And while we wait, to wait and worship, and in love and in adoration, teach us, Lord, that it is not how much we do that men see, but that it is that we do that which Thou dost seek and ask for from us. We thank Thee for each who carry a load of responsibility, daily task, hourly, weekly burdens in behalf of this church, and work, and fellowship. We are grateful for this. And we would ask for their hearts to be encouraged and strengthened in Thee. But show to us, Lord, pastor, and elders, and deacons, and teachers, that these ministries that we carry are not to be the whole of our work, but we are each to be available to touch that life that Thou wouldst reach through us when and where Thou wouldst use us. And so press upon our hearts, Lord, a concern for men, individuals, for boys, for girls, for people, not just people in a general sense, in the mass, but that lady, that young woman, that boy, that hungry hearted Christian wherever it may be found. Give to us, therefore, Lord, a personal concern for the spiritual nurture, and maturation, and development, and wellbeing of the whole household of believers. Father, we thank Thee for Thy presence. We thank Thee that in Thy plan everyone is important, and everyone has a ministry. Give to us that sense that we recognize our interdependence one upon another. We need each other. We need the gifts that Thou has given to one another, we need the abilities, and the talents, the vision, the burden, the strength of hand. We need one another. Oh, give to us an appreciation, Father, for every member of the Body of Christ, that we should all sensitively recognize that we have been bound together, members of a body, Christ the head, and each of us interdependent upon the other members of the same Body. We ask it with thanksgiving.

While our heads are bowed, while this has not been to the point of some particular invitation, but there is a particular invitation. It is this. If you have a particular need, and God has shown it to you, don't leave until you have dealt with it. This room to my right, your left, we call Wilson Chapel, is yours if you are willing to go there. We will join you and talk with you, and open the word and help you. Oh, that somehow the Spirit of God should show you this is a very practical matter, and God tonight wants you to begin being an Ananias to Him, available for whatever ministry He has. Let us stand for the Benediction.



Early give us, Father, we pray Thee a company of Spirit filled men and women who are available for all Thy purpose. Continue with us. May Thy grace and mercy and peace be and abide upon us now and until we meet again. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

\* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, November 11, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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