

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 #67

COMMENTARY ON: 15:32-41

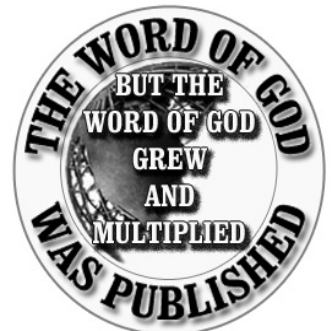
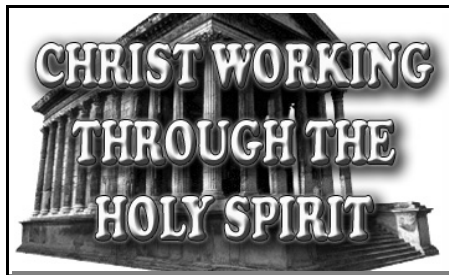
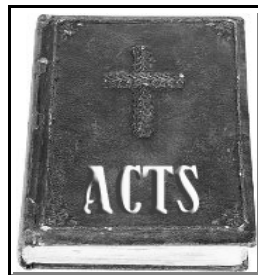
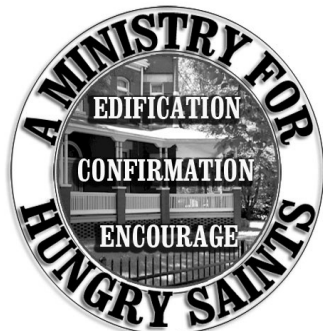
THE WORD SPREADS and BARNABAS AND SAUL DIVIDED

Again, the priority of the body of Christ is confirmed. Judas and Silas, prophets from Jerusalem exhorted and confirmed the Antioch brethren, attesting to both the nature and content of the letters sent from Jerusalem. After some time, the brethren allowed them to return to the apostles. Silas, however remained behind, which proved to be providential. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, preaching the Word. Soon Paul determined to revisit the churches, seeing how they were doing. It was during this occasion that Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. However, Paul recoiled at the suggestion, remembering the instability of John Mark when they first went into that region. The contention was so strong that the two men separated, Barnabas taking Mark with him to his home country of Cyprus. It was at this point that Paul chose Silas as a companion. They left for Syria and Cilicia with the commendation of the brethren – something not said of Barnabas and Mark.

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)

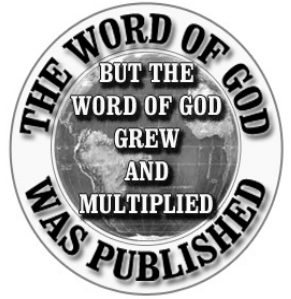


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 67



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).

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.

----- 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

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 SPREADS, BARNABAS AND SAUL DIVIDED

“15:32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. 36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” (Acts 15:32-41)

INTRODUCTION

Again, the priority of the body of Christ is confirmed. I will continue to draw your attention to this precedence throughout the book of Acts. This by no means suggests that the disciples failed to preach the Gospel to every creature. However, it does appear that they were specifically directed into this holy activity, and did not simply roam about at random. There were times when they purposed to go here and there, preaching

the Word where Jesus had not been named. However, even in those purposes, a due regard was given to the churches.

As excellent example of this is found in the life of Paul – certainly one of the premier propagators of the Gospel to the whole world. Because of serious doctrinal and behavioral deficiencies in Corinth, Paul especially endeavored to establish them, holding his other plans in

abeyance until this was accomplished. He wrote to them declaring he had, “hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you” (2 Cor 10:15-16). Other versions read, “we have the hope and confident expectation that as your faith continues to grow, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, still within the limits of our commission, So

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- PAUL AND BARNABAS REMAIN IN ANTIOCH, TEACHING AND PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD (15:35)
- PAUL DETERMINES TO VISIT THE CHURCHES (15:36)
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that [we may even] preach the Gospel in lands [lying] beyond you, without making a boast of work already done in another [man's] sphere of activity [before we came on the scene],” ^{AMPLIFIED} **“so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you,”** ^{NIV} **“so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you,”** ^{NRSV} and **“Then we will be able to go and preach the Good News in other places far beyond you.”** ^{NLT}

The reason for this priority should be very evident. **The church is the depository for all the fulness of Christ – the place where He imparts both His nature and graces.** As it is written, *“And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”* (Eph 1:22-23). Jesus has, in fact, been made the head over all things **“for the church,”**

^{NIV/NRSV/RSV} That is, He has been given “to the church” in the capacity of “Head over all,” in order that He might impart Himself to it. The reason for this is seen in the words of verse twenty-three, *“Which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all [for in that body lives the full measure of Him Who makes everything complete, and Who fills everything everywhere with Himself].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This church, which is Christ’s body, is what every convert is “added to” (Acts 2:47). If that church is weak and emaciated, it is a living contradiction of the revealed purpose of God, to conform the people to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). **Adding people to such a contradiction leads to the perpetuation of spiritual mediocrity, which is antithetical to the Divine Nature itself.**

It is questionable whether or not it is even right for a weak and uninformed church to be engaged in any kind of outreach ministry. Precisely what is it that they have to offer? Such a group is like a half-baked cake (Hos 7:8), or a tree that requires urgent attention (Lk 13:7). I realize that such a view will be highly offensive to some. However, that does not change the facts in the case.

The revealed objective for the church is as follows: *“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: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 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 4:12-16).

The objectives are progressive in nature, and are designed to bring the whole body into a stable and productive condition – one in which they are not tossed about by “every wind of doctrine,” and are capable of edifying one another. Here is the Divine logic of the matter.

EPHESIANS 4:12-16

- ⇒ The perfecting (maturing) of the saints (verse 12a).
- ⇒ **In order that** they may engage in the work of the ministry (verse 12b).
- ⇒ **In order that** the body may be edified (verse 12c).
- ⇒ **Until** we all come into the unity of the faith (verse 13a).
- ⇒ **Until** we all come into the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God (verse 13b).
- ⇒ **Until** we collectively reflect the image of Christ (verse 13c).
- ⇒ **Until** each individual is matured in their “measure” of the “fulness of Christ” (verse 13d).
- ⇒ **In order that** no one remains childlike, and moved about by erroneous teaching (verse 14).
- ⇒ **In order that** the truth may be spoken in unmitigated love (verse 15a).
- ⇒ **In order that** all may grow up into

The objectives are progressive in nature, and are designed to bring the whole body into a stable and productive condition – one in which they are not tossed about by “every wind of doctrine,” and are capable of edifying one another.

Christ in all things (verse 15b).

- ⇒ **In order that** the body might be fitly joined together (verse 16a).
- ⇒ **In order that** the body may be compacted, or made solid, by what every *“joint”* supplies (verse 16b).
- ⇒ This is in strict accord with the effectual working of the Lord in every part of the body (verse 16c).
- ⇒ **In order to** the increase of the body.
- ⇒ **In order to** the edifying of itself in love (verse 16d).

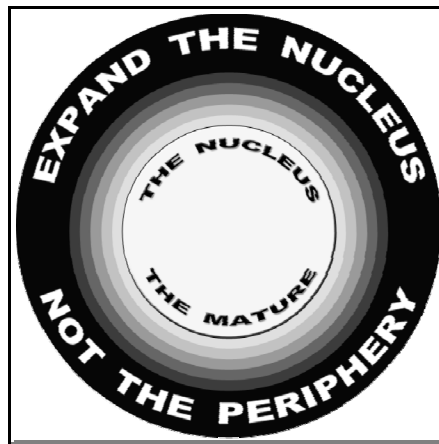
Do you see any provision in that marvelous statement for prolonged juvenileness? Is there any room for perpetual mediocrity, or the continued lack of spiritual productivity. Does this statement of Divine purpose suggest that the objective for the church is to be a kind of spiritual hospital for correcting deviate behavior? Is there the slightest hint of this kind of emphasis?

The church is a place where souls are fed and cultured for glory. It is more of a place for transformation than recovery, and for advancement than reform – and those terms are not synonymous. Jesus is *“bringing many sons to glory”* (Heb 2:10), not merely resolving moral and spiritual difficulties in the people. To be sure, that sort of work is included, but it is not the thrust of Divine effort, and it certainly ought not to be ours. Even in nature, once a debilitating infection is arrested, it is necessary to build up and strengthen the individual. More precisely, when raising children, the most important thing is not

to continue teaching them to stay out of the street and not put their hands in the fire – especially when they are forty years old. The children must be brought to know how to be in the proper places, and to put their hands to noble and God-honoring works.

EXPANDING THE NUCLEUS

A proper view of “church growth,” if I may use that hackneyed term, involves the expansion of the nucleus, not the enlargement of the periphery. **It is not simply to get larger crowds, or more names on the roll, but to rather prepare the people to serve the Lord here, and stand confidently before Him there.** I do not know how it is possible to perceive Ephesians 4:11-16 in any other way.



LIVED OUT IN THE TEXT

The particular point here is that this what the workers in our text were doing. That is why they remained with the churches, then went out to visit other churches. They were not simply promoted camaraderie, but were seeking to

promote spiritual advancement. That is what God has declared He is doing, and they were joining in the work.

Judas and Silas, prophets from Jerusalem exhorted and confirmed the Antioch brethren, attesting to both the nature and content of the letters sent from Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, preaching the Word. Behold both their interest in the brethren in Antioch, as well as their obvious delight with their fellowship. **Those who have enjoyed the richness and benefit of godly association can understand why these brethren wanted to be together.** They were the better for it, and it tended to prepare them for the work into which they would be directed. Here we see *“the mind of Christ”* (1 Cor 2:16) at work, for He also preferred to be around His disciples (Matt 20:17; Mk 3:7; 8:10; 10:46; Lk 22:15; John 6:3; 11:54). All of His post-resurrection appearances were to His disciples (Mk 16:9; Matt 28:9; Lk 24:15; 24:36; Acts 1:3-8; 1 Cor 15:5-8).

Soon Paul determined to revisit the churches, seeing how they were doing. It was during this occasion that Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. However, Paul recoiled at the suggestion, remembering the instability of John Mark when they first went into that region. The contention was so strong that the two men separated, Barnabas taking Mark with him to his home country of Cyprus. It was at this point that Paul chose Silas as a companion. They left for Syria and Cilicia with the commendation of the brethren – something not said of Barnabas and Mark. This is a remarkable and clear account of concern for the churches – a concern Paul would always maintain!

JUDAS AND SILAS EXHORT THE BRETHREN

^{15:32} ***And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.***

After it was clear that the words sent from the apostles and elders had been gladly received, Judas and Silas

spoke to the Antioch brethren. They spoke in their God-ordained capacity, and did so with purpose.

BEING PROPHETS

“And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves . . .” Other versions read *“gifted speakers.”* ^{LIVING}

“prophets (inspired interpreters of the will and purposes of God),” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Due to the lack of sound doctrine, and the consequence of a church that is not established, both the concept and ministry of a prophet has been blurred. Even though God has clearly

placed “*prophets*” in the church (1 Cor 12:28), there is little talk about them, and no apparent place made for them. This is a ministry fulfilled in the local assembly, or congregation of saints.

⇒ “*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether **prophecy**, let us **prophecy** according to the proportion of faith*” (Rom 12:6).

⇒ “*Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may **prophecy***” (1 Cor 14:1).

⇒ “*Let the **prophets** speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all **prophecy** one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the **prophets** are subject to the **prophets***” (1 Cor 14:29-32).

⇒ “**Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues**” (1 Cor 14:39).

⇒ “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, **prophets**; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers*” (Eph 4:11).

⇒ “*Despise not **prophecyings***” (1 Thess 5:20),

The word “*prophet*” is a transliteration of the Greek word **προφήτης** (prof-ay-tas). That is, there was no precisely parallel English word that conveyed the **Scriptural** use of this Greek word.

Etymological Definitions

As defined by the English dictionary, it means the following.

However, this is not the lexical meaning of the word as used in Scripture. The root meaning of the Greek word is, “to speak forth, speak out; hence, one who speaks forth.” In the Septuagint version the root meaning is “to divulge, make known, announce . . . therefore properly, equivalent to interpreter.” As used in Scripture, the word is lexically understood to mean, “hence, an interpreter or spokesman for God; one through whom God speaks . . . one who speaks forth by divine inspiration.” ^{THAYER} “generally one who speaks for God, proclaiming what God wants to make known,” ^{FRIBERG} “of one who has

insight into the divine will and possesses the power of inspired utterance,” ^{UBS}

The Louw-Nida Greek lexicon wisely adds, “There is a tendency in a number of languages to translate **προφήτης** only in the sense of ‘one who foretells the future,’ but foretelling the future was only a relatively minor aspect of the prophet’s function, though gradually it became more important. Patristic authors [*post-apostolic church fathers*] defined the function of a prophet mainly in terms of foretelling the future. In New Testament times, however, the focus was upon the inspired utterance proclaimed on behalf of and on the authority of God.

Whatever value may be attached to etymological definitions, it cannot be allowed to be superior in nature. In the Word of God itself, although there were often people present to spoke in a differing languages, key words were never defined from the standpoint of mere language. They were rather expounded doctrinally.

The Source of the Prophet

The word of God informs us of the origin of the prophet. A prophet is not produced by education or natural giftedness. It is not someone who has been trained to be a prophet. In no sense is the prophet self-made.

It is of interest to note that much of the preaching of John the Baptist is referred to as “*his exhortation*” (Luke 3:18). That is, he pressed the people to do something about what he was preaching.

Particularly in this day of salvation, the administration of the New Covenant, the prophet is a gift from God. Thus it is written, Therefore He says: “*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave **gifts** to men... And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some **prophets**, some evangelists, and some **pastors and teachers***” (Eph 4:9-11). ^{NKJV}

The book of First Corinthians views these gifts, as well as others, as Divine placements, ranking “*prophets*” as second, superceded only by the apostles. “*And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, **secondarily prophets**, thirdly teachers . . .*” (1 Cor 12:28).

Ministry Associated with Faith

The epistle to the Romans also

ETYMOLOGY OF ENGLISH “PROPHET”

Original use was during the twelfth century

1. “One who utters divinely inspired revelations:
 - a. As often capitalized, the writer of one of the books of the Bible.
 - b. One regarded by a group of followers as the final authoritative revealer of God’s will; Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah.
2. One gifted with more than ordinary spiritual and moral insight ; especially an inspired poet.
3. One who foretells future events.
4. An effective or leading spokesman for a cause, doctrine, or group.
5. Christian Science
 - a. A spiritual seer
 - b. Disappearance of material sense before the conscious facts of spiritual Truth.”

MERRIAM-WEBSTER

speaks of this gift. Rather than referring to the individual prophet himself, there **what is said** is emphasized: “*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us **prophecy according to the proportion of faith***” (Rom 12:6). Note that what is said by the prophet is directly related to his faith. That is, a New Covenant prophet does not speak without the engagement of his heart and mind. He has been enlightened, yet speaks from personal insight and understanding that have been acquired from God.

A More Particular Analysis

An even more particular analysis of the prophet is provided in the first epistle to the Corinthians. There the teaching is couched in a discourse that stresses the importance of understanding what is said in the assembly. The statement concerning prophesy relates to its effects, as compared to its source, and is quite revealing. “*But he that **prophesieth** speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*” (1 Cor 14:3). Other versions read, “*edification, and exhortation, and consolation,*” ^{NASB} “*strengthening, encouragement and comfort,*” ^{NIV} “*upbuilding and encouragement and consolation,*” ^{NRSV} and “*upbuilding and constructive spiritual progress and encouragement and consolation.*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

These effects are what made prophesying the superior gift. It is why

Paul taught the Corinthians to prefer it above other gifts: *“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy”* (1 Cor 14:1). I have known several people who have expressed a fervent desire to speak in tongues. I do not know how it is possible to take hold of this text and engage in such a quest.

The use of the words *“prophesy”* or *“prophecy”* in Scripture is in perfect accord with the doctrine concerning prophets. The prophet, although he may foretell the future (Acts 11:28), is by no means limited to that function in his work.

⇒ The 31st chapter of Proverbs concerning a virtuous woman, is defined as *“the prophecy”* that Lemuel’s mother *“taught him”* (Prov 31:1).

⇒ The *“prophecy of Oded he prophet”* was a word of encouragement and exhortation to king Asa (2 Chron 15:1-8).

Note the three principle effects of prophesying: edification, exhortation, and comfort.

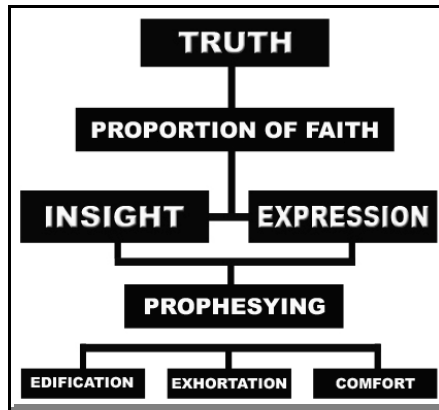
⇒ **EDIFICATION:** This has to do with building up and strengthening the understanding of the believers. In such a case, the truth is seen more clearly, and thus the truth sanctifies and stabilizes the people. Paul also associated edification with the power of God that was given (2 Cor 13:8,10).

⇒ **EXHORTATION:** In this ministry the souls of the people are moved to do something that directly relates to their identity with the Lord.

⇒ **COMFORT:** This is a rational comfort, and does not refer to a mere feeling. It relates to encouragement that causes hope to flourish.

The *“prophet,”* being a speaker, is one in whom insight and the ability of precise spiritual expression have been merged. Where these effects have been realized, the people have heard a prophet.

Like all spiritual gifts, prophesy is the outworking of a member of the



body holding to the Head, from whom all spiritual nourishment originates. As the prophet maintains the vital fellowship with the Son, into which he is called (1 Cor 1:9), his gift is made functional. He is given various insights into the truth, all of which are integral to God’s eternal purpose. This is all done in direct relation to his *“proportion of faith”* (Rom 12:6), or *“measure of faith”* (Rom 12:3). **The “measure” is not a quantitative one, but one that is adapted for a particular role in the body of Christ.** In accordance with that faith, the truth is not only perceived, but it is merged with the ability to articulate it. It is that expression, if delivered in strict accord with the *“proportion of faith,”* that causes the saints of God to be edified, exhorted, and comforted. The people of God are matured, motivated, and stilled within. They are made adequate to fight the good fight of faith and lay holy on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). Confidence and assurance are also realized in increasing measure.

That is what real prophets do. Now, we will see this lived out in our text. Judas and Silas, *“being prophets,”* will do what prophets are prone to do.

EXHORTED THE BRETHREN

“... exhorted the brethren . . .”
 Other versions read, *“encouraged,”* NASB
“gave teaching,” BBE *“comforted,”* DOUAY
“strengthened,” MRD *“preached,”* LIVING and
“urged and warned and consoled and encouraged.” AMPLIFIED

These men were prophets, and they *“exhorted.”* They did not foretell the future, or have a conference on last things. They *“exhorted the people,”* calling them into deeper and sustained

involvement *“with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3).

⇒ Some years before, Barnabas had come to the church in Antioch, being sent from the church in Jerusalem. During that time, he *“exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”* (Acts 11:23).

⇒ On the day of Pentecost, following his response to their question, *“What shall we do,”* it is written that Peter *“with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40). It was after this exhortation that those *“that gladly received his word were baptized”* (Acts 2:41).

⇒ Paul reminded the Thessalonians how he had *“exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory”* (1 Thess 2:11-12).

⇒ Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, *“Furthermore .. We beseech you and exhort you by the Lord Jesus that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more”* (1 Thess 4:1).

⇒ In a remarkably detailed exhortation, Paul told the Thessalonians, *“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil”* (1 Thess 5:22).

⇒ Paul told Timothy, *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions,*

and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior”(1 Tim 2:3).

- ⇒ Paul told Titus, “Young men likewise **exhort** to be sober minded” (Tit 2:6).
- ⇒ Peter wrote to elders, “. . . I **exhort** you . . . Feed the flock of God which is among you . . .”(1 Pet 5:1-2).
- ⇒ Jude wrote to some sluggardly believers, “unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and **exhort** you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”(Jude 1:3).

Behold the marvelous scope of

- ⇒ Support the weak.
- ⇒ Be patient, or longsuffering with all men.
- ⇒ Do not repay evil for evil to any man.
- ⇒ Always rejoice.
- ⇒ Pray without ceasing, or with perseverance, not fainting.
- ⇒ In everything give thanks.
- ⇒ Do not quench the Spirit.
- ⇒ Do not despise prophecies.
- ⇒ Test all things.
- ⇒ Hold fast what is good.
- ⇒ Abstain from all appearance of evil.

A spirit of independence has arisen within the professed church that is offended by any demands being placed upon it. This condition is largely owing to inferior, and sometimes erroneous, preaching. A message is being preached that leaves the impression that response is not an urgent matter.

exhortation – moving the people of God to do something. Allow me to briefly recap the reports I have just recounted. These were things the people of God were EXHORTED to do – for exhortation always relates to the people DOING something.

- ⇒ Save yourselves from this untoward, perverse and corrupt, generation.
- ⇒ Walk worthy of God.
- ⇒ Walk and please God more and more.
- ⇒ Warn them that are unruly (insubordinate).
- ⇒ Comfort the feeble minded (fainthearted or timid).

- ⇒ Supplication, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be given for all men (1 Tim 2:1).
- ⇒ That such prayers be made for kings and for those who are in authority (1 Tim 2:2).
- ⇒ For young men to be sober.
- ⇒ To feed the flock of God.
- ⇒ To earnestly contend for the faith.

There are twenty-one facets of spiritual life in which the people of God are urged participate more fully. It should be apparent to you that there is a certain strangeness in the tone of such words – at least to those who have been unduly influenced by our generation. A

spirit of independence has arisen within the professed church that is offended by any demands being placed upon it. This condition is largely owing to inferior, and sometimes erroneous, preaching. **A message is being preached that leaves the impression that response is not an urgent matter.** The impression is being left that men have a lot of time to sort things out, work on their deficiencies, and decide whether or not they want to give themselves wholly to the Lord. The very fact that God has placed the gift of exhortation in the church confirms that this is an erroneous impression. Unless men are rescued from it, there is no hope of them being saved. That is why it is written, “**Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation**”(Heb 3:15). And again, “**And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed**”(Rom 13:11).

WITH MANY WORDS

“. . . with many words . . .” Other versions read, “with a lengthy message,”^{NASB} “said much,”^{NIV} “with a long message,”^{CSB} “much discourse,”^{DARBY} “spoke a long time,”^{GWN} “abundant discourse,”^{MRD} “a long speech,”^{NET} “spoke at length,”^{NLT} “much preaching,”^{TNT} “long sermons,”^{LIVING} “a long . . . talk,”^{WEYMOUTH} “many a good counsel,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “many talks.”^{PHILLIPS}

As Peter did, Judas and Silas exhorted “with **many words**”(Acts 2:40). Their words were not brief, as though they were not essential, or were already accepted by the audience. There are at least two reasons for this.

- ⇒ First, the letter they brought dealt with matters pertaining to salvation, and nothing can be more important than that. If the matter of salvation is shrouded with mystery, or if its nature and scope do not have some clarity, the disciples will be thrown into a state of constant jeopardy.
- ⇒ Second, as confirmed in the accounts of actual exhortations, there are many areas that are addressed by faith. Believers cannot remain in a state of inactivity, thinking that the benefits related to being in Christ will simply come to them. As with

Paul, it is necessary to apprehend the things for which Christ has apprehended us (Phil 3:12-13). Exhortation has to do with compelling believers to do precisely that.

CONFIRMED THEM

“ . . . and confirmed them.”

Other versions read, “strengthened,”^{”NKJV} “made them strong,”^{”BBE} “established,”^{”MRD} and “make them stronger.”^{”IE}

The word “confirmed” is translated from the Greek word ἐπεστήριξαν (ep-ee-stay-rid). The word means, “to establish besides, strengthen more; to render more firm, confirm,”^{”THAYER} “cause to be firm,”^{”FRIBERG} and “to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief.”^{”LOUW-NIDA} In the English language, the word means “to make firm or firmer.”

In this sense, the word is used several times in the book of Acts.

- ⇒ “. . . they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, **Confirming** the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:21-22).
- ⇒ “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and **confirmed them**” (Acts 15:32).
- ⇒ “And he went through Syria and Cilicia, **confirming the churches**” (Acts 15:41).
- ⇒ The word is also translated “strengthening” – “And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening all the disciples**” (Acts 18:23).

The state of being “confirmed” is the opposite of being “unstable” (James 1:8; 2 Pet 2:13; 3:16). Those who are **not “confirmed”** are “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph 4:14). Unconfirmed disciples can be “drawn away” after false teachers (Acts 20:30) – like the teachers



TENDER SAPLING

UNSTABLE



STRONG TREE

CONFIRMED

who came to Antioch from Judaea, teaching the believers that unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved. Such poor souls are susceptible to teachings that deal with “another Jesus,” “another gospel,” and “another Spirit” (2 Cor 11:4). Those who are not confirmed are like a tender sapling, as compared to a strong and mature tree. The winds of adversity and doctrinal error toss them about, and will eventually break them. These are the people who can be “beguiled with enticing words” (Col 2:4). Their love waxes cold when iniquity abounds (Matt 24:12). They have great difficulty holding their profession “without wavering” (Heb 10:23).

There is only one answer to a wavering and unstable state: confirmation, or being made “strong in faith” and “able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Rom 4:20; Eph 6:11). Such a state is the objective of the various gifts that have been given to the church. The aim of those gifts is to bring the people to a state “are no more children,” but “grow up into Christ in all things” (Eph 4:15). This means more than a reduction in the frequency of sin.

That kind of thing happens when a person begins to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:18-19). That, of course, is the direct result of God strengthening the saints with might by His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ can dwell in their hearts by faith. Then, being “rooted and grounded” in the love of God, they will realize what it means to be “confirmed.”

In an extended effort, and with many words, Judas and Silas spoke to the brethren in a manner that contributed to their stability and maturity in Christ. Giving heed to their words would ensure they would not have such difficulty if any other false teachers came among them. Being mature in Christ, they would be “filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). They would be confirmed, stable, strong in the faith, and able to stand against the various winds that would assault them.

I have noted over the years what

a small percentage of professed preachers and teachers are concerned with confirming the saints. For many years, the situation has been very disconcerting to me. Very rarely does one confront a believer who has, in fact, been confirmed, and is strong in faith, giving

glory to God. When such a soul is found, they have generally become firm in spite of the teaching and fellowship to which they have been subjected. **All who stand before the saints of God do well to take their confirmation and spiritual stability into consideration.** This will not come by

brief and shallow homilies. It will not be produced by purported praise and worship services that are little more than a folic in the fields lacking spiritual sustenance. In this text we are exposed to a very real and profitable ministry to the people of God.

THEY TARRIED IN ANTIOCH FOR A TIME

“³³ And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.”

Hungry souls are not content

Judas and Silas continued to confirm the disciples with many words.

There are instances in Scripture of those who desired the one ministering

Ephesus, they fell on his neck and wept, because he had told them they would not see him again (Acts 20:37).

Here, we are being exposed to the manner of spiritual life. It is not a life of fits and starts, or the mingling of activity with inactivity. Wherever such a life is encouraged or promoted, the Lord is not the one who is at work.

Here, we are being exposed to the manner of spiritual life. It is not a life of fits and starts, or the mingling of activity with inactivity. Wherever such a life is encouraged or promoted, the Lord is not the one who is at work.

THEY WERE LET GO IN PEACE

“... they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.” Other versions read, *“they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles,”*^{NKJV} *“they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them.”*^{NIV}

Here, the idea is that the brethren in Antioch recognized that the issue that had arisen there had now been resolved. That is why they dismissed the brethren after they had remained there for some time. They did not accept a correction of their challenge by stages or installments. The matter was too critical. When dealing with an issue that has to do with salvation, this is not a matter to be studied out over an extended period of time, or by a series of protracted courses. If such an approach had been taken, some might have been called away, or departed to another place in a state of delusion. They may even have spread the delusion, or even been so confused they cast the faith overboard.

Now, however, the issue had been resolved, and there was great jubilation among the disciples because of it. No follower of Jesus thrives on controversy, or delights to remain in the dark about the salvation of God.

with teachers who remain for only a short time. They delight in continued exposure to the words and insights of such men. This spirit is revealed in the text before us, confirming the value that those who love the truth have for the ones who declare it.

THEY TARRIED THERE A SPACE

“And after they had tarried there a space . . .” Other versions read, *“for a time,”*^{NKJV} *“spent time there,”*^{NASB} *“spending some time there,”*^{NIV} *“passed some time there,”*^{DARBY} *“stayed in Antioch for some time,”*^{GWN} *“stayed for a while,”*^{NLT} *“stayed several days,”*^{LIVING} and *“continuing for a time.”*^{LITV}

As used here, the word *“tarried”* means more than simply lingering. It carries the idea of continuing to do something – in this case, delivering words of exhortation. Technically, the word translated *“tarried”* (ποιήσαντες) carries the idea of productivity: “to produce, construct, form, fashion,”^{THAYER} “a basic meaning make, do,”^{FRIEBERG} and “make, do, cause, effect, bring about, accomplish.”^{UBS} **The idea here is that**

to remain with them. They did not simply enjoy the company of such people, but desired for them to continue what they were doing.

⇨ The Samaritans asked Jesus to remain with them (John 4:40).

⇨ After hearing the words of Jesus, the two on the road to Emmaus constrained Jesus saying, *“Abide with us”* (Lk 24:29).

⇨ Those converted at the house of Cornelis asked Peter to *“tarry certain days”* with them (Acts 10:48).

⇨ Lydia besought Paul and Silas, *“come into my house and abide there”* Acts 16:15).

⇨ After the Philippi an jailor had been baptized, he brought Paul and Silas into his house, set food before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all of his house (Acts 16:34).

⇨ When Paul left the elders from

Therefore the brethren were released to return to Jerusalem and the apostles, with the blessing of peace upon them. Here are some examples of the conferment of peace upon the righteous.

⇨ *“For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee”* (Psa 122:8).

⇨ *“... peace shall be upon Israel”* (Psa 125:5).

⇨ *“And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong . . . ”* (Dan 10:19).

⇨ *“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen”* (Rom 15:33).

⇨ *“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”* (Gal 6:16).

In new covenant life, or “newness of life,” there is a keen interest in the welfare of the saints of God.

SILAS DECIDED TO STAY FOR A WHILE

“³⁴ Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.”

This text marks a new epoch in the book of Acts – one that will involve the labors of Silas with the apostle Paul.

This verse is omitted in the following versions: NIV, NRSV, RSV, CJB, CSB, DARBY, ERV, GWN, NAB, NIB, NLT, and LIVING. The reason for this omission is that it is missing in the Syriac, Alexandrian, Arabic, and Coptic versions. PULPIT COMMENTARY/BARNES

It is surmised that Silas returned with Judas, then came back later to Antioch, at which time Paul chose him. However, if this was the case, Paul would have made his choice of Silas based upon a relatively brief period of time with him. This interpretation also has to be forced into the text, causing it to read in a kind of random way. It simply does not blend with the nature of this whole passage. I will proceed with the assumption that this was a providential working of the Lord, in preparation for the works that follow. I see no value in adopting the variant view represented by the removal of this verse from the text. Further, where there is no genuine advantage to such an alteration, I find it difficult to justify taking such an action.

NOTWITHSTANDING

“Notwithstanding . . . ” Other versions read, *“However,”*^{NKJV} and *“But.”*^{NASB}

The word *“notwithstanding”* marks a departure from the general course of action. Judas and Silas had been freed to return to Jerusalem, with the peace of God conferred upon them. However, Silas chose not to do so, preferring to take another course. There

It is obvious that, for Silas, it was *“good and pleasant”* to dwell among the Antioch brethren. In addition, he must have seen time spent with Paul an advantage as well. He did not stay out of a sense of obligation, for his mission there had been fulfilled. However, probably unknown to him at this time, there was future work to be done in which he would play a significant role. Therefore, it seems to me that God can be seen in this whole matter, orchestrating

This is another example of God working all things together for the good of His people – not only for Silas himself, but for those in Antioch and the surrounding territories.

are times when what **can** be done is not always the best, or preferred thing to be done.

IT PLEASSED SILAS

“ . . . it pleased Silas to abide there still.” Other versions read, *“it seemed good,”*^{NKJV} *“thought good,”*^{GENEVA} *“it was the pleasure of,”*^{MRD} and *“decided to stay.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

the affairs of His people for His own glory and the betterment of the body of Christ. This is another example of God working all things together for the good of His people – not only for Silas himself, but for those in Antioch and the surrounding territories. This is also a sterling commentary on the spiritual attractiveness and profitability of the brethren in Antioch.

PAUL AND BARNABAS REMAINED IN ANTIOCH, TEACHING AND PREACHING THE WORD

“³⁵ Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

Many of the great works that are recorded in this book were preceded by an extended time, during which

brethren were meeting together.

⇨ The events of the day of Pentecost (Luke 24:53; Acts 1:14; 2:1-4).

- ⇒ The rapid spread of the Word throughout Jerusalem and the surrounding areas (Acts 2:42,44,46; 4:31; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7).
- ⇒ The scattering of the disciples, when they went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:1-4).
- ⇒ The events that took place at the house of Cornelius (Acts 9:36-43; 10:1-48).
- ⇒ Paul and Barnabas called to a special work by the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:26; 13:1-2).

The church is *“the fulness of Him that filleth all in all”* (Eph 1:23), and nourishment is ministered within that church while they are holding to the Head (Eph 4:15-16; Col 2:19). It is also true that when they come together Christ said He was especially among them (Matt 18:20). **These things being true, we should expect great things to take place within, and because of, the assembling of the saints.** This manner is seen throughout the book of Acts, where newness of life is being lived out.

PAUL AND BARNABAS CONTINUED THERE ALSO

TIME SPENT WITH BELIEVERS

1. Saul spent time with the disciples in Damascus – 9:19
2. Peter tarried certain days with those who believed at the house of Cornelius – 10:48
3. Paul and Barnabas spend a whole year with the church in Antioch – 11:26
4. Paul visited the churches, confirming the souls of the disciples – 14:22
5. Paul and Barnabas spend a *“long time”* with the church in Antioch – 14:28
6. Judas and Silas confirmed the brethren in Antioch – 15:32
7. Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch teaching and preaching the Word – 15:35
8. Paul went throughout Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches – 15:41
9. Paul went throughout the cities, and the churches established in the faith – 16:5
10. Paul spent a year and six months teaching the brethren in Corinth – 18:11
11. Paul strengthened all the disciples in all the country of Galatia and Phrygia – 18:23
12. Apollos helped the disciples in Achai who had believed through grace – 18:27
13. Paul ministered to the disciples in Troaz – 20:7
14. Paul spent three years with the church in Ephesus, warning them with tears – 20:31

“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch . . .”

Here again is a protracted stay of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch. It is the third such occasion.

- ⇒ The first is when they spend *“a whole year”* there, assembling with the brethren, and teaching *“much people”* (11:26).
- ⇒ The second is when they returned from the work to which the Spirit had called them – a time estimated to have been between four and eight years (14:28). It was the period of time between their return and the trip to Jerusalem that is covered in the fifteenth chapter.
- ⇒ The third is the period described in our text, where they are said to have *“continued in Antioch.”*
- ⇒ A fourth occasion took place when Paul left Ephesus, going to Caesarea, then going down to Antioch and spending *“some time there”* (18:22).

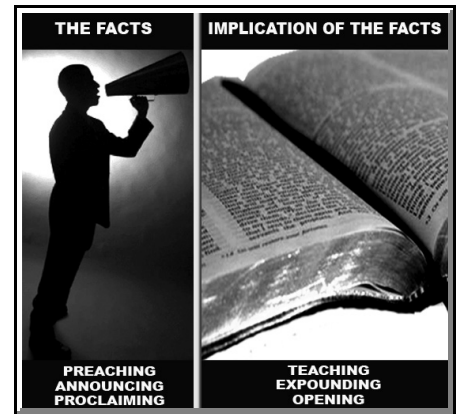
This was also the place where Peter came, when Paul withstood him to the face (Gal 2:11).

So far as the book of Acts if concerned, this church ranked second only to the church in Jerusalem, the general residence of the apostles themselves. Considering that this was a Gentile church, this is a most remarkable circumstance, confirming that **wherever there is a love of the truth and faith in Christ, great progress can be made.**

There are still congregations of believers that are particularly attractive to sensitive and informed souls. Those who are engaged in the good fight of faith and the work of the Lord, are willing to go out of their way to be with such people. They also will spend considerable time in such places. In my judgment, it is good for a congregation to determine to be this kind of fellowship. It seems to me that any other kind of congregation is deficient in many ways.

TEACHING AND PREACHING THE WORD

“ . . . teaching and preaching the



word of the Lord . . .”

Other versions read, *“taught and proclaimed,”* ^{NRSV} *“teaching and announcing the glad tidings,”* ^{DARBY} *“taught people about the Lord’s word and spread the Good News,”* ^{GWN} *“telling the Good News and teaching the people the message of the Lord,”* ^{LIVING} *“continued to teach the Lord’s message and to tell the good news,”* ^{WILLIAMS} and *“continued teaching and proclaiming the good news, the Word of the Lord [concerning the attainment through Christ of eternal salvation in God’s kingdom].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

What does it mean to preach and teach? For some, it means speaking to sinners (preach), and to saints (teach). Is this the case here? Remember, Paul and Barnabas had spent years in Antioch. Does this mean they had not preached throughout the city, or that the church in Antioch was fundamentally uninformed?

Preaching

Preaching is the means by which faith is both initiated and maintained.

Faith comes by hearing – hearing a message, not a list of instructions. Faith rests on affirmations, not explanations, as Romans 10:14-17 affirms. No believer will reach a point in this world where there is no longer a need for affirmation, for preaching, and for announcement and proclamation. Gospel affirmations found in the epistles are staggering in number – declarations that have to do with:

- ⇒ Who Jesus **IS** (Rom 10:4; Eph 5:23; Phil 2:11; Col 1:19; 2:9,10; 3:12; Heb 8:1; 1 John 4:5). None of these facts can be enhanced or enlarged. They do not have to do with Christ

progressing or advancing. It is our apprehension of these facts that grows. That is why they are proclaimed, announced, and preached.

⇨ What Jesus **HAS ACCOMPLISHED** (Rom 10:4; Gal 3:13; 5:1; Col 1:20; 2:15; Heb 2:14; 9:26; 1 Pet 4:1; Rev 1:5-6), and what He is doing (Heb 2:10; 7:25; 13:20; 1 Pet 3:22). None of these things can be improved. None of them are in the process of change. Again, it is our comprehension of them that expands, and that can only be done when they are declared.

⇨ What He **WILL DO** (Matt 3:12; 10:32; 13:41; 25:31-33; Acts 17:31; Phil 3:20-21; Col 3:4; Heb 9:28; Rev 22:12). Again, none of these things are in a state of development. They are simply awaiting the time when they will be fulfilled. Their proclamation fuels hope and brings assurance to the hearts of the trusting ones. **They are to be preached, or reported.**

Again, these are the things that cause faith to come, then maintain and mature it.

discern what is implied by the Word. That is, they come to the point where they can “handle” the Word of God, or correlate it with living in a manner that honors and pleases the Lord.

Jesus Himself is depicted as teaching the truth to us. “*But ye have not so learned Christ: If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus*” (Eph 4:20-21). What is “taught” is specified in the next three verses: “*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph 4:22-24). **In other words, you might say that the written word is incarnated, or embodied, in the lives of those who are taught by Jesus.** Teaching has to do with that kind of accomplishment.

Another example of the nature of teaching is found in First Thessalonians: “*But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another*” (1 Thess 4:9). Again, the teaching has to do with apprehending the

expressions highlight this.

⇨ “*Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*” (Col 2:7).

⇨ “*Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*” (Titus 1:9).

⇨ “*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle*” (2 Thess 2:15).

No believer will ever come to the point where both preaching and teaching cease to be required. There is no stage of spiritual life in which it is no longer necessary to hear the unchanging and unalterable facts pertaining to who Jesus is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. Equally true, there is no point where those facts no longer need to be expounded. **Furthermore, as soon as the message being delivered by those who preach and teach centers in the people themselves, it ceases to be profitable.** That is, when life in this world is seen as the primary life, the way that leads to eternal life has been abandoned. I realize this has some alarming implications.

WITH MANY OTHERS ALSO

“... with many others also.” Other versions read, “and many others also,”^{NASB} “with a number of others,”^{BBE} “along with many others,”^{CSB} “in company with many others,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “as did many others.”^{ISV}

In preaching and teaching, Paul and Barnabas were joined by “many others.” The “others” were competent preachers and teachers. This does not refer to casual discussions.

It is to be understood that the assembly in Antioch was the locus of these extended activities of preaching and teaching – for these gifts have been given to the church and for the church. They are for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 12:7,28). While they are not confined to the church, that is where they yield their

No believer will ever come to the point where both preaching and teaching cease to be required. There is no stage of spiritual life in which it is no longer necessary to hear the unchanging and unalterable facts pertaining to who Jesus is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. Equally true, there is no point where those facts no longer need to be expounded.

Teaching

Strictly speaking, teaching, or doctrine, is the exposition of the facts regarding “*the salvation that is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim 2:10). That is why it is often related to “wisdom” (1 Cor 2:13; Col 1:28; 3:16). The person who is “taught in the Word” (Gal 6:6) is not merely told what the Word says, but is brought to

truth, and being able to live it out to the glory of God.

When it comes to the teaching of holy men, the same principle is made known. The people hear the exposition of the facts related to the Gospel in such a way as enables those who receive the teaching to live in a manner that adorns the doctrine. Several apostolic

greatest benefit – as Jesus teaching His disciples was His most focused and productive teaching.

This is a commentary on the character of the congregation in Antioch. Our introduction to that church is found in these words: *“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul”* (Acts 13:1). It appears that this number of leaders had grown. Silas is now added to the number as well.

What a marvelous congregation to have such an appetite for the Word of the Lord! In this regard, it was much like the church in Jerusalem. Such assemblies are exceedingly rare, and apparently have been unusual throughout church history.

The Word of Truth Fellowship

It is a great source of blessing to me to see this kind of congregation being developed in The Word of Truth Fellowship in Joplin, Missouri. Frequent gatherings take place in which “many others” contribute to the edification of the saints through preaching and teaching. We even have additional gatherings

through the year during which preaching and teaching extend over several days. These annual gatherings include The Refreshing Waters Renewal, The Table In the Wilderness, and The Preaching Festival. All of these gatherings focus on the Gospel of Christ and its implications. They are held to nourish the saints because of their increased love and appetite for the truth of God.

Currently, we have a number of competent teachers and prophets. These include Aaron Hutchcraft, Ricky Sims, Robert Cobb, Gene Hutchcraft, Jeremy Williams, Michael Blakely, Tony Parker, Jonathan Blakely, and Matthew Cobb. Additional teachers who speak with less frequency include LaVaine Murphy,

Hutchcraft, Tasha Sims, Nichole Williams, Amanda Miller, Nicole Cobb, Melissa Parker, Pat Jones, Mattie Blakely, Debbie Hutchcraft, Michele Blakely, Eva Blakely, and Logan Williams.

This is a most remarkable circumstance. It is worthy of note because it represents the kind of life that was found in the church in Antioch. For many of us, it has proved to be an environment in which spiritual growth, stability, and expression are being encouraged and cultured. The contributions of these saints is also heard throughout the world. In my judgment, what is occurring here is representative of what is possible wherever honest and

In my judgment, what is occurring here is representative of what is possible wherever honest and good hearts are found. It confirms how the truth of God works within those who love it, and by faith subject themselves to it. It invariable produces fruit.

Isaac Murphy, and Tobiah Murphy. There are also a number of insightful sisters who deliver words of benefit to the assembly: June Blakely, Barbara

good hearts are found. It confirms how the truth of God works within those who love it, and by faith subject themselves to it. It invariable produces fruit.

PAUL DETERMINES TO VISIT THE CHURCHES

“⁸⁶ And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.”

One of the marks of a truly spiritual leader is a profound concern for the churches – for those who are “in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:1). Christ Himself “nourishes and cherishes”^{NKJV} the church (Eph 5:29), being the “great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20). It is not surprising, therefore, that those who are “workers together with Him” (2 Cor 6:1) maintain an interest in His flock.

LET US GO AGAIN AND

VISIT OUR BRETHREN

“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren. . .” Other versions read, “let us now go back,”^{NKJV} “Let us return,”^{NASB} “we should go back,”^{IE} and “let us go back and again visit and help and minister to the brethren.”^{AMPLIFIED}

After spending “some days,” or “some time”^{NIV} preaching and teaching in Antioch, Paul speaks to Barnabas about the places where they had preached during the fulfillment of the “work” to which the Spirit had formerly called them. They had “fulfilled” that work (Acts 14:25), and yet did not forget it.

Initially, they had proceeded

throughout the island of Cyprus, and up into Asia, going into the regions of Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Cilicia (13:14-14:21a). Then they had returned through those regions from Derbe, ministering to all of the churches again (14:21b-25). Now, Paul determines to go the region a third time.

IN EVERY CITY

“ . . . in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord . . . ” Other versions read, “proclaimed the word of the Lord,”^{NASB} “given the word of God,”^{BBE} “proclaimed the message about the Lord,”^{CJB} “announced the word of the Lord,”^{DARBY} “spread the Lord’s word,”^{GWN} “showed the words of the Lord,”^{TNT} and “made known the Lord’s message.”^{WEYMOUTH}

Paul and Barnabas continue teaching and preaching in Antioch; a division occurs, and Paul, chooses Silas – by Given O. Blakely

The cities in which they ministered that are specifically named include the following: Salamis (13:5), Paphos (13:6-12), Antioch of Pisidia (13:14), Iconium (13:51-14:3), Lystra and Derbe 14:6-23). It is also written that they preached “throughout all the region” surrounding Antioch (13:49), and the region of Lycaonia as well (14:6-7). They had also “ordained them elders in every church.” and commending “them to the Lord, on whom they believed”(14:25).

AND SEE HOW THEY DO

“... and see how they do.” Other versions read, “see how they are doing,” NKJV “see how they are,” NASB “see how they are getting on,” DARBY “see how they fare,” ERV “getting along,” LIVING “whether they are prospering,” WEYMOUTH and “how they are having.” INTERLINEAR

- in Him (15:6).
- ⇨ Having prayers answered (15:7).
- ⇨ Glorifying God (15:8a).
- ⇨ Being His disciples (15:8b).
- ⇨ Experiencing Jesus’ love (15:9a).
- ⇨ Continuing in His love (15:9b).
- ⇨ Keeping His commandments (15:10).
- ⇨ His joy remaining in the disciple (15:11a).
- ⇨ The joy of the disciple being full (15:11b).

If this is all we knew about this subject, it would be enough to promote

expectations – things salvation is calculated to produce.

- ⇨ “To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, **that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**”(Eph 3:16-17).
- ⇨ “That ye **being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height**”(Eph 3:17-18).
- ⇨ “That ye might **know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge**”(Eph 3:19a).
- ⇨ “That ye might be **filled with all the fulness of God**”(Eph 3:19b).
- ⇨ “The **perfecting of the saints**”(Eph 4:12a).
- ⇨ “For the **work of the ministry**”(Eph 4:12b).
- ⇨ “Till we all come to **the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God**”(4:13a).
- ⇨ “Unto a **perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**”(Eph 4:13b).
- ⇨ “That we be **no more children**”(4:14).
- ⇨ “**Grow up into Him in all things**”(Eph 4:15).
- ⇨ “The **increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love**”(Eph 4:16).
- ⇨ “That ye may be **able to stand against the wiles of the devil**”(Eph 6:11).
- ⇨ “To be **filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**”(Col 1:9).
- ⇨ “That ye might **walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing**”(Col 1:10a).
- ⇨ “Being **fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God**”(Col 1:10b).
- ⇨ “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto

If the individual can profit from the salvation of God apart from a very real association with Jesus, then exactly what is the purpose of that association?

This language suggests there are certain expectations concerning the progress of the churches. Ordinary men may settle for the churches simply remaining in a state of peace, or not falling into reprehensible conduct. But that is not enough for the man of God. You may be sure, Paul was not thinking about how many people were attending the churches in Asia, or the extensive nature of their mission program, youth ministry, or community outreach.

Jesus taught His disciples that both growth and fruit are expected of those who are in Him (John 15:1-11). He associated these conditions with the following:

- ⇨ Either remaining in Him or being removed from Him (15:1).
- ⇨ Bearing fruit (15:4-5).
- ⇨ Being cast into the fire if not abiding

sobriety and hearty effort. Nothing about Christ’s words suggest the acceptability of casualness or lack of advancement. Additionally, the very thought of abiding in Christ yet failing to grow is too absurd to be entertained for a moment. There is not the slightest hint in Scripture that so much as one benefit can pass from Christ to the person who remains at a distance from Him. Furthermore, once God puts the individual into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), he is expected to remain there, else all of the benefits realized through Christ will be forfeited. If this was not true, there would be no real purpose to being joined to the Lord in the first place. **If the individual can profit from the salvation of God apart from a very real association with Jesus, then exactly what is the purpose of that association?**

Ponder the revelation that has been given concerning the nature of spiritual life, and what is intended to take place within it. Here are a few of the

all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"(Col 1:11).

You might summarize these words, and more, by saying, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29).

In rebuking some of the Jewish believers, the Holy Spirit addressed this matter of what is expected in believers. "For when for the time **ye ought to be teachers**, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat"(Heb 5:12).

IN THIS TEXT

Paul is not suggesting they ought to visit the churches to see if they have been overcome, or fallen into some deep sin, and in other ways were coming short of the glory of God. If those conditions did exist, they would be made known in a process described as "see how they do" – **not** "see how they are not doing."

The word translated "do" is an interested one (ἐχουσι). Lexically the word means, "to have, or to hold . . . to be in such and such a condition," THAYER and "literally and figuratively, as holding something safely keep, preserve." FRIBERG Robertson's Word Pictures says of this expression: "How they fare (pōs echousin). Indirect question, "how they have it." The precariousness of the life of new converts in pagan lands is shown in all of Paul's Epistles (Furneau)."

There are certain things in which the believer is to have marked growth and advancement. **As in nature, spiritual life is expected to grow and mature.** As it is used here, the expression "see how they do" means "see how they are progressing," or "see if they are holding firmly to the things to which they were called." Here are a few of the areas in which how we are doing is to be considered.

- ⇒ Keeping the faith (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7).
- ⇒ Keep the rejoicing of the hope (Heb 3:6).

- ⇒ Abiding in Christ (John 15:4,7; 1 John 2:27,28).
- ⇒ Running the race with patience, or endurance (Heb 12:12).
- ⇒ Growing up into Christ in all things (Eph 4:15).
- ⇒ Growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).
- ⇒ Being steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor 15:58).
- ⇒ Being strong 1 Cor 16:13. Eph 6:10).
- ⇒ Putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11).
- ⇒ Adding to your faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Pet 1:5-8).
- ⇒ Setting your affection on things above, and not on things the earth (Col 3:1-2).

Thus Paul expresses his desire to see how the churches are progressing in the faith. It was this matter that was addressed on all of his letters to the churches – letters that contained many extortions directly related to spiritual growth (Rom 6:12,17; 12:2; 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 14:20; 15:58; 2 Cor 6:14; -7:2; Gal

he said, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches"(2 Cor 11:28).

Peter expressed this same concern in his letters to believers (1 Pet 1:22; 2:2,21; 3:9; 2 Pet 1:5-9; 3:2,14). John did the same as well (1 John 1:7; 2:6; 3:11,23; 4:7,11).

THE EMPHASIS IS ON THE BODY OF CHRIST

Although it is clear from both the doctrine and the historical record that the Divine emphasis has been placed upon the church, this point has been greatly obscured by the professing church itself. Ponder, for example, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself. The burden of His present ministry is represented as being toward His body.

- ⇒ He is bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10).
- ⇒ He is the Head of the body, which is the church (Col. 1:18).
- ⇒ His body is the repository for all of His fulness (Eph 1:22-23).
- ⇒ He is making intercession for those who are coming to God through Him (Heb 7:25).
- ⇒ He is the Mediator of the New Covenant, which is the "better hope" by which we draw near to God (Heb

THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION IS ON THE BODY OF CHRIST

ENTER

BEING CHANGED FROM GLORY TO GLORY

LIVING BY FAITH, WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

APOSTLES DOCTRINE, LEADING OF SPIRIT,

GRACE TEACHES, JESUS' INTERCESSION

CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF THE SON

GLORY

5:1-2, 19-25; Eph 4:22-24,26,32; 5:1,17; Phil 1:7,27; 2:2,12-15; Col 1:9-10; 3:5; 4:6; 1 Thess 4:1; 5:14-22; 2 Thess 3:12). Paul expressed this frame of mind when

- 7:19; 12:25).
- ⇒ He is loving and nourishing the church (Eph 5:29).

- ⇒ He has been given to the church as Head over all things (Eph 1:20-22).
- ⇒ He is the “*great Shepherd of the sheep*” (Heb 13:20).

Add to this the fact that all apostolic writing has been addressed to the saints. The Holy Spirit has been sent into the hearts of those who are now “*sons*” of God (Gal 4:6). The grace of God is engaged in tutoring those whom Jesus has redeemed from all iniquity to Himself, in order that they might be peculiarly His own (Tit 2:11-14).

*so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye **put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;** and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye **put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness**” (Eph 4:21-24).*

- ⇒ “*Wherefore **putting away lying,** speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another*” (Eph 4:25).

envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet 2:1-2).

- ⇒ “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye **sin not.** And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (1 John 2:1).

The thrust of apostolic doctrine dealt with the clarification of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, together with the exposition of the circumstances that required it. Ponder some of these teachings that dealt with matters that were greater in scope than the individuals to whom they were addressed. This is only a very general sampling of the teaching concerning objective realities. These were addressed to the churches.

- ⇒ The condition of humanity that required a great salvation (Rom 1:19-3:10).
- ⇒ The nature of justification (Rom 3:21-5:21; Gal 3:20-4:7).
- ⇒ The implications of baptism into Christ (Rom 6:1-23).
- ⇒ The reality of the inner conflict created by regeneration (Rom 7:1-25).
- ⇒ The extensive nature of a salvation that is ungirded by Divine power (Rom 8:1-39).
- ⇒ Reasoning concerning Divine involvements with, and commitments to, the children of Israel (Rom 9-11).
- ⇒ The nature and purpose of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14).
- ⇒ The resurrection of the dead, and its association with the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-58).
- ⇒ The glory of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:1-23).
- ⇒ The resurrection body (2 Cor 5:1-8).
- ⇒ The logic of new creatureship, and what God has accomplished in

Teaching of this sort makes for spiritual maturity and stability. This is because it provides things that can be grasped by faith. Once apprehended to some measurable degree, these provide a context in which believers can work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

How serious is it when there is not a prevailing interest in the body of Christ – not in assisting them in the resolution of their problems, but in their growth up into Christ? There are all kinds of religious professionals who specialize in improving interpersonal relationships, recovering from moral failure, and restructuring a dissembled life. However, you could take everything the Word of God has to say on these subjects, and the compilation of them all would barely qualify for a tract. **Such problems are addressed in Scripture, to be sure. However, the manner in which they are handled is quite different than modern methodologies.** A problem solving routine is absent in the doctrine. Allow me to give a few examples.

- ⇒ “*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof***” (Rom 13:14).
- ⇒ “*Awake to righteousness, and **sin not;** for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame*” (1 Cor 15:34).
- ⇒ “*But ye have not so learned Christ: If*

- ⇒ “***Neither give place to the devil***” (Eph 4:27).
- ⇒ “*But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, **let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints***” (Eph 5:3).
- ⇒ “*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, **be put away from you, with all malice***” (Eph 4:31).
- ⇒ “*But now ye also **put off all these:** anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds*” (Col 3:8-9).
- ⇒ “***Abstain from all appearance of evil***” (1 Thess 5:22).
- ⇒ “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist the devil,** and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7).
- ⇒ “*Wherefore **laying aside all malice,** and all guile, and hypocrisies, and*

Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:14-21; Col 1:13-22).

- ⇒ The nature of the freedom that is in Christ Jesus (Gal 5:1-26).
- ⇒ The purpose of God (Eph 1:4-23).
- ⇒ What God is doing in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:1-4:16).
- ⇒ The nature of spiritual life (Rom 12:1-21; Eph 4:17-6:24; Phil 2:12-16; 3:3-16; 4:4-9; Col 1:9-12; 2:6-3:1-25; 1 Thess 5:14-28).
- ⇒ What was involved in Jesus coming into the world (Phil 2:1-8).
- ⇒ The fact and implications of the exaltation of Christ (Phil 2:9-11).
- ⇒ The coming of the Lord (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Thess 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 2:1-9; 2 Pet 3:10-13).

Teaching of this sort makes for spiritual maturity and stability. This is

because it provides things that can be grasped by faith. **Once apprehended to some measurable degree, these provide a context in which believers can work out their own salvation with fear and trembling** (Phil 2:12). Such a requirement cannot be addressed by confining both teaching and effort to avoiding sin, or recovering from it. Whenever sin is defeated at the temptation level, or recovery is realized from the Satan's captivity, **there must be a corresponding apprehension of the objective realities of the Kingdom.**

I understand the phrase "see how they do" to refer to this apprehension. It has to do with progress in the matter of being conformed to the image of God's Son. As Paul said it, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:12). Other versions read, "in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus,"^{NASB} "to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus

took hold of me,"^{NIV} and "to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own."^{AMPLIFIED}

Spiritual progress has to do with the apprehension, or taking hold of, the things for which Jesus has taken hold of us. That is the thing Paul is looking for in the churches where they have ministered.

A SOLEMN THOUGHT

In this case, neglecting the people of God would involve failing to see how they are progressing. The thought of neglecting the people upon whom so much Divine and commissioned interest is focused causes me to shudder. I recall the solemn words of the apostle Paul concerning defiling the body of people in whom God dwells. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor 3:17).

This day is a time requiring a solemn emphasis of this reality!

BARNABAS WANTS TO TAKE MARK, BUT PAUL DID NOT THINK THAT WAS GOOD

"³⁷ And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."

This passage has been the subject of considerable controversy in the Christian community. Some have said that Barnabas made the right decision, and others affirm that Paul's assessment of the situation was the correct one. I shall view this text within the context of how heaven reacted to the whole matter – whose work was chronicled after this event, and whose was not. I will also assess the purpose of the mission that was undertaken, and the bearing that had on this matter.

BARNABAS DETERMINED TO TAKE JOHN

"And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname

was Mark." Other versions read, "was desirous of taking John,"^{NASB} "wanted to take John,"^{NIV} "was minded to take,"^{ASV} "proposed to take,"^{DARBY} "counseled to take,"^{GENEVA} "suggested taking,"^{NJB} "was bent on taking,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "persisted in wanting."^{ISV}

The Greek word translated "determined" is ἐβούλετο. The lexical meaning of this word, as used here, is, "to deliberate with oneself consider . . . resolve,"^{THAYER} "to resolve on, to determine with oneself."^{LEH} This was a personal decision on the part of Barnabas – something he himself had determined. Of itself, this does not make the decision wrong, for this word is used at least once of a proper decision resulting from personal consideration (2 Cor 1:17). However, most of the time it is used, it clearly reflects personal reasoning, as compared with Divine direction (Lk 14:31; John 12:10; Acts 5:33; 12:4).

It must be remembered that John was Barnabas' nephew – the son of his own sister (Col 4:10). It appears as though Barnabas was moved by his personal relationship to Mark – at least that is the consensus of the commentators (Expositor's Bible, Albert Barnes, Pulpit Commentary, John Gill, John Benson, Matthew Henry, John Calvin). Of itself, this is not enough to form a satisfactory view of the text. I only mention it to confirm there have been numerous godly men who have viewed this text in this manner.

I will proceed with the assumption that Barnabas was thinking primarily of his nephew, no doubt desiring to give him the opportunity to be more firmly established. Of itself, this was good. However, it is questionable in view of the work on which they were embarking.

PAUL THOUGHT IT NOT GOOD

“But Paul thought not good to take him with them . . .” Other versions read, *“Paul insisted they should not,”*^{NKJV} *“did not think it wise,”*^{NIV} *“decided not to,”*^{NRSV} *“thought best not to,”*^{RSV} *“did not think it appropriate,”*^{CSB} *“thought it not meet,”*^{GENEVA} *“didn’t think it was right,”*^{GWN} *“was not willing,”*^{MRD} *“insisted that they should not take”*^{NAB} *“kept insisting,”*^{NET} *“disagreed strongly,”*^{NLT} *“would not take him,”*^{PNT} *“didn’t like the idea at all,”*^{LIVING} *“deemed it undesirable,”*^{WEYMOUTH} *“did not consider such a man fit,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“strongly disapproved.”*^{PHILLIPS}

Here we are not dealing with mere human opinions concerning an individual. Paul had shown a clear acceptance of John Mark in their initial journey into Asia (Acts 13:5). **Here, however, a larger matter is under consideration than the recovery or training of John Mark.** They will be going into a territory where considerable hostility had been experienced, with the aim to see how the churches are progressing. This mission will require focus and consistency. Therefore, the reason for Paul’s stance on this matter is given to us.

THE REASON FOR THE DISSENSION

“ . . . who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.” Other versions read, *“deserted them,”*^{NASB} *“withdrawn from them,”*^{RSV} *“gone away from them,”*^{BBE} *“gone off and left them,”*^{CJB} *“abandoned them,”*^{DARBY} and *“quit and deserted them.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

The word *“departed”* is a translation of the Greek word ἀποστάνα. The root meaning of this word is “to go away, depart, from anyone . . . to desert, withdraw from, one,”^{THAYER} and “go away, withdraw . . . desert someone”^{GINGRICH} The ideas of revolt, quitting, discontinuing, defection, abandonment, and desertion are in this word. It is by no means mild in its implications. The uses of this term confirm its strength.

- ⇨ Satan *“departed”* from Jesus after tempting Him for forty days and nights (Lk 4:13).
- ⇨ It is translated *“fall away”* in the parable of those who received the Word like seed on rocky soil (Lk

8:13).

- ⇨ This is word Jesus used when speaking to those making false claims of doing wonderful works: *“Depart from Me . . .”* Lk 13:27).
- ⇨ Paul used it when speaking of an apostasy in which some would *“depart from the faith”* (1 Tim 4:1).
- ⇨ It is used in the admonition *“depart from iniquity”* (2 Tim 2:19).
- ⇨ It is also used to describe those who evidence unbelief, *“in departing from the living God”* (Heb 3:12).

Ponder the things with which this word is associated – revealed in both the translations of this verse and the lexical meaning of the word: desertion, withdrawing, going away, abandoning, and quitting.

The account of John departing is found in Acts 13:13. *“Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”* This was after Paul and Barnabas had passed through the island of Cyprus, and were on the way to Asia, to which the Spirit had called them. That is when John abandoned or deserted them. It was not merely that he left them, the text continues, but because *“he went not with them to the work”* – the work to which the Spirit had called Paul and Barnabas, and for which he had joined them as their *“minister,”*^{NKJV} *“assistant,”*^{NKJV} or *“helper.”*^{NASB}

It must be remembered that *“it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Cor 4:2), whether the involvement is at the level of a leader of a helper.

Paul perceived *“the work”* of the Lord to be too important to involve those whose devotion was questionable. They would be journeying into places where they had faced hostility, and where he himself had been stoned. This was no time to institute a training program for the undependable. Although John Mark would avenge his condition later, proving himself to be trustworthy and profitable (2 Tim 4:11), that dependability had not yet been confirmed. However Barnabas

PAUL AND BARNABAS TOGETHER

Dates are an absolute minimum, and are probably understated

- A.D. 37 – Barnabas takes newly converted Saul, bringing him to the apostles, and standing in his behalf (Acts 9:27-28).
- A.D. 43 – After being sent to Antioch by the church in Jerusalem, Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Saul, and brought him to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).
- A.D. 44 – Barnabas and Saul remain in Antioch for a whole year (Acts 11:26).
- A.D. 44 – Barnabas and Saul are sent to the elders of the Jerusalem church with relief gathered from the churches (Acts 12:29-30).
- A.D. 44 – Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, bringing back John Mark with them (Acts 12:25).
- A.D. 45 – Barnabas and Saul are called to a special work by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-3).
- A.D. 46 – They went Cyprus, preaching in the synagogues, with John Mark as their helper (Acts 13:4-5).
- A.D. 46 – They ministered together throughout Cyprus, and provinces in Asia (Acts 13:6-20).
- A.D. 47 – They returned through the regions in which they had preached confirming the souls of the disciples (Acts 13:21-25).
- A.D. 47 – They returned to Antioch reporting what God had done through them, remaining there for a long time (Acts 14:26-28).
- A.D. 50 – Some years later, they were sent to Jerusalem, together with others from Antioch, about the matter of circumcision and keeping the law being required of the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-21).
- A.D. 50 – Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch from Jerusalem with letters of instruction for the Gentile churches (Acts 15:22-34).
- A.D. 50 – Paul and Barnabas remain for some time in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord (Acts 15:35).
- A.D. 50 – Paul then determines to revisit all the places there they have preached, to see how the believers have been progressing.

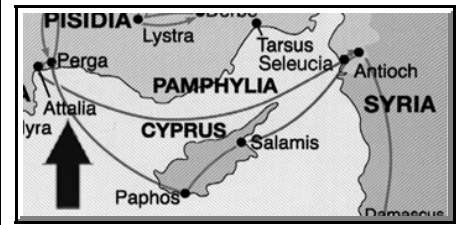
may have considered John Mark, Paul did not regard him after the flesh – and that is the manner of the kingdom (2 Cor 5:16). **In this case what was to be done was of greater consequence than focusing on a particular individual.** The whole of the work must be considered.

In confirmation that this is,

indeed, a proper way of thinking, consider the manner in which Paul dealt the infamous fornicator in Corinth. When confirming why he had spoken as he did, he made it clear that it was the whole church that concerned him. Here is what he said: *“So although I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God,”* NASB or *“to find out how loyal you are to us*

before God”^{1E} (2 Cor 7:12). To be sure, the “offender” and “the one offended” profited from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. However, it was Paul’s labors with the entire congregation that was the real issue at stake.

So it is in this text. The work of visiting the churches to see how they were progressing was the greater work. In Paul’s estimation, John Mark came



behind that work.

A SHARP CONTENTION CAUSES PAUL AND BARNABAS TO SEPARATE

“³⁹ And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.”

There are some matters that cannot be settled – this was one of them. No counselors were called in to assist them, for that was apparently not appropriate. **Behind the scenes, it seems to me that the Lord was now shifting the emphasis to Paul’s apostleship and leadership.** So far as laboring with Paul, the work of Barnabas had apparently come to a conclusion, and he would be used in other ways. Considering that the report of Paul confronting Peter in Antioch (Gal 2:1-13) took place during the meeting recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, **this is the last record in the Bible of any activity of Barnabas.** The only other mention of him is found in the epistles of First Corinthians and Colossians (1 Cor 9:6; Col 4:10). The Corinthian reference suggests that Barnabas did continue to work for the Lord. It is just that it is not reported.

Here we have an example of two men, both with noble motives – yet one

was more interested in an individual, while the other was consumed with the work of the Lord itself.

SHARP CONTENTION

“And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other . . .” Other versions read, *“such a sharp disagreement,”* NASB *“the disagreement became so sharp,”* NRSV *“a dissension,”* DOUAY *“so stirred,”* GENEVA *“this strife,”* NAB *“a sharp irritation,”* MONTGOMERY and *“a sharp clash of opinion.”* PHILLIPS

Being in Christ does not dehumanize us, or cause us to be indifferent about matters that are of importance to us. Neither does it allow us to violate our conscience or indulge in activities we judge to be inappropriate. In this case, both men apparently presented their reasoning, and neither one of them would yield to the reasoning of the other. In this case, it appears that Paul had a more noble motive. The events that follow, together with the Divine record of Paul’s ministry seem to me to justify that conclusion.

BARNABAS TOOK MARK AND

SAILED TO CYPRUS

“ . . . and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.”

Cyprus, as you may recall, was the home of Barnabas (Acts 4:36). The original mission trip of Barnabas and Saul took them through Cyprus (Acts 13:4-5). There were cities there where he and Paul had preached. Salamis and Paphos are particularly mentioned. In Salamis they are said to have *“preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews”* (13:5). Being an island with numerous cities, it is assumed that they preached in several of them as they went *“through the isle unto Paphos”* (13:6). However, on their return trip, they did not pass through the Isle of Cyprus, but sailed straight from Attalia to Antioch, bypassing Cyprus.

This indicates that Barnabas did not revisit the brethren as Paul had determined, seeing how they were doing, and delivering the letters sent by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The purpose stated by Paul, however, will not be neglected. It will be carried forward as he had determined. This leads me to believe the Lord was directing Paul.

PAUL CHOOSES SILAS FOR THE DETERMINED WORK

“⁴⁰ And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.”

To me, this is a commentary on the effectiveness of the peace of God keeping one’s heart and mind. As it is written, *“And the peace of God, which*

passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). After a sharp, and apparently somewhat extended, conflict

with Barnabas over taking John Mark with them, and their consequent separation, Paul's heart and mind were still on the work of the Lord. He did not abandon his plans to revisit the cities where they had preached, and see how the brethren were doing. A lesser man would have been distraught over the dispute of reference, and probably required time to be alone. The work may even have been altogether abandoned.

PAUL CHOSE SILAS

"And Paul chose Silas, and departed . . ." Other versions read, *"and left,"* ^{NIV} *"and set out,"* ^{NRSV} and *"went forth."* ^{DARBY}

We know this is the case because of the revealed purpose of God for the saved: to conform them to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). We know that this is accomplished through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who changes the reconciled ones from glory unto glory (2 Cor 3:18). However, this is done, according to revelation, as they behold *"the glory of the Lord"* (2 Cor 3:18). **That is where valid ministry comes into the picture, for it is through the exposition of the Gospel that what is seen of Christ is enlarged.** Men do not grow by instruction, but by spiritual insight. Contrary to the suppositions of the self-help gurus, **we are transformed or changed by what we**

and support in the work. **In other words, the brethren recognized what Paul was doing to be in harmony with the will and purpose of God.** Therefore, they sought the Divine support of the work – that the Lord bless and sustain it.

While care must be taken not to make more of this than is appropriate, the brethren are not said to have recommended Barnabas and Mark to the grace of God. This again suggests that Paul had the clearer perspective of the the work before him, and those who would be appropriate to participate in it. The considerations that compel me to view the matter in this way are as follows:

- ⇒ Barnabas chose his nephew, who had not been proven to be reliable at that point.
- ⇒ Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus.
- ⇒ There is no further word concerning the ministry of Barnabas.
- ⇒ Paul had a mind for the work itself, as opposed to an interest in an individual.
- ⇒ Paul's choice blends more perfectly with the kingdom trait of not knowing men after the flesh.
- ⇒ Paul's choice and destination met with the approval and blessing of the brethren.
- ⇒ So far as the book of Acts is concerned, from this point on, the accent is on the labors of Paul.

This is not something of which I seek to make an issue. Rather, I intend to show that there are good reasons to consider Paul's rejection of John Mark as one made with a sound mind, and with a settled interest in the churches.

In other words, the brethren recognized what Paul was doing to be in harmony with the will and purpose of God. Therefore, they sought the Divine support of the work – that the Lord bless and sustain it.

Paul wasted no time, but chose Silas to take the place of Barnabas, and set out on his mission – to see how the brethren were doing in all of the cities where he and Barnabas had preached. An overly sensitive person might have been cast down because of being separated from a fellow-worker with whom he had spend quite a few years in close and productive labors.

Remember, that original mission was one to which they were called by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they had fulfilled that mission, completing it as the Spirit had directed them (Acts 14:26). Yet, the work of the Lord requires more than initiation – and Paul knew it. **Every work that is commenced by God is like a plant that is to be tended and nurtured until it is mature.**

SEE, not what we do (2 Cor 3:18; 4:6; 1 John 3:2).

BEING RECOMMENDED BY THE BRETHREN

" . . . being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." Other versions read, *"being commended by,"* ^{NKJV} *"being committed by,"* ^{NASB} *"commending him to,"* ^{NRSV} *"with the blessing of,"* ^{BBE} *"delivered . . . to,"* ^{DOUAY} *"entrusted him to,"* ^{GWN} and *"having been given up to."* ^{YLT}

This is not the first time the brethren commended someone to the grace of God. In their original mission, Barnabas and Saul had been *"recommended to the grace of God"* (Acts 14:26). This involves committing them into the care of the Lord for His blessing

PAUL AND SILAS GO THROUGHOUT SYRIA AND CILICIA CONFIRMING THE CHURCHES

" 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

We will find that Paul's mission was in strict harmony with the focus of the letters prepared and sent out by the

apostles and elders, with the whole church, in Jerusalem. Of that intent it is written, *"And they wrote letters by them*

after this manner: The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and **Syria and Cilicia** (Acts 15:23). This is the Antioch from which Barnabas and Saul had been sent out (13:1-3). Syria and Cilicia are the general areas where preaching had been done, with Antioch being a part of Syria, and the place where the matter of circumcision first became an issue.

THROUGH SYRIA AND CILICIA

“And he went through Syria and Cilicia . . .” Other versions read, *“Paul went,”*^{GWN} *“Paul and Silas went.”*^{LIVING}

Notice, the text reads, **“HE went.”** All versions, with the exception of those noted, read **“he went”** – i.e., Paul went. He was not traveling alone, but he was the leader of this expedition, God having put it into his heart. This manner of expression is frequently found in Scripture. Often it is written that Jesus went here or there, although His disciples were with Him (Matt 4:35; 9:35; 12:1; 14:14; 15:21; 21:12).

Note, there is no record of them going to Cyprus, where Barnabas took John Mark. After Acts 15:39, there is no record of any special trip being made to Cyprus. It is only mentioned in reference to trips that took vessels past Cyprus (Acts 21:3,16; 27:4). This does not appear to be of any special significance, as though it was wrong for Barnabas to have gone to Cyprus, or that in any way it was not a proper place to preach the Gospel. Those who had been scattered by the persecution that rose over Stephen had preached there (Acts 11:19). It appears, however, that the thrust of Divine activity was in other regions.

Syria was a rather extensive territory, with numerous coastal cities, as the Mediterranean Sea was its Eastern boundary. Cities in that region included Damascus (now over 4,000 years old), Tyre, Sidon, and Laodicea.

CONFIRMING THE CHURCHES

“. . . confirming the churches.” Other versions read, *“strengthening the churches,”*^{NKJV} *“making the churches stronger in the faith,”*^{BBE} *“establishing the churches,”*^{GENEVA} *“consolidating the churches,”*^{NJB} *“helping the congregations grow stronger,”*^{LIVING} *“establishing and*

strengthening the churches,”^{AMPLIFIED} *“on standing fast the called,”*^{INTERLINEAR} *“encouraging the churches,”*^{CEV} and *“making the assemblies strong,”*^{LITV}

The word *“confirming”* is translated from the Greek word ἐπισημαίνω. It is in the present active tense, which means this was a continual work; i.e., it is what Paul did wherever he went. The word itself means, *“to establish besides, strengthen more; to render more firm, confirm,”*^{THAYER} *“cause to be firm,”*^{FRIBERG} *“to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief - ‘to strengthen, to make more firm.”*^{LOUW-NIDA}

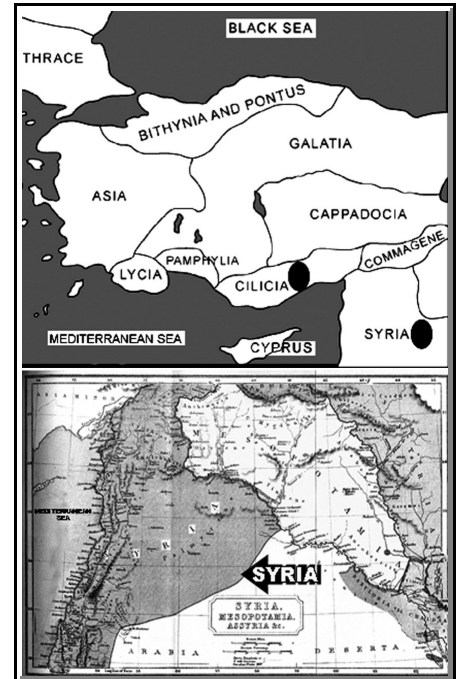
This is not strengthening as in recovering weak and backsliding people – which work is essential – but in the sense of maturing, growing up into Christ, and being more partakers of the Divine nature. Technically, this is not stabilizing a bruised reed, or fanning a smoking flax into a great flame. Those activities are essential, but that is not the meaning of *“confirming.”*

Actually, recovering those held captive by the devil (2 Tim 2:24-26), restoring those overtaken in a fault (Gal 6:1-2), and raising up the fallen (1 Tim 3:6-7), are activities **that bring the individual to the point where they CAN grow up into Christ in all things.** Once those ministries are fulfilled, the work of the laborer has not finished. Then it is necessary to get on with the work of establishing the people in the faith, or they will fall again, be bruised again, and be snared by the devil again. Let me be clear about this. **The person who is dabbling in sin, succumbing to temptation, and following after worldly lusts, has been pulled out of the sphere of spiritual growth.** They are on the broad road that leads to destruction.

When *“the old man”* dominates, *“the new man”* sits down. It simply is not possible to serve to masters. It is not that we **should** not serve two masters, it is **impossible** to do so. If the saints of God are not strengthened and confirmed, they cannot avoid being vulnerable to the *“devices”* of the wicked one.

Being *“confirmed”* means the person has a more firm grasp on the truth, being able to hold on to it during

the storms and trials of life. Such a person is able to *“stand in the evil day,”* when the adversary launches unusual and prolonged initiatives against that individual (Eph 6:13). When iniquity abounds (Matt 24:12), the love of the confirmed people will not *“wax cold.”* In the day of adversity, they will not faint



(Prov 24:10).

The *“confirmed”* soul can *“put off the old man,”* and *“put on the new man”* (Eph 4:22-24). They can *“fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Tim 6:12). They can *“run the race with patience,”* finishing the course that concludes in the presence of the Lord (Heb 12:1-2). These are the people who have effectively resisted the devil, for which cause they are able to *“add”* to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Pet 1:5-6). These are the people who are obtaining more from heaven than they are denying from earth, and receiving more of the Lord than they are rejecting from the devil. They are being *“taught by God”*^{NKJV} (1 Thess 4:9), have *“the mind of Christ”* (1 Cor 2:16), and are participating in the Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). These are the people who have their senses exercised to discern both good and

evil, and have need of “strong meat”(Heb 5:12,14). They cannot subsist on meager

spiritual diets. They are “prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim 2:21), being

“thoroughly furnished unto all good works”(2 Tim 3:17).

CONCLUSION

Our text has exposed us to the proper manner in which we are to think of the churches – all of them. It particularly accents the manner in which men should think of the churches where they have invested of themselves. **A church that is not established in the faith, or “confirmed,” is not an exemplary congregation – regardless of how it may appear to men.** Its size is of no consequence whatsoever, for no church of Scripture was ever evaluated upon the basis of its size. In fact, we have little or no detailed information on the size of any congregation of Scriptural record, unless it be the church in Jerusalem. There are also some indications that the church in Corinth was of considerable size, although it certainly gave them no spiritual advantage.

The stability and maturity of any congregation can be measured by the kind of diet that sustains it. If, for example, the **fundamental** ministries of a church pertain to getting people off the streets, aiding the needy, recovering

they are not. **However, not a single one of them have to do with growth up into Christ** (Eph 4:15). They all have to do with getting people back on the “narrow” way that leads to life (Matt 7:14).

Those who are classified as Christians, yet who live closer to the world than to heaven, are a living contradiction of “newness of life,” in which all of them had their genesis in Jesus. Our Lord certainly did say that the “sick have need of a physician” (Mk 2:17). However, who is the fool who imagines that the Great Physician leaves them sick, and that He is **only** a Physician? Did He not come so we could be “made partakers” of Him (Heb 3:14) – and He is certainly not sick! How is it that people who are being oriented for glory can maintain a primary affiliation with the world from which they have been delivered (Gal 1:4)? Life in Christ is calculated to bring us into the objective that God has revealed – to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). Such a

“confirmed,” or established in the faith. These realities substantiate to us that spiritual advancement is not automatic. It requires the investment of the saved themselves, and the faithful workers who are “laborers together with God” (1 Cor 3:9).

⇒ Every person who is born again, with absolutely no exceptions, are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”(Eph 2:10).

⇒ They all begin with a clean slate, having been “justified from all things”(Acts 13:39), and forgiven of “all trespasses”(Col 2:13).

⇒ All of them were buried by baptism into the death of Christ, and raised to walk in the “newness of life”(Rom 6:4).

⇒ All of them were “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” (1 Cor 6:11).

⇒ Without exception, they were raised up by God to sit together with Christ “in the heavenly places”(Eph 2:6).

⇒ They started their new life with the “old man” crucified (Rom 6:6), and a “new man” that was “created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:24).

⇒ All of them had “access” to God (Eph 3:12).

⇒ Because they were sons, God sent His Holy Spirit into their hearts (Gal 4:6), to lead in subduing the flesh (Rom 8:13), and wait for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal 6:5).

⇒ Jesus Himself performed an “operation,” or work, of circumcision upon them when they were baptized, that successfully separated them from the “body of the sins of the flesh”(Col 2:11-12), so they were no

The stability and maturity of any congregation can be measured by the kind of diet that sustains it. If, for example, the fundamental ministries of a church pertain to getting people off the streets, aiding the needy, recovering people from moral deficiencies, putting marriages together that are falling apart, and other matters relating to moral and spiritual inadequacies, then the strength of that church is in question. It is not that any of those works are wrong, for they are not. However, not a single one of them have to do with growth up into Christ

people from moral deficiencies, putting marriages together that are falling apart, and other matters relating to moral and spiritual inadequacies, then the strength of that church is in question. It is not that any of those works are wrong, for

conformation postulates becoming more like Him, not remaining as we were.

Ponder the advantages realized by those in Christ. These are the matters that are addressed by believers being

longer debtors to the flesh to be dominated by its impulses (Rom 8:12).

⇒ In addition, the grace of God came, teaching them how to successfully deny, or reject, “*ungodliness and worldly lusts*,” while living “*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*” (Tit 2:11-12).

⇒ All of the saved were “*reconciled to God*” (Col 1:20), being no more “*enemies*” (Rom 5:10), and were “*made free*” by the Son of God from all that ensnares the soul and separates men from God (Rom 8:36; Gal 5:1).

Those who engage in the noble

work of confirming the saints make much of these realities. They engage in assisting believers to see more clearly that they have been called **to** something that is intended to be appropriated, as well as **from** something to be avoided. What they have been summoned to is greater in both magnitude and nature than what they have been called from. They have been called to better things.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/19/08. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Sixty-eighth lesson will cover verses 1 through 5 of the sixteenth chapter: “THE INTRODUCTION OF TIMOTHY.” As they were revisiting the churches to see how they were doing, Paul confronts a young disciple who was held in high regard by the brethren in Lystra and Iconium – Timothy. He came from a divided home, but evidenced such qualities as moved Paul to determine to take him with them as they journeyed to the churches. As they went throughout the region, they delivered the decrees that had been determined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. 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.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A REQUISITE FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE, FOR THE PREDESTINATED OBJECTIVE OF GOD IS FOR THE JUSTIFIED ONES TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON. WHERE THAT PURPOSE IS NOT ACHIEVED, GRACE HAS BEEN FRUSTRATED, AN EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF HAS ENTERED, AND SATAN HAS CAPTIVATED THE PERSON TO DO HIS OWN PERVERSE WILL.



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Clarifying the nature and content of the Gospel



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PARTICIPATING BROTHERS AND SISTERS SPEAKING/LEADING/MINISTERING IN THE ASSEMBLY

The Word of Truth Fellowship, Joplin, MO
DURING NOVEMBER 2008

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* (AM Calling).
2. *Eva Blakely* (AM Calling).
3. *Blakely, Given O.* (AM Table Meditation, PM Message, PM Message, PM Exhortation).
4. *Blakely, Jonathan* (PM Table Meditation, PM Introduction, PM Message).
5. *Blakely, June* (AM Opening Word, Teach AM Class).
6. *Blakely, Mattie* (Lead PM Singing).
7. *Blakely, Michael* (Play piano, Teach AM Class, AM Table Meditation, AM Opening Word, PM Table Meditation, PM Message).
8. *Blakely, Michele* (Play Piano, Lead AM Singing).
9. *Cobb, Matthew* (PM Message).
10. *Cobb, Nicole* (AM Calling).
11. *Cobb, Robert* (Teach AM Class, AM Message, AM Exhortation, PM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation, Lead PM Singing, PM Table Meditation).
12. *Hill, John* (Lead Intercessory Prayer).
13. *Hutchcraft, Aaron* (AM Exhortation, AM Message, AM Introduction, Teach AM Class, PM Exhortation, PM Exhortation).
14. *Hutchcraft, Barbara* (Lead Scripture Shower, PM Introduction, Lead PM Singing).
15. *Hutchcraft, Debbie* (Lead AM Singing, Lead PM Singing).
16. *Hutchcraft, Gene* (AM Message, AM Exhortation, Teach AM Class, AM Table Meditation, PM Exhortation).
17. *Hutchcraft, Judah* (Read AM Sermon Text, Closing Scripture/Prayer, Introduce to PM Sermon, Read PM Sermon Text).
18. *Hutchcraft, Micah* (Lead Scripture Shower, PM Opening Word).
19. *Jones, Pat* (AM Opening Word).
20. *Murphy, Isaac* (AM Table Meditation).
21. *Murphy, Mariah* (Lead Scripture Shower, Read AM Sermon Text, Closing Scripture/Prayer, Read AM Sermon Text).
22. *Murphy, Micaela* (Read AM Sermon Text).
23. *Murphy, Tobias* (AM Opening Word).
24. *Parker, Melissa* (Lead AM Singing).
25. *Parker, Tony* (AM Table Meditation).
26. *Scalf, Rebecca* (Lead Scripture Shower).
27. *Sims, Annie* (Lead Scripture Shower, Closing Scripture/Prayer, Read AM Sermon Text, Read PM Sermon Text).
28. *Sims, Baylie* (Closing Scripture/Prayer, Read PM Sermon Text).
29. *Sims, Ricky* (AM Opening Word, AM Message, AM Exhortation, AM Message, PM Table Meditation, Lead PM Singing).
30. *Sims, Tasha* (Lead AM Singing, Lead AM Singing, PM Introduction).
31. *Williams, Jeremy* (PM Message).
32. *Williams, Nichole* (PM Introduction).
33. *Williams, Logan* (Play AM/PM Lord's Table Interlude, Closing Scripture/Prayer, Introduce AM Message, Read PM Sermon Text).
34. *Williams, Sydney* (Read PM Sermon Text).
35. *Preparing Lord's Supper* (Various sisters).



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