

Devotion, Week of October 4, 2026

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We just looked at the conversion of Saul in Sunday School this past week. You know this story. Saul was as zealous a Jew as could be found. He studied under Gamaliel, the foremost Rabbi of the time, and he persecuted followers of "The Way," including having these early Christians beaten, imprisoned, and killed. He was on his way to Damascus with a letter from the High Priest to find other followers there and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

And then a miracle happened. On the road, he was blinded by a great light, and Jesus asked him why he was persecuting him. Saul asks what he is to do, and Jesus tells him to go on to Damascus and he would be given instructions. What is interesting is what happens there. Ananias, a very devout Jew, NOT an early Christian, comes and tells Saul his sight is restored. Then he says, "The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear his own voice, for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. and now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name."

This is really interesting. A devout Jew, well thought of in Damascus, gives Saul his commission – not to be a devout Jew persecuting Christians, but to become a follower of Jesus and spread the gospel to all the world. Ananias says God chose Saul to see and hear Jesus' voice and to be a witness. Saul is baptized and begins his call as a witness to Jesus and an organizer of churches throughout Asia Minor.

We don't ever hear of Ananias again. Did he become a believer also? Did he get baptized? It seems like he would have, if he considered the message he received from God about the Righteous One to be authentic. I'd like to think that Ananias helped found a Christian community in Damascus. Regardless, he was certainly chosen by God as a devout Jew to bring the Good News to another devout Jew. This would have seemed an authentic message from God, if Ananias delivered it to Saul. It is amazing that God chose these two special Jewish people to begin the mission to the people around them, including Gentiles, of a savior who loved them enough to die for them. God chooses people we don't expect to do astounding things. So he can choose us to do astounding things too. What a gracious gift.

Jeanne