

"The Church at Antioch"

Part 3

Acts 11:19-30

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we stopped in Acts 11 as Barnabas arrived at Antioch.

Notice Acts 11:20-22

The Gentiles at Antioch were getting saved as the Jews preached the Gospel. The church at Antioch needed leadership and so the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas.

Notice Acts 11:23

Barnabas came to Antioch and when he met with the believers, he could see the grace of God. This means he saw people who were deep in their sin and they now had a testimony about how Jesus saved them. He then exhorted them that with purpose of heart they were to remain steadfast in following the Lord. This meant that they were to be determined that no matter what they were going to follow the Lord as long as they were alive.

Daniel 1:8a

⁸ *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:*

As we read Daniel, we get the idea as to what Barnabas exhorted them to do. Daniel had set his heart on living for the Lord in the land of Babylon and he was determined that nothing would keep him from doing so. There were many things in Babylon that could deter him but he was determined to be true. This was exactly what Barnabas encouraged the new believers at Antioch to do. There were many temptations in the city to pull them away but they were to have their hearts set on following the Lord. They were to have a strong resolve to seek the Lord in the midst of their dark city.

Application:

In the days in which we live it is good for us to purpose in our hearts to cleave to the Lord in the midst of the deception and sin that exists in our world. Satan is busy doing all he can to lead us away from the Lord. He knows he cannot take away our salvation but he can lead us into sin so that we are not effective in serving our Lord.

John 15:1-5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

³ *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

⁴ ***Abide in me***, and I in you. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

⁵ *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without me ye can do nothing.***

Notice Acts 11:24

In this verse we see the Holy Spirit's description of Barnabas. He was a "good man" he was "full of the Spirit" and he was "full of faith". The result of a man living this close to the Lord is that the power of God works through his life as he did through Barnabas in Antioch.

Notice Acts 11:25

We are not told how long Barnabas was in Antioch before he went to find Saul but from this verse, we can understand that the work in Antioch was more than he could handle on his own.

Application:

There is a great lesson here for all of us. Sometimes we cannot conquer the task before us and, in those times, it is perfectly fine to ask for help. There are times when life can be overwhelming and we need help. It may be in our service to the Lord or it may just be with ordinary matters of life. Let me take a moment and flip this around to make an application. There are times when others cannot bear their burdens and it is then that we must be ready and willing to step in and help them.

Galatians 6:2

² *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Let us always remember that our Lord desires that we cast our care and burdens upon Him.

Psalm 55:22

²² Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

1 Peter 5:6-7

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Matthew 11:28-29

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Notice Acts 11:25-26a.

The idea here is that Barnabas had to really search to find Saul. It is believed that Saul had been in Tarsus for some 7-9 years. Let us notice when he departed to Tarsus.

Acts 9:26-30

²⁶ And when Saul came 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.

²⁹ And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

³⁰ Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, **and sent him forth to Tarsus.**

Let me get you back to Barnabas' search for Saul. Why did he have to search for him. Because Saul was not just sitting around waiting for someone to come get him. He was busy serving the Lord while he was there. Notice what Paul recorded in Galatians.

Galatians 1:18-23

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

¹⁹ But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

²⁰ Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

²¹ **Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;** [Cilicia was the region where Tarsus was located]

²² And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

²³ But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past **now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.**

From these verses we can see that while he was in Tarsus, he was not idle. Notice the words of Swindoll.

"Saul's absence from Acts 10 and most of Acts 11 - Benched. Shelved. Set aside. Taken out of circulation. If we go by what Luke reveals about Paul's activity during Peter's historic evangelism among the Gentiles in Acts 10, we might get the impression that Paul was out of action for ten years after his dramatic conversion. The truth is, Paul was never inactive. He certainly wasn't in the limelight or in the mainstream of activity, but he was doing ministry like the vast majority of faithful servants of God throughout history—in the background, in obscurity. But why? Why would God send him to "small time" ministry in Tarsus for ten years after such an explosive conversion? Think about it. No Christian had a more impressive résumé for ministry among the Jews. Yet in His wise providence and for His own purposes, God often places such people in small-scale, nonglamorous ministries for

a season. He hones their theology, whittles at their character, rearranges their priorities, and teaches them the techniques of walking in the Spirit and not walking in the flesh."

Notice Acts 11:26

Saul and Barnabas worked as a team in Antioch for a year teaching (making disciples) of the believers that were there. These believers would become the sending church for Paul when he went on his missionary journeys.

Acts 13:1-3

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

² *As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

³ *And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

Application:

Let us not forget how this church began in Antioch.

Notice Acts 11:20-21

These people who stepped out and shared the Gospel with the Gentiles in Antioch had no idea the impact that would come from their service. Let us also keep in mind that when we serve the Lord in our little corner of the world, we have no idea how God may use our service. When we share the Gospel or we share a Truth from the Bible or we pray with someone. Keep in mind that the book of Acts is considered to be unfinished because the Lord is still working in our lives to build His church.

Acts 1:1

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

Luke's first letter showed the beginning of the Lord's ministry and Acts is the continuation that shows the Gospel spreading out from Jerusalem. In our day the Gospel is still going out to unreached people and we get to be part of it. With that, let us serve in great anticipation of what the Lord can do. If one person comes to the Lord because of our service that is worth it all.

Notice Acts 11:26 again.

It was Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. Notice what Stedman says concerning this statement.

"It is clear from this brief statement that it was not the Christians themselves, but the people of Antioch who called them that. The word means, "those belonging to Christ," or "Christ's men." As these Christians talked about Jesus to men everywhere -- Jesus the Christ, the Messiah -- the Gentiles around them labeled them "Christ's men." You can tell from this that they didn't talk about the church; they talked about Jesus. At first it was a disrespectful term, a term of reproach. "Look at these crazy people! They come into our city, they don't worship our idols, don't observe our moral (or immoral) standards, they live lives entirely different from ours." So, disrespectfully they called them "Christ's men," Christians. But the disciples thought it was wonderful to be called Christ's men, so they adopted the name and called themselves Christians. That is why yet today we are called Christians."

Today the title "Christian" is used rather carelessly. Over the years it has lost its true meaning. With many today the title fits anyone who is "religious". Let us notice the words of Tozer on what a Christian really is.

"A real Christian is an odd number anyway. He feels supreme love for One whom he has never seen, talks familiarly every day to Someone he cannot see, expects to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, empties himself in order to be full, admits he is wrong so he can be declared right, goes down in order to get up, is strongest when he is weakest, richest when he is poorest and happiest when he feels worst. He dies so he can live, forsakes in order to have, gives away so he can keep, sees the invisible, hears the inaudible and knows that which passeth knowledge."

Conclusion:

Let us live so that Jesus Christ is seen in us.

¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

¹¹ For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.