

## Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 8.17.2025

## PART 28 - ANTIOCH: A MODEL CHURCH

### I. INTRODUCTION

Acts 11:19-30

19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 25 So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

27 Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). 29 So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. 30 And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

### HISTORICAL SETTING

- V19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution...
- We saw how God providentially led his people to scatter throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria after Stephen's execution, and these believers went about preaching the word (8:4).
- What looked like tragedy was actually God's strategy to effectuate his mission.
- Luke now gives us a more expansive picture of the spread of the word geographically in ch11.
- Those scattered traveled as far north as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch.
- Luke is connecting the expansion of the gospel to these new places with the Jerusalem church.
- This is the continuing work and ministry of the exalted Christ, who from his heavenly throne, is directing his people to take his message to the ends of the earth.
- There are several geographical locations mentioned in this narrative.

- Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean with a sizable Jewish population.
- Cyrene was an ancient Greek colony and Roman city in North Africa in modern-day Libya.
- Phoenicia was located in the coastal region of present day Lebanon
- Antioch in ancient Syria, in what is present day southeast Turkey.
- The focus is on the city of Antioch, which is approximately 300 miles north of Jerusalem.
- Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the Greco-Roman world.
- Boasted a population of 500,000 people at this time.
- It was a large, wealthy cosmopolitan and commercial city.
- It was a diverse city.
- It was religiously pluralistic.
- Its people were notorious for their morally loose living.
- Antioch is exactly the kind of place you would want to plant a Christ-centered church.
- Antioch would be the headquarters of the Gentile mission work, sending gospel workers throughout the world.

## II. A GRASSROOTS CHURCH

- Some of those scattered believers spread the word as they went. But they only spoke the gospel to Jews.
- What was needed was someone like Philip who could break through barriers.
- However, some unknown men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who upon coming to Antioch, preached the Lord Jesus to the Hellenists also.
- They didn't just speak to the Jews, they took the gospel to those of Greek culture.
- These men didn't just stick to what is comfortable and familiar, only reaching people who were just like them.
- They were willing to cross socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic boundaries to bring the good news to everyone.
- This has always been God's plan, to use ordinary, everyday followers of Jesus, engaged in his mission, to make disciples from every nation.
- The church in Antioch began as a grassroots movement led by unknown people.
- Luke doesn't even mention their names—but their names are known in heaven!
- There is no mention here of the apostles coming to Antioch.
- These are a group of unnamed disciples who are now featured as bringing the gospel message to the Gentiles.
- They had moved hundreds of miles away and carried the message to a new group of people in a foreign city.
- The Antioch church at its founding, wasn't started by the paid, professional clergy.
- It was a movement of ordinary, Spirit-empowered witnesses, Christ followers who boldly engaged in the Great Commission.
- To be a church like Antioch, we need to get involved with people who are far from God and who desperately need to hear the good news.
- Now we need to be wise in how we go about this, but what we can't do is have a 'retreatist' or escapist mentality.
- We can't be salt and light in this dark world if we're never involved with those who are stumbling and fumbling about in the darkness.
- Proclaiming the good news requires engagement with those who need to hear the good news.

- These unnamed disciples were just being faithful to Jesus in their everyday life and they made a difference in the kingdom of God.
- What was the result of their evangelistic efforts?
- V21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.
- Their bold labor was richly blessed by God.
- In our day of celebrity Christianity, we need to recover the grassroots ethos of the Antioch church, the ordinary work of ordinary disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Maybe you feel unqualified or too insignificant to be useful to God.
- Remember that God delights in using ordinary Christians, parents, students, workers, retirees, doing their everyday ordinary things, to further his kingdom purposes.
- Whose life is God calling you to touch this week with the gospel?

### III. GRACE-FILLED CHURCH

- News of this grassroots evangelist movement and Gentile conversions reaches the Jerusalem church.
- And as before, the apostles decide to send someone to investigate what is taking place.
- But notice, they don't send an apostle. They sent Barnabas to Antioch.
- Barnabas was nicknamed by the apostles, "the son of encouragement."
- Acts 4, Luke writes about his generosity.
- Acts 9, when Saul tries to join the disciples in Jerusalem after his conversion, and they're all scared of him and skeptical of his conversion, who comes alongside him? Barnabas.
- And in our passage, Luke describes Barnabas as a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith (24).
- Barnabas is the kind of person you want at your side.
- Barnabas makes his way to Antioch and upon arriving he sees the tangible evidence of God's grace.
- V23 When he came and saw the grace of God...
- He sees a vibrant group of believers who have come to salvation in Jesus Christ through the grassroots ministry of ordinary disciples.
- He is not filled with doubt, skepticism or objections, he sees genuine followers of Jesus, filled with God's Spirit, desiring to be faithful to their Lord and zealous to make a difference in their city.
- So he encourages them to remain steadfastly faithful to the Lord.
- Luke connects Barnabas' encouragement and faithfulness with the growth of the Antioch church.
- V24b And a great many people were added to the Lord.
- The church is growing, lives are being changed by the gospel and by the church being encouraged and strengthened.
- All of this is a work of grace.
- There was a visible manifestation of Spirit-empowered life happening among the disciples in Antioch.
- You can't see grace but you can see the evidence of its effects—changed lives, new love and zeal for God, hunger for his word.
- If God is at work then there should be a manifestation of God's grace on the people.
- A grace-filled people will manifest that grace in their love and service to those inside and outside the community of faith.
- A grace-filled church will be growing in grace and growing spiritually and numerically.

- Are you manifesting the grace of God in your life?
- I want to challenge you to become an expert in actively looking for and affirming God's work in others.
- This week, pick someone and encourage them in how you see God's grace in their lives.

## IV. A GROUNDED CHURCH

- Barnabas sees the obvious grace of God in Antioch, he endorses it, and he sees the need for this growing movement of Christ followers to be disciplined.
- He knows this church needs help. The church needs intentional teaching and disciple making, so he determines to get someone to assist him, he can't do it alone.
- He determines Saul is the right man for the job.
- Barnabas, knowing that Saul was called by the Lord Jesus Christ to be apostle to the Gentiles, knew that he had to be part of this work in Antioch.
- So he goes to Tarsus looking for Saul, he locates him, recruits him, and brings him to Antioch.
- And for a whole year they dedicated their lives to meet with the church, and to teach and instruct them.
- Just as the Jerusalem church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, the Antioch church devoted themselves to the teaching of their leaders.
- How are disciples made? Through teaching and instruction.
- The church is strengthened through the faithful teaching of God's Word.
- Teaching is a critical component of disciple making.
- Believers need to be grounded in God's Word.
- Are you growing in the knowledge of God's Word?
- If you've been a believer for years, who are you teaching and grounding in the word?

### CHRISTIANS

- It was in Antioch where the believers were first called Christians. The term only appears here and two other places in the NT (Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).
- They didn't give that name to themselves, that title was coined by the unbelieving public of Antioch who called them in the Greek, *Christianos*; which means, 'Christ-partisan' or 'Christ-supporter.'
- The believers in Antioch so identified with Jesus, spoke so much about Jesus, so passionately lived out their faith in Jesus, that Gentile observers gave them a title reflecting that they were of the party of Christ.
- The believers were so distinct from the culture around them, they neither identified as Jews or Gentiles, that the people of Antioch developed a third classification of people to call them by—Christians.
- The term Christians is how followers of Jesus are commonly called today.
- Our faith should be public, our allegiance to Christ should be crystal clear, showing with our words and actions that we belong to Christ, and that we follow Christ.
- If your coworkers, classmates, neighbors or friends were asked to describe you, would the first words out of their mouths be that you belong to Christ?

## V. A GENEROUS CHURCH

- The church at Antioch was a model of sacrificial generosity.
- The Holy Spirit, through a prophet named Agabus, warns the church that a great famine is coming.
- The disciples, knowing that the believers in Judea would be greatly impacted, determined to help.
- The prophetic word gave the believers in Antioch, an opportunity to show their support for and solidarity with the believers in Jerusalem.
- V29 So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.
- Those gifts were sent to the elders of the Jerusalem church by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.
- “Every one according to his ability” determined to give.
- Not equal amounts but equal sacrifice. It was voluntary, proportionate giving. It was Spirit-prompted generosity.
- The famine hadn’t even happened yet and the disciples were determined to send relief.
- This is the gospel in action! It was an act of gospel unity!
- They didn’t ask how much it would cost? They gave as much as they could.
- That is the mark of true Spirit-transformation.
- That is the heart of a person who has been changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, who understands the grace freely shown to them by God.
- Christians who rarely or don’t give have little understanding of God’s grace.
- Does your giving reflect trust in God’s future provision, or is ruled by fear of not having enough?
- A mature disciple of Jesus has no problem living open-handedly and generously, trusting the Lord to supply for their needs as they generously give to the needs of their local church and other believers.
- If you don’t give, start today by giving according to your ability.
- If you give infrequently, determine to give generously and with regularity.
- If you are a generous giver, ask the Lord to help you stretch your faith in giving.
- There are blessings attached to the generous believer. Begin to give according to your ability and watch how the Lord provides for your every need and blesses you to give more.

## CONCLUSION

- The church at Antioch stands as a living model church for us today.
- They were grassroots, ordinary believers simply being faithful to Christ.
- They were grace-filled, the evidence of God’s power was undeniable in their transformed lives.
- They were grounded, they loved the Word and were deeply rooted in Christ.
- They were generous, open-handed with their resources because they trusted in a generous Savior.
- The reason the church at Antioch was such a remarkable church was because they were captivated by Christ.
- They weren’t defined by their city, their culture, or their background, they were defined by their Savior.
- They were so marked by the living and exalted Christ that outsiders had to come up with a new name for them.
- What if we were a church where everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, was engaged in grassroots gospel work, abounding in the grace of God, grounding in the Word of God, and generous for the mission of Christ?

- Be faithful where God has placed you. Boldly speak the gospel. Encourage one another. Ground yourself in His Word. Give generously.
- And bear the name “Christian” with all joy, because you belong to Christ, who purchased and redeemed you by his precious blood.
- May we be the kind of church Antioch was, not for our glory, but for His alone!

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?