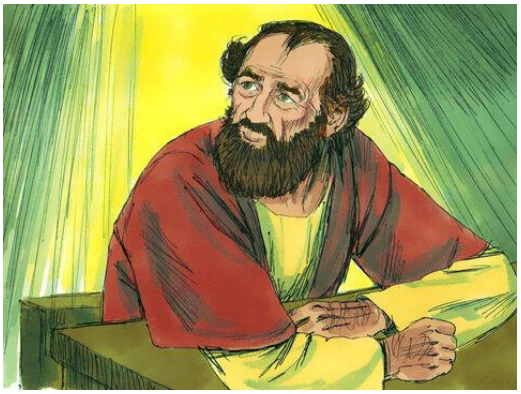
ANANIAS

ACTS 9:1-22

What terrible times! A real test of faith!

I can't believe what is happening.

Our church in Damascus was thriving, - we had good contact with our brethren in Jerusalem, and the word of Christ was evident in so many healings, the love and togetherness that all shared. But suddenly being a Christian became dangerous, so very dangerous.



The early optimism of our Christian conversion, the recognition of the presence of Christ, so many healings amongst the new disciples, suddenly overtaken by the threat of imprisonment and death. We needed one another, but admitting to our Christianity exposed us to danger. The brutal stories emerging from Jerusalem, - Stephen, dear Stephen, stoned to death.

And word soon reached us that someone called Saul had been involved at that stoning, watched it all happen, and now he was leading a crusade against all Christians, and being successful too. I hate to think how many men, women and yes even children, have been arrested, imprisoned and slaughtered! We were so glad we didn't live in Jerusalem, - but now we also were no longer safe, - Saul was coming here, to forcibly take any Christians he could find back to Jerusalem, to death. Why wasn't God protecting us? How could this evil be going on? How do we pray for those who have lost their family, are still in prison? What is awaiting?

A group of us got together, seeking and yearning to understand the words that Jesus gave us to pray: "Our Father"…. Who did this include? If He is the Father, are these murderers of Christians His children too? God their Father? This must include Saul, - But dear God, do we really have to love our enemies?? What are you seeing that we can't? How do You see us? Do I truly love God, do I love myself, as He requires?? This is the commandment Jesus gave. Is my understanding yet so shallow? We began to feel the fear they must have felt in Jerusalem, if God could not save them there, in the Holy City, what chance had we? When Saul arrives, would that be the last time we'd ever meet again?

That night I prayed with all my heart, soul and mind. I so wanted to do what was right, to loose the fear, to love.

"ANANIAS!" I heard my name, I knew it was the Lord!

"Behold. I am here, Lord". Behold, I am Your son, and I will do as You ask.

"ARISE, GO IN TO THE STREET WHICH IS CALLED STRAIGHT, AND INQUIRE IN THE HOUSE OF JUDAS FOR ONE CALLED SAUL, OF TARSUS, FOR BEHOLD HE PRAYETH, AND HATH SEEN IN A VISION A MAN NAMED ANANIAS COMING IN, AND PUTTING HIS HAND ON HIM, THAT HE MIGHT RECEIVE HIS SIGHT."

What!? Am I dreaming? In my confusion and uncertainty I responded with all my doubts: **"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."** Surely God must know all this? Yet He saith Saul is blind, and it is I that must help him, - lay my hand on him to heal and give him back his sight? Is this how to love my enemy?

"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:"

God has said to "Go thy way". I must do what HE has commanded, and I knew this was the only way forward. It wasn't for me to outline, but to obey. A thought flashed again through my reasoning, - "Love thy neighbour as thyself". Love Saul as God sees Him, as God sees me, as Jesus may well have addressed him. And what did God say further, "He is a chosen vessel", - what He has planned may not be put asunder, and I was being asked to be part of this

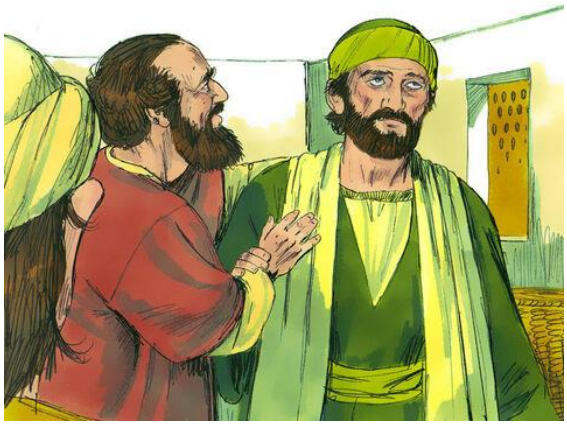
unfolding. Yes, I too am part of God's plan, so much greater than ever I could imagine. And God's name will be known among gentiles, kings, and all peoples…I felt the stirring of humility and God's holy purpose, that we all work for His names sake. God has given me instruction, and He will perform what I must do. That is my guarantee. God's words spoke on:

"FOR I WILL SHEW HIM HOW GREAT THINGS HE MUST SUFFER FOR MY NAME'S SAKE."

Not punishment, but fulfilment, not vengeance, but reward…What did God say about Saul "***Behold he prayeth***". Is this the same Saul that was so intent on betraying us? Has he so changed. Must I also change, trust God yet more?

The street and house were easy to find. It seemed well known who and where he was, - Blind Saul! The slayer of Christians! You can have him! Who would be a Christian anyway! There are other gods….

There were several people outside the house, those that knew Saul, and those that mocked at that now blind man held therein. "God, lead me as Thou wilt.." I entered, saw a man, obviously Saul, sat quietly, scales hiding his eyes. He felt my presence, looked in my direction and somehow knew to call my name, reaching out his hands to me. I felt the presence of God. I stretched out my hands and touched his. I felt him as my brother, and we were united:



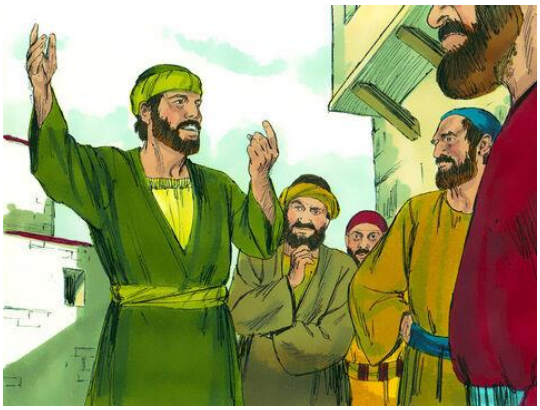
"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

Love filled the room. It was tangible. Saul stood, the scales fell, and he saw! His eyes focused on mine with awe and gratitude. In that heavenly moment we both felt our lives transformed with renewed purpose. We said nothing, just letting the intuition between us speak its volumes.

Later that day I baptised him. We were all amazed at the change that had taken place, the authority with which he spoke of Jesus Christ, his love of the brethren he had previously sought to destroy. I thought back to the stories of Jesus' own baptism, the voice from heaven "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". I saw more clearly than ever, we are *all* the beloved sons of God, we had all been chosen. I understood "Our Father"…

Since I went to Saul, I have been so blessed. I have seen the mortal dropped for the immortal. Saul stayed with us several days. His preaching of Christ was amazing, for he spoke from an inner conviction, a knowledge of Jesus that can only have been born of the Spirit of God.

The murderous intent of the Jews was unabated, but now it was them wanting to kill Saul, a man so clearly empowered by his faith in God, his allegiance with the Christ. It renewed our faith. His reflection of Love became our reflection of Love. Christianity spread widely, and this man who I had baptised was like the breath of Spirit spreading, and I could see it reaching across even to mighty Rome.



One Father, one infinite Love, - that was the answer!

Behold what one man can do when Love leads!

I had heard God call my name. Love is calling yours.

©KenCooper2022