

46 Unsung Heroes

One of the many precious features of the New Testament is the presence of a long list of "unsung heroes" within its pages. These are Christian men and women, our brothers and sisters in Christ, who just "get a mention" in passing, and then we never hear of them again.

Think of all the people mentioned by Paul in the closing pages of his various epistles. And let us think this time in particular about dear Ananias, in Acts Chapter 9 - a classic unsung hero.

We are told very little about Ananias - be it how and when he came to put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or anything about his age or character or family or employment.

But here he is, living quietly and faithfully as a Christian believer in Damascus (a reminder incidentally, in these horrible times for Syria, that there has been a Christian presence in that city since the earliest days of the Christian Church).

We can presume that his daily life was pretty normal, a round of routines and tasks and kindnesses along the way, and for all Ananias knew, that was the way things were going to remain.

Yet one day, suddenly, right out of the proverbial "blue", everything changed! The Lord met Ananias in a vision (Acts 9.10). He told this obscure, ordinary faithful sheep of Christ to find the dreaded Saul of Tarsus, and lay hands on him to restore his sight (vv 11-12).

No wonder Ananias checked out this instruction! For he had already heard of Saul's impending visit to the city, and the purposes of that visit (vv 13-14). But the Lord was having none of it - "Go on Ananias, stop fussing and do as I say!".

And dear, amazing Ananias did just that. He found Judas' house (Judas presumably being another sworn enemy of the Christians), and found himself face to face with Saul himself.

There then comes one of the most gracious and remarkable greetings in the whole of Scripture - "**Brother** Saul". Gone is any fear, suspicion or loathing, to be replaced by this act of extraordinary Christian love, born from simple obedience to the Lord's words. Ananias' hands are laid on poor Saul, in all his guilt and inner turmoil. His sight is restored, he is filled with the Holy Spirit, and is baptised.

The spotlight swings immediately on to Saul of Tarsus from then on, with good reason. And Ananias? - he slips away into obscurity once more. He would never forget that day when the Lord used him for this precious, vital task.

Ananias was seen and known by the Lord long before this momentous encounter, and the Lord knew him to be a faithful disciple, attentive, alert, ready, and responsive to His call. His trust in Ananias was well-founded.

And then, when back into obscurity, the Lord still saw and knew and valued this dear man - "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10.30).

What an encouragement for us! Ananias would be taken aback to be called an "unsung hero" - he was just serving his Lord - but we can see with hindsight that that is just what he is.

Our calling, as we worship and serve the same Lord as did Ananias and Saul of Tarsus, is to be just the same: Christ's faithful sheep getting quietly on with the tasks of discipleship, while ever-alert and ready to respond to the Lord's special call.

What a privilege. What responsibility!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you (I Corinthians 16.23).

© 2013 Faithful Sheep Ministries - www.fsmins.org