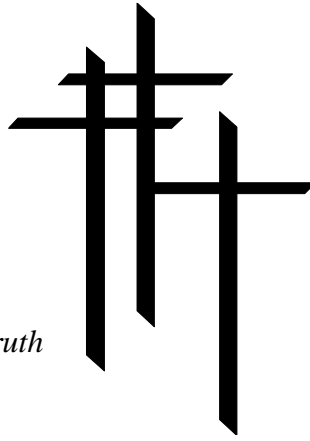


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



Volume 64 No. 11

November 2004

USEFUL FOR THE MASTER

By Gregg Bing

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

Believers are called to be servants of God; vessels that He can use. In 2 Timothy, Paul compares us to actual serving vessels

in a house. Some are vessels unto honor and some unto dishonor. Our desire, as believers, is that we would be vessels that bring honor to the Lord. If we are to be this type of vessel, there are several requirements. We must first be sanctified. The word means “set apart.” Believers are to be set apart for the Lord’s use, thus we are to be set apart from sin and the world. We must be kept clean so that we are fit for the Master’s use. Finally, we must be prepared for every good work. We are not saved by our good

works, but once we are saved, we are to walk in the good works that God has prepared for us (Eph. 2:8-10), and we must be prepared by Him to do these works (2 Tim. 3:17).

How can we become vessels unto honor, vessels that are useful for the Master? Let’s look at an example of a man who was just such a vessel; a man who served God and brought honor to Him. We find his service recorded in Acts chapter 9. No, not the Apostle Paul, though he was greatly used of God. Our focus will be on a man named Ananias, who was not an apostle, a pastor, or a prophet, as far as we know, but was simply what many would call an ordinary man. Yet, God chose to use this man to minister to the needs of Saul of Tarsus, the man who would later be known as the Apostle Paul.

All we know of Ananias we find in only two chapters in Scripture: Acts 9 and Acts 22. As we examine the life of Ananias from these passages, we find three qualities that make for a useful servant

of the Lord: the character of a servant, the preparation of a servant, and the work of a servant.

Character of a Servant

Ananias is described in Acts 9:10 as a disciple, no doubt a disciple of the Lord. The word “disciple” means a learner or a student. Ananias was a student of the Lord Jesus. Whether he actually heard Jesus’ teaching while He was here on earth is not really the issue. Ananias learned of Him. He knew the Lord Jesus, personally, and he knew His Word. This knowledge is what transforms believers into servants. The Word of God and our personal relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ, is what gives us the type of character traits that God can use.

The Apostle Paul was led of the Spirit to describe Ananias as

“... a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there.” (Acts 22:12)

Ananias was a devout Jew who lived in Damascus. The word “devout” speaks of someone whose attitude toward God is one of sacred fear or reverence; one who is devoted to God and whose devotion to God is demonstrated by their actions. If we truly want to serve the Lord, we must have a genuine reverence for God. We must stand in awe of Him. We must spend time feeding on His Word that we may grow in our knowledge of Him. As we grow, our devotion to Him grows, and we become more like Him in our thoughts, words and deeds.

However, our devotion to God must be in accordance with God’s revealed will as found in His Word. In Ananias’ case, his devotion to God was in accordance with the Mosaic law, which, at that time, was God’s will for their lives; the basis for the Jews’ worship and walk. Having received no new revelation from God, they still observed the feast days, practiced circumcision, kept the Sabbaths, and worshipped in the temple (cf. Acts 2:1,46). Ananias was effec-

tive in serving the Lord because he was obedient to God’s will for his life.

Today, we live in a different dispensation, that of the grace of God. Since the time of Ananias, God has given further revelation. Today, we are to be devoted to God according to the revelation of the truth of the mystery that God made known through His apostle, Paul. The mystery revealed to Paul contains God’s will for believers today who are part of His church, the body of Christ. If we are to be effective in our service for the Lord today, we, too, must be devoted to Him, according to this new revelation of His will.

We also read that Ananias had a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt in Damascus. The expression “good testimony” may be understood in two ways. First, Ananias had a good reputation among the Jews. When people spoke of him, he received a good report or testimony. Second, Ananias bore a good testimony among the Jews; a testimony for the Lord Je-

sus. It is significant that it speaks of his good testimony among “all the Jews.” This includes not only believing Jews, but unbelieving Jews also. This is an important quality for a servant of the Lord. When Paul wrote Timothy about the requirements for leaders in the local church, he specified:

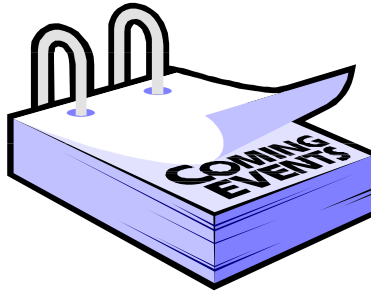
“Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Tim. 3:1)

We read in Philippians 2:15-16 that believers are to:

“... become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast (forth) the word of life ...”

Ananias was just such a

(Continued on page 4)



WINTER YOUTH RETREAT

Dec. 30 — Jan. 1

WHO? This retreat is for young people, ages 13 through college age.

WHERE? The retreat will be held at Three Mountain Retreat near Clifton, Texas. They have wonderful facilities, good home cooking, and horseback riding.

WHY? The focus of this retreat is Bible study and Christian fun and fellowship. The theme this year will be “*Matters of the Heart—A Biblical View of Love, Dating, Marriage, and Sex.*”

HOW? A registration form is included in this issue and will be next month as well. Fill out the form and return it to us in the mail.

Timely Messenger

Published monthly by:

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

1450 Oak Hill Road
Fort Worth, TX 76112-3017
(817) 451-0937

Website:
www.gracebiblechurch-fw.com
Email: gbcfw@juno.com

Gregg Bing — Editor

Sent **free** to anyone upon request. If you live in the Fort Worth area, we invite you to worship with us.

Sunday Services:

10:00 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Morning Worship
6:00 PM Evening Worship

Mid-Week Services:

Tues. 10:00 AM Ladies Class
Wed. 7:00 PM Bible Study

ADDRESS CHANGED?

If so, please notify Grace Bible Church. Be sure to include your name, your old address, and your new address. This will help us keep our mailing list current and reduce the cost of postage.

*Thanks for your help
in this matter!*

(Continued from page 3)

man and, therefore, a man that God could use in His service. If we would be useful in our service for the Lord, we must have this same type of good testimony among all people.

Preparation of a Servant

Saul of Tarsus was struck down on the road to Damascus by a blinding light from heaven. The Lord Jesus confronted him and humbled him as Saul came to see that the One he had been persecuting, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Lord of glory. Saul stood upon his feet, but he was blind. He was led into Damascus where he spent the next three days fasting and praying. As Saul prayed, the Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision and called his name, "Ananias." Ananias answered with the simple words, "Here I am, Lord."

When God called him, Ananias' words indicated his desire to serve. First, Ananias presented himself to the Lord, saying, "Here I am." He placed himself at the Lord's disposal. He

also took his position as a humble servant, calling Him, "Lord." Ananias' response to God's call reminds us of Samuel, who answered God's call with "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Sam. 3:10) or of Isaiah, who answered God's need with "Here am I! Send me" (Isaiah 6:8). Is this your attitude toward serving God? Are you ready to serve Him, wherever He sends you?

However, Ananias was probably not expecting what God was about to ask him to do. For the Lord said to him,

"Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hands on him, so that he might receive his sight." (Acts 9:11-12)

No doubt, this was a great shock to Ananias, to hear God directing him to go and help Saul of Tarsus, a man whose terrible repu-

tation preceded him. Saul was, after all, the chief persecutor of the church, of all those who were believers in the Lord Jesus. Yet, the Lord spoke of Saul as blinded, and praying, and receiving visions from the Lord. Ananias' first response was probably one of fear. Even men and women of faith are still human and still affected by their sin natures. This may be why Ananias initially responded to the Lord by saying,

"Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." (Acts 9:13-14)

Ananias questioned the Lord about this man, for he had heard many reports of Saul's persecution of believers in Jerusalem: entering houses and synagogues and forcing people to blaspheme the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, binding both men and women and committing them to prison, even voting to put believers

to death because of their testimony for Christ. Ananias knew why Saul was in Damascus, that he had letters from the chief priest giving him authority to bind believers there as well and to take them back in chains to Jerusalem.

But God calmed Ananias' fears by assuring him,

“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15-16)

The Lord told Ananias three things about Saul that assured him and calmed his fears. First, Saul was a chosen vessel of the Lord. Saul now belonged to the Lord. He was a child of God which only happens when a person trusts in the Lord Jesus. Not only that, but God had chosen Saul to be a vessel for His service. Second, the Lord already had a specific commission for Saul, “to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and

the children of Israel.” What an amazing change God had worked in this man’s life. This one who had previously persecuted all who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus, would now bear that very same name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Ananias may not have understood Saul being called to go to the Gentiles, but he knew that this was God’s commission for Saul. Third, Saul was not only to bear the Lord’s name to many, he would also suffer many things for this precious name. This shows how much conviction Saul would bring to his service for the Lord.

Ananias was now ready to carry out this service for the Lord. He had the desire to serve God and now he had carefully listened to God’s directions for his service. He was prepared to do this work for God.

The Work of a Servant

Upon receiving directions from the Lord, we read that

“Ananias went his way

and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.” (Acts 9:17-10)

The first thing we notice in this passage is the manner in which Ananias carried out the work God called him to do. When the Lord said, “Go,” Ananias obeyed and “went,” trusting in the Lord to work things out according to His own good pleasure. Also note that when Ananias entered the house, he addressed Saul as “Brother Saul.” Think how much this must have meant to Saul, who had spent the last three days fasting and

praying. During this time, Saul must have experienced feelings of guilt, doubt, and questions. Guilt for the things he had done against the Lord and His saints. Doubts as to whether he would ever be accepted by anyone, either the Jewish leaders he worked with or the saints of the Lord, whom he had persecuted. Questions as to how God could ever use a man like him. When Ananias, a disciple of the Lord, called him “brother,” it must have been a great comfort to him.

Ananias then acknowledged that he had come because the Lord Jesus had sent him. He humbly gave the Lord the preeminence, not taking any credit or glory for himself. He also demonstrated his courage and boldness in calling Jesus “Lord.” Ananias knew that Saul still had letters from the chief priest giving him authority to bind any he found who were believers in the Lord Jesus. By calling Jesus “Lord,” Ananias plainly declared he was a believer, and, therefore, put himself at risk of being taken away.

Ananias did not hesitate to acknowledge he was a believer because he trusted what the Lord told him about Saul’s future.

Ananias then communicated the words God had given him to declare to Saul, saying:

“The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.”

This is one of the most important aspects of our service for the Lord, sharing His Word with others. We often find believers are reluctant to do this, either out of fear or shame. Paul encouraged Timothy in this area of his service telling him:

“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.” (2 Tim. 2:6-8)

Ananias was not ashamed of the Lord and boldly testified for Him to this man who had previously persecuted the church of God. He clearly was relying upon the Spirit and power of God.

Ananias then laid his hands on Saul, who immediately received his sight, then he asked Saul, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Remember that when Saul was saved, this was still God’s requirement for these Jews, that they “repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). So, through the ministry of Ananias, Saul was told of God’s will for his

life, received his sight, was baptized, and received the Holy Spirit.

When we think of people who were “useful for the Master,” men who were vessels unto honor, we often think of men such as the Apostle Paul, who has such a prominent place in Scripture. We need to take note of the important ministry of ordinary men, such as Ananias, who was not a leader, apostle, pastor, or teacher, but who still served God by knowing His will, sharing His Word, and carrying out His work.

God desires to use each of us as well. Are you “useful for the Master?” Are you a vessel that is being used to bring honor to the Lord? You can be, just like Ananias, if you devote yourself to the Lord so He can develop the proper character in you; if you are willing to serve the Lord and seek to know His directions for your life and service; and if you faithfully carry out the work God calls you to do, not in your own power, but in accordance with His great power which works in us.

Poet's Corner

THIS I KNOW

I do not know what next may come,
Across my pilgrim way.
I do not know tomorrow's road,
Nor see beyond today;
But this I know—My Saviour knows
The path I cannot see.
And I can trust His wonderful hand
To guide and care for me.

I do not know what may befall
Of sunshine or of rain,
I do not know what may be mine
Of pleasure or of pain;
But this I know—My Saviour knows
And whatsoever it be,
Still I can trust His love to give
What will be best for me.

I do not know what may await
Or what the morrow brings.
But with glad salute of faith
I hail its opening wings.
For this I know—that in my Lord
Shall all my needs be met.
And I can trust the heart of Him
Who has not failed me yet.

—Author Unknown

BIBLE STUDY BOOKS

The following Bible study materials are available free of charge for your personal use or for use in teaching a Bible class.

by Charles Wages

- Written for Our Learning
- Stepping Stones to Truth
- Past Pentecost to Paul
- Points to Ponder
- The Ages
- Saved by Grace
- Ministry of the Church
- The Perfect Will of God
- Once in a Lifetime
- Fellowship in Christ
- Hidden in God
- Thoughts on Vision
- Spiritual Fitness
- What Saith the Scripture
(Set of 6 Diff. Tracts)

by Mrs. Charles Wages

- Seasons
- Spiritual Thoughts for Young Minds
- A Man Named Paul
- Studies for Women

by R.B. Shiflet

- Informal Study: Philippians
- Informal Study: Ephesians
- Personal Meditations on Paul's Post-Acts Ministry
- Giving Under Grace
- Ultradispensationalism
- The Lord's Supper

by Ike T. Sidebottom

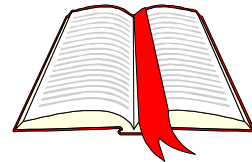
- The Book of Acts
- Through the Bible Dispensationally
- Prophetic Gleanings from Daniel and Revelation
- Saved, Settled and Sure
- Fellowship of the Mystery

by Gregg Bing

- Keys to the Word : Understanding the Bible
- That I May Know Him
- Making Good Choices
- For God So Loved the World
- It is Finished!
- Conformed to the Image of His Son
- The End of the World
- Assurance : Can We Know that We are Saved?

by John D. LaVier

- Yokefellows : Paul and His Companions
- Sure Words of Prophecy
- The Lord has Spoken
- Why is Heaven Silent?



GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

1450 Oak Hill Road
Fort Worth, TX 76112-3017

NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FORT WORTH, TEXAS
PERMIT NO. 480

