

"The Church at Antioch"

Part 2

Acts 11:19-30

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we were in Acts 11 and when we stopped, we were in the middle of Antioch. The Jews who had been persecuted when Stephen was stoned went to the city of Antioch preaching the Gospel but only to the Jews.

Notice Acts 11:19

Within this group of Jews however there was another group who were also Jews and they made the choice to be pioneers. They made the choice to share the Gospel with the Gentiles.

Notice Acts 11:20

By sharing the Gospel in Antioch, these Jews were fulfilling the Words of Jesus Christ.

Acts 1:8

⁸ But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Jerusalem was where the church started. The Gospel then went into Judaea and then to Samaria.

Acts 2:14

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

Acts 8:1

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

⁵ Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Now when we come to Acts 11 the Gospel is now in Antioch and it is therefore going further into the world. We can see the progression of the Gospel in these verses. Before we move on there is something here that I really want you to see that was unique about

the people in Antioch. Let me back up to when the church started. It began with Jews who were people that knew the Old Testament. Then it went to the Samaritans who were half Jew and half Gentiles they too had a knowledge of God. Then it went to Cornelius' house and those Gentiles were God fearing as we had already looked at. But here in Antioch the Gospel has reached pagans! These people are deep in sin with no knowledge of God like the Jews and the Samaritans had. These people had idols made to every god they could think of. Let me show you something about the people in Athens to give you an idea what the people were like.

Acts 17:22-23

²² Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

²³ For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Here in Athens, there was an altar to an unknown god. What was this about? The people believed that there were many gods and if they missed worshipping one it was "bad luck" and there would be consequences. Therefore, they build this altar to the unknown god just incase they missed a god. This gives you an idea as to what the people were like in these cities. Antioch was extremely immoral much like Corinth and it was at the point that there was almost a different god worshipped in every house.

Application:

When the Gospel reached Antioch, the Lord was seeing that His Words were fulfilled. He was also sending a clear message to the world that it makes no difference how sinful you are or what you are living in, the Gospel is for you and you too can be saved. It is interesting to me that two cities where the Gospel would thrive was Corinth and Antioch. Two of the darkest cities that have ever existed. This is where the Light of the Gospel shined the brightest. Getting back to verse 20, this group of Jews who preached to the Gentiles certainly made an impact in Antioch.

Notice Acts 11:21

There was a great number that believed. This city was the third largest in the Roman Empire. It is believed it was a city of some 500,000+ people. This was where the Gospel would thrive. This is the place where God choses to plant a church. This will be the church that sends Paul on his missionary journeys. So, the Jews share the Gospel and there is a

great number of Gentiles who believe and now there is a problem. These new believers need leadership.

Notice Acts 11:22

When the church in Jerusalem heard of the conversions, they sent Barnabas. Do you remember this man?

Acts 4:34-37

³⁴ Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

³⁵ And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

³⁶ And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

³⁷ Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas was his nickname given by the Apostles and it means "son of comfort". Barnabas was known as an encourager and a comforter. We see this in his life after Paul was saved.

Acts 9:26-28

²⁶ And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

²⁷ But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

²⁸ And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

Barnabas is therefore sent to Antioch which was about a 300-mile journey.

Notice Acts 11:23

When Barnabas arrived, we are told that he "saw the grace of God". What does this mean? Keep in mind he is going to a pagan city. I believe that when he came to the believers at Antioch, he was able to see the grace of God as he met the people who were saved and as he heard their testimonies of what they were saved out of. These people were far from perfect. They were saved but they had no teaching but they had a testimony. Their lives

were changing slowly and Barnabas could see the difference. They would have been exercising spiritual gifts and this was visible to Barnabas. It was God's grace that people like this could be saved.

Notice Acts 11:23 again.

We see also that he exhorted them all which also means he "encouraged them all". He had the gift of encouragement and he was exercising his gift among these new believers. What did he encourage/exhort them to do? He encouraged them that with purpose of heart they were to stay steadfast in following the Lord.

Notice the words of Wiersbe.

"Barnabas emphasized dedication of the heart as he taught the people the Word of God. The phrase "cleave [cling] to the Lord" does not suggest that they were to "keep themselves saved." The same grace that saves us can also keep us (1 Cor. 15:10; Heb. 13:9). The phrase reminds us of Joshua's admonition to Israel in Joshua 22:5. To "cleave to the Lord" includes loving the Lord, walking in His ways, obeying His Word, and serving Him wholeheartedly. It means that we belong to Him alone and that we cultivate our devotion to Him. "No man can serve two masters".

Joshua 22:5

⁵ But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

These people had bad habits that had developed over the years as they grew up in Antioch. The idea now was to develop new habits of following the Lord. This would take time and determination.

Illustration: Have you ever driven a car and had the tires get in a rut? To get the tires out it takes an effort to turn the wheel. This is exactly what Barnabas would have taught these new believers. They had developed "ruts" in their lives and they needed to be determined to get out. He would have told them to stay the course and keep your eyes upon the Lord.

Notice the words of Arnold.

"Notice, also, that Barnabas did not tell these new Christians to seek a second blessing or search for the experience of tongues, or tarry for a second work of grace. No, he told them to be true to the Lord. When they were saved, they received all they were ever

going to get from the Lord. Salvation had been given to them and there was nothing more they were going to receive after salvation. However, they were to develop what they had by faith, which was a progressive experience as one remained true to the Lord. Therefore, we can conclude that Christians do not need anything new. Christians are to remain faithful to what they have and not to go after something else. No Christian will ever be able to use up what resources he already has. His resources will never run dry. What is the key? The key is to remain true to the Lord."

The writer of Hebrews gives us encouragement to stay the course.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

² *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

³ *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

Let us move on and see how Luke describes Barnabas.

Notice Acts 11:24

Luke tells us first of all that he was a "good man". This sounds like a contradiction of Scripture.

Romans 3:10-12

¹⁰ *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

¹¹ *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

¹² *They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

Paul tells us there is none that does any good so how can Luke say that Barnabas is "good"? Luke is referencing the new Barnabas. The good in this man was the result of the Lord working through him. Romans 3 describes man before salvation but Luke is describing Barnabas after salvation.

Application:

Before salvation we had no choice for, we could not produce any works of righteousness. But now it is different as it was with Barnabas.

Romans 6:18-22

¹⁸ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

¹⁹ I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

²⁰ For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

²¹ What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

²² But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Notice Acts 11:24 again.

He was a "good man" because he was full of the Holy Ghost and faith. To be "full" of the Holy Ghost means that he was controlled by the Holy Spirit. This was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:19

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Barnabas was also filled with faith. The result of all of this was that even more people were saved.

Hebrews 11:1, 6

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Conclusion: The growth was the result of the Spirit not being hindered. Barnabas was surrendered over to the Spirit and therefore He was free to move in the city of Antioch.