

# PAUL

## A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

### STUDY THREE

## The Memorable Faith of a Forgotten Hero

*Acts 9:10–22*

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*There are thousands of forgotten heroes in the church. Thousands still doing heroic things, like an iceberg under the surface, not known by the great majority of us but faithfully doing their work . . . right where God wants them . . . doing what God wants them to do.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**S**AUL of Tarsus wasn't the only one the Lord visited unexpectedly. There was another—a faithful follower of Jesus named Ananias.

Like all the believers in Damascus, Ananias heard about Saul's violent background and his hatred toward Christians. No doubt, accounts of Saul arresting Christians, even "hounding some to death" (Acts 22:4), had spread through the church. Now, this violent persecutor was coming to Damascus! A thunderhead of impending persecution gathered over the city as Saul's fury was about to strike.

Then, surprisingly, the Lord commanded Ananias in a vision to find Saul and minister to him. How could that be? A shock of panic must have jolted Ananias' soul.

What would you do if God told you to seek out a treacherous enemy who was hunting you? Would you double lock your door in fear and refuse to go? Or would you venture into the storm, offering yourself to serve the Lord even if it meant imprisonment and death?

Ananias doesn't usually come to mind as a hero of the church. He's mostly forgotten to most Christians, but his role was crucial during Saul's first unsteady steps as a Christ-follower. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, let's explore what happened to Ananias and see how this common guy displayed uncommon faith, becoming one of the church's least-remembered but most-admirable heroes.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

God calls us to engage in situations that require feats of faith. Fear of risk creeps in to weaken us and paralyze us. Have you ever found (or do you now find) yourself in a spot like that? As you prepare your heart to engage God's Word, let David's prayer of trust in Psalm 56:3–4 be your own.

*But when I am afraid,  
I will put my trust in you.  
I praise God for what he has promised.  
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?  
What can mere mortals do to me?*



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Having just seen Jesus in a dramatic vision, Saul was spiritually humbled and physically blinded. His companions led Saul by hand into Damascus. How long was Saul blind, and what did he do for that period according to [Acts 9:9](#)?

What parallel event occurred in [9:10](#), and to whom did it occur?

Very little is stated in the Scriptures about Ananias. His life was abruptly interrupted with a vision of his own just like Saul's. So we pick up the story with two believers—one hungry for divine direction and the other receiving direction he's not so sure is divine.



## Observation: “But Lord, I’ve Heard . . .”

Solid observation requires careful reading.<sup>1</sup> Who speaks, what is said, and how much space each speech is given display emphasis. Trace the conversation slowly and try to get a sense of the emotion behind the words.

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As Saul awaited instruction, the Lord broke into Ananias' world. Read [Acts 9:10–22](#). According to 9:10, was Ananias receptive or unreceptive to the vision? In 9:11–12, what command did God give to Ananias, and what assurance accompanied His command?

Ananias quickly contended with the Lord. In 9:13–14, what two arguments did he use to question God's instruction? What do you think caused Ananias' initial lack of faith?

*Fix this message really clearly in your mind. Ananias is a Christian. Saul kills Christians. Ananias has been given a vision. He wonders, Can I trust it?*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

God then reissued His command for Ananias to “Go.” While that charge may have been enough, God provided Ananias with additional details. According to 9:15, what did the Lord reveal about Saul? Whom was Saul going to preach to?

Perhaps surprisingly, the Lord provided Ananias with a sneak peek into Saul's future. In 9:16, what was revealed?

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Acts 9:17–19 are crucial verses in the narrative. What did Ananias do—and notice what he immediately called Saul—and what does that act reveal about his faith? What happened to Saul? Note any observations that stand out to you or that you might want to explore for deeper understanding in the Interpretation section.

Summarize what occurred in 9:20–22. Who are the key people, and why are they featured in these verses? What echoes of Ananias' initial reaction to the Lord's command do you hear in the people's reactions?

*One of the forgotten heroes of the Christian church is Ananias. There are thousands like him. Thousands still doing heroic things, like an iceberg under the surface, not known by the great majority of us but faithfully doing their work. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Interpretation: From Persecutor to Proclaimer

Saul's seismic transformation propelled him as a juggernaut *for* the Messiah and *for* the church. Our passage carries several concepts worthy of deeper study. Return to [Acts 9:15–16](#). The Lord clarified to Ananias that Saul was God's chosen instrument. Consult a Bible commentary, like the free *IVP New Testament Commentary on Acts* at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com). Consult the article, "[Saul the Chosen Vessel](#)," to understand the significance of God choosing Saul as His instrument. Record insights you uncover.

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Shortly after his conversion and immediately after his eyesight was restored, Saul was baptized, according to [Acts 9:18](#). Take a fresh look at baptism by reviewing an article on baptism in a Bible dictionary, such as [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) or the [Holman Bible Dictionary](#) at [studylight.org](#). Record key points you hadn't realized before.

In what way did Saul keep “confounding” the Jews (Acts 9:22 NASB)? Consult [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#) for further explanation. Why is it significant that this was Paul's new message?

*It's great how the Lord used the brilliance of a mind like Saul's. As the enemy once owned that mind, now the Lord has it and is transforming his message.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

God used Ananias' heroic faith to help transform Saul of Tarsus into Paul the apostle. Reflect on Ananias' conversation with the Lord—his initial reluctance and eventual obedience—and record any inspiration or instruction his example offers to you.



## **Correlation: Maturation Through Suffering and Seasoning**

It was approximately AD 35 when Saul met Christ on the Damascus Road and launched his gospel ministry. While he was already trained in all aspects of Judaism, Saul needed maturing in the faith which only suffering and seasoning, as designed by God, could perfect. According to [Acts 9:16](#), God gave Ananias a sneak peek into the suffering that lay ahead for Saul.

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Fast forward to AD 55. Paul, now a seasoned apostle, was writing to the church at Corinth attempting to persuade them of his authenticity. His suffering proved his office. Turn to [2 Corinthians 11:23–28](#) where he detailed what he had been through. Record each of the ways in which Paul suffered for Christ. What is the role of suffering in service to the gospel?

*“I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake. . . .” God said it straight. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Application: Obeying like Ananias

We can learn much from the life of Ananias. His faithful obedience to the Lord’s direction merits our attention and our gratitude. Ananias’ obedience profoundly impacted Saul . . . who then profoundly impacted the world for Christ. Four key principles emerge from Ananias’ encounter with God.

1. *Surprises are always part of God’s leading.* That was certainly true in the lives of both Saul and Ananias. Neither had an inkling of what God was about to do.
2. *Surprises always intensify the need for faith.* Ananias chose faith in a trustworthy God to overcome his fear.
3. *Stepping out in faith always results in further clarification of God’s unfolding plan.* Only when Ananias and Saul took that first step of obedience did the Lord reveal what was next . . . and next.
4. *Obedience always stimulates spiritual growth.* Ananias’ obedience was rewarded through Saul’s miraculous healing and transformation.

Where do these principles find you? Is one of them especially relevant to you right now? How so? How is the Spirit leading you to trust in His plan and risk walking in faith?

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Did you have an Ananias who played a role in your conversion experience—or in your growth as a believer? Spend a few moments reflecting on how God worked in your life through an Ananias.

Have you been, or how can you now be, an Ananias in the life of a loved one or of a friend? What might that encounter entail? What words, encouragement, or challenge do they need?

*You might be the Ananias, the courageous messenger, who, against his own wishes and will, obeyed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## A FINAL PRAYER

Close your study by making Jude 1:24–25 your prayer to God.

*Now all glory to God, who is able to keep me from falling away and will bring me with great joy into Your glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to You who alone is God, my Savior through Jesus Christ my Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.*

## ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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