

The Church at Antioch | Acts 11:19-26 | 2/28/16

- Introduction
 - The Church at Antioch is a significant city and Church that was second only to the first church in Jerusalem.
 - Up until this time the church had centered around Jerusalem.
 - This is where the Apostles had first received the Holy Spirit and where Jesus had told them to remain.
 - It was all part of God's plan and timing for them to stay in Jerusalem to spread the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.
 - But now since the stoning of Stephen they are branching out into the world and they founded this great church.
 - Acts 8:4
 - "So those who were scattered went on their way preaching the message of good news."
 - Acts 11:19
 - The church at Antioch is the next major city that started a large church and gathering of Christians.
 - God's plan to begin growing the church throughout the rest of the world had begun.
 - Antioch is also the city that was the Launchpad for Paul to begin his missionary work of spreading the Gospel.
 - The disciples were first called "Christians" at Antioch.
 - History outside of Scripture tells us that the name was used as a derogatory word against the disciples. However, they seemed to embrace it and it has stuck ever since.
 - Modern Christians can learn from ancient Christians of Antioch.
- Antioch the city
 - Antioch is a significant city for the church to begin its next stage in growth.
 - Antioch was a great place to bring the message of Christ as it was the third largest city in the Roman Empire.
 - It had a population of 500,000
 - It was the only city in the ancient world at that time that had its streets lighted at night.
 - **This city was chosen by God to be used as another foundation on which to build His church.**
- The Lord was with this new church in Antioch
 - Verse 21 tells us that the hand of the Lord was with them, it was very clear that it was in God's will for the church in Antioch to be established.
 - There is no question that God was with these Christians and that it was not a church established by the will of man, but instead by the will of God.
- The apostles heard about the church in Antioch and sent Barnabas
 - Word of these faithful Christians reached the ears of the apostles in Jerusalem and they were impressed enough that they sent Barnabas to see if the claims were true.
 - This was significant as Antioch was over 300 miles North of Jerusalem.
 - This was not a small church that was keeping to themselves in the shadows, they had made a name for themselves that traveled all the way to Jerusalem.
 - This is the same Barnabas who had his heart in the right place when he sold his field and gave the proceeds to the church in Acts 4:36.
- **Barnabas had great joy when he arrived at Antioch because he saw that the grace of God was upon and working through the Antioch Christians.**

- Barnabas had heard of the great things that were going on in Antioch, but now he has seen it with his own eyes.
- The grace of God was **unmistakably** seen upon these Christians. God was genuinely at work.
- **When Christians are obedient to God and are doing His Will, He will show His grace upon those Christians.**
 - God desires for all of His Christians to be obedient and to do what He has called us to do.
 - He cannot help but to bestow His mercy and grace upon those that show their love through obedience and are faithful.
 - God was blessing these Christians, they were growing in number and were growing the church.
- **God's grace was seen in obvious signs, that God was working through and using these Christians to accomplish His great works.**
 - When we think of the grace of God we think perhaps of blessings and God's mercy shown upon someone which is very true.
 - **But when we talk about the grace of God being "visible" we are also talking about God using and working through the Christians.**
 - **Barnabas "saw" God's grace.**
 - When Christians exercise our spiritual gifts and doing God's work He will use us and the results can be seen.
 - Evidence for the church at Antioch was likely seen in that many ways.
 - The Antioch Christians were not ashamed of the Gospel because they were witnessing, preaching and teaching as many believed in Christ.
 - Romans 1:16
 - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew and also to the Greek."
 - Acts 4:33
 - "And the apostles were giving testimony with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them."
 - The Antioch Christians were doers of the Word not just listeners.
 - James 1:22
 - "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."
 - James 1:25
 - "But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and preserves in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works—this person will be blessed in what he does."
 - **God's grace is visible when Christians act out their faith and produce fruit.**
 - **John 15:8**
 - "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples"
 - These Antioch Christians were proving themselves to be disciples of Christ. God will not glorify those who prove themselves NOT to be.

- The Antioch Christians would have been a loving church congregation, not just in a building, but a community of Christians who loved one another.
 - John 13:35
 - “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - If Barnabas saw the grace of God among this community of Christians, he would have seen brotherly love.
 - If they would have been selfish and only cared for themselves, it would be hard to see God’s grace through that.
 - For God to use us to display His visible grace we must be obedient, we must do what God has called us to do.
 - Do we think that God will use a Christian who has no desire to obey God or use their spiritual gifts to display His visible grace?
 - **How can God’s grace be seen within the church, if the Christians are all sitting down in their pews and never share the Gospel or attempt to do any of God’s good works.**
 - This is a glimpse of what these Christians would have looked like for God’s grace to have been so visible to Barnabas.
 - **God’s grace is visible among those who are doing the work of God with their hearts in the right place.**
 - God will bless those who do His good works and are obedient to Him. This is generally something that is visible, when God’s grace is bestowed we cannot help but notice.
 - **What can we as Christians, as a church, do so that if Barnabas walked in here today, that he would have great joy because he saw the grace of God upon NewSite Baptist Church? What would he see?**
 - **What does a Christian or a church look like that one would not see God’s grace or the obvious signs of Him working through them?**
 - **What are some pitfalls that we as Christians (or the church) could fall into that could lead us into this direction?**
- Barnabas sought to encourage the Christians so that they would not lose but gain in their relationship with Christ.
 - Barnabas did not need to give them advice on how to obtain the grace of God, it was obvious they had already done this.
 - **But what advice he did give them was how to maintain it, so that they would grow instead of losing what they had.**
 - All too often Christians can be on-fire for God and drift away.
 - All too often is there a church that at one point was used by God and His grace was visible, only for the Christians to lose their focus and begin to lose their effectiveness.
 - Barnabas did not want this to happen to this new church so he gave them advice on how to maintain it.
 - Barnabas encouraged these Christians to remain faithful (or true) to the Lord with a firm resolve of the heart.
 - His advice was very simple, yet it is very powerful to the Christian to maintain their relationship with Christ.
 - **In our hearts we MUST remain faithful to the Lord.**
 - **If we remain loyal to God and never give up on being obedient to Him, we can be assured that He will continue to use us and work through us.**

- 1 Peter 1:14-15
 - “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,”.
- The Christians at Antioch were faithful, they were being obedient, this why God’s grace was bestowed upon them and there were the visible signs of God working through them.
- But if these Christians begin to regularly disobey God and were no longer faithful, these signs will become less and less visible.
- Disobedience is the chief way that we can show God our unfaithfulness.
 - When we disobey we tell God that we do not respect His will and that we put our selfishness first.
- **If we the Christians of NewSite Baptist desire to have God’s grace be given and used through us, we must be faithful and obedient to Him.**
- We must never give up
 - The moment that we give up on being obedient to God and we do what we want to do, is the moment that we begin to drift from God.
 - As soon as we give up Satan is ready to pounce on us and we will be much weaker at defending ourselves from his temptation.
 - 1 Peter 5:8-9
 - “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.”
- We must cling to the Lord and serve Him with all our heart and soul.
 - Joshua 22:5
 - “Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you. To love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep His commandments and **to cling to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul**
 - **If we truly cling and hold onto Jesus Christ, if we serve Him with all of our heart and soul how could we ever be unfaithful?**
- **What does being faithful to God mean to you?**
- **What happens if we do not remain faithful? If our hearts do not stay true? Will our works suffer?**
- Antioch and Paul (Saul)
 - Barnabas found that he needed help in Antioch and so he sought out Saul to join him.
 - God’s plan for Saul (Paul) to begin his great missionary journey was beginning to take root and soon Paul would set out to bring the Gospel into the world.