

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #52

### COMMENTARY ON: 11:19-30

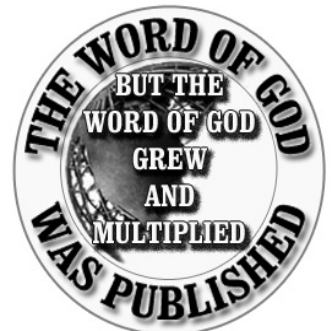
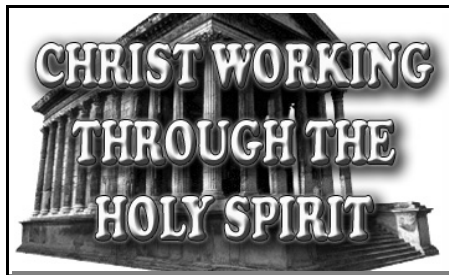
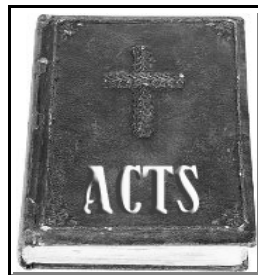
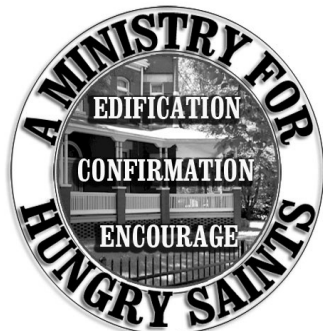
#### THE WORD OF GOD SPREADS

Without any revealed plan or apostolic mandate, those who were scattered by the persecution that arose over Stephen continued to aggressively spread the Word of God. Even though the Gospel had been taken to the Gentiles, these scattered believers preached the Word only to Jews. However, the hand of the Lord was with them, and great numbers believed. Upon hearing this, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to examine the work. When he perceived the grace of God in the people, he exhorted them to purposefully cleave to the Lord. Following that, he searched for Saul, and upon finding him brought him to Antioch, where they remained for a whole year. It was here that the disciples were first called "Christians." About this time, a prophet named Agabus prophesied of a coming pervasive famine. Upon hearing this, the disciples determined to send relief to the brethren in Judaea, which they did, sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

"... 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." (Acts 1:8)

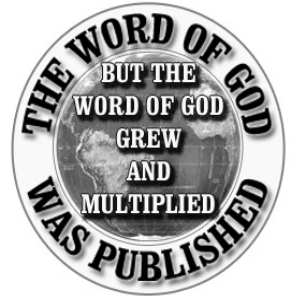


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 52



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.LITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# THE WORD OF GOD SPREADS

<sup>11:19</sup> Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. <sup>20</sup> And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. <sup>22</sup> Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. <sup>23</sup> Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. <sup>24</sup> For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. <sup>25</sup> Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: <sup>26</sup> And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. <sup>27</sup> And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. <sup>28</sup> And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. <sup>29</sup> Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: <sup>30</sup> Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11:19-30)

## INTRODUCTION

Without any revealed plan or apostolic mandate, those who were scattered by the persecution that arose over Stephen continued to aggressively spread the Word of God. At the very first, this is what they did. As it is written, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). It is estimated that this

took place approximately five years after the day of Pentecost. Now, the events of our text took place around six years after that original scattering, or eleven years after the inauguration of the New Covenant.

**The consistency and persistency of the early church stands in stark**

**contrast to the static posture and vacillating nature of the modern church.** Without any revealed strategies or known organized efforts, early disciples, though dispersed by antagonistic opposition, "went everywhere preaching the word." They had something that is not at all common in the church of our time. They were driven from within –

*Believers scattered by persecution continue to preach the Word, believers are added, and are first called "Christians," by Given O. Blakely*

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even by the “*newness of life*” that is the habitat in which the person who is baptized into Christ walks (Rom 6:4). Also, they did not disperse among the peoples to meet their perceived worldly needs. Much of the modern missionary focus is totally missing in our text.

### RECORDED ACTIVITIES

Thus far, there is no institutional thrust made known in the book of Acts. If one was to set out to examine the activities of the early church, what exactly would they find? And, how does it compare with the modern representation of the church? Here are some things that have been revealed to this point.

- ⇒ They “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42).
- ⇒ “*All that believed were together, and*

*had all things common*” (Acts 2:44).

- ⇒ They continued “*daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house,*” eating their food “*with gladness and singleness of heart*” (Acts 2:46).
- ⇒ They reported threats and prayed about them (Acts 4:23-31).
- ⇒ Those who believed “*were of one heart and of one soul*” (Acts 4:32).
- ⇒ No one among them lacked, and, when required, distribution was made to every person according to their need (4:34-35).
- ⇒ When hypocrisy surfaced, it was dealt with immediately (Acts 5:1-10).
- ⇒ In the Temple and in every house, they ceased not to “*teach and preach Jesus Christ*” (Acts 5:42).
- ⇒ Scattered believers went everywhere “*preaching the Word*” (Acts 8:4).
- ⇒ Upon hearing that the city of Samaria had heard the Word, Peter and John were sent to them in order that they might receive the Holy Spirit (8:14-15).
- ⇒ The churches were “*edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit were multiplied*” (Acts 9:31).
- ⇒ The apostles and brethren in Judea heard that the Gentiles had “*received the word of God*” (Acts 11:1).
- ⇒ Peter reported what took place at the house of Cornelius, and the church recognized the work of the Lord and gave Him glory.

⇒ Now, in our text, the church in Jerusalem hears about the spread of the Word, and sends Barnabas to examine the work.

### WHAT DO WE SEE?

Now, how does that kind of activity compare with the *church work* of our time? There is a two-fold thrust revealed that can scarcely be found in our time. **First, there was a marked emphasis on declaring the Word of God. Second, the body of Christ was closely knit, and in a state of constant edification.** They were motivated by a message, and urged to live in strict conformity with that message. Their allegiance to the body of Christ and soundness of doctrine is also evident.

The notation of the conduct and manners of the early disciples is essential to a good understanding. The reason for this is that in the record of their activities we are beholding two critical things. First, the nature and thrust of newness of life is being displayed. Second, the directing of the Holy Spirit is also perceived, which confirms Divine priorities. If these two things are not duly considered, men will become distracted to the recorded results without obtaining an understanding of why they were present. When men attempt to duplicate the results recorded in this book, or to codify them so that they are robbed of their power, they are following the dictates of human wisdom. The result of such an approach is always downward, degenerative, and hence unprofitable.

### THE SCOPE OF THOSE EMPLOYED IN KINGDOM WORK

The scope of those who were employed in the work of the Lord is also worthy of note. Although the apostles were primary, they were not the solitary

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workers. Consider the laborers who have been mentioned by name through the verses covered in our text – people who were not apostles.

- ⇒ Stephen (Acts 6:8-9).
- ⇒ Non-apostles who were scattered abroad (Acts 8:1,4).
- ⇒ Philip (Acts 8:5-6, 26-40).
- ⇒ Ananias (Acts 9:10-17).

- ⇒ James, the brother of the Lord (Acts 15:13; 21:18).
- ⇒ The prophets Judas and Silas (Acts 15:27; 32).
- ⇒ Silas with Paul (Acts 15:22,40; 16:19,25,29; 17:4,10).
- ⇒ Timothy (Acts 16:1-3; 17:11,15; 18:5).
- ⇒ Silas and Timothy (17:11,15; 18:5).

Paul for seven days (Acts 28:13-14).

- ⇒ Brethren from Rome who came to meet Paul at Appii Forum to encourage him (Acts 28:15).

Throughout the book of Acts we are being subjected to the life of the body of Christ as well as the activities of the apostles Peter and Paul. The manner of the kingdom is being unveiled to us. In it there is not the slightest hint of institutionalism, or the establishment of a religious hierarchy, or the development of a national, state, or even city church.

**AS THE WORD SPREADS**

In our text, the word of God spreads to other regions. Upon hearing this, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to examine the work. When he perceived the grace of God in the people, he exhorted them to purposefully cleave to the Lord. Following that, he searched for Saul, and upon finding him brought him to Antioch, where they remained for a whole year. It was here that the disciples were first called “*Christians*.” About this time, a prophet named Agabus prophesied of a coming pervasive famine. Upon hearing this, the disciples determined to send relief to the brethren in Judaea, which they did, sending it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

What a marvelous commentary on the effectiveness of the salvation that is “*in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2 Tim 2:10). Not only is the Word of God faithfully preached, there is also a favorable response to it. When a word is delivered that concerns the people of God, they immediately perceive the proper course of action and take it. These are all examples of how the word of God works effectively in those who believe. As it is written, “. . . *the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1 Thess 2:13). This is the record of the real church!

**In our text, the word of God spreads to other regions. Upon hearing this, the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to examine the work. When he perceived the grace of God in the people, he exhorted them to purposefully cleave to the Lord.**

- ⇒ Barnabas (Acts 9:27; 11:22,25-26).
- ⇒ Men from Cyprus and Cyrene who preached in Antioch (Acts 11:20).
- ⇒ Prophets from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27).
- ⇒ Agabus (Acts 11:28).
- ⇒ The elders of Jerusalem (Acts 11:30).

Following this text, there will be several other individuals mentioned – noted for their labors in the Lord, many of which were while they were with Paul.

- ⇒ Certain prophets in the church of Antioch: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen (Acts 13:1).
- ⇒ The elders of Jerusalem (Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 21:18).

- ⇒ John Mark (Acts 15:39).
- ⇒ Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).
- ⇒ Aquilla and Priscilla (Acts 18:26).
- ⇒ Timothy and Erastus (Acts 19:22).
- ⇒ Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timotheus, Tychicus and Trophimus (Acts 20:4).
- ⇒ The elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:17,28).
- ⇒ Philip the evangelist (the same one mentioned in chapter 8 – Acts 21:8).
- ⇒ The four daughters of who were prophetesses – Acts 21:8
- ⇒ Agabus the prophet (Acts 21:10-11).
- ⇒ Brethren from Puteoli who refreshed

**THE WORD CONTINUES TO BE PREACHED BY THOSE WHO WERE SCATTERED**

“ <sup>11:19</sup> *Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*”

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It becomes very apparent in the book of Acts that the church is, in fact, “the body of Christ” – although the people of God are never referred to as Christ’s “body” in the book of Acts itself. In it, the collective saints are referred to as:

- ⇒ “The church” (2:47; 8:1,3; 11:22; 13:1; 15:3,4; 18:22; 20:17,28).
- ⇒ “The churches” (9:31; 15:41; 16:5).
- ⇒ “Disciples” (6:2; 11:29; 15:10).
- ⇒ “The brethren” (11:29; 15:1,3,22,23).
- ⇒ “Them that believed” (4:32).

However, the nature of *body-life* is seen in the various things chronicled in this volume. Collectively, believers gave heed to the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, breaking bread together, praying together, and ministering to one another in meaningful ways. There was also a dissemination of the Word of God by various members of the body. Those members represented a kind of cross-cut of Christ’s body, as confirmed in the latter portion of the introduction to this lesson. Our text provides some more details on this aspect of the life of the early church.

**THOSE WHO WERE SCATTERED ABROAD**

“Now they which were scattered abroad . . .” Other versions read, “scattered after the persecution,” NKJV “scattered because of the persecution,” NASB “had been scattered by the persecution,” NIV “scattered abroad upon the tribulation,” ASV “who had gone away at the time of the trouble,” BBE “dispersed by,” DOUAY “dispersed, by the oppression,” MRD “who fled from Jerusalem,” LIVING “driven in various directions by,” WEYMOUTH “fugitives from the persecution,” WILLIAMS

The Greek words translated “scattered abroad” come from a single word: διασπαρέντες. The lexical meaning of the word is: “disperse, driven to different places,” THAYER and “to cause a group or gathering to disperse or scatter, with possible emphasis on the distributive nature of the scattering (that is to say, each going in a different direction).” LOUW-NIDA

The narrative of the text now

returns, continuing from the eighth chapter (8:1-4). At that time “there was a great persecution against the church which is at Jerusalem,” resulting in the dispersion of nearly every one “except the apostles” (8:1). That is, according to appearance, circumstances drove most of the disciples out of Jerusalem. **Those who imagine they can manage circumstances, or be taught how to control their environment must take special note of what is here described.** There have been numerous records in Scripture that describe people being forced from their environment. Here are few of them.

- ⇒ **COMPELLED BY THE LORD.** Adam and

**The idea here is that there was a certain disdain for believers that pervaded the city of Jerusalem. There was apparently no end to which the people would not go to make it difficult for those who were confessed disciples of Jesus.**

Eve from Eden (Gen 3:24), the people who were building the tower of Babel and a city (Gen 11:8), and Lot from Sodom (Gen 19:16).

- ⇒ **CONSTRAINED BY A DIRECT CALL FROM GOD.** Abraham from his homeland (Gen 12:1, Jacob from the land in which Laban lived (Gen 31:13), and Israel from Egypt (Ex 11:8).

- ⇒ **COMPELLED BY CIRCUMSTANCES.** By famines (Abraham, Jacob’s ten sons, Elimelech, Naomi, and their sons – Gen 12:10; 42:5; Ruth 1:1-2), and Claudia’s expulsion of the Jews from Rome (Aquila and Priscilla – Acts 18:2).

**It is good to be aware that there is an uncertainty that attends life in this world.** Solomon well said, “Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov 27:1). James also confirmed this to be the case: “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow” (James 4:14).

This circumstance is another

reason why we, together with the ancients, confess that we are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11). **In Christ, we are geared for heaven and eternity, so to speak, and thus at variance with the very nature of the world, which is passing away.** “Newness of life” is contrary to the course of this world, and cannot fit handily into it. Add to that the aggressiveness of the children of darkness against the children of light, and you have the reason for believers being “scattered” as they were in Jerusalem.

The thing that we want to note in this passage is **the manner** in which the

believers reacted to this dispersion.

**THE PERSECUTION THAT ROSE ABOUT STEPHEN**

“. . . upon the persecution that arose about Stephen . . .” Other versions read, “after the persecution,” NKJV “because of the persecution,” NASB “by the persecution,” NIV “upon the tribulation,” ASV “at the time of the trouble,” BBE “as a result of the persecution,” CSB “through the tribulation,” DARBY “during the persecution,” NLT “through the affliction.” TNT

**The Persecution**

The idea put forth in this text is twofold: (1) That of believers fleeing from the persecution, and (2) That of the persecution driving, or forcing them out of Jerusalem. Life became intolerable for those wearing the name of Jesus. This suggests not only outright opposition, such as that launched against Stephen, but life becoming complicated by withholding social and economic privileges from the people – like being able to buy and sell.

**The idea here is that there was a certain disdain for believers that**

pervaded the city of Jerusalem. There was apparently no end to which the people would not go to make it difficult for those who were confessed disciples of Jesus.

**That Rose About Stephen**

The persecution and death of Stephen was like a catalyst, igniting the hatred of the Jews for Christians. We know that this is what awakened the fierce hatred and aggression of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1; 9:1-2). **Hatred spreads like venom, and there is no known depths to which it cannot plummet.** When a contempt for the truth and those who embrace and proclaim it is developed, hostility is born, and initiatives are launched against those who have embraced the truth. As Solomon well said, *“hatred stirreth up strifes.”*

**A Parallel in Spiritual Babylon**

Although it often appears less hostile than the persecution to which our text refers, spiritual Babylon bears many similarities to the hostile Jews in Jerusalem. **Anyone who insists that people must be born again, seek the things that are above, and grow up into**

**Christ in all things, is immediately perceived as a threat.** If they press the truth, engaging opponents of it in disputation as Stephen did, they will, face opposition. The pressure put upon such people is depicted in the parallelism of *“the mark of the beast.”* The Revelation tells us that the mark had to be received in one of two places – *“in their right hand, or in their foreheads”* (Rev 13:16). **That is, the person had to consent to either work for the beast (right hand), or embrace his thoughts and agenda (forehead).** Those who refused to subscribe to this arrangement could not *“buy or sell.”* For Stephen, that meant he could no longer minister in the synagogue. For many of our time, it has meant they could no longer preach in certain churches.

**Like the persecution of Stephen, this Babylonish opposition to the truth has caused those who have received the love of the truth to appear strange.** The individual who actually lives aggressively for God simply does not fit into the religious arrangements of the day. Such are, in a manner of speaking, driven out of the establishment.

**True Believers Will Not Succumb**

As our text confirms, true believers will not succumb to the pressure of unbelievers. Although they may be required to *“flee,”* they will not close their mouths or cease to declare what they have seen and heard. **This is because of the compelling and satisfying nature of the truth itself.** The truth has a sanctifying power about it (John 17:17). Not only does it produce an environment of clarity for those who receive it, it brings great satisfaction and enjoyment to the soul. **What truth brings to the believer outweighs everything that is contrary to it.** Now, the person does not testify or preach out of a sense of mere obligation, but because of *“the spirit of faith,”* which is produced by the truth itself. Now the believer confesses with David and Paul, *“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak”* (2 Cor 4:13; Psa 116:10). This is why persecuted believers *“went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4).

**PREACHING TO JEWS ONLY**

*“... traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”*

Phenice was a region, approximately 150-200 miles north of Jerusalem. It was a strip of coastline about one hundred and twenty miles long and twelve miles broad. Antioch was about one hundred and eighty miles north of the northern frontier of Phenice, and was the capital city of the Greek kingdom of Syria. <sup>McClintok</sup> Cyprus was an island in the Mediterranean Sea. It is currently about one hundred and forty miles long, and ranging from fifty to five miles in width. <sup>McClintok</sup> It was about one hundred miles off the coast of Phenice, fifty miles south of Asia, and about 185-200 north of Jerusalem. **I give these approximate measurements to accent the aggressiveness of the dispersed believers.** Considering the involvements of traveling by land and sea to these places, this is a most arresting account. Terrain maps indicate that the country was rugged, and occasionally even mountainous.

These brethren were not *“preaching the word”* simply because they were commanded to do so. There is no



account of the apostles ever motivating early believers by, what men refer to as, *the great commission*. When Jesus spoke those words (Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16), He did not put them in the context of persecution. Neither, indeed, were they intended to be a law, like the Ten Commandments. This was rather the expression of how newness of life would react. It is reflected in the manner in which Luke refers to Christ's words. *"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"* (Luke 24:46-47).

There is a sense in which the preaching of repentance and the remission of sins is in the same category as Christ suffering and rising from the dead the third day. **It is a Divine appointment, and can be carried out only by those who have willingly embraced the word of the King.**

This is what we are seeing in this text – people who are willingly carrying out the Word of the King, even though they have been forced out of Jerusalem by an aggressive persecution.

#### Preaching to Jews Only

Even though the Gospel had been taken to the Gentiles, these scattered believers preached the Word only to Jews. It might be thought that this was wholly inappropriate. After all, on the day of Pentecost Peter had declared that the promise of the Holy Spirit was for those who are *"afar off"* as well as the Jews (Acts 2:39).

In addition to this, the city of Samaria had received both the Word of God and the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14,17), and the Ethiopian eunuch had believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and was baptized into Christ (Acts 8:36-38). Now, the household of Cornelius, together with his relatives and friends have also believed and received the Holy Spirit, being baptized into Christ (Acts 10:43-48).

**Yet, in the early days of the church, there was little clarity concerning the acceptance of the**

*promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power"* (Eph 3:3-7). Paul further expounded this reality in Ephesians 2:13-22.

It should not surprise us that it was difficult for the early Jews to perceive Jew and Gentile being joined together in one body. **To this very day there remain a significant number of Gentile believers who believe the Jews have been summarily rejected as a people, and that the church is, by Divine**

**To this very day there remain a significant number of Gentile believers who believe the Jews have been summarily rejected as a people, and that the church is, by Divine design, fundamentally Gentile.**

**Gentiles.** In fact, this was a matter that required some special revelation, which was given to Paul. Here is how Paul referred to that remarkable revelation. *"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his*

**design, fundamentally Gentile.** Such poor souls have fallen into the same pattern of erroneous thinking as many of the early Jews. This manner of thinking is also seen in the rarity of any Gospel preaching being directed toward the Jews. While such preaching can be found, it is generally an exception to the rule.

**The irony of the situation is that the mystery of Jew and Gentile being joined together has now been clarified through Paul, so that there ought to be no confusion on the matter.**

### SOME OF THEM PREACHED AMONG THE GRECIANS IN ANTIOCH

*"<sup>20</sup> And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus."*

Acts 8:4 states that those who were scattered *"went everywhere preaching the word."* Here is an example of one group of those people.

#### SOME OF THEM

*And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene . . ."* Cyprus was an Island North of Jerusalem, as I have already said. Cyrene was a region and city in Africa, which was nearly six hundred miles West of Jerusalem. Yet, these saints were together. Perhaps they were some of those who journeyed to

Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost mentioned in the second chapter of Acts.

This very expression ("some of them") confirms that the common activity of those who were scattered was **preaching the word.** Here the Holy Spirit places a magnifying glass over one part of them. It is interesting to observe that

“preaching” is not at all common in the modern church. In fact, it is even growing less and less common among the group referred to as “preachers.” The amount of actual time that they spend “preaching” is rather minimal. For some preachers, the time spent in preaching is less than one hour a week. The rest of the time is taken up with things other than proclaiming, declaring, and opening and alleging. However, in our text, “preaching” was the thing being done. In its various forms, “preaching” is mentioned thirty-six times in the book of Acts. It is referred to fifty-six times in the

been confined to those who are alienated from God. Further, it has always been the propensity of those who embrace the Gospel to preach it, according to each one’s ability. A sad day has dawned upon the church when it loses its appetite for preaching, replacing it with a desire for singing and entertainment.

**THEY SPAKE TO THE GRECIANS**

“... which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.” Other versions read, “the Hellenists,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “the Greeks,”<sup>NASB</sup> “THE Gentiles,”<sup>NLT</sup> “non-

“Grecians” is translated is Ἑλληνιστάς (hell-an-is-tas). The transliteration of the word (translation letter-by-letter instead of the translation of the word itself) is “hellenist), and it is so expressed in a number of versions (NKJV, RSV, CSB, ESV, YLT, LITV, MKJV, ISV). This word is used three times in the book of Acts (6:1; 9:29; 11:20). The first occasion is unquestionably a reference to Greek-speaking Jews, and there is no reason to question that this is its meaning in our text. The word “Gentiles” is the consistent word used to distinguish the Jewish people from the rest of the world. That is the ethnic designation of the non-Jewish humanity. The word Hellenist, or “Greek” is not an ethnic distinction, but one of speech, and is compared with those who spoke “the Jews’ language” (Neh 13:24), or “the Hebrew tongue” (Acts 21:40).

This circumstance must be seen with three facts in mind.

- ⇒ That the text says the scattered believers preached “only to the Jews.”
- ⇒ That the acceptance of the Gentiles as recipients of the Gospel began with the report of the conversion of the household of Cornelius.
- ⇒ That well after the events of our text, a special caucus was called in Jerusalem to discuss the matter of Gentile acceptance (Acts 15:2,13).

**In view of these considerations, I understand this text to be descriptive of a Gospel initiative primarily toward Greek-speaking Jews, although encompassing some of the Gentiles in Antioch.**

The manner in which this preaching is described is also worthy of note: “preaching the Lord Jesus.” This blends perfectly with the manner in which preaching is described throughout the book of Acts.

- ⇒ “Jesus Christ” was preached (3:20).
- ⇒ They “preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead” (4:2).
- ⇒ “Preaching the word” (8:4; 8:25;

**When they were driven out of Jerusalem, therefore, they did not simply seek a place of safety in which they could settle down and enjoy peace. Their lives had been altered by Christ, and they were now living for a different reason.**

Epistles, which are addressed to the churches and individual believers.

- ⇒ Paul was ready to preach the Gospel to the church in Rome (Rom 1:15).
- ⇒ Paul said believers were established by the preaching of Jesus Christ (Rom 16:25).
- ⇒ Preaching the cross is the power of God to those who believe (1 Cor 1:21).
- ⇒ Paul preached in order to present every man perfect before Christ (Col 1:28).
- ⇒ Timothy was exhorted to preach the Word with longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim 4:2).
- ⇒ God has manifested His Word in due times through preaching (Tit 1:3).
- ⇒ Peter said the Gospel is purposely being preached to those who believe (1 Pet 1:25).

In this text, the preaching was apparently done to those who were not in Christ. **However, preaching has never**

Jews,”<sup>IE</sup> “Hellenistic Jews,”<sup>ISV</sup> and “Greek-speaking Jews.”<sup>ALT</sup>

It was a long trip from Jerusalem to Antioch – approximately three hundred miles!<sup>McCLINTOK</sup> These scattered believers, however, made the trip and engaged in a holy activity – “preaching the Lord Jesus.” When they were driven out of Jerusalem, therefore, they did not simply seek a place of safety in which they could settle down and enjoy peace. Their lives had been altered by Christ, and they were now living for a different reason.

These spoke to “the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.” It is argued by some that those to whom these preached were not Jews, but were Gentiles. Those espousing this view state that their preaching thus differed from the preaching of the others who spoke “only to the Jews.” To me, this view is questionable, because the description of the activity of the entire group was that they preached “unto the Jews only.” Now, our text affirms, “some of **them**” made their way to Antioch and preached the Lord Jesus to “the Grecians.”

The Greek word from which

- 11:20; 14:25).
- ⇒ Men “preached Christ”(8:5; 9:20).
- ⇒ Men “preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”(8:12).
- ⇒ They “preached the Gospel” (8:25; 14:7,21).
- ⇒ They preached “Jesus”(8:35).
- ⇒ They preached “in the name of Jesus”(9:27).
- ⇒ God is said to have sent the word to

- Israel “preaching peace by Jesus Christ”(10:36).
- ⇒ Preaching “the Lord Jesus”(11:20).
- ⇒ They “preached the word of God”(13:5; 15:35).
- ⇒ Through Jesus “the forgiveness of sins”was preached (13:38).
- ⇒ They “preached the word of the Lord”(15:36).
- ⇒ They “preached Jesus and the resurrection”(Acts 17:18).

- ⇒ They “preached the kingdom of God”(20:24; 28:31).

**This is the kind of context within which the working of the Lord is being reported.** There is no institutional emphasis, and there is no declared effort to swell the numbers of the church. Rather, there is a message being delivered that is associated with the power of God unto salvation. The absence of this thrust in the church of our day is so obvious it is a wonder that any have missed it. Differing agendas have been adopted and are being perpetrated. All of this is not an innocent matter. Too much has been revealed to justify such action.

## THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH THEM

**<sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”**

Even though those who were preaching were doing so “unto the Jews only,” the Lord still blessed their endeavors. Like Peter prior to being at the house of Cornelius, their understanding had not yet been perfected concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles. However they delivered a message with which the Lord of glory could work – and He did!

### THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH THEM

“And the hand of the Lord was with them . . .” Other versions read, “the power of the Lord,”<sup>BBE</sup> “the Lord helped them,”<sup>NJB</sup> “the Lord honored this effort,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “the presence of the Lord,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “hand of the Master.”<sup>INTERLINEAR</sup>

The expression “hand of the Lord” is mentioned thirty-six times in Scripture. It is certainly worthy of our consideration.

Ponder the works that are attributed to “the hand of the Lord.”

- ⇒ The destruction of the men of Ashdod (1 Sam 5:6).
- ⇒ Turning the king’s heart (Prov 21:1).

- ⇒ Causing those in Judah to have one heart (2 Chron 30:12).
- ⇒ The dispensing of both good and evil, or calamity (Job 2:10).
- ⇒ Fulfilling prophesy (1 Kgs 8:15).
- ⇒ Upholding the righteous (Psa 37:24).
- ⇒ The success of John the Baptist (Lk 1:66).

“The hand of the Lord” is a literary anthropomorphism: i.e., “an interpretation of what is not human or personal in terms of human or personal characteristics.”<sup>MERRIAM-WEBSTER</sup> In this case, it is ascribing human attributes to God to assist in comprehending what He does. Thus we

- ⇒ The “ears of the Lord” (Num 11:18; James 5:4).
- ⇒ The “mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8:3; Isas 40:6).
- ⇒ The “arm of the Lord”(Isa 51:9; John 12:38).
- ⇒ The “finger of God” (Ex 8:19; Lk 11:20).
- ⇒ The “face of the Lord” (Gen 19:13; 1 Pet 3:12).
- ⇒ God’s “feet”(Ex 24:10; Psa 18:9).
- ⇒ His “tongue”(Isa 30:27).

The use of such terminology is not

**What God accomplishes among the sons of men is very real. It is not ethereal, or lacking material substance. His works are not mere visions or likenesses, or some form of a mere idea.**

read of the following:

- ⇒ The “eyes of the Lord”(Gen 6:8; 1 Pet 3:12).

intended to leave the impression that God has a body, for He is “a Spirit”(John 4:24). **However, by speaking in such a condescending manner, the Lord frees**

men from the tendency to philosophize about the working of the Lord, or assigning mystical meanings to His “wonderful works.”

**The Reality of Divine Working**

What God accomplishes among the sons of men is very real. It is not ethereal, or lacking material substance. His works are not mere visions or likenesses, or some form of a mere idea. When the Lord caused Joseph to prosper, it was observable, and was apparent to all who saw him. When He healed people, they became whole, and no longer bore

require holiness, nor is he insistent that men separate from the world. He allows duplicity in the people, and is pledged to work with people who insist on dwelling at a distance from him. He does not require the commitment of professing believers to himself or to one another, and is with them wherever they go, even if it is a place He has condemned.

This is the kind of god against which we are warned. John wrote, “*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in*

describes this use of the word “hand” as meaning, “by the help or agency of anyone.”  
LIGHTFOOT Lexically, as used in this text, the word means, “figuratively, as the expression of the activity of a supernatural or human being *control, power*; (a) of God’s agency as creator.” FRIEBERG

**There is a marked tendency in the Christian world to overstate the capability of men and understate the role of God in holy accomplishments.** This is precisely the reason for the current emphasis on methods and techniques, routines, and procedures. The modern church is producing a battery of religious professionals that are expert in producing impressive, yet ineffective results. They can launch initiatives to garner a lot of new church members, but they are not able to keep them. They can bring people to profess, but are impotent to enable them to possess. However, in our text we are reading of genuine believers preaching the authentic Gospel, and yielding God-glorifying results. All of this is because God was “*working with them*,” as He did with the apostles who had remained in Jerusalem (Mk 16:20).

**It is entirely possible that the reason for countless numbers of professing Christians being unable to live above the world is that they have embraced a false god.**

the marks or traits of their former illness. If he healed lepers, they simply were no longer lepers in any sense. “*The hand of the Lord*” is an accommodation to the Person of God Himself, but it does not diminish what He does.

**It is necessary to say these things because of the impression that is being left on society by the nominal church.** Although it may not be fashionable to make mention of these things, something must be said about them, for they are shaping the manner in which men think about God Himself.

The change that is wrought in regeneration is not at all apparent in our society. There is actually little difference between the average church member and the person of the world. Professing Christians are often noted for being slothful, dishonest, ignorant of God, and attached to the world – all of which are addressed in regeneration. The fact of sin has been so blurred that men scarcely know how to define it. What is even more serious, a mental idol has been erected and paraded before the masses. It is a god who loves everyone the same, and does so regardless of who they are or what they do. He can tolerate sin, and is even sympathetic toward it. He does not

*him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen*” (1 John 5:20-21). Any and every God who can be known or enjoyed independently of the direct ministry of Jesus is not the true God. It is an idol that cannot save or sanctify in any sense.

**It is entirely possible that the reason for countless numbers of professing Christians being unable to live above the world is that they have embraced a false god.** This is not something to be used in the judgment of others. However, it is incumbent upon everyone professing to be a Christian to know whether or not they have embraced the true God – and that will be determined by identifying the results that He produces. Just as surely as it is imperative that ever person come to God through Christ, it is also necessary for them to keep themselves from idols.

**God Was Active In Their Work**

When our text says “*the hand of the Lord was with them*,” it means that the Lord Himself was active in what they were doing. He was blessing their works and causing them to prosper, producing results by His power, while being active in their activities. One commentator

**A GREAT NUMBER BELIEVED, AND TURNED TO THE LORD**

“... and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” Other versions read, “a large number who believed turned to the Lord,”<sup>NASB</sup> “a great number had faith and were turned to the Lord,”<sup>BBE</sup> “believing, were converted to the Lord,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> “became believers,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “[learned] to believe (to adhere to and trust in and rely on the Lord) and turned and surrendered themselves to Him,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “put their faith in Him.”<sup>CEV</sup>

**One of the edifying things about the book of Acts is the different ways in which it describes those who were initially saved.** Some of the translations appear to make a studied habit of failing to project this intentional variety. The literal rendering of the text emphasizes the word “turned.” The Greek word used here is ἐπέστρεψεν, and there is no question about its technical meaning as used in this verse: “to turn to, to turn oneself,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “to turn around, (turn about),”<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> “turn to,”<sup>UBS</sup> “to turn about.”<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup>

**What It Means to Turn to the Lord**

To turn to the Lord is to cease traveling on the broad road that leads to

destruction. It involves an abrupt alteration of ones conduct. Thus we read of turning *“to God from idols”* (1 Thess 1:9). The commission delivered to Saul of Tarsus involved turning men *“from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God”* (Acts 26:18). The promised conversion of Israel is described as them being turned *“to the Lord”* (2 Cor 3:16). This involves beholding the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6). It means the person begins *“looking unto Jesus”* (Heb 12:1-2). The person who *“turns to God”* is occupied with the Lord. This means that they are no longer attracted to the world and the things that are in it. There is a prevailing interest in the things of God, and the Word of God, the Son of God, and the promises of God.

No person is truly *“saved”* who has not turned to the Lord. There is no such thing as a salvation that leaves the individual enamored of the world.

#### Holy Variety

Through this chapter, the inspired record of people being saved includes a variety of statements describing the experience.

- ⇒ **RECEIVED THE WORD AND WERE BAPTIZED.** *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized . . .”* (Acts 2:41a).
- ⇒ **THE LORD ADDED UNTO THEM.** *“...and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”* (Acts 2:41b).
- ⇒ **THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH.** *“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47).
- ⇒ **HEARD THE WORD AND BELIEVED.** *“Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand”* (Acts 4:4).
- ⇒ **BELIEVERS WERE ADDED.** *“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”* (Acts 5:14).
- ⇒ **THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES WAS MULTIPLIED.** *“And in those days,*

*when the number of the disciples was multiplied . . .”* (Acts 6:1). *“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly”* (Acts 6:7a).

- ⇒ **OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.** *“. . .and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”* (Acts 6:7b).
- ⇒ **BELIEVED AND WERE BAPTIZED.** *“But*

*“Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?”* (Acts 11:17).

- ⇒ **GOD GRANTED REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.** *“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto*

**Salvation is a large work, and may therefore be viewed from many different perspectives – all of which are inherent in salvation itself. The person who can employ such language will, in that very employment, distance himself from sectarianism, which demands some form of stereotyping.**

*when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”* (Acts 8:12).

- ⇒ **RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD.** *“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God . . .”* (Acts 8:14).
- ⇒ **TURNED TO THE LORD.** *“And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord”* (Acts 9:35).
- ⇒ **BELIEVED IN THE LORD.** *“And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord”* (Acts 9:42).
- ⇒ **RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT.** *“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”* (Acts 10:47).
- ⇒ **RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD.** *“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God”* (Acts 11:1).
- ⇒ **GOD GAVE THEM THE GIFT.**

*life”* (Acts 11:18).

- ⇒ **BELIEVED AND TURNED TO THE LORD.** *“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:21).
- ⇒ **ADDED TO THE LORD.** *“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:24).

#### Salvation Is A Large Work

Salvation is a large work, and may therefore be viewed from many different perspectives – all of which are inherent in salvation itself. **The person who can employ such language will, in that very employment, distance himself from sectarianism, which demands some form of stereotyping.** To stereotype something is to make it conform to a fixed pattern, making it hackneyed, and robbing it of its power.

I understand that those who are dominated by the natural mind can make no sense out of this. They prefer to have a step-by-step plan that will fully describe how a person may appropriate salvation. Such a plan can be readily codified and printed, thus making for the preferred consistency. **However, no such**

approach is made in Scripture to the directing of a soul in what to do to be saved.

We have a number of statements in the book of Acts that relate to what people were to do in order to appropriate the salvation of God. Although there are not many of these statements, no person can afford to treat the subject as though these texts did not exist.

- ⇒ **CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD.** *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13).
- ⇒ **REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.** *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be*

⇒ **BELIEVING AND RECEIVING REMISSION.** *“To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43).

⇒ **BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.** *“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31).

We can add to this the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). And again, *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”* (John 10:9). Paul adds that salvation requires the hearing of the

- ⇒ Calling on the name of the Lord, and being saved.
- ⇒ Repenting unto life.
- ⇒ Being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.
- ⇒ Being converted in order to have ones sins blotted out.
- ⇒ Believing and confessing that Jesus is the Son of God in order to be baptized.
- ⇒ Entering the sheepfold by means of Christ.
- ⇒ Hearing the Gospel from the mouth of a God-sent person.

The Gospel is calculated to direct the one who believes it into a path that will include all of these responses – and this does not even include the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).

In my judgment, the tendency to codify the means of appropriating the salvation of God is driven by what I call a *Great Commission* mentality. That is the presumption that the most significant work of the church is to see to it that souls are initially converted – even though there is not a church of Scriptural record that was ever told such a thing. To take such a position is like saying that the most important thing in building the Temple was to get the work underway. Who does not know that the essential thing was to build the Temple, and to finish the work.

So it is in Christ Jesus. The most vital work has to do with conforming us to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29), Christ being *“formed”* in us (Gal 4:19), and growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15). **If believers are not “changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18), what difference does it make whether they entered the fold or started the race? If men are “called” by God “into the fellowship” of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9), what may be said of those who give no evidence of having such a fellowship? Although men are prone to do this, God does not dismiss the requirement for growing up into Christ because a person**

**The Gospel is calculated to direct the one who believes it into a path that will include all of these responses – and this does not even include the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment**

*baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

- ⇒ **REPENT AND BE CONVERTED.** *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”* (Acts 3:19).
- ⇒ **CONFESSING JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.** *“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him”* (Acts 8:38; Rom 10:9-10).

Gospel, delivered by a preacher who has been sent by God (Rom 10:14-17).

Now, all of these statements are true, and none are to be altered or rejected. Each of them reflect some discernment as to where the hearer is, and what he is to be told. **Most, if not all, of them presume that some kind of inquiry has been made into the matter of salvation.**

I do not know what valid purpose is served by crystalizing a *plan of salvation* – particularly sense such a plan is nowhere articulated in Scripture. **We know that there are not multiple ways to be saved, for the gate of entrance to the road that leads to life is a single one.**

I am suspicious of the integrity of any person who finds it easy to omit any requirement that has been stated in Scripture. Think of the marvelous scope of human response that has been covered in the statements just cited:

has been busy *winning souls*. Further, the one who is actually being conformed to the image of Christ will be up and about spreading the word, and shining as a light in the world. **Of course, that is precisely what we see happening in our text.** Even though the people were persecuted and forced out of Jerusalem, they still went everywhere preaching the Word, and God worked with them.

**See, in the book of Acts the people were caught up in the Divinely appointed objective of becoming like Jesus.** That is why they went everywhere preaching the Word, and that is why those who heard that word always were properly directed, and always obeyed what they were commanded – and there are no exceptions.

It would bring personal delight to my soul to hear of a body of people who “*turned to the Lord*.” I would know at once they had “*turned from*” every competing interest, and would be eager to obey the Lord. However, I greatly fear that a gospel is being preached these days that is not even presenting the view of turning to the Lord, or calling upon His name, or being converted.

## THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM HEARD OF THE WORK

**“<sup>22</sup> Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.”**

I want to emphasize that we are being exposed to the manner of life in the body of Christ. There is a constant communication of the works of the Lord within that body. When the Lord worked, it was faithfully reported.

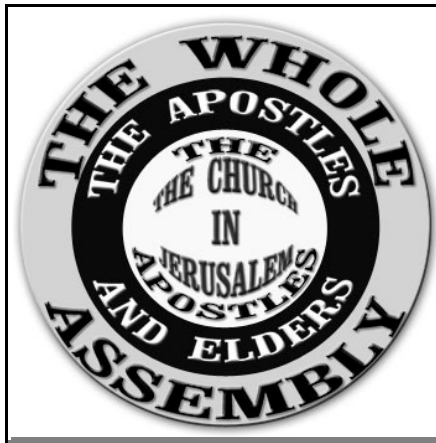
### TIDINGS REACHED JERUSALEM

*Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem . . .* Other versions read, “*news of these things,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*news of this,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*the report concerning them,*”<sup>ASV</sup> “*the news about Antioch,*”<sup>GWN</sup> “*the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*the account was heard in the ears of the assembly,*”<sup>YLT</sup> “*the congregation which was at Jerusalem heard about these new believers,*”<sup>LIVING</sup> “*the rumors of this came to their ears of the church (assembly) in Jerusalem,*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “*the word about them was heard in the ears of the assembly.*”<sup>ALT</sup>

There was a level of communication among early believers that is scarcely known in our time. **It is evident that a priority was placed upon what the Lord was doing, and that was faithfully reported.** Already the church in Jerusalem had heard of the conversion of the Gentiles in Caesarea. Now, another report reaches the church concerning many turning to the Lord in Antioch.

The language suggests that these

were not merely person-to-person reports, but ones that were given in the assembly: “*unto the ears of the church,*” or “*in the ears of the assembly.*”<sup>YLT</sup> **This being true, it tells us something concerning the nature of the assembly in Jerusalem.** Their focus was obviously on what the Lord was doing, and they were interested in His working in places far removed from themselves. When the text says the assembly heard “*these things,*” it means they heard of “*a great number*” believing and turning “*to the Lord.*” Further, they would know that this was the result of “*the hand of the Lord*” being



with them.

The first report delivered to Jerusalem was that of the city of Samaria believing. It is written that this report was heard by “*the apostles*” (8:14). The second report that was heard concerned the Gentiles in Caesarea

believing. That report was heard by “*the apostles and brethren in Judaea*” (11:1). The third report concerned a great number of people in Antioch, a chief city, who had believed and turned to the Lord. This time, the report comes to “*the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem*” (11:22).

In this text we perceive a certain growth that is taking place in the church in Jerusalem. At first, the decisions were made solely by the “*apostles.*” Then, the “*elders*” are brought into the decision-making process. Now, the whole church becomes involved, selecting a representative that is neither an elder nor an apostle.

**Here is an example of a body of believers maturing, coming into singleness of mind, and increasing with the increase of God.** The revealed objective for the church is thus seen as taking place in a particular assembly. The following text confirm that objective.

⇨ “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Cor 1:10).

⇨ “*And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the*

*Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13).*

⇒ *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:15-16).*

⇒ *“ . . . the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col 2:19).*

For the most part, in our time, these are distant goals that are rarely seen. **In our text they are realities.** They are characteristics that are employed in walking in the works for which the saved are ordained (Eph 2:10).

Now, it is their response to this report that is of particular importance. It will confirm how those early brethren thought, and where their placed their priorities.

### THEY SENT FORTH BARNABAS

*“ . . . and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.”* Other versions read, *“they sent out,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“they sent Barnabas off to Antioch,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“they sent Barnabas to Antioch,”* <sup>NIV</sup> and *“Barnabas was sent.”* <sup>GWN</sup>

This is the third time Barnabas is mentioned in the book of Acts (4:36; 9:27; 11:22). Every time, there was an initiative associated with his name. First, he had a piece of land and sold it, bringing the proceeds and laying them at the feet of the apostles (4:36-37). Second, he took newly converted Saul to the apostles and declared how Jesus had appeared and spoken to him, and how he had *“preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus”* (9:27). **Now, the assembly in Jerusalem sends him far North to Antioch to examine the work reported to have taken place there – three hundred miles away!** Although, considering the modes of transportation, this was a considerable distance, there is not the

slightest hint of any inconvenience.

### SOME FACTS ABOUT ANTIOCH

A city on the banks of the Orontes, 300 miles north of Jerusalem, and about 30 from the Mediterranean. This metropolis was situated where the chain of Lebanon, running northward, and the chain of Taurus, running eastward, are brought to an abrupt meeting. Here the Orontes breaks through the mountains; and Antioch was placed at a bend of the river, partly on an island, partly on the level which forms the left bank, and partly on the steep and craggy ascent of Mount Silpius, which rose abruptly on the south. It was in the province of Seleucis, called Tetrapolis, from containing the four cities Antioch, Seleucia, Apamea, and Laodicea; of which the first was named after Antiochus, the father of the founder; the second after himself; the third after his wife Apama; and the fourth in honor of his mother . . . In the time of Chrysostom the population was computed at 200,000, of whom one half, or even a greater proportion, were professors of Christianity (Chrysos. *Adv. Jud.* 1, 588; *Hom. in Ignat.* 2, 597; *In Matthew Hom.* 85, 7:810). Chrysostom also states that the Church at Antioch maintained 3000 poor, besides occasionally relieving many more (*In Matthew Hom.* 7, 658).

McCLINTOK STRONG'S

By saying *“as far as Antioch,”* the text means Barnabas was to cover the territory all the way up to Antioch, which was North of Phenice. It is not clear whether he went to Cyrene and Cyprus – although the suggestion is that he did not. The fact that he remained in Antioch for some time suggests that it was the specific place to which Barnabas was sent.

Barnabas had distinguished himself in the faith, and it was duly noted by the assembly. Earlier, the apostles had *“surnamed”* him Barnabas, for his natural name was *“Joses,”* or Joseph (4:36). Now, however, he appears to be well known among all of the disciples for his spiritual qualities. Once again, I want to draw attention to the fact that he was not an apostle, and was not one of the seven who were chosen (Acts 6). Later, in chapter thirteen, he will be classed among the prophets and teachers in Antioch. However, at this time he was not counted among the prophets in Jerusalem. Yet, Barnabas had excelled to such an extent that he was sent to Antioch to examine the work that had been done there.

### SOMETHING TO NOTE

It is arresting to see the interest

that the early brethren had in others who had received the word of God. This interest will surface several times in the book of Acts (15:2-3,32,36,40-41; 16:4-5,40; 18:27).

In my own judgment, one of the besetting sins of the American church is its lack of interest in the saints of God. There is even a mindset afoot among professed believers that belittles the idea of ministering to the people of God, or devoting quality time to maturing them in the faith. The result of this tragic condition is that the churches are generally weak in the faith, with ignorance prevailing rather than the *“wisdom and spiritual understanding”* that was the focus of apostolic prayers and endeavors (Col 1:9).

**Even though the Head of the church has provided it with remarkable teaching and revelation, multitude of people remain in abject ignorance concerning them.** When you consider what has been delivered to the churches, this is mind-boggling! The list of writings specifically addressed to believers include Acts, Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, First Peter, Second Peter, First John, Second John, Third John, Jude, and Revelation. Within the framework of these letters the following are contained.

- ⇒ The exposition of the Person of Christ Jesus.
- ⇒ The exposition of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.
- ⇒ The exposition of the present mediatorial and intercessory ministry of Jesus.
- ⇒ An exposition of the second coming of Christ.
- ⇒ The eternal purpose of God, and how it is being accomplished through Jesus.
- ⇒ The ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- ⇒ The objective for the church.

- ⇒ The resources available to the church.
- ⇒ The nature and effects of regeneration.
- ⇒ The pivotal nature, purpose, and effectiveness of the grace of God.
- ⇒ The exposition of justification, how it is received by faith, and what it does.
- ⇒ The combining of Jew and Gentile into one body.
- ⇒ The complexities related to the old man and the new man.
- ⇒ The presence and purpose of spiritual gifts.
- ⇒ The danger of this world, and the necessity of being separate from it.
- ⇒ How believers overcome the devil and the world.
- ⇒ The definition and nature of the new covenant.
- ⇒ What happens when a person is baptized into Christ.
- ⇒ The necessity and role of hope in the life of faith.
- ⇒ The reality of a falling away that would be found within the church, together with its nature and effects.

**What I am saying is that it is inexcusable for the church today to stand in stark contrast to the church of which we are reading. Unless there is something about salvation that makes for spiritual decline, and unless faith is really not the victory that overcomes the world, this current condition of the church is like a trumpet blast of alarm.**

- ⇒ The rise and fall of spiritual Babylon.
- ⇒ The necessity of holiness, and the rationale that supports that necessity.
- ⇒ Details concerning the end of the world and how that knowledge impacts upon life.

These are only representative of the content and nature of apostolic doctrine. **So far as the record is concerned, this is the focus of all spiritual gifts and sound doctrine.** Yet, there is such a level of ignorance on these matters that it defies all soundness of thought. Consider if a mandatory questionnaire on these matters were delivered to every church in our land, and a demand made for it to be answered and given to men of understanding to peruse. I do not doubt that it would be difficult to even support that the people had been born again, or had made any kind of genuine commitment to the Lord. **If this assessment reflects any degree of accuracy, it should awaken a vigorous**

**and sustained interest in maturing the body of Christ.** There is no possible way that a people enveloped in perpetual ignorance, and remaining in a juvenile state can be described as making herself ready to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ – **and that is precisely how the real church is described (Rev 19:7).**

What I am saying is that it is inexcusable for the church today to stand in stark contrast to the church of which we are reading. **Unless there is something about salvation that makes for spiritual decline, and unless faith is really not the victory that overcomes the world, this current condition of the church is like a trumpet blast of alarm.**

May God raise up men who can recognize this situation that now confronts us – men of wisdom and understanding – who will lift up their voice like watchmen on the wall. It is time to make war on spiritual mediocrity, and thrust from our presence anyone and everyone that is promoting it. There is no place for such people in Christ's body.

## BARNABAS SAW THE GRACE OF GOD, AND WAS GLAD

***“<sup>23</sup> Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”***

We know from this verse why Barnabas went to Antioch. **It was to provide a sound assessment of the work there, and to respond accordingly to it.** I must acknowledge that I know few men capable of such a diagnosis.

### HE SAW THE GRACE OF GOD

*“Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God . . .”* Other versions read, *“witnessed the grace of God,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“saw the evidence of the grace of God,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“seeing for himself the grace of God,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“to see what God had done for them out of kindness,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“saw this evidence of God's blessing,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“saw the wonderful things God was doing,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“to see the grace which God had bestowed,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“saw the spiritual blessing God had given*

*them,”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *“saw what grace (favor) God was bestowing upon them,”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> *“saw this working of God's grace,”*<sup>PHILLIPS</sup> *“perceiving the grace of the God,”*<sup>INTERLINEAR</sup> and *“saw what God had been kind enough to do for them.”*<sup>CEV</sup>

Exactly how does one “see” the grace of God. Grace itself is not tangible, nor can its presence be substantiated by any natural senses. So far as human sight is concerned, “grace” itself is

invisible, just as the God who gives it.

The Greek word translated “seen” is ἰδόν. This word accents knowledge or awareness instead of the sight of the eye. As used in this text it means to “to perceive, notice, discern, discover,” THAYER “as having come to a perception or realization of something know, understand, comprehend” FRIBERG and “understand, recognize, come to know” GINGRICH **This is seeing that is done with the mind,** as compared with the eyes. It is perception of the same order as that expressed by Peter to Simon the sorcerer: “For I **perceive** that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in

those familiar with it. Ponder some of the statements of the Spirit concerning the grace of God.

⇒ **MEN BELIEVE THROUGH GRACE.** “And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace” (Acts 18:27). Grace is only as evident as one’s faith, and wherever faith can be confirmed, the presence of grace is also corroborated.

**Grace brings spiritual stability, enabling the believer to stand amidst trials and in the face of ungodly trends and emphases. Where people are not standing firm, the presence of God’s grace cannot be substantiated.**

the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:23). It is also akin to the perception he expressed in Acts 10:34: “For I **perceive** that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” Paul spoke in the same manner to the Athenians: “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” (Acts 17:22).

In all of these texts, as well as the verse we are considering, something was seen with the eyes. But it is the deduction to which they refer – the truth that was ascertained by their hearts and minds.

Now, back to the question of how a person can see or perceive the grace of God. **First of all, the language suggests an acquaintance with the grace of God, so that it can be recognized.** A person who is not familiar with the grace of God has no way of recognizing it, even though strong evidence is placed squarely before him. Once the grace of God is comprehended to some measurable degree, the evidence of it can be detected.

What, then, are some of the effects of the grace of God? What does it do that can be readily recognized by

⇒ **MEN STAND IN THE GRACE OF GOD.** “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2; 1 Pet 5:12). Grace brings spiritual stability, enabling the believer to stand amidst trials and in the face of ungodly trends and emphases. Where people are not standing firm, the presence of God’s grace cannot be substantiated.

⇒ **GRACE REIGNS THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS.** “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2). This is righteousness that is expressed, or lived out. John refers to it as **doing** righteousness (1 John 2:29; 3:7,10). Where godly living is observed, grace is present. Where there are lapses into sin and friendship with the world, grace is absent.

⇒ **UNDER GRACE, SIN LOSES ITS DOMINION.** “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Those who have tasted of the grace of God are **not** dominated by sin. Those who are ruled by sin have spurned God’s

grace,

⇒ **GRACE CAUSES SPIRITUAL PRODUCTIVITY.** “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor 15:10). Those who are spending and being spent for the cause of the Lord are doing so because they have grace. Those who are living for self and uninvolved in the work of the Lord are in that condition because they do not have grace.

⇒ **GRACE BRINGS SUFFICIENCY IN EVERYTHING.** “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Cor 15:10). A personal sufficiency that is of such magnitude that it allows a person to abound to every good work exists because of the grace of God.

⇒ **GRACE BRINGS CONSOLATION AND HOPE.** “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2 Thess 2:16). The presence of everlasting consolation and good hope is a confirmation of the presence of the grace of God. These twin qualities ensure that the person does not cast off their faith, or succumb in the time of trial. Those who are knocked down by trial and swept away by temptation lack the grace of God – and we are saved “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8).

⇒ **GRACE TEACHES MEN EFFECTIVELY.** “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13). Those who know how to live godly and do so, have been effectively taught by the grace of God. They are

able to reject the tug of temptation and yield to the impulses of the Spirit – and they do so. Ungodly people are always lacking in grace, if not devoid of it altogether, and that condition exists because they do not have faith.

→ **GRACE ENABLES MEN TO SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY.** “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28). There is a Divine standard for serving God. Men cannot serve God out of rote, or by mere routine. What is more, their service must be accompanied by reverence and godly fear. It is the presence of grace that causes this kind of service.

When Barnabas came to Antioch, he saw the evidences of grace, which were apparently abundant. I cannot help but consider how he would react to the average church of our day. What would he see, or perceive, that would cause him to see the grace of God in the people? That is, indeed, something to think about!

**HE WAS GLAD**

“... was glad...” Other versions read, “he rejoiced,”<sup>NASB</sup> “he was pleased,”<sup>GWN</sup> “was filled with joy,”<sup>NLT</sup> “was filled with excitement and joy,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “made him very happy,”<sup>IE</sup> “he was delighted,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “he was full of joy,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “was joyed.”<sup>INTERLINEAR</sup>

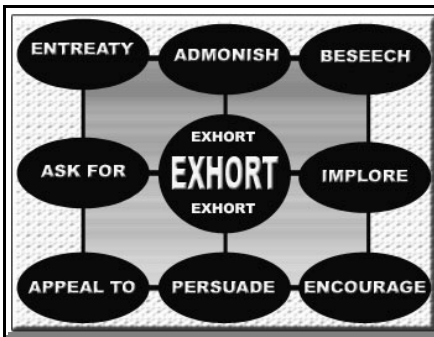
The word from which “was glad” is translated means, “to rejoice, be glad, in a proper, and strict sense,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “be delighted,”<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> and “to enjoy a state of happiness.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> This word contains the ideas of gratification and extreme satisfaction. It also includes the idea of pleasure. All of this is in a “proper and strict sense,” as compared to sinful indulgence and the pleasures of sin for a season.

**The unique thing about this is that Barnabas was not rejoicing in what he had personally experienced.** Rather, it was in what he had beheld in others. He saw the grace of God in them, and “was glad.” This is an aspect of rejoicing in the truth (1 Cor 13:6), which is a display of the absolute absence of self-centeredness.

One of the indications of spiritual maturity is when the individual finds great joy and satisfaction when the grace of God is at work in other people.

**HE EXHORTED THEM ALL**

“... and exhorted them all...” Other versions read, “encouraged them,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “he made clear to them the need of,”<sup>BBE</sup> “entreated them,”<sup>MRD</sup> “urged them all,”<sup>NJB</sup> “continuously encouraged,”<sup>ISV</sup> “continuously exhorted (warned, urged, and encouraged) them all,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> “he begged them,”<sup>CEV</sup> and “urged them.”<sup>GNB</sup>



The word “exhorted” is an important one in our spiritual vocabulary. It means “to call for, summon... entreaty... admonish... beg, beseech,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “as speaking with persistence, earnestly ask for, implore, beg... urge, encourage,”<sup>FRIEBERG</sup> “appeal to,”<sup>UBS</sup> “ask for earnestly,”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> “to request, to plead for, to appeal to,”<sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup> “to persuade,”<sup>LEH</sup> and “implore.”<sup>GINGRICH</sup>

This is a word that has to do with persuasion – constraining people to do the will of the Lord, and engage themselves in what is right and needful. Exhorting is one of the spiritual gifts, or abilities, that the Lord has placed in the church. After telling the saints that they are to think soberly, and in accord with the measure of faith that has been dispensed to them, Paul mentions several gifts that were apparently functioning in the Roman church. Among them was exhortation. He admonishes the brethren to use their gift properly, doing what they have been placed in the body to do. In his admonition he says, “or he that exhorteth on exhortation” (Rom 12:3-8). “The exhorter,”<sup>RSV</sup> he says, is to give himself “in exhortation.”

**The Distinction Between a Command and an Exhortation**

An exhortation is more of an appeal than a demand. That does not mean that it is to be treated as optional, or that it does not really have to be done. This is an appeal to the heart as well as to the mind. It is not so much a statement of what is essential, as it is to what is reasonable. **An exhortation presumes some life and desire, and is urging the person to act upon it, and enter wholeheartedly into the work.** In an exhortation, the sense of the action to which men are called is made obvious, so that, if accepted, the exhortation will confirm that absolute unreasonableness of failing to respond in faith. For this reason, those who respond to exhortations are least apt to require chastening rebuke, reproof, and instruction in righteousness. Institutionalism has so hidden the value of exhortation that it is exceedingly difficult for some to make any sense out of it. Some would rather depend upon an authoritarian approach – a demand from the leaders of the church, a mandate from the elders, or a dictum from the mythical church board.

**The necessity for exhortation is seen in that fact that we are engaged in a warfare – both without and within.** Within, there is “a law,” that when we would do good, evil is present with us (Rom 7:21). Not only do we possess the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, we also have “another law” that wages war against the law of our mind (Rom 7:23). Without, we are a declining world within which we are strangers. Yet, it calls to us through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – all of which are “in the world” (1 John 2:15-17). In our time, there is also the influence of false religion that maintains a “form of godliness, but denies the power thereof” (2 Tim 3:5). All of this requires the word of exhortation to encourage and move us forward in our progress to glory.

**Exhortation is not common in the modern church, even though the gift of exhortation has been placed within the body of Christ.** Religious men have chosen to yield to the masses, looking upon any summons higher to be putting undue pressure upon the people. It is imagined that they will move forward at their own pace without having to be stirred up. After all, it is assumed, they

love the Lord, and therefore they will grow at their own pace, so to speak.

Any soul who is simple enough to accept such erroneous reasoning will have to remove a good part of the Scriptures, cutting out the many exhortations delivered to the people of God with Jehudi's penknife (Jer 36:23). **Any person who objects to being exhorted, pled with, appealed to, and asked to move forward in faith, is shortsighted, to say the least.** It is wrong to yield to the juvenile whims of such people, and no person professing to be of God can afford to do so. There simply is too much at stake for those who have come into Christ to be left on their own. This is why Barnabas faithfully and willingly exhorted the people.

Note that he did not do this because the people were lagging behind, or were spiritually indolent, neglecting so great salvation. **He was moved to exhort the people because he had seen the grace of God in them.** Due reflection on that perspective will yield a good harvest of holy thought.

#### CLEAVE WITH PURPOSE OF HEART

“. . . that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.” Other versions read, “with purpose of heart continue with the Lord,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord,”<sup>NASB</sup> “remain true to the Lord with all of their hearts,”<sup>NIV</sup> “remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion,”<sup>RSV</sup> “keeping near the Lord with all the strength of their hearts,”<sup>BBE</sup> “remain true to the Lord with their whole hearts,”<sup>CJB</sup> “remain solidly committed to the Lord,”<sup>GWN</sup> “with all their heart, they would adhere to our Lord,”<sup>MRD</sup> “remain faithful to the Lord in

**There are staggering numbers of professing Christians who have never been so addressed by any living person. Never have they been admonished to hold fast to the Lord with steadfast determination. They have never been challenged to cling to Jesus with a purposeful heart.**

firmness of heart,”<sup>NAB</sup> “stay close to the Lord, whatever the cost,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “Never lose your faith. Always obey the Lord with all your heart,”<sup>IE</sup> “remain, with fixed resolve, faithful to the Lord,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “with hearty purpose to continue to be devoted to the Lord,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “remain faithful to the Lord, with full purpose of heart,”<sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> “cleave unto and remain faithful to and devoted to the Lord with [resolute and steady] purpose of heart,”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> “be resolute in their faithfulness to the Lord,”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup> “with purpose of [or, a resolute] heart [fig., with steadfast devotion] to be continuing with [fig., remaining loyal to] the Lord,”<sup>ALT</sup> and “remain solidly committed to the Lord.”<sup>CEV</sup>

**There are staggering numbers of professing Christians who have never been so addressed by any living person.** Never have they been admonished to hold fast to the Lord with steadfast determination. They have never been challenged to cling to Jesus with a purposeful heart. Somehow they rarely, if ever, hear anything about their personal identity with God through Christ Jesus. They only hear of their lives in this world, resolving social and domestic difficulties, and doing their best to do what is right. However, the matter at hand – cleaving to the Lord with purpose of heart – was the **first** thing that Barnabas said when he saw the grace of God in the those in Antioch who had “turned to the Lord.”

Let it be clear, therefore, that turning to the Lord is not the fundamental thing. **It is rather the beginning that enables the primary thing to be done.** You would never get this impression in the average church. Many of the sermons that are regularly delivered do not leave people with this thought. Much of the literature to which they subject their minds is devoid of this kind of admonition.

The exhortation of Barnabas perfectly agreed with the words of our Lord: “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 . . . If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:4,6). **Is there any person of sound mind who will postulate that a person can be saved without abiding in Christ, or without cleaving to Him with purpose of heart?**

Or, who will champion the cause that states our condition in Christ requires no vigilance, no commitment, and no steadfastness. Further, precisely why are many people apparently arriving at that conclusion? If such a spiritual posture is even remotely possible, why did Barnabas deliver such a stirring exhortation? What would possibly compel him to speak in such a manner?

### A GOOD MAN, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FAITH

**“<sup>24</sup> For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.”**

Now the text accounts for **why**

Barnabas said what he did. I will tell you that this is a very revealing text – one that many poor souls will not be able to receive. Yet, this is the Holy Spirit, moving Luke to record not only what took

place, but **why** it took place.

#### FOR

“For . . .” Other versions read, “because.”<sup>NET/YLT/ALT</sup>

The Greek word translated “for” is  $\delta\tau\iota$ , and it is found in all of the standard manuscripts. As used in this text, its lexical meaning is, “the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that,” THAYER “because, for, since,” UBS and “as a causal conjunction because, since.” GINGRICH

It was for the reason that follows that Barnabas exhorted the people to cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart – because, he as a “good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith.” NKJV That is why, when he perceived the grace in the people, he spoke as he did.

**A PARTICULAR KIND OF MAN**

“... he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith...”

Luke now accounts for the action of Barnabas. It was not because he was obligated to do so. Nor, indeed, was it because he was talented, and was compelled to use that talent.

**A Good Man**

Forty-eight of the versions that I

“edification” (Rom 15:2). He, like the brethren in Rome, was “full of goodness” (Rom 15:14), and was “wise unto that which is good” (Rom 16:19). As a “good man” Barnabas walked in the “good works” that had been ordained for him (Eph 2:10). He was no doubt “fruitful in every good work” (Col 1:10), and was among those who followed “that which is good” (1 Thess 5:15). This was a man of God who had been “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” by the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:17).

**In other words, Barnabas was walking in newness of life, and therefore was devoted to the betterment of the saints.** His was not a philosophical religion, but one that was lived in the power of the truth of God.

I have emphasized repeatedly that the book of Acts, among other things, confirms how life in Christ Jesus is lived. Barnabas is a case in point.

**Full of the Holy Spirit**

The text does not say that

person who lives and walks “in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). A person who is “full of the Holy Spirit” is the one who is “led by the Spirit” in putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13-14). This is the person who is “strengthened with might” by the Holy Spirit in the inner man (Eph 3:16), and in whom “the fruit of the Spirit” is being exhibited (Gal 5:22-24). It is a person who neither quenches nor grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19).

**Full of Faith**

This is also a most arresting phrase. This statement was also made concerning Stephen (Acts 6:5,8). This is synonymous with being “strong in faith,” and not wavering (Rom 4:20). The effect of such a state is that the believer comes to possess the “full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22). Being full of faith is equivalent to living by faith (Heb 10:38) and walking by faith (2 Cor 5:7). It means that faith is the basis of both reasoning and living. When we are full of faith, like Abraham, we “consider not” natural circumstances that contradict what faith apprehends (Rom 4:19). A person who is full of faith will “prepare an ark to the saving of his house,” even though there is no outward evidence or circumstance that justifies such an action (Heb 11:7).

**What of Those Who Do Not Exhort the Saints?**

If Barnabas exhorted those in whom the grace of God had been seen because he was a good man, and filled with the Holy Spirit and faith, **what can be said of pretentious leaders who do not do as he did?** What can be said of the preacher or teacher who does not admonish the people to cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart? What of those who year after year omit such words from their preaching and teaching? **What kind of men are they?** I will leave the matter for you to consider. However, I am persuaded the omission of such exhortations is a far more serious condition than some think.

**MUCH PEOPLE WERE ADDED TO THE LORD**

“... and much people was added unto the Lord.” Other versions read, “considerable numbers were brought to the Lord,” NASB “added to the Lord,” NRSV

**I have emphasized repeatedly that the book of Acts, among other things, confirms how life in Christ Jesus is lived. Barnabas is a case in point.**

have read “good man.” Some variant versions read “dependable man,” GWN “kindly person,” LIVING “good man [good in himself and also at once for the good and the advantage of other people].” AMPLIFIED

The word “good” means, “of a good constitution or nature,” THAYER “of the moral character of persons good, upright, worthy,” FRIBERG “just, kind, generous,” UBS and “implies some type of activity involving others.” LOUW-NIDA

**In other words, the life of Barnabas was in harmony with his profession.** He “worked good,” as stated in Romans 2:10. He was among those who were overcoming evil “with good” (Rom 12:21). He was willing and able to please “his neighbor for his good unto

Barnabas once was filled with the Holy Spirit – as some are wont to speak – but that he was “full of the Holy Spirit.” That is, this was the condition in which he was remaining. The Amplified Bible reads, “full of and controlled by the Holy Spirit.” This same thing was said of Stephen (Acts 6:5). When the apostles told the early church to select men to be placed over food distribution, they specified that the men must be “full of the Holy Spirit” NKJV (Acts 6:3).

Believers are admonished, “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Barnabas was fulfilling that word. This is the kind of person who is “spiritually minded,” or has a mind that is “controlled by the Spirit” NIV (Rom 8:6). This is the

“were joined to the Lord,”<sup>BBE</sup> “joined them selves to the Lord,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “believed in the Lord,”<sup>GWN</sup> “won over to the Lord,”<sup>NJB</sup> “became followers of the Lord,”<sup>IE</sup> “the number of believers in the Lord greatly increased,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “were united to the Lord,”<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> “added to the Master.”<sup>INTERLINEAR</sup> “turned to the Lord,”<sup>CEV</sup> and “believed in the Lord.”<sup>GW</sup>

Linguistically, there is no question concerning the meaning of the word translated “added.” The Greek word is προσετέθη, and all of the accepted manuscripts contain it. The lexical meaning of the word is, “to put to . . . to add, join to, gather with,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “put to, add to,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “to add something.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> This word is used eighteen times in the Scriptures. Examples of its usage is as follows.

- ⇒ “Which of you by taking thought can **add** one cubit unto his stature?” (Matt 6:27).
- ⇒ “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be **added** unto you” (Matt 6:33).
- ⇒ “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were **added** unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).
- ⇒ “Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord **added** to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).
- ⇒ “And believers were the more **added** to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14).
- ⇒ “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was **added** because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal 3:19).

As you can see, the meaning is very apparent: something or someone was appended to what already existed. **In the text before us, people were added, and “the Lord” is the existing Reality to whom they were added.**

Here the uniqueness of life in

Christ is brought to light. Under the Law the people were **not** added to the Lord. Nor, indeed, were they added to Moses, the Lord’s representative. But here, in our text, the people were actually added “to the Lord.” I am not sure what translators were thinking when they chose to translate the words “joined themselves to,”<sup>GENEVA</sup> “believed,”<sup>GWN</sup> “won over,”<sup>NJB</sup> “became followers of,”<sup>IE</sup> and “turned to.”<sup>CEV</sup> Whatever was in their minds, they failed to convey a very essential aspect of salvation.

#### Believers Are Joined to the Lord

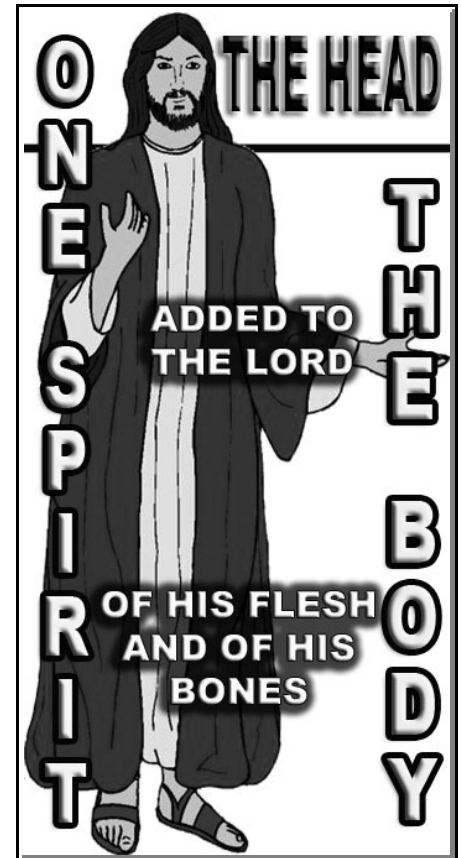
In the New Covenant, believers are “joined unto the Lord,” becoming “one spirit” with Him. As it is written, “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor 6:17). **This views conversion from the standpoint of being in Christ’s body,** which is such an intimate association that it is said, “For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph 5:30). There is a sense in which we are actually “added to the Lord” when we become members of His body. This obviously does not mean that we are equal with the Lord. It does mean that we become “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), and “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). It does mean that those who are “added to the Lord” have “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). It means that “the dying of the Lord Jesus” and “the life also of Jesus” is “made manifest in our body” (1 Cor 4:10-11).

This same language is employed in the fifth chapter of Acts, where another multitude of people are mentioned. “And believers were the more **added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women**” (Acts 5:14). The same Greek expression is used: πιστεύοντες τῷ κυρίῳ (added, or joined to, the Lord).

This representation of things perfectly coincides with apostolic doctrine. This is a condition that is declared the following facts.

- ⇒ Believers are “in Christ” (Rom 8:1).
- ⇒ They have been “baptized into Christ” (Gal 3:27).
- ⇒ Christ is in believers (Col 1:27).
- ⇒ Christ dwells in their hearts by faith (Eph 3:17).

- ⇒ Christ makes His abode in them (John 14:23).
- ⇒ The response of people to those who are in Christ is said to be their



response to Jesus Himself (Matt 25:40,45).

- ⇒ The Spirit of Christ dwells in them (Rom 8:9).

**In the salvation of God, a very real union is wrought between Jesus Christ and those who believe on Him.** There is a sense in which they become one with Him, and even with the Father as well (John 17:11,21,22).

In wonderful words, our text affirms that because Barnabas spoke comfortingly and with strong exhortation to those who had “turned to the Lord” in Antioch, “many people were added to the Lord.”<sup>NKJV</sup> So far as the record is concerned, that was not the result of an evangelistic campaign by Barnabas. Rather, it was the result of the saints of

God being properly exhorted.

Who is able to estimate what

glorious results would take place if professing believers were exhorted to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart,

and actually did that by faith? This is certainly an area for sober and sustained thought.

## BARNABAS SEEKS FOR SAUL

*“<sup>25</sup> Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul.<sup>26a</sup> And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.”*

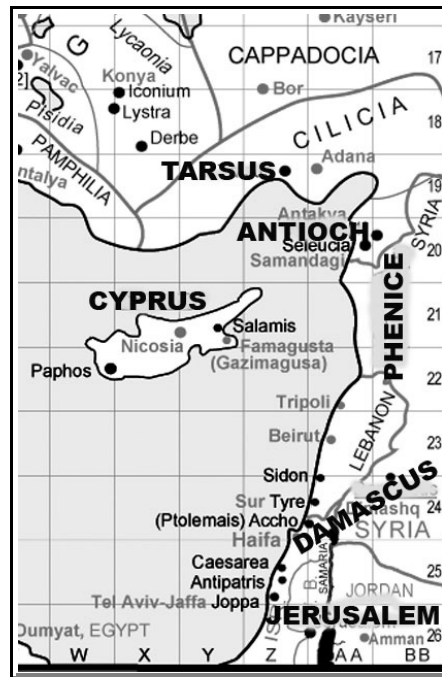
The text now provides some insight into how holy men responded to those who believed on Jesus, embracing His word and holding on to Him with strong determination. **I will tell you that what we will now read will not blend with what is seen in professed men of God today.** There is an inordinate emphasis being placed on recruitment, and a deploring and meager place being made for the building up of the saints – which is the revealed intention of the Head of the church (Eph 4:11-16).

### BARNABAS SEEKS FOR SAUL

*“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul . . .”* Other versions read, *“to look for Saul,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“to seek out Saul,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“to hunt for Paul,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“to try to find Saul,”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“to search out Saul.”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

A great spiritual harvest was being reaped in Antioch – similar to that which was going to be reaped in Samaria. That harvest was foretold by the Lord during His ministry in the flesh. At that time He told His disciples, *“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors”* (John 4:34-38). **Now, in Antioch, the spiritual fields are ready to be reaped,**

and Barnabas senses there is need for another laborer – in informed and dedicated laborer. Therefore, he sets out to find Saul, who is in Tarsus – about 150 miles away.



Prior to this, the last word that is given concerning Saul of Tarsus is that when his life was endangered because of certain aggressive Jews, the brethren *“brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus”* (Acts 9:30). They took Saul to Caesarea from Jerusalem, where he had been with the apostles, and had been *“coming in and going out of Jerusalem”* (Acts 9:27-28). That was probably a little more than three years prior to this trip by Barnabas. Generally accepted chronology places the sending away of Saul to Tarsus around 40 A.D., and Barnabas’ departure to look for him around 43 A.D. So, it had been some time since Barnabas had seen Saul. However, he had not forgotten him, and now sets

out to find him. We do not know what Saul had been doing during that interim.

Tarsus is referred to as *“no mean city,”* *“no insignificant city,”*<sup>NASB</sup> or *“no ordinary city.”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Acts 21:39). Ancient historians refer to Tarsus as *“the chief of cities,”*<sup>SOLINUS</sup> a *“very opulent”* city,<sup>CURTIVS</sup> *“the most famous of the cities of Gallacia.”*<sup>JOSEPHUS</sup> (John Gill’s Commentary).

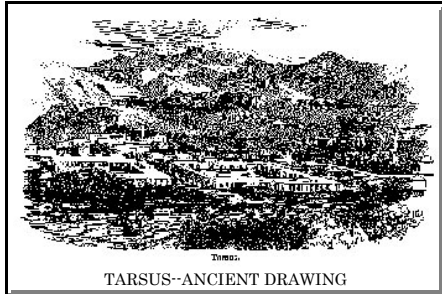
We do not know the size of the city of Tarsus during the time of our text, but it must have been significant. Scholars speak of it as *“the chief city of Cilicia. It was distinguished for its wealth and for its schools of learning, in which it rivalled, nay, excelled even Athens and Alexandria, and hence was spoken of as ‘no mean city.’”*<sup>EASTON</sup> The city still exists today, being largely in a ruined state, yet with still 30,000 occupants.<sup>McCLINTOK-STRONG’S</sup>

Now Barnabas goes to this significant city to find Saul. For some, this would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, so to speak. But holy minds do not view challenges in such a manner. In the very least, think of Barnabas’ search as looking for a specific person in Clearwater FL, South Bend IN, Independence MO, or Kansas City KS. That will give you a reasonable perspective of what was involved in looking for Saul. **You also get a sense of the value these holy men placed on the work of the Lord.** They did not think in terms of it interrupting the flow of their normal lives. They were holding to a principle that was later enunciated by Paul: *“For me to live, is Christ”* (Phil 1:21). That is a most precise picture of *“the newness of life”* (Rom 6:4), and what is involved in being *“joined to the Lord.”*

Over the years I have observed the rarity of people who were devoted to the Lord in this manner. **It is most unusual to find a person purporting to be working for the Lord that is not driven by an institutional agenda.** There is not

the slightest hint of this kind of thing in our text. This is the record of men who were living by faith and walking in the light.

### HE FINDS SAUL AND BRINGS HIM TO ANTIOCH



*“And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch . . .”*

I do not doubt that Saul was actually found in one of the synagogues, or with the brethren who had probably been converted in that region. From the very beginning, Saul was noted for being with the disciples and speaking to the Jews concerning Jesus (Acts 9:19-22).

Having found Saul, Barnabas brings him to Antioch. This indicates willingness on the part of Saul, as well as the heart of himself and Barnabas for the work of the Lord.

### THEY ASSEMBLED WITH THE CHURCH FOR A WHOLE YEAR

*“And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.”*

How will the Spirit describe the activities of Barnabas and Saul? What will be the thrust of their work? That will be something of interest, and will provide a perspective of the manner in which insightful laborers think.

### They Assembled Themselves with the Church

Other versions read, *“even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church,”*<sup>ASV</sup> *“for an entire year they met with the church,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“they were with the church there for a year,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“They met with the congregation there for a whole year,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“that a whole were they*

*were conversant with the Church,”*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *“a whole year they assembled themselves with the church,”*<sup>RWB</sup> *“a whole year did assemble together in the assembly,”*<sup>YLT</sup> and *“For a whole year they assembled together with and were guests of the church.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

For an entire year, Barnabas and Saul gathered with *“the church”* in Antioch – the **assembly** of the saints in that city. That is where they concentrated their attention. During the time of Moses, his ministry was focused on the children of Israel – God’s chosen people. The prophets majored on ministering to Israel. The ministry of John the Baptist concentrated on the Jews. When Jesus came, His ministry centered in the Jews. Throughout the book of Acts the bulk of the ministry of the apostles and other laborers was toward the churches. All of the epistles were written to the churches. Nearly every record we have of Paul speaking or writing is addressed to the churches, with very few exceptions. Leaders within the church were admonished to *“Feed the flock of God”* (1 Pet 5:2). The church itself is admonished to edify and build up one another (Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11). Paul declared that he had been given power to edify (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10). **The labors of holy men were not confined to the church, but that is where the stress was placed.**

This has always been the manner of God. **Judgment begins at the house of God because it has been given the most** (1 Pet 4:17). This is where the vast majority of heavenly influence is poured out. These are the people to whom holy angels minister (Heb 1:13-14). They are the ones for whom Jesus intercedes (Heb 7:25), and the ones to whom God gives His Holy Spirit (1 Thess 4:8). These are the people upon whom God Almighty sets His eye, and toward whom His ear is bent (1 Pet 3:12). They alone are His *“family”* (Eph 3:15), and are the exclusive *“body of Christ”* (1 Cor 12:27).

**What kind of influence would move a person to neglect these people, abandon them, or fail to feed them?** In view of the Divine attention that is given to this body of people, what would constrain a person to advocate an emphasis that is placed on someone else

– whether the lost, the poor, the young, or anyone else? Mind you, it is not that there is a studied neglect of such people. Rather, it is that they are not the focus of Divine intention. **Reaching them is a fruit of spiritual maturity.** Further, if the church is not strong, it has no business attempting to expand. In such a case, it is only perpetuating mediocrity and producing deformed and uninformed disciples.

Apart from this kind of reasoning, I do not know how you could account for men of the caliber of Barnabas and Saul remaining in Antioch for a whole year.

### And Taught Much People

Other versions read, *“taught a great many people,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“taught considerable numbers,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“taught great numbers of people,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“taught a great company of people,”*<sup>RSV</sup> *“instructed a large number of people,”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> *“instructed a large number of people,”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“taught a large crowd.”*<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

The word translated *“people”* is *ἄγλον*, which has the following lexical meaning: *“a multitude of men who have flocked together in some place, a throng,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> *“throng of people milling around or closely pressed together, crowd, multitude,”*<sup>FRIBERG</sup> *“crowd,”*<sup>USB</sup> *“group of people, fairly large in size and assembled for whatever purpose,”*<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and *“crowd, host, multitude,”*<sup>LEH</sup> This word is used 175 times in the Scriptures. It always speaks of a **gathering** of people, not of people who are divided or dispersed.

This means that Barnabas and Saul were not speaking one-on-one, or to different groups. So far as this text is concerned, they were not even going from house to house. **They were teaching an assembly of people who had come together to hear the Word of the Lord.**

This should not surprise anyone. This is how Jesus taught – the people came to Him, or He called them to Him, and He taught them collectively (Mk 2:13; 10:1; Lk 5:3; 20:1; John 8:2). Paul spoke of *“the whole church”* coming together *“in one place”* (1 Cor 14:23). The church of our time has allowed men to promote smaller gatherings and cell groups which, they say, are more conducive to learning. **What is the source of this idea, and why has it not birthed a**

mature and informed people?

There is an underlying objective that has been revealed for the church. It is that the whole body be *“fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth”* (Eph 4:16). It is that the saints be *“perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10). It may be easy to say that this can best be

accomplished by dividing the people into small discussion groups. **However, it is not so easy to support that supposition, or to produce some fruit that justifies its embrace.** This is not how Barnabas and Saul operated. In view of that, we require some extensive explanation from those who have chosen to conduct their supposed ministry in a different manner. How do you support the idea of a *“body”* being separated into different parts –

particularly when the local congregation is referred to as a *“body”*? (1 Cor 12:27).

I do not mean to be contentious about this, but neither will I yield to reasoning that has not been substantiated. When men take it upon themselves to go about the work of the Lord in a manner that differs from Scriptural representations, they do owe us an explanation.

## THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED “CHRISTIANS”

<sup>26b</sup> **And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.** Other versions read, *“in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“the disciples were first given the name of Christians in Antioch,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“it was in Antioch that the talmidim for the first time were called Messianic,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“at Antioch the disciples were first named Christians,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“In Antioch, God called the followers ‘Christians’ for the first time,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“in Antioch that the disciples first received the name of ‘Christians,’”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“at Antioch too that the disciples first came to be known as ‘Christians.’”* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

Note, the citizenry of Antioch did not refer to the disciples as good citizens, exemplary moral people, or those whose maintained the family structure. They made an association of these people with Christ – **not with a movement, but with Christ!**

This text has been used to promote the idea that *“Christian”* is the name of preference for those who are in Christ Jesus. This is based on the notion that the word *“called”* means called by God. For this reason, the International English version reads, *“God called the followers ‘Christians.’”* The Greek word translated *“were called”* is *χρηματίζωαι*. This word is occasionally used to denote something that God has said. However, in each of those cases, there is a slightly different meaning to the word than the one projected in this text.

It is said to be a warning, and is translated *“warned”* (Matt 2:12,22; Acts

10:22; Heb 8:5; 11:7). It is used to describe God revealing to Simeon that he would not see death until he had seen *“the Lord’s Christ”* (Lk 2:26). It is translated *“admonished”* in Hebrews 8:5 where God is said to have instructed Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern that had been shown to him. It is also used to describe Moses who *“spoke”* the Law *“on earth”* to the children of Israel (Heb 12:25). It is also used to describe a woman who was unlawfully married: *“she shall be called an adulteress”* (Rom 7:3). In none of these cases is the word employed to designate what God intended to be an appellation, **and that is not its meaning here.** It is unfortunate, to say the least, when men become so eager to support their own view that they endeavor to make the Word of God say what they have come to imagine.

### CONCERNING THE WORD “CALLED”

*“The name was evidently given to the followers of Christ by the Gentiles to distinguish them from the Jews since they were Greeks, not Grecian Jews. The Jews would not call them Christians because of their own use of *Christos* the Messiah. The Jews termed them Galileans or Nazarenes. The followers of Christ called themselves disciples (learners), believers, brethren, saints, those of the Way. The three uses of Christian in the N.T. are from the heathen standpoint (here), Ac 26:28 (a term of contempt in the mouth of Agrippa), and 1Pet 4:16 (persecution from the Roman government).”* – Robertson’s Word Pictures

Until this time, the church was

largely Jewish, and **the Jews did not identify the people with Christ, for they did not consider Jesus to be the Messiah.** In one place, the Jewish leaders referred Jesus’ followers as *“the sect of the Nazarenes”* (Acts 24:5). The above quotation is taken from Robertson’s Word Pictures and presents, what I consider to be, the proper view of this word.

*“Christians”* was a Gentile designation. The word itself (*Χριστιανούς*) means *“a follower of Christ,”* <sup>THAYER</sup> and *“one who is identified as a believer in and follower of Christ.”* <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> In other words, the lives of these people confirmed whom they were following, and whose word was being kept by them. **What do you suppose professing Christians are called today by those who do not personally know the Lord?** I would venture to say that enough is not being said about the Christ these days for this association to be made.

Among other things, this suggests the emphasis of the teaching of Barnabas and Saul. Just as the apostles had *“filled Jerusalem”* with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28), so Barnabas and Saul must have filled Antioch with their teaching. I do not know how any Gentile could have associated the people of God with Christ without the awareness of what they had been taught.

The use of this term in Scripture confirms that *“Christian”* is **not** the Divinely preferred way of referring to His people. It emphatically is not the appellation that God has assigned to them. It is used only three times in Scripture.

- ⇨ “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).
- ⇨ “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).
- ⇨ “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet 4:16).

It can be argued that all three of these expressions are from an outsider’s point of view. We do know that no church was ever addressed as “Christians.” There is no record of believers referring to one another in this manner. This certainly does not mean it is wrong to use

the term. It DOES mean that it is not proper unless there is some evidence that the individual is really a follower of Christ. In our society, the very concept of a follower of Christ, or being one of His disciples, has little meaning. This is because there is a prevailing ignorance concerning both the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. His words are largely unknown, and His teaching has been withheld from the people. It is a tragic circumstance, indeed.

**The Result of A Valid Ministry**

It is not a coincidence that this Gentile area came to refer to the people of God as “Christians.” This was the result of the faithful ministry of Barnabas and Saul. They had brought a proper understanding of the Lord’s

Christ, and made an obvious correlation between the manner of life of believers and the Savior of the world. Even though there is remission of sin in Christ Jesus, that is something that cannot be perceived by the world. The truth of remission must be evidenced through a life that is separate from sin, else the word is nothing more than jargon. The thought that those in Christ are sinners just like everyone else except that they are forgiven, is nothing more than the ranting of mad men who have no spiritual sense. Unless those outside of Christ can detect something obviously different in professed believers, it is open to question that there really is anything different about them. In such a case, claims of being of Christ bring reproach on Him.

**PROPHETS CAME FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH**

“<sup>27</sup> And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.<sup>28</sup> And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.”

Continuing the accent on the body of Christ, Luke now reports that certain prophets from Jerusalem came down to Antioch.

**PROPHETS CAME FROM JERUSALEM**

“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.” Other versions read “at this time,”<sup>NASB</sup> “during this time,”<sup>NIV</sup> “at that time,”<sup>RSV</sup> “while they were there,”<sup>NJB</sup> “about that same time,”<sup>IE</sup> and “during this period,”<sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

The phrase “in these days,” refers to the year during which Barnabas and Saul remained in Antioch. Apparently word had reached Jerusalem of the multitudes that were being added to the Lord. It makes perfect sense that prophets came down to Antioch, for they are especially suited for the ministry to the body. It is written, “he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort”

(1 Cor 14:3).

Behold the interest in the church, which is the body of Christ, and the flock of God. These were not organizers or motivators, but prophets. They were not ministers for specialized groups, but prophets. During their stay in Antioch, the Lord will make provision for His people during a time of testing that will come.

**THE PROPHECY OF AGABUS**

“<sup>28</sup> And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world . . .”

Agabus the prophet is mentioned again in the twenty-first chapter, where he foretold the imprisonment of Paul, when he would be delivered “into the hands of the Gentiles” (21:10-11).

Other versions refer to this calamity as, “a great famine throughout all the world,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “a severe famine that would spread over the entire Roman world,”<sup>NIV</sup> “a great famine over all the world,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “serious need of food all over the earth,”<sup>BBE</sup> “a severe famine throughout the Roman Empire,”<sup>CJB</sup> “a severe famine throughout the Roman world,”<sup>CSB</sup> “a great famine over all the inhabited earth,”<sup>DARBY</sup> and “a great famine over the whole world.”<sup>DOUAY</sup>

Here, the Greek word from which “world” is translated is οἰκουμένην. As used here, the word means “the inhabited earth,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “the inhabited part of the earth world.”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> The idea is that wherever men were found, food would become scarce. It would be a condition that could not be corrected by the governments of men, even the mighty Roman Empire.

**Behold the interest in the church, which is the body of Christ, and the flock of God. These were not organizers or motivators, but prophets. They were not ministers for specialized groups, but prophets.**

**IT CAME TO PASS**

*“ . . . which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.”*

The famine of reference came to pass, just as Agabus had said. **Of course, that is the acid test of a true prophet – whether or not what he says actually comes to pass.** When it comes to prophesying, the Lord makes no provision for mistakes or errors in

judgment (Deut18:20-22). When a person declares God has revealed to him that He is going to do this or that, **his word had better come to pass.** If this does not take place, the person has spoken presumptuously, or brashly. Such should be confronted with the error of his way.

The following is a word concerning this famine. “In point of fact, the predicted famine, which began in the fourth year of Claudius Caesar (A.D. 44) and lasted till A.D. 48, fell

upon Judea exclusively, as far as appears from Josephus (‘Ant. Jud.,’ lit. 15:3; 20. 2:5, 5:2), and was very severe there. Ishmael was high priest at the time; and Helena, Queen of Adiahene, fetched large supplies of corn from Egypt and of figs from Cyprus to Jerusalem, to supply the wants of the people. Eusebius (‘Eccl. Hist.,’ 2:8) speaks of this famine as having prevailed “over the world,” and as being recorded by authors hostile to Christianity, but mentions no names and gives no particulars (‘Eccl. Hist.,’ 2:8), but in the twelfth chapter of the same book he limits it to τὴν Ἰουδαίαν, Judea” PULPIT COMMENTARY

**THE DISCIPLES DETERMINE TO SEND RELIEF TO BELIEVERS IN JUDEA**

*“<sup>29</sup> Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: <sup>30</sup> Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”*

The response of the disciples to

DARBY and “send succor.”<sup>GENEVA</sup>

This relief was to be sent to the brethren in Judaea which, according to historians, was impacted greatly by this extensive famine. The collection of these resources, together with additional contributions, is mentioned frequently in

throughout Scripture. This does not suggest that it is wrong to assist the poor as we are able. It does, however, accent that while we are to “do good unto all men,” we are to do it “**especially unto them that are of the household of faith**” (Gal 6:10). In my own judgment, this has not been made sufficiently clear to the modern church.

**This was the manner of the early church, and is the focus of philanthropy throughout Scripture. This does not suggest that it is wrong to assist the poor as we are able. It does, however, accent that while we are to “do good unto all men,” we are to do it “especially unto them that are of the household of faith”**

**THEY SENT IT BY THE HANDS OF BARNABAS AND SAUL**

Other versions read, “sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders,”<sup>NASB</sup> and “sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.”<sup>NIV</sup> Those who have been involved in the distribution of gifts for the poor and needy, or have been made aware of such a work, know that distribution is the weak point of such programs. In addition, the siphoning of funds for other purposes this is a very troublesome reality.

this word is most arresting. The coming famine was declared to impact “all the world.” One might imagine that a good church would set up a world-wide relief fund. Perhaps some provision would be made for the starving children or some other global category of people. However men may choose to view it, this is not what the disciples determined to do – and there is no suggestion in the text that they were not correct in what they did chose to do.

**THE DISCIPLES DETERMINE TO SEND RELIEF**

Other versions read, “to send a contribution,”<sup>NASB</sup> “to provide help,”<sup>NIV</sup> “provide relief,”<sup>CJB</sup> “to minister to them,”

Scripture (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8:1-5; 9:1-2).

These were apparently financial resources, and each person determined to do the best that he could, giving proportionately to their resources. Paul also admonished that manner of giving to this cause in First Corinthians 16:1-2.

The particular people for whom provisions were being made were “the brethren,” or those who are in Christ Jesus. These are the poor for whom the church in Jerusalem made provision during the early days of the church (Acts 6:1-6). This was the manner of the early church, and is the focus of philanthropy

One might question why they did not send the gift to the apostles, or to the deacons who had originally been appointed to the work of distribution to the needy. They did not send it to the apostles because it was not reasonable. Barnabas himself was there when “the twelve” told the people, “it is not reason that we should leave the word of God to serve tables” (Acts 6:2). Second, of the original seven who were appointed over the work of distribution, Stephen had been martyred, and Philip, driven out from Jerusalem by the persecution, was preaching abroad. It is reasonable to suppose that the other deacons had been involved in the dispersion as well. This was now 13-14 years after Pentecost, and

the elders could best handle this situation – if not by direct involvement, by seeing to it that spiritually competent men were appointed over the work.

Notice how the believers in Antioch addressed this situation. First,

they selected honorable men to be in charge of getting the contribution to Jerusalem – “*Barnabas and Saul.*” Second, they made sure that spiritually insightful and wise men were in charge of distributing the funds – “*the elders.*” **Godly endeavors require godly men, who**

**will conduct themselves in a godly manner.** It appears that the church of our time could improve in this are. This is a time when waste is too common.

This, in a few verses, we have covered a period of more than one year.

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## CONCLUSION

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Once again, I want to stress that we are being exposed to the expression of “*newness of life.*” This is the regenerated life in action. It is a display of how justification by faith impacts those who participate in it. The servants of whom we are reading are living by faith and walking in the Spirit. This is how people who have received the love of the truth

conduct their lives. The priorities that are created by faith are made known in this book. Proper assessments are manifested, and how believers react to a word from God is made known. The level of interest that holy men had in the church of the living God is verified, and what believers think of one another is lived out.

Godly men and women should be profoundly concerned when these kinds of responses are not found in the church. Further, diligence must be exercised to avoid exalting traditions and customs that attempt to duplicate the results of which we are reading, while avoiding the appointed means through they are accomplished.

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/23/08. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Fifty-third lesson will cover verses 1 through 5 of the twelfth chapter: “**JAMES IS KILLED AND PETER IS ARRESTED.**” Confirming that the Kingdom of God is not governed by men, and after a remarkable spreading of the Word, Herod engages in an initiative against selected people of the church. In the wake of this aggression, James the apostle is martyred. Seeing that his malicious deed pleased the Jews, Herod seized Peter also, imprisoning him, and intending to present him to the Jews during a feast day. However, unbeknown to him, the church made unceasing prayer to God for Peter. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

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FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>  
COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>  
COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>  
COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>  
COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>  
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COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>  
COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>  
COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

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|  |  | <p><b>THE WORD OF TRUTH<br/>RADIO BROADCAST</b></p> <p><b>KNEO, 91.7 FM<br/>4:00 - 4:15 PM<br/>Monday thru Friday</b></p> <p><b>The purpose of this program is to clarify the nature and content of the Gospel of Christ. Our target is the body of Christ, and our aim is to strengthen their faith and enhance their hope.</b></p> |
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## PARTICIPATING BROTHERS AND SISTERS

# SPEAKING/LEADING/MINISTERING IN THE ASSEMBLY

### DURING APRIL 2008

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#### A DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES DURING OUR GATHERINGS

“Openings and Introductions” = 7-10 minute exposition of truth to promote spiritual focus; “Calling” = 7-10 minute exposition of truth designed to provoke disciplined thought; “Message” = 45 minute exposition of the things of God as revealed in Scripture; “Exhortation” = 5-8 minute challenge to act upon the truth we have heard; “Table Meditation” = 8-12 minute exposition of matters relating to Christ’s role in salvation; “Lead Scripture shower” = Leading of the quoting/reading of Scripture without comment; “Lead prayer session” = Presentation of three matters for prayer that are taken from the Word of God; “Lead Intercessory Prayer” = A time of focused prayers for personal needs.

1. *Blakely, Benjamin* (Lead Scripture Shower, Lead Scripture Shower, AM Opening Word).
2. *Blakely, Eva* (Lead AM Singing).
3. *Blakely, Given O.* (PM Sermon).
4. *Blakely, Jonathan* (AM Calling, AM Table Meditation, PM Introduction).
5. *Blakely, June* (Lead PM Prayer Session, Teach AM Class, Lead PM Singing).
6. *Blakely, Mattie* (Lead AM Singing).
7. *Blakely, Michael* (Play piano, AM Exhortation, AM Sermon, PM Sermon).
8. *Cobb, Anita* (Leading AM Singing).
9. *Cobb, Robert* (AM Table Meditation, AM Exhortation, PM Exhortation, PM Message, PM Table Meditation).
10. *Cole, Michele* (Play Piano, AM Opening Word)
11. *Hill, John* (Lead Intercessory Prayer).
12. *Hutchcraft, Aaron* (Teach AM Class, AM Table Meditation, AM Sermon).
13. *Hutchcraft, Barbara* (Lead PM Singing).
14. *Hutchcraft, Gene* (Teach AM Class, PM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation, PM Exhortation).
15. *Hutchcraft, Judah* (Closing Scripture & Benediction, Read AM Sermon Text).
16. *Miller, Levi* (PM Introduction).
17. *Murphy, Isaac* (Lead Scripture Shower).
18. *Murphy, LaVaine* (Lead PM Singing).
19. *Murphy, Mariah* (Read AM Sermon Text).
20. *Murphy, Micaela* (Read AM Sermon Text).
21. *Parker, Melissa* (AM Opening Word).
22. *Parker, Tony* (AM Calling, AM Exhortation, AM Sermon).
23. *Sims, Annie* (AM Closing Scripture & Benediction Read PM Sermon Text, Read PM Sermon Text).
24. *Sims, Baylie* (Lead Scripture Shower, Closing Scripture & Benediction, Read PM Sermon Text).
25. *Jack Sims* (Lead AM Singing)
26. *Sims, Ricky* (AM Sermon, AM Table Meditation, AM Exhortation, Teach AM Class, PM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation, Lead PM Singing).
27. *Sims, Tasha*, (AM Calling, PM Opening Word).
28. *Williams, Jeremy* (AM Opening Word, PM Sermon, PM Sermon).
29. *Williams, Nichole* (PM Introduction).
30. *Williams, Logan* (Play AM/PM Lord’s Table Interlude, Read AM Sermon Text, Closing Scripture & Benediction, Reade PM Sermon Text).
31. *Preparing Lord’s Supper* (Various sisters).