

A Certain Disciple

We are still in the general category of “Walking by the Spirit” for this morning. When we first began this series, I intended it to be a review for those listening who had been a part of the Advanced Class on Power for Abundant Living offered by The Way International and I knew that many of you fit into that category. But I also knew that there would be believers that would hear these sessions that had never been exposed to that class. Each teaching therefore had to be independent of the others and clear for everyone. Hopefully that has been and will continue to be the case.

When it comes to living with and for God, walking by the spirit, there may come times when God will prompt you to do something that you would never have done on your own. God can take you to completely new experiences that may be well outside of your “comfort zone”. As mature (or maturing) believers, we want to be open to that idea. You will remember that we have previously read this verse from the Gospel of John.

John 21:18

We saw God do this with Peter in Acts 10, when He got Peter to go to the home of a Gentile – something that Peter never would have done on his own. Today we are going to look at another instance where God gets someone to go outside of their comfort zone in living with and for Him. Before we read about that individual, we need some background information to set the stage.

In Acts 6, seven men of honest report and full of holy spirit and wisdom were appointed to help oversee parts of the ministry. One of these men, Stephen, did great wonders and miracles among the people. This

attracted attention from the religious leaders who were already very unhappy about this growing movement. By getting false witnesses, they were able to bring charges against Stephen to the council. Chapter 7 of Acts gives Stephen's response to these charges before the council. His response was not received well.

Acts 7:54 – 60

These verses introduce us to a young man named Saul, who made himself a real problem for the believers.

Acts 8:1 – 4

So, Saul began to really cause problems for the church. We saw in chapter 6 that these religious zealots would not hesitate to use false testimony, whatever they needed, to put a stop to the growth of the church. The rest of chapter 8 goes on to tell about Philip, another of the seven men from chapter 6. Once we get to chapter 9, we again pick up with this young man Saul.

Acts 9:1, 2

We previously read that, because of the persecution in Jerusalem, believers had gone into the regions around Judea and Samaria. Saul was not content to stay in Jerusalem causing trouble, he followed the believers into these outlying areas so that he could bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. Many years later, he was recalling his earlier days as a persecutor of the church.

Acts 22:1 – 5

Acts 26:4 – 11

So, as a follower of Jesus Christ, this man Saul was the last person you would want to knock on your door. He was nothing but trouble for the

believers, even to the point of putting them to death. Now let's go back to Acts 9 and continue the record.

Acts 9:2 – 9

Saul had quite the encounter on his way to Damascus. So, all that information sets the stage for what God is going to get a certain disciple to do.

Acts 9:10

Ananias was not an apostle. He was not one of the seven chosen in Acts 6. It doesn't say he was an elder or in any type of leadership position. But remember that we have previously read that the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man (I Corinthians 12:7). The privilege of manifesting the spirit is for every believer, not just select ones or special ones. Here, Ananias is receiving revelation, information via the new birth spirit.

Acts 9:11 – 14

Here in this record, Ananias is getting information and instructions from the Lord and Ananias is not too excited about this. Remember, we know now that this Saul of Tarsus is going to become the Apostle Paul. But all that Ananias knew was the track record of Saul of Tarsus up to this point. Understandably, Ananias does not want to go on a visitation to Saul. Ananias is being asked to do something he never would have done on his own. It is certainly outside of his comfort zone and Ananias lets the Lord know how he feels.

Acts 9:15 – 17a

Think of the courage and the trust in God that it took for Ananias to act. Given all that he knew about Saul, Ananias could be risking his life here. Certainly, it was an opportunity for doubt, worry and fear to creep in.

Instead, Ananias acts with confidence, trust and faith. He goes forward with action on the information and instructions from the Lord. That kind of trust in God doesn't just happen. It must be developed by building the Word of God into our lives. For example:

Psalm 23:3, 4

Psalm 71:1 – 4

Psalm 91:1 – 4

These verses are just an example of what may be hundreds in the Bible. We put these verses into our minds and heart to the end that we believe them and can rely on them despite any circumstances. We know that God is in us and with us in every situation. So Ananias went on his way.

Acts 9:17, 18

People read the word "baptized" and almost everyone thinks of water. And yet, water is never mentioned here. Remember Jesus' words in Acts 1, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with holy spirit". Water is never mentioned in the context of Acts 9, but being filled with holy spirit is mentioned. So, why do so many jump to the conclusion that it means water and not holy spirit?

Acts 9:19 – 22

What a turnaround for Saul and what a turning point for the Church. And it happened because God was able to get a certain disciple to do something he never would have done on his own.