

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?...

A Video Bible Study Series

(John 6:68, NIV)

EPISODE 2 – ACTS OF COURAGE

HOLY SPIRIT – THE FLAME WITHIN ME SERIES (ACTS 9:1-27)

- Just before Jesus was taken up into heaven, He told His disciples in **Acts 1:8**; *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will tell people about me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria. And you will even tell other people about me from one end of the earth to the other.”*
- It was ten days later that Jesus’ disciples were together and a sound like a strong wind filled the whole house. As Jesus promised, something that looked like flames of fire came to rest on each of them, filling them with the Holy Spirit.
- The disciples began to speak in other languages. Jews from many other countries were staying in Jerusalem and they were amazed, to hear the disciples speaking in their native languages.
- Then Peter stood up and spoke to the crowd. Peter told them about Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and the promise God made to David of the coming Messiah. He told them that the people of Israel had nailed Jesus to the cross.
- When the people heard this, they were filled with shame. They asked them, *“What should we do?”*
- Peter replied, *“All of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then your sins will be forgiven. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*



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- Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized. Around 3,000 people joined the believers that day!
- For our benefit, the early believers did not keep the Good News a secret. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and He gave them the power and ability to be bold and tell others! Quickly the Lord brought more and more people into their community.
- But not everyone accepted the Good News, and our story in this episode is about one such man. Saul was a Pharisee who believed in God and he followed the Jewish law. But he didn't have the Holy Spirit and so he did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised Savior.
- He thought Jesus was a rebel and a blasphemer. A blasphemer was someone who claimed to be God. Saul believed someone like Jesus needed to be crucified.
- Saul participated in the persecution of a Christ follower named Stephen who was stoned to death. Saul didn't stop there. He planned to arrest even more of Jesus' disciples. He asked the priests for letters to the synagogues in Damascus. He wanted permission to arrest the followers of Jesus.
- Saul wanted to eliminate all of Jesus' followers because he believed they were all rebels. It was his beliefs that was driving Saul to arrest the disciples and so they were afraid of him.
- Yet, God still had a plan for Saul. God's Holy Spirit would change Saul, and then He would use him to spread the Good News. Saul would spread the Word about Jesus to people who were both Jewish and Gentiles. Anyone who was not Jewish was considered a Gentile.
- God also had plans for Jesus' followers. They were afraid of Saul, but they had all received the Holy Spirit. Even though they were afraid, the Holy Spirit would give them courage to help Saul while God transformed him into a man that would live his life advancing the Great Commission.

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- There is a Bible passage in **Matthew 28:19-20** that was later described as “The Great Commission.” That passage reads, *“So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am with you always, to the very end.”*
- This would later become Saul’s mission! But, before that happened, Saul received the letters he asked for from the high priest and now he had permission to hunt down the followers of Jesus in Damascus and arrest them.
- Saul was on his way to Damascus, when a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him, and he fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying, *“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”*
- Saul asked, *“Who are you, Lord?”* The voice replied, *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do.”*
- The men traveling with Saul were speechless. They heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up, but when he opened his eyes, he could not see anything. The men led Saul by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything.
- In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision. *“Ananias!”* *“Yes, Lord,”* Ananias replied.
- The Lord instructed Ananias, *“Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man named Saul. He is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”*
- Do you think Ananias was afraid? He certainly was. *“Lord,”* Ananias answered, *“This man has harmed your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”*
- But the Lord said to Ananias, *“Go! I have chosen Saul to proclaim my Name not only to Jews but Gentiles and their kings. I will also show him how much he must suffer for me.”*

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- Ananias went to the house. He placed his hands on Saul and said to him, *“Brother Saul, Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”*
- Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see. Saul got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Not only did Saul receive his sight back, but he also received the Holy Spirit.
- Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. These were the very people he had come to arrest. Not only did Ananias need courage to go see Saul, but the other disciples living in Damascus needed courage to spend several days with him.
- Saul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. Those listening were astonished and asked, *“Isn’t he the man who caused so much trouble for Christians in Jerusalem, and came here to arrest them?”* Saul powerfully explained to them that Jesus is the Messiah.
- A few days later some Jews who were against Jesus plotted to kill Saul. They kept watch at the city gates hoping to kill him. But Saul learned of their plans. Saul’s followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall so he could escape.
- It would be later that Saul would become known as Paul. Paul was his Roman name. Most scholars credit Paul for writing the letters that make up at least 13 of the books of the New Testament. It is also believed that he planted at least 14 churches, and probably many more.
- He wrote in **2 Timothy 3:16**; *“God has breathed life into all Scripture. It is useful for teaching us what is true. It is useful for correcting our mistakes. It is useful for making our lives whole again. It is useful for training us to do what is right.”*
- The letters Paul wrote has changed the lives of many believers and they still do today. Saul, who was later Paul, wanted to kill followers of Jesus, but God had another plan. The Holy Spirit transformed Paul and gave him the power to do mighty things for God.

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- Ananias wasn't a famous person. He wasn't an apostle, a prophet, a pastor, an evangelist, an elder, or a deacon. He was an ordinary person just like you and me. Still, God used Ananias because God loves to use everyday people. He wants to use all of us!
- There were also other unnamed disciples that God used to help grow Saul's faith. They also helped him escape certain death. Ananias and these unnamed disciples all needed great courage and the Holy Spirit helped them overcome their fear.
- Like Paul and Ananias, God has a purpose for all of us. And like the disciples, He has given us the Holy Spirit too. The Holy Spirit is in us to help us accomplish the mission God has for us.
- The Holy Spirit will help us understand God's Word and His plan for our lives and provide the spiritual gifts and power to carry out His plan.
- Like the early believers, the Holy Spirit will lead us to a community of believers who will help strengthen our faith. Together we challenge each other and keep one another accountable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who gave Peter the courage to speak to the crowd about Jesus?

- It was the Holy Spirit.

2. Why did Ananias go visit with Saul?

- The Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision and told him to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man named Saul. He was to place his hands on him to restore his sight.

3. What reasons did Ananias have to be afraid of Saul?

- Saul harmed Jesus' followers in Jerusalem. He also got letters from the chief priests to arrest anyone who called on the name of Jesus.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

4. Where did the power come from to heal Saul when Ananias laid his hands on him?

- The Holy Spirit!

5. How was Saul able to preach about Jesus and the Good News so soon after being converted?

- Saul had the Holy Spirit living in him and he was knowledgeable in Jewish law. He was also helped by Ananias and the other disciples in Damascus.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS

1. What are some reasons we are afraid to tell others about Jesus?

- We might be afraid others will make fun of us or reject us for our faith. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you courage to share the Good News with others, just like Ananias did.

2. What can you do to allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life?

- God wants to speak with you. Talk to Him in prayer. It is important to tell God you are sorry for the things you do wrong and let Him know you will stop doing them. Bring Him your joys and struggles.
- Spend time reading the Bible which is His Word. You can watch video Bible lessons, and you can be part of a Friendship group. Be part of a group of believers.