



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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Welcome, everyone to today's sermon. The sermon today is titled, "Afraid to Witness?". Today's scripture lesson comes from Acts Chapter 9 verses 10 to 24. Starting at verse 10.

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias!”, “Here I am, Lord!” he said.

“Get up and go to the street called Straight,” the Lord said to him, “to the house of Judas, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, since he is praying there. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and placing his hands on him so he can regain his sight.”

“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And he has authority here from the chief priests to arrest all who call on Your name.”

But the Lord said to him, “Go! For this man is My chosen instrument to take My name to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. I will show him how much he must suffer for My name!”

So Ananias left and entered the house. Then he placed his hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so that you can regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

At once something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. And after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul was with the disciples in Damascus for some days.
Immediately he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: "He is the Son of God."

But all who heard him were astounded and said, "Isn't this the man who, in Jerusalem, was destroying those who called on this name and then came here for the purpose of taking them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

But Saul grew more capable and kept confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that this One is the Messiah.

After many days had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him,
but their plot became known to Saul. So they were watching the gates day and night intending to kill him.

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

Good morning, beloved family of God.

Can I be honest with you for a moment? There is a quiet, unspoken struggle that many of us carry in our hearts. It is not a struggle with doubt about God's existence, nor a lack of desire to serve Him. It is this... we know, deep in our spirits, that God has called us to share our faith, to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to those who do not yet know Him.
And yet, the very thought of opening our mouths to speak about the Savior ties our stomachs in knots. We feel awkward, inadequate, exposed.

You are not alone. This morning, I want to take you to the book of Acts, chapter 9, where we meet a man who felt exactly the same way. His name was Ananias.
And God asked him to do something terrifying: go and speak to the most dangerous enemy of the church in that day—a man named Saul of Tarsus.
As we look at his story, I pray the Holy Spirit will untie those knots and set you free to be the witness God has called you to be.

Point 1... Being Afraid to Witness Is "Normal".

Let's be real. When God told Ananias to go to Saul, Ananias was afraid. And who wouldn't be? This was the man who was breathing out murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord.
He had letters from the high priest authorizing him to arrest Christians and drag them off to prison. If there was anyone on earth you would not want to witness to, it was Saul of Tarsus.

But here is something you need to understand: it does not have to be another Saul to cause us fear. For many of us, the fear comes when we think about witnessing to the people we know best...the loving relatives,
the gracious neighbors, our fellow classmates, our coworkers, our close friends. We love them... we just cannot seem to bring ourselves to talk to them about Jesus.

We sit through evangelism classes, we take notes in Sunday School about how to share the Gospel, and it all makes perfect sense, until it's time to step out and actually try it.
Then comes the hesitation, the excuses. Why is that? Sometimes it's because we aren't truly Christians ourselves, so we have nothing to share. Sometimes it's a lack of commitment. But often, it's raw fear.

Now, let's be honest... it is easy to talk to anyone about anything, except matters of the soul. Think about it. Normal conversations don't require us to open up our inner selves, our deepest hearts. But witnessing means being vulnerable. We imagine how someone might respond, and we let fear of rejection cripple us. We also get caught up in the wrong idea of what "successful" witnessing even looks like.

We think we have to convince the person, seal the deal, and see them walk an aisle right then and there. And that terrifies us.

So, if you are afraid, I want you to know this first point... you are normal. Ananias was afraid too. But fear was not the end of his story, and it doesn't have to be the end of yours.

Point 2... Don't Know or Forget That God Has Already Been Working.

Here is where Ananias got a glimpse of something that changed everything. He didn't realize that God had already been working in Saul's heart for three days. Saul was in a house in Damascus, blind, fasting, and praying.

He was broken, ready, and waiting. Ananias had no idea that the fearsome persecutor had already met the risen Jesus on the road and was now a humbled, praying man. God told Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine, and he is praying."

Beloved, listen to me: we will never encounter a single person that God has not already been working on. Before you ever open your mouth, God has been preparing that heart. He has already been drawing that person through circumstances, through conscience, through dreams, and through seeds that others have planted. We are not walking into a battlefield blind, we are walking into a field that God has already been tilling.

The problem is that God has more people ready to be witnessed to than He has people ready to witness. The harvest is plentiful, the workers are few. Think about this: the person who is ready for Jesus usually isn't flipping through the yellow pages looking for a church. They aren't googling "how to find a Christian." Instead, they are searching horoscopes, palm readers, gurus, or some self-help philosophy. They are desperate, looking for answers in places that have nothing to do with Jesus, and they are starving for the Truth.

God is already at work. He is not waiting for us to make the first move in salvation—He is inviting us to join Him in what He is already doing. When you realize that, witnessing becomes less about your courage and more about your obedience.

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Point 3: God Has a Plan for Everyone.

Let's look at Saul for a moment. Ananias knew who Saul was and what he had been doing to Christians. In Ananias's mind, Saul was nothing but trouble—a menace, a terrorist of the church. But in God's mind, Saul was a messenger,

a missionary, a preacher, and a writer. God was not surprised by Saul's past; God had a plan for his future.

Who would have ever imagined that this man, Saul of Tarsus, would one day write half of the New Testament? That this very persecutor would pen the words of Romans chapter 8, or 1st Corinthians 13, or the great resurrection chapter, 1st Corinthians 15? God saw something that no one else could see.

Now, I want you to take a look around you. Look at your Sunday School class. Look at your neighbors. Look at your friends and family. You have absolutely no idea what God could do through them—or what He wants to do through them, if only someone would tell them about Jesus. What if all the great men and women of our world had only come to know Christ as their Savior? What would our politics look like? What would our classrooms look like? What would our neighborhoods look like?

And think about the leaders of tomorrow: the children, the youth, the young adults sitting right here in these pews. What if God had the opportunity to work His will and His plan in their lives? Who is supposed to tell them about Jesus Christ?

It is not our job to know what God intends to do with each life. That is His business. It is enough for us to know that we are to witness, to tell the Good News to the "whosoever." God is the One who does the saving, the calling, and the equipping. We just have to be the messengers.

So, what do we do with all of this? Let's get practical.

First, go anyway. Ananias went, despite his fear. He didn't wait until he felt brave; he went in obedience. I want to challenge you this week: pick one person—just one—that God has laid on your heart. It might be a co-worker, a friend, a relative. And this week, have a conversation with them about Jesus. You don't need a fancy outline. You don't need to be eloquent. Just tell them what Jesus has done for you.

Second, remember that God has already been working. Every person you meet is a divine appointment. Before you even say the first word, God has been preparing that heart. So pray, and then speak with confidence, knowing God is leading you.

Third, redefine success. Success in witnessing is not getting a "yes." Success in witnessing is being obedient to witness. The results are up to God. You plant the seed, you water the seed, but God gives the increase. If you obey, you have been successful, even if the person walks away shaking their head.

And finally, Christian, do it. Push past the fear. Push past the awkwardness. Push past the excuses. Someone's eternity may hang in the balance. If you are hesitant, fearful, shy—you are not the first, and you won't be the last. But remember, God has somebody He wants you to talk to.

If you are here today and you realize that you have never truly surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, if you have been “religious” but not “born again”—then this altar is for you. Come and meet the One who took your place on the cross, who paid the penalty for your sin, and who rose again so you could live. Don’t wait. Come to Him now.

And if you are a Christian, but you have been paralyzed by fear, afraid to witness, making excuses, staying silent—I invite you to bring that to the altar this morning. Lay your fear at the feet of Jesus. Tell Him,
“Lord, here I am. Send me. Use me.” He will give you the courage, and He will prepare the hearts ahead of you.

Everyone, bow your heads as we pray.

Father in heaven, we thank You for Your patience with us. You know how weak and fearful we are, yet You still choose to use ordinary people like Ananias—and like us—to accomplish extraordinary things in the lives of others.

Lord, we confess our fear of witnessing. Forgive us for the times we have been silent when we should have spoken. Forgive us for the excuses we have made. Forgive us for forgetting that You are always at work in the hearts of those around us.

Jesus, You said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” We respond to that call. Fill us with the Holy Spirit, give us boldness, and help us to see people through Your eyes—not as threats, not as projects, but as souls You love and died to save. Help us to understand that success is simply being obedient to share the Good News.

We lift up to You the names of people we know who do not yet know You. Prepare their hearts, open doors of opportunity, and give us the right words at the right time. May we be willing to be the Ananias in their lives.

Now, send us out from this place as Your witnesses. We ask it all in the mighty, saving name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Go in peace, be bold, and share the love of Christ with someone this week.

Remember, Be a blessing and be blessed. For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed.

Thank you for watching and listening and we will see you next week.

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