

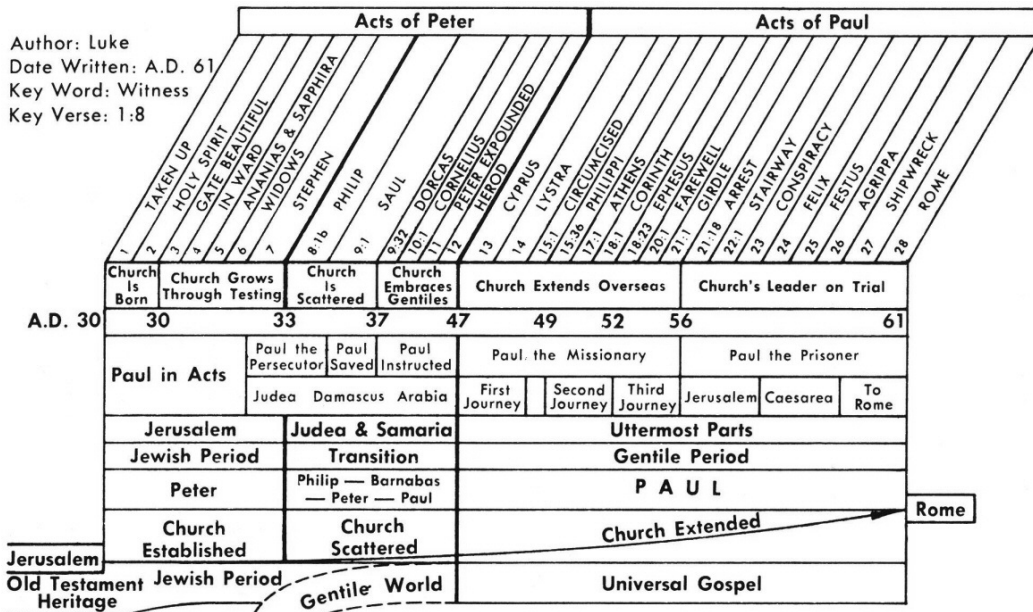
Acts 11 Commentary

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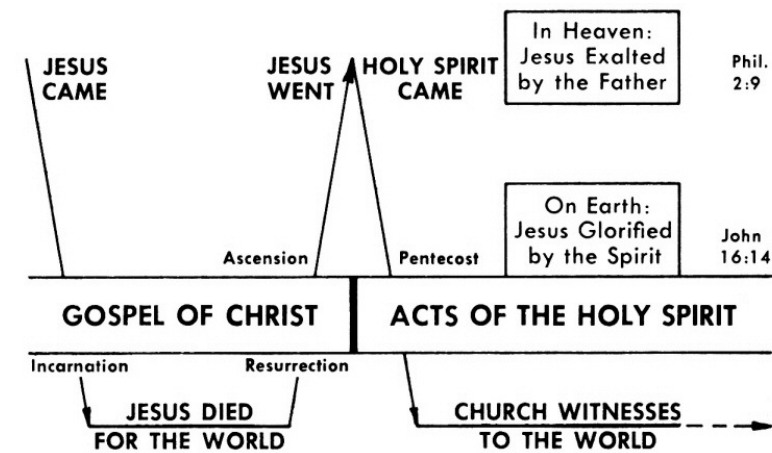
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Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

Acts 11:1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

KJV Acts 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

- **the apostles** Acts 8:14,15; Galatians 1:17-22
- **the Gentiles** Acts 10:34-38; 14:27; 15:3; Genesis 49:10; Ps 22:27; 96:1-10; Isaiah 11:10; 32:15; Isaiah 35:1,2; 42:1,6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:3; 62:2; Jeremiah 16:19; Hosea 2:23; Amos 9:11,12; Micah 5:7; Zephaniah 2:11; 3:9; Zechariah 2:11; 8:20-23; Malachi 1:11; Matthew 8:11; Mark 16:5; Luke 2:32; Romans 15:7-12

JEWS RECEIVE WORD THAT GENTILES WELCOME "THE WORD"

This chapter divides into three sections:

- Acts 11:1-18 - Peter's Report to Jerusalem Church - He Justifies His Conduct and defends God's grace
- Acts 11:19-26 - Foundation of Church at Antioch - Barnabas and Saul begin mission to the Greeks
- Acts 11:27-30 - Famine Relief at Judea - Barnabas and Saul Depart

Warren Wiersbe divides this chapter by looking at three responses of the Jewish believers to the Gentile Christians, which should help us better understand how today ought to relate to one another:

- Acts 11:1-18 They Accepted the Gentiles
- Acts 11:19-26 They Encouraged the Gentiles
- Acts 11:27-30 They Received Help from the Gentiles

TIME APPROXIMATION - When do the events in Acts occur in relation to the preceding events? There are a number of resources that give dates of the historical events in Acts, but the reader should understand that they are all approximations. One problem is that there is even disagreement on the date of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection, some sources saying A.D. 33 and others A.D. 30. **That said, the dates listed are simply to give you a sense of the span of time of the historical events in the Book of Acts.**

Thus Pentecost would be 30-33, Stephen's stoning 31-33, Paul converted 33-34, Paul's meeting with Peter in Jerusalem 36-37, Paul ministers in Syria/Cilicia 37-45, Peter's witness to Cornelius 38. **Thus the events in Acts 10 occur from 5-10 years after the Church is born in Acts 2.**

- [ESV Timeline](#) - below is an excerpt from the larger chart.

33 (or 30) Jesus returns to Judea, is crucified, and resurrected. James the brother of Jesus becomes a believer after witnessing the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 12:17). Jesus ascends to the Father's right hand (Acts 1). Jesus' first followers receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and begin to proclaim the gospel (Acts 2).

33/34* Paul witnesses the resurrected Lord on the way to Damascus and is commissioned as an apostle to the nations (Acts 9; Gal. 1:15–16).

34–37 Paul ministers in Damascus and Arabia (Acts 9:19–22; 26:20; Gal. 1:16–18).

36 Pilate loses his position for incompetence.

36/37* Paul meets with Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–30; Gal. 1:18).

37–45 Paul ministers in Syria, Tarsus, and Cilicia (Acts 9:30; Gal. 1:21).

38* Peter witnesses to Cornelius (Acts 10).

42–44 Paul receives his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7).

* The Asterisk indicates approximation.
/ The slash mark indicates "either/or"

- [Biblehub Timeline](#)
- [Book of Acts Story and Structure](#)
- [BlueLetterBible Timeline](#) - see excerpt below

Event	Reference	Year (AD)
Descent of the Holy Spirit	Acts 2:1-13	30
Setting Up of the Church	Acts 2:40-47	30
First Persecutions (Illustration)	Acts 4:1-22; 5:21-42; 7:1-60	35
Philip at Samaria	Acts 8:4-13	35
Conversion of Saul (Illustration)	Acts 9:1-9	36
First Gentile Converted	Acts 10:1-48	40
Founding of Church at Antioch	Acts 11:19-30	43
Writing of Matthew's Gospel	Matthew	43

TIMELINE FROM WIL POUNDS

EVENT IN ACTS	CHAPTER	AD	EVENT IN HISTORY
Conversion of Paul (c. 33–36 AD)	9	33	
Paul in Cilicia & Syria	-	35	Paul's Visit to Jerusalem 9:26–30
	-	37	Caligula Gaius Augustus Emperor of Rome 37–41
		39	Herod Antipas exiled to Gaul
Conversion of Cornelius	10	40	
	-	41	Claudius Emperor of Rome 41–54
		44	Martyrdom of James; Death of Herod Agrippa
Paul's Second Jerusalem Visit	12	46	

Below is another Basic Acts Timeline (Ben Witherington - The Acts of the Apostles)

A.D. 30—Jesus is crucified under Pontius Pilate. Resurrection appearances, Pentecost, initial growth of the church in and around Jerusalem.

A.D. 31–33—The events of Acts 3–7 transpire with mounting concern on the part of Jews and especially the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The rising tension results in vigilante action taken against Stephen, and then

an authorized effort under Saul to disrupt and even destroy this new messianic sect, involving persecution and even the death of some Christians (cf. Acts 8:1–3 to Gal. 1:13). The persecution led various Christians such as Philip to go elsewhere, such as Samaria, and bear witness (Acts 8:4–40). THE FIRST EIGHT CHAPTERS OF ACTS COVER ONLY THE PERIOD FROM ABOUT 30 TO 33.

A.D. 33 or 34—Saul is converted on the road to Damascus during his period of persecuting the church (Acts 9; Galatians 1).

A.D. 34–37 or 38—Saul is in Damascus and Arabia; he returns to Jerusalem for the first time as a Christian in 37.

A.D. 37–46—Saul sent off to Tarsus and home region. In the meantime, Peter has a notable ministry up and down the Mediterranean coast between Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea, involving at least one notable Gentile and his family. This, in turn, leads to a report to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11). The precise timing is unknown.

A.D. 43—James (brother of John) is killed, and Peter is imprisoned.

A.D. 44—Agabus' prophecy in Antioch; Herod Agrippa dies.

NOTE THAT LUKE'S DATA FOR THE PERIOD A.D. 37–46 ARE CLEARLY SKETCHY. HE IS BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THE PERIOD AFTER THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL (49), IN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE PAULINE PART OF THE STORY.

A.D. 46–48—famine in Judea.

A.D. 48—Second visit by Paul to Jerusalem (with Barnabas, cf. Galatians 2) for famine relief to Jerusalem (Acts 11:29–30).

A.D. 49—Claudius expels Jews from Rome; Priscilla and Aquila go to Corinth; Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

A.D. 50–52—Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:23).

A.D. 51 or 52—The Gallio incident in Corinth (Acts 18).

A.D. 53–57—Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:26).

A.D. 57–59—Paul in custody under Felix, and then briefly under Festus.

A.D. 59–60—Paul goes to Rome (for a fuller discussion of the Pauline material for the period from 48 to 50, see below).

A.D. 60–62—Paul under house arrest in Rome.

Acts 11 could be aptly entitled "**From Jerusalem to Antioch**" as we begin to see the Gospel ripple out "to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8+).

It is significant that Acts 11:1-18 is the third version of the story of Peter's preaching to the Gentiles in Caesarea (twice in Acts 10, once briefly by Cornelius). Clearly the Holy Spirit wants the reader to grasp the great significance of the events in this section. **James Montgomery Boice** says it this way - "We know that this story was not only important to him (Luke) but to God also. If God tells us something once, we should listen. If he tells us something twice, we should pay extremely strict attention. How then if he tells us something three times over, as is the case here? In that case, we must give God's words the most intent, comprehensive, sympathetic, and obedient notice possible. (An Expository Commentary – Acts)

Spurgeon speaks to the necessity of this three fold repetition of the critical truth that now the Gospel could go to the Gentiles - One of the greatest obstacles which the Christian religion ever overcame, was the [inveterate](#) prejudice which possessed the minds of its earliest followers. The Jewish believers, the twelve apostles, and those whom Jesus Christ had called from the dispersed of Israel, were so attached to the idea that salvation was of the Jews, and that none but the disciples of Abraham, or, at any rate, the circumcised ones, could be saved, that they could not bring themselves to the thought that Jesus had come to be the Saviour of all nations, and that in him should all the people of the earth be blessed. It was with difficulty they could allow the supposition; it was so opposite to all their Jewish education, that we find them summoning Peter before a council of Christians, and saying to him, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them." Nor could Peter exonerate himself until he had rehearsed the matter fully, and said that God had appeared unto him in a vision, declaring, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common," and that the Lord had bidden him preach the gospel to Cornelius and his household, inasmuch as they were believers. After this the power of grace was so mighty, that these Jews could no longer withstand it: and in the teeth of all their previous education, they at once assumed the broad principle of Christianity, "and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18) Let us bless God that now we are free from the [trammels](#) of Judaism, and that we are not under those of a Gentilism which has in its turn excluded the Jew; but that we live so near the blessed time that is coming, when Jew and Gentile, bond and free, shall feel themselves one in Jesus Christ our Head. (from his sermon [Repentance Unto Life](#)).

To sum up the church's early vision, it was narrow and traditional, exclusive and not inclusive, Jewish oriented and not ethically open.

William Larkin entitles Acts 11:1-18 Peter's Defense of His Gentile Mission. The gospel had decisively crossed its last cultural threshold.

You also might take a moment to examine Jensen's excellent chart at the top of this page to help give you context. Jensen includes Acts 11 in the subsection labeled the "Church Embraces Gentiles" and the time is about 43-44 AD.

Now - (See above for the approximate timeline of Acts) How long between Peter's meeting with Cornelius and this **how** is not clear from the text. However given the attitude of most Jews to Gentiles, it is likely this news spread rapidly. To most Jews the fact that the Gentiles had received the "Good News" would not be viewed (at least at first) as "good news!" The NLT paraphrase "**soon the new reached...**" is probably accurate. Gentiles had come into the Church in Acts 2, but Luke explains that they "came in" through the door of Judaism, as proselytes (see Acts 2:10+). Thus Acts 10 signaled a radical change, for now Judaism was being bypassed which would cause concern among the Jewish believers who did not yet grasp God's great plan of redemption for all peoples.

The apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea - In this context the **brethren** would be Jewish believers who themselves had received the Gospel. For as sense of the meaning of **throughout Judea** see map of the [Expansion of the Early Church in Palestine](#). Note that Peter's meeting with Cornelius in Caesarea by the Sea was about 40 miles from Judea. However even without modern means of communication the news spread "like wildfire." At this time

Compare Acts 8:14+ and the Jewish response - "Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John...."

As **Ben Witherington** says "First it was the Samaritans, now it's the Gentiles, and the Jerusalem church is caught just as unprepared as they were with the results of the mission of Philip in Samaria." (The Acts of the Apostles) (**ED**: If they had really bought into Acts 1:8, they would not have been caught "off guard.")

Clearly, what we are seeing in Acts 10-11 is a fulfillment of Jesus' charge in Acts 1:8+ to be His "witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (cf ROMAN GENTILES)." From this point on in Acts, the storyline will focus primarily on the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles with occasional Jewish conversions.

Apostles (652)([apostolos](#) from **apo** = from + **stello** = send forth) ([Click](#) discussion of [apostle](#)) means one sent forth from by another, often with a special (official) commission to represent another (in this case Jesus) and to accomplish his work. Note the work is His work not "their" work - see this same idea in Eph 2:10 "good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Luke's use of apostolos -

Lk. 6:13; Lk. 9:10; Lk. 11:49; Lk. 17:5; Lk. 22:14; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 13:16; Acts 1:2; Acts 1:26; Acts 2:37; Acts 2:42; Acts 2:43; Acts 4:33; Acts 4:35; Acts 4:36; Acts 4:37; Acts 5:2; Acts 5:12; Acts 5:18; Acts 5:29; Acts 5:40; Acts 6:6; Acts 8:1; Acts 8:14; Acts 8:18; Acts 9:27; Acts 11:1; Acts 14:4; Acts 14:14; Acts 15:2; Acts 15:4; Acts 15:6; Acts 15:22; Acts 15:23; Acts 16:4

Related Resources:

- [What is an apostle?](#)
- [Is God restoring the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today?](#)
- [What is the difference between a disciple and apostle?](#)

Brethren (brothers and sisters)(80)([adelphos](#) from **a** = denotes unity + **delphus** = a womb) means brother or near kinsman, thus emphasizing that to be a believer is to be part of a family, the family of God Who is our Father. Only believers can truly call God their Father (cf Jn 1:11-13+, 1 Jn 3:1+).

Adelphós denotes a fellowship of life based on identity of origin, and is used figuratively here to describe members of the Christian community, brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow Christians, fellow believers (Ro 8:29). It should be noted that the Jews used **adelphos** to describe fellow countrymen (Acts 3:22), but in this context these **brethren** are Jews who had also believed in Jesus.

ESV Study note - The issue was raised by "the circumcision party" (Acts 11:2), a group of strict Jewish Christians, perhaps of a Pharisaic background (see Acts 15:1, 5). They probably held the position that Gentiles who wished to become Christians must first become converts to Judaism, which included circumcision and living by the ritual laws.

Heard that the Gentiles - This would have been like the "Berlin wall" coming down thus the news would spread quickly. One thinks of Paul Revere's ride "The British are coming! The British are coming!" But here it would have been "The Gentiles are coming! The Gentiles are coming!"

Gentiles (1484)(**ethnos** our word "ethnic") in general refers to a multitude (especially persons) associated with one another, living together, united in kinship, culture or traditions and summed up by the words nation, Gentiles (especially when ethnos is plural as in this verse), people (much like "people groups" in our modern missionary vernacular). Keep in mind that this word also had somewhat of a negative connotation conveying the sense of godless (generally idol worshipping) pagans (heathens, cp Eph 4:17, Mt 6:32), foreign nations not worshipping the true God (Mt 4:15).

Luke's uses of ethnos -

Lk. 2:32; Lk. 7:5; Lk. 12:30; Lk. 18:32; Lk. 21:10; Lk. 21:24; Lk. 21:25; Lk. 22:25; Lk. 23:2; Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:5; Acts 4:25; Acts 4:27; Acts 7:7; Acts 7:45; Acts 8:9; Acts 9:15; Acts 10:22; Acts 10:35; Acts 10:45; Acts 11:1; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:19; Acts 13:46; Acts 13:47; Acts 13:48; Acts 14:2; Acts 14:5; Acts 14:16; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:3; Acts 15:7; Acts 15:12; Acts 15:14; Acts 15:17; Acts 15:19; Acts 15:23; Acts 17:26; Acts 18:6; Acts 21:11; Acts 21:19; Acts 21:21; Acts 21:25; Acts 22:21; Acts 24:2; Acts 24:10; Acts 24:17; Acts 26:4; Acts 26:17; Acts 26:20; Acts 26:23; Acts 28:19; Acts 28:28

GENTILES PUT OUT THE "WELCOME MAT"

Also (kai) - **Also** means in addition; besides; as well; to the same degree or extent and speaks of the reception of the word of God not only by Jews but now by Gentiles as well (to the same degree).

Utley proposes that "This verse implies that the church's leadership was surprised at this turn of events. They were shocked and not fully supportive! They had not understood the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8)."

Had received the word of God - A historical landmark. The Gentiles had "welcomed" the Gospel of salvation.

Received (1209)(**dechomai**) means to to receive something offered or transmitted by another (Luke 2:28). In this context the idea is that they were receptive to Peter's message, receiving it with a favorable attitude. Jesus used dechomai to describe the way that humble, childlike believers (Mt 18:5), faithful preachers of the gospel (Mt 10:14), and the gospel itself (Luke 8:13; cf. Acts 8:14; 17:11) should be received.

Received is in the middle voice which is reflexive and speaks of the subject themselves participating in the act they carry out, the point being that true reception of the Gospel involves a personal interaction and is not just an intellectual belief or a profession of such belief.

Dechomai means to accept with a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered, to receive kindly and so to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another. It means to welcome as a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. The word describes accepting persons with open arms, minds, and hearts, even going beyond normally expected gracious hospitality. The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness.

The picture here in Acts 11:1 is of one of the Gentile's "putting out the welcome mat" for God's messenger and His word of truth, even as one would receive a good friend or guest, and inviting them into one's house (Luke 10:8,10; *Rahab welcomed the spies*- Heb 11:31-note). It pictures one assenting to God's Word of Truth. **Dechomai** indicates that the reception was a voluntary and willing act on the part of the Thessalonians.

Luke's uses of dechomai -

Lk. 2:28; Lk. 8:13; Lk. 9:5; Lk. 9:48; Lk. 9:53; Lk. 10:8; Lk. 10:10; Lk. 16:4; Lk. 16:6; Lk. 16:7; Lk. 16:9; Lk. 18:17; Lk. 22:17; Acts 3:21; Acts 7:38; Acts 7:59; Acts 8:14; Acts 11:1; Acts 17:11; Acts 22:5; Acts 28:21

Acts 11:2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

KJV Acts 11:2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

- they Acts 10:9,45; 15:1,5; 21:20-23; Galatians 2:12-14

"BAD NEWS" OF THE SPREAD

OF "GOOD NEWS" PRECEDED PETER

And when Peter came up to Jerusalem - How long Peter stayed with Cornelius and the new "church plant" in Caesarea Maritima is uncertain, but it clearly was long enough for the "bad news" to spread to the Jews in Jerusalem! Scripture almost always says "up" when one goes to Jerusalem because of its elevation. It is interesting that the leaders in Jerusalem do not summon Peter but he was led to go (surely a leading of the Spirit given the importance of this emotionally charged issue). We have seen a number of times in Acts that Peter is clearly a Spirit filled man and there is no reason to doubt that is the case now.

David Guzik - This reaction of the Christian Jews shows how significant the change was that God initiated in Acts 10. The change said, to the Gentiles, "You don't have to become Jews first, and put yourself under the Law of Moses first. Repent and believe, and you can come to Jesus." But it also said to the Jewish followers of Jesus, "Receive your Gentile brothers and sisters as full members of the family of God. They aren't inferior to you in any way." The objection of those of the circumcision was on the second point, not the first. They complained, You went into uncircumcised men and ate with them! At first, they were more concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing with the Gentiles.

Those who were circumcised - The Jews, but Luke does not say definitely whether they were believers but Acts 11:18 "they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'" indicating they were believing Jews. In Acts 10:45 the 6 circumcised men are clearly identified as believing Jews. While Luke specifically mentions the **apostles** in Acts 11:1, he does not mention them in the contentious, critical, circumcised group.

The misunderstood that "the radical nature of the Gospel had opened the door to all people totally unconnected to the Mosaic Law. This is a message (grace, not performance, brings salvation) many modern believers need to hear and heed!...It is so hard to rethink traditions, culture, and personal preferences, but the gospel demands that we do (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:23–29; Col. 3:11)." (Utley)

Arnold - These legalists, though wrong, had the right to argue with Peter. This shows conclusively that Peter was not the first pope, that he was not infallible and that he did not speak **ex cathedra**. These legalists contended with Peter and felt the freedom to do so. Had they thought he was a pope, they would have never disputed with him. The reason Peter could tolerate these legalistic Christians was that he knew where they were coming from. He understood their background. He knew the source of their prejudices and he believed God would change their hearts when they had all the facts.

Related Resources:

- [Is papal infallibility biblical?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about the pope / papacy?](#)
- [Was Saint Peter the first pope?](#)

Circumcised (4061) (**peritome** from **perí** = around + **témno** = cut off) refers literally to cutting and removal of the foreskin. As discussed below both the Old and New Testament also use the concept of circumcision in a figurative or metaphorical sense. (See also exposition of [Scriptures on Circumcision](#)) Recall that a daily prayer of a strict Jewish male was to thank God that he was neither a woman, a Samaritan, nor a Gentile. Gentiles came to be regarded by the Jews as the "**uncircumcision**," a term of disrespect implying that non-Jewish peoples were outside the circle of God's love. The terms "**circumcised**" and "**uncircumcised**" became emotionally charged symbols to Israel and their Gentile neighbors. This issue later brought discord into the fellowship of the New Testament church and especially caused confusion about how one obtained genuine salvation.

Wiersbe adds "It was not only a matter of religion, but also of culture; and cultural habits are very hard to break."

Luke's uses of **peritome** - Acts 7:8; Acts 10:45; Acts 11:2;

One wonders whether this experience percolated in Peter's mind and caused his response described by Paul in Galatians 2:12 - For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he (PETER) used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, **fearing the party of the circumcision.**" So here is Peter, by this time in quite matured in the faith, and yet he still wrestled with the approval (or disapproval) of men (or as some might say he still had an "[approval idol](#).")

Took issue with him - The imperfect tense pictures this as occurring over and over. One can picture one Jewish man accosting Peter and then another and another! It must have been quite a scene! Clearly they did not yet understand the relationship between Law and grace or the new relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the Body of Christ.

Took issue (contended, criticized) (1252) (**diakrino** from **diá** = thru, to and fro + **kríno** = distinguish, decide, judge) literally means to **judge between two** (or to and fro) and has a range of meanings in the NT. The idea is to separate oneself apart and thus to make a cleavage (the prefix "diá" can mean "two" so here the cleavage is "in two.") The picture in this passage is of the Jerusalem Jews taking sides against Peter, disputing (debating) with him. Luke had used this same verb in Acts 10:20 to describe the Spirit

instructing Peter to go downstairs to "accompany (the 3 men from Cornelius) them without **misgivings** (diakrino), for I (the Holy Spirit) have sent them Myself." And Peter uses this same verb (diakrino) again in Acts 11:2 when he related how the Spirit had given him instructions. Luke's only other use of **diakrino** is also in the context of Jewish disagreements concerning the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (see Acts 15:9+).

Wiersbe adds that **diakrino** "means "to make a difference." These legalists were making a difference between the Gentiles and the Jews after Peter had demonstrated that "there is no difference!" God had declared the Gentiles "clean," that is, accepted before God on the same basis as the Jews—through faith in Jesus Christ."

Adam Clarke points out that the Jews taking issue with Peter is "A manifest proof this that the primitive Church at Jerusalem had no conception of Peter's supremacy, or of his being prince of the apostles. He is now called to account for his conduct, which they judged to be reprehensible; and which they would not have attempted to do had they believed him to be [Christ's vicar upon earth](#), and the infallible head of the Church. But this absurd dream is every where refuted in the New Testament.

Jack Arnold - The overcoming of prejudice is one of the main themes in Acts 10 and 11 - Are you a Christian who has prejudices? If you answer "no" then you are deeply deceived and know nothing of your own human nature. If your answer is "yes" then you are an honest Christian and you are probably battling through your prejudices, attempting to bring them under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we bring many of our cultural, religious and personal prejudices of our unsaved life over into our saved life and a good portion of our progressive sanctification is changing these prejudices so as to have a Christ-centered viewpoint of life. Most of us are under the power of prejudice more than we realize. Prejudice is nothing more than a form of legalism in which we think ourselves better than someone else. Prejudice is a superior attitude in which one feels himself a step higher than another person. It is all very subtle but prejudice comes out in a feeling of superiority of one race over another, or the superiority of one man over another because of education or class. It can also be religious prejudice where one feels himself superior spiritually to another man. Prejudice is with us all and it must be faced honestly before Christ and put to death when it raises its ugly head.

The overcoming of prejudice is one of the main themes in Acts 10 and 11. You remember how God desired that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. In order to open the door so the gospel could go to Gentiles, God gave two men a vision. Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, a devout man, a religious man, a praying man and a seeking man was given a vision and told to seek out a man named Simon Peter, who would give him a message by which Cornelius and his household would come to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. As Cornelius sent three men to Joppa to find Simon Peter, Christ gave Peter a vision. He saw a huge sheet filled with unclean and clean animals and was told to kill and eat these animals. This whole vision was horrifying to Peter because a good Jew never ate unclean animals, but Peter, after some deep struggle, obeyed and went to Cornelius in Caesarea and preached to him, his family and friends the message of Jesus Christ and they were saved. The vision Peter saw not only told him that under the new dispensation it was right to eat unclean animals, but the deeper spiritual meaning was that the gospel of Christ was to go to unclean Gentiles and they could be made spiritually clean in Christ. Peter was learning to set aside his prejudices for the furtherance of Christ and His kingdom.

Acts 11:3 saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

KJV Acts 11:3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

- Acts 10:23,28,48; Luke 15:2; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 John 1:10

THE OUTRAGE OF CIRCUMCISED EATING WITH UNCIRCUMCISED

Peter had broken the taboo! In their legalistic eyes he had become ceremonially defiled and was deserving of excommunication. While we see no criticism from the other 11 apostles, there is also no record of them coming to his defense!

John Phillips says "We want to cry out: "Come on, Andrew! Don't you have a good word for your own brother? John! Why remain silent when your fellow apostle and partner is attacked?""

Saying - Present tense indicating they did not let up, suggesting initially Peter could not even make a defense at first. As Jews who had been raised in a culture steeped with tradition, what they were basically saying to Peter is that he was now ritually unclean himself for having social intercourse with unclean Gentiles! What is absurd about this fuss is there is not one passage in the Old Testament that says the Jews are not to eat with Gentiles. Their "prejudice led to a myopic view of the situation." (Larkin) This was a

"fleshly fabrication" by men zealous for the Law (which paradoxically did not even prohibit what they prohibited)! This point emphasizes that it is always critical to test men's "traditions" by going back to "what saith the Lord?"

As **Larkin** laments "How sad it is when man-made rules designed to protect our holiness and bring us close to God prevent us from seeing and rejoicing when God grants salvation to those who had not known his grace." (IVP NT Commentary)

"You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." - The accusation is two-fold - (1) entering a Gentile abode ("You were a guest in the home of") and (2) eating with Gentiles (with possible intake of "unclean" food), both of which were considered abominations to Jews and were "mistakes" any self-respecting Jew would never commit.

Although Luke does not state so, it is very likely that the circumcised brethren were upset that they had baptized Cornelius without having him circumcised first. Circumcision was to become a major stumbling block for the Jews and would come to a head at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (cf Acts 15:5+).

Robertson - They did not object to Peter's preaching to the Gentiles, but to his going into the house of Cornelius and eating with them, violating his supposed obligations as a Jew (Hackett). It was the same complaint in principle that the Pharisees had made against Jesus when he ate with publicans and sinners (Luke 5:30+). The Jews had not merely the Mosaic regulations about clean and unclean food, but also the fact that at a Gentile table some of the meat may have been an idol sacrifice.

Utley - Eating in the ancient Near East was a kind of covenant of fellowship. Jesus had been accused of a similar breach of tradition in Matt. 9:11; 11:19; Luke 5:30; 15:2.

Chuck Smith on **ate with them** - In that mid-eastern culture, to eat with a person was tantamount to **becoming one with them**. which is why the Jew would never eat with a Gentile.

Lenski - The point is that simply to go in and then—still worse—to eat was wrong, to say nothing of baptizing such men and receiving them into the church. This circumcision party appealed to the Mosaic regulations which were clear in regard to circumcision and kosher foods. Already these regulations, they claimed, condemned Peter's proceeding as being totally wrong. This contention was perfectly correct—if, indeed, the Mosaic regulations were still in force; then the only way into the church was through the synagogue. (An Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles)

Peter could certainly understand their criticism for recall his declaration in the home of Cornelius

"And he said to them, "You yourselves know how **unlawful** it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean." (Acts 10:28+)

Comment - Peter was not saying this was an Old Testament (Mosaic) prohibition, because there was none. He was saying it was "unlawful" according to the Jewish traditions which made it virtually impossible to associate with a Gentile without becoming ritually unclean in the eyes of other Jews! It was a cultural barrier that could only be penetrated and broken down by God as we see in Acts 10-11.

Uncircumcised (203) (**akrobustia** from **ákrōn** = the extreme + **búō** = cover) means uncircumcised (the foreskin not cut off) or uncircumcision and thus referred to the **prepuce** or **foreskin**. **Akrobustia** in this context was meant to convey their sense of scorn, contempt and derision of the Gentiles. Paul uses this word later explaining how the Jews had come to glory in external circumcision and completely miss the more important internal circumcision (see Ro 2:25, 26, 27+, et al)

Related Resource:

- Excursus on [Circumcision](#)

Bruce Barton - Suspending Judgment - When Peter brought the news of Cornelius's conversion back to Jerusalem, the believers were shocked that Peter had eaten with Gentiles. After they heard the whole story, however, they praised God (11:18). Their reactions demonstrate how to handle dis-agreements with other Christians. Before judging the behavior of fellow believers, it is important to hear them out. The Holy Spirit may have something important to teach us through them. (Life Application Commentary)

Acts 11:4 But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying,

KJV Acts 11:4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,

- Acts 14:27; Joshua 22:21-31; Proverbs 15:1; Luke 1:3

PETER'S ORDERLY EXPLANATION

Peter begins his discourse on God's will for His church and that will is to have a worldwide mission focus, not an ethnocentric Jewish focus.

J Vernon McGee - There was doubt and division. We need to understand that to the Jews the action of Simon Peter was a terrible thing. In fact, if we could have talked to Simon Peter a month before this, he also would have said it was a terrible thing to do. Actually, Peter gives them an apology. He makes it clear that he didn't want to do it at all, but that the Spirit of God was in the whole episode.

But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying - The verb began (archo) signifies not just to start speaking but in context signifies that Peter began at the beginning and gave a full story regarding the Gentiles and how their reception of the Gospel paralleled the Jewish reception on Pentecost.

Explain (1620)(ektithemi from **ek** = out + **tithemi** = to place) means literally to place outside. It was used in this literal sense to describe newborn babies left out to die from exposure. BDAG = "withdraw support or protection from, expose, abandon" (Acts 7:21+). It is used figuratively in Acts 11:4 meaning to set forth, to provide additional information, a deliberate and detailed narrative, "to convey information by careful elaboration" (BDAG) and thus to explain (also used this way in the only other NT uses - Acts 18:26+, Acts 28:23+).

Utley on orderly sequence - It has the connotation of explaining something in a logical, temporal, or sequential order. This fits Luke's research method (cf. Luke 1:1-4), personality, and professional training (physician).

In orderly sequence (NET = "point by point")(2517)(kathexes from **katá** = according to + **hexés** = following) means in order, one after the other, successively; in an orderly fashion; successively, consecutively in connected order. Kathexes stresses orderly arrangement and sequence. It indicates one thing following after another in order. The word does not occur in the Septuagint. This is the same word Luke used at the beginning of his Gospel writing that "it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you **in consecutive order**, most excellent Theophilus." (Luke 1:3)

Only Luke uses **kathexes** in the NT (no uses in Septuagint) - Lk. 1:3; Lk. 8:1; Acts 3:24; Acts 11:4; Acts 18:23

Acts 11:5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me,

KJV Acts 11:5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

- **I was in the city of Joppa** Acts 10:9-18
- **in a trance I saw a vision** Acts 22:17; 2 Corinthians 12:1-3
- **and it came right down to me** Jeremiah 1:11-14; Ezekiel 2:9; Amos 7:4-7; 8:2

PETER BEGINS BY EMPHASIZING THE SUPERNATURAL ASPECT

Peter is not boasting but factually stating that he was a man of prayer. This was a good place to begin with these legistic Jews. The fact that he had been praying would indicate to them that he was not entering into this venture with a spirit of self-will, but was entering on his knees --a good place for everything we do to begin! Do you begin your day on your knees with the open Word, your heart open to the Spirit and your will ready to surrender to what you hear from God? Note well, that you are not under law, but under grace. There is nothing "holy" per se about kneeling. It is not the posture of your body, but the posture of your heart that really matters! In our digital age everyone is into "Face Time," and that is all this is -- "Face Time" with our Father in Heaven. I wonder how many spend more time face timing men rather than face timing God? Just a thought.

In Peter's defense in Acts 11:5-18, he reiterates the events that occurred in Acts 10, thus these notes will not significantly repeat comments that were made in that chapter. To summarize, Peter defended himself with 3 pieces of evidence: (1) The vision from

God (Acts 11:5-11); (2) The witness of the Spirit (Acts 11:12-15, 17) and (3) the witness of the Word (Acts 11:16) (Modified from Wiersbe).

I was in the city of Joppa (Acts 10:5+) **praying** - See commentary on Acts 10:9

On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. (Acts 10:9)

So here Peter does not mention the fact that he was on the housetop at the sixth hour.

Praying (4336)([proseuchomai](#)) like a good Jew would do, which would certainly be agreeable to his hearers.

And in a trance I saw a vision -See commentary on Acts 10:10 =

But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance. (Acts 10:10)

Peter does not repeat how he became hungry while they were cooking the meal below.

Trance (1611)([ekstasis](#)) [English - [ecstasy](#)] from [existemi](#) = "be out of one's sense") "strictly being put out of place; hence (1) as an abnormal state of mind distraction, terror, amazement (Mk 5.42); (2) as a partially suspended consciousness ecstasy, trance (Acts 10.10)." (Friberg)

An object coming down like a great sheet ([othone](#)) **lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me** - See commentary on Acts 10:11

"and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground." (Acts 10:11)

In Acts 10:11 the great sheet is lowered to the ground, but here Peter says it came down to him. So Peter does make sure to repeat the fact that this was like a **great sheet**. **John MacArthur** interprets this **great sheet** as a "type" of or picture of the Church (composed of Jews and Gentiles, "clean" and "unclean" so to speak). In the context, that certainly seems to be a reasonable interpretation.

Guzik agrees adding that "There is a sense in which the sheet represents the church, having both "kosher" (Jews) and "unkosher" (Gentiles) on it, with no distinction or dividing line between the two (Ephesians 2:11-18)."

Acts 11:6 and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air.

KJV Acts 11:6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

- **had fixed my gaze on it** Acts 3:4; Luke 4:20

And when I had fixed my gaze on it - See commentary on Acts 10:11 which uses the verb [theoreo](#) instead of [atenizo](#) as in this passage.

and he saw ([theoreo](#)) **the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,** (Acts 10:11)

Robertson on **fixed my gaze** - This personal touch Peter adds from his own experience. See on Luke 4:20; Acts 3:4, 12 for this striking verb *atenizō*, to stretch the eyes towards.

I had fixed my gaze (816)([atenizo](#)) from from **atenes** = strained, intent which in turn is from **a** = intensifies + **teino** = to stretch, to extend or to strain all of which help to paint a picture of the meaning of *atenizo*) means to look intently, to fix one's gaze on something, to stare at something, to gaze earnestly, to look straight at something, to fasten one's eyes upon. Luke used the same verb in Acts 1:10+ to describe the apostles watching Jesus ascend and continuing to strain hard to see Him as long as possible. Even after He had been lost from sight, they kept on looking.

All of Luke's uses of **atenizo** - Lk. 4:20; Lk. 22:56; Acts 1:10; Acts 3:4; Acts 3:12; Acts 6:15; Acts 7:55; Acts 10:4; Acts 11:6; Acts 13:9; Acts 14:9; Acts 23:1

Acts 3:4+ But Peter, along with John, **fixed his gaze** on him (Man lame from birth Acts 3:2) and said, "Look at us!"

Acts 3:12+ But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you **gaze** at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"

Acts 6:15+ (Jewish opposition to Stephen) And **fixing their gaze** on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

Acts 7:55+ (Stephen) But being full of the Holy Spirit, he **gazed intently** into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

And was observing it (not used in Acts 10:11)(imperfect tense)(2657)([katanoeo](#) from **kata** = down [kata can be used to intensify the meaning] + **noéo** = to perceive or think) means literally to put the mind down on something and so to observe or consider carefully and attentively. It means to fix one's eyes or mind upon and to perceive clearly. **Katanoeo** means to look carefully, cautiously, observantly. The idea is to think about something very carefully or consider closely which denotes the action of one's mind apprehending certain facts about a thing so as to give one the proper and decisive thought about the thing considered.

Robertson on katanoeo - Imperfect active of kataneōō to put the mind down on, to ponder, I was pondering. **I saw** - Second aorist active indicative, saw in a flash.

I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air -See commentary on Acts 10:12. This passage is repeated almost verbatim but here he adds **the wild beasts**.

and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. (Acts 10:12)

NET Note on crawling creatures - Or "snakes." Grk "creeping things." According to L&N 4.51, in most biblical contexts the term (due to the influence of Hebrew classifications such as Gen 1:25–26, 30) included small four-footed animals like rats, mice, frogs, toads, salamanders, and lizards. In this context, however, where "creeping things" are contrasted with "four-footed animals," the English word "reptiles," which primarily but not exclusively designates snakes, is probably more appropriate.

Birds of the air - The idiomatic expression "birds of the air" refers to wild birds as opposed to domesticated fowl.

John Phillips writes that "Then, too, mention of the vision would direct their thoughts at once to the dietary laws of Leviticus 11:1-47+. They knew those laws by heart, as Peter did. The sheet descending from and ascending to heaven filled with creatures ceremonially unclean gripped them. Nor did the fact that the thing was done three times escape them. A threefold testimony was crucial in Israel to establishing the truth of a matter. That God had pronounced the creatures clean and thus put an end to Peter's religious scruples was remarkable and wholly unexpected. That such diverse creatures should be received finally and emphatically into heaven was astonishing. The revolutionary nature of the vision must have impressed Peter's listeners almost as much as it had impressed him. Evidently the vision heralded some drastic changes in the Levitical law, upon which they had cut their eyeteeth and by which they had lived since infancy. The dietary laws controlled every facet of their everyday lives; for the Hellenists, the Jews of the Dispersion, those laws protected them from assimilation into the great Gentile world in which their lot was cast. Burdensome the laws might have been, but they were tremendously effective in keeping a Jew a Jew. Was all that now to be changed? " (Exploring Acts)

Acts 11:7 "I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'

KJV Acts 11:7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up ([anistemi](#)), Peter; kill and eat. - See commentary on Acts 10:13 is virtually verbatim...

A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" (Acts 10:13)

Steven Ger - As had Saul on the road to Damascus, Peter now hears a [bat kol](#), the divine voice of God from heaven. The voice commanded Peter to pick himself up, walk over to the assembled menagerie, slaughter an animal of his choice and eat it.(Acts - Twenty-First Century Commentary)

Wikipedia on [bat kol](#) - In Judaism *bat kol* or *bat kōl* (**Hebrew**: **בת קול**, literally "daughter of voice", "voice of God") is a "heavenly or divine voice which proclaims God's will or judgment."^[1] It signifies the [ruach ha-kodesh](#) (רוח הקודש, "the spirit of holiness") or serves as a [metonym](#) for God; "but it differed essentially from the Prophets", though these were delegates or mouthpieces of *ruah ha-kodesh*.

Acts 11:8 "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

KJV Acts 11:8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

- common Mark 7:2; Romans 14:14
- unclean Leviticus 10:10; 11:47; Ezra 9:11,12; Hosea 9:3; Romans 14:14; 1 Corinthians 7:14

But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth - See commentary on Acts 10:14 is similar except a different phrase for placing something in one's mouth...

But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean" (Acts 10:14)

The Jewish listeners would certainly identify with this statement by Peter, and this would add credence to his story. He had wrestled with the same prejudice and traditions that they were now wrestling with, but he had overcome these hindrances to the spread of the Gospel.

The prophet Ezekiel expressed a similar sentiment when instructed by the Lord to eat "[Ezekiel Bread](#)" (Ezekiel 4:9-13) replying to the Lord "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth." (Ezekiel 4:14+).

Acts 11:9 "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'

KJV Acts 11:9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

- What Acts 10:28,34,35; 15:9; 1 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 9:13,14

But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy - ("you must not consider ritually unclean! = NET) See commentary on Acts 10:15 is virtually verbatim...

Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy:" (Acts 10:15)

Larkin - The dietary laws that marked the distinction between Jew and non-Jew are abolished.

No longer consider unholy ([koinos](#)) ([2840](#)) ([koinoo](#)) means to consider ritually unclean and ceremonially disqualified. **Koinoo** is a command in the [present imperative with a negative](#) which is a call to stop an action already in progress or to forbid this as one's habitual attitude.

Acts 11:10 "This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

KJV Acts 11:10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

- **This happened three times** Numbers 24:10; John 13:38; 21:17; 2 Corinthians 12:8

A THREE FOLD TESTIMONY

This happened three times - If God says something once, it is incredibly important, but three times! So these critical Jews realized there was something monumental about what Peter was experiencing.

Peter emphasized the repetitive nature of the Vision. He may have recalled the Word of God from Solomon..

And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. **A cord of three strands** is not quickly torn apart. (Eccl 4:12)

And everything was drawn back up into the sky- See commentary on Acts 10:16 is similar except now **drawn back up** replaces

was taken up..

This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky. (Acts 10:16)

John Phillips - Even the dullest scholar in the school of God could hardly miss the point of a lesson that was gone over three times by the teacher. "**Precept upon precept; line upon line... here a little, and there a little,**" was the Holy Spirit's way of teaching the dull hearts of Israel (Isa. 28:10). "**Three times,**" Peter said. "God had to drill this thing into me. I couldn't see it. Then I wouldn't see it. Now I can see it clearly." (Exploring Acts)

Acts 11:11 "And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

KJV Acts 11:11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

- Acts 9:10-12; 10:17,18; Exodus 4:14,27

THE VISITATION FOLLOWING THE VISION

And behold - Peter uses this interjection to get their attention.

Behold (2400)(**idou**) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!"

Spurgeon reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

At that moment - The moment Peter heard the voice from heaven the third time and the sheet went back into the sky.

Three men appeared at the house in which we were staying - If you doubt that God is IN CONTROL, then you are missing the perfect providential precision of Peter's hearing 3 times and at that same moment three Gentile men appearing at the front door of a Jewish house!

THOUGHT - Beloved, whatever you are wrestling with, you can rest in the absolute truth that God is absolutely in control! Circumstances may suggest otherwise, but God is Lord over circumstances! The word "**providence**" (pronoia) is found only once in the Bible, a usage which refers to human providence (Acts 24:2), and yet Divine Providence permeates the pages of Holy Writ from Genesis to Revelation! This great truth ought to cause all of God's children to shout "Hallelujah! Our God Reigns!" Amen. Indeed a healthy understanding of God's providences should produce praise from His people, for as John Piper rightly said "In all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is plotting for your joy." The Master is providentially interweaving the seemingly disconnected strands of circumstances and life events in a way that is often (usually) difficult for us to perceive, but all of which are providentially perfect in the Master's sovereign hand and His perfect plan! (cp Ro 8:28, Ge 50:20). Our spirits are most satisfied when we discern God's aim in everything.

Having been sent to me from Caesarea - Here of course is the other part of the providential puzzle, for this simultaneous supernatural vision given to a Gentile some thirty miles away integrates perfectly with the supernatural vision to a Jewish man on a roof. This should put to rest any doubts you have that God is behind the circumstances and controls the circumstances He is behind! Case closed!

See commentary on Acts 10:17, noting that in Acts 11 he does not relate that he was **greatly perplexed** (**diaporeo**) (nor any of the details in **red** below). He does not mention Cornelius.

Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house,

appeared **at the gate**; (Acts 10:17)

Related Resources:

- [What is divine providence?](#)
- [What is the all-seeing eye?](#)
- [Is it true that everything happens for a reason?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about fate / destiny?](#)
- [Do the ends justify the means?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about luck?](#)

Acts 11:12 "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house.

KJV Acts 11:12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

NLT Acts 11:12 The Holy Spirit told me to go with them and not to worry that they were Gentiles. These six brothers here accompanied me, and we soon entered the home of the man who had sent for us.

- the Spirit Acts 8:29; 10:19,20; 13:2,4; 15:7; 16:6,7; John 16:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Revelation 22:17
- nothing Matthew 1:20
- these Acts 10:23,45

THE SPIRIT CLEARLY SPOKE AND SIX CORROBORATING WITNESSES WENT

The Church began with the Spirit's falling and here is kept on track by the Spirit's guidance. The times have changed, but God's method has not changed. Sadly, the Spirit is shunned by many evangelical, reformed churches today for fear of "charismatic chaos." The proper balance is Spirit filled leaders attuned to the Holy Spirit through the Holy Word. Does your church trust in the Spirit's leadership of Spirit filled men? See discussion of what the Bible says about [A Spirit Filled Church](#).

The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings- NLT paraphrases it "not to worry that they were Gentiles." The ESV may be a better translation than the NAS for it has "making no distinctions." This highlights the idea that Jews were not to make distinctions with non-Jews. The sense of **misgiving** is a little "softer" (so to speak) because it means to have no uneasiness about the fitness of the action. This Jewish-Gentile barrier is more that about having uneasiness but about making out and out distinctions. As an added note, it is surprising that in the previous chapter diakrino is translated in the ESV as **without hesitation** (Acts 10:20ESV), for reasons that are not clear. In any event I prefer the more direct, stronger translation of "making no distinctions."

See commentary on Acts 10:19-20 which is similar but Peter does not repeat the **phrases in red**...

While Peter was reflecting on the vision the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. "But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."
(Acts 10:19-20)

John Phillips comments that "It is a great thing when contemplating some course of action to be sure that we have the mind of the Spirit. That is true of all of life's decisions but particularly so when contemplating some major change of direction or some wholly new course of action. The Holy Spirit does not lack for means to impress His will upon us, but usually we are in too big a hurry. Peter himself, by nature, was a very impetuous man. In this whole incident, however, the Holy Spirit impresses upon us how Peter's natural impulses were kept under the restraint of the Holy Spirit. If Peter had been left to himself he would either have stubbornly refused to go or else would have blundered by himself into a situation that would have permanently impaired his usefulness as the apostle to the circumcision. Where the Holy Spirit leads, all is done decently and in order." (Exploring Acts)

Related Resources:

- [How can I recognize the guidance of the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [Is a believer supposed to be able to feel the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [When / How do we receive the Holy Spirit?](#)

- [What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today?](#)
- [How can I receive divine guidance?](#)

Without misgivings (without making distinctions)([1252](#))(see discussion of **diakrino** in Acts 10:20 to describe the Spirit instructing Peter to go downstairs to "accompany (the 3 men from Cornelius) without **misgivings** (diakrino)." The root idea of **diakrino** is to make distinctions and the Spirit is telling Peter not to treat the Gentiles as he would have had the dietary laws still been in place, but instead, now to make no distinctions regarding the Gentiles.

These six brethren also went with me - See commentary on Acts 10:23 where the **six brethren** are described as "some of the brethren from Joppa" who "accompanied him."

Stephen Ger - According to the Torah, two or three witnesses were sufficient to establish a matter (Dt. 19:15). Peter had brought along triple the necessary number (again demonstrating his natural affinity for things in triplicate).

NET Note - Six witnesses is three times more than what would normally be required. They could confirm the events were not misrepresented by Peter.

John MacArthur has an interesting note on **six brethren** - He took six people with him. Why? Because he didn't want to be mistaken in what was going on. He wanted the testimony of six others to confirm his own. The Jews knew well Egyptian law and Egyptian law said that where there are seven witnesses the case is closed. And Roman law said that on any will or any testament there had to be seven seals, so seven became a number of sealing the authoritativeness of something. (**ED: PETER + SIX = SEVEN. INTERESTING**)

And we entered the man's house - In recounting this encounter with the 3 men sent from Cornelius, Peter does not repeat the details of Acts 10:21-23a. It is interesting that again Peter does not mention Cornelius the (Gentile) centurion nor describe his character. He also does not describe how he had invited the 3 Gentile envoys into Simon's house to lodge with them. Peter apparently knows that that mentioning these details would only serve to stir up their anti-Gentile sentiments.

Notice the phrase **we entered** so it was not just Peter but six other Jewish brethren who broke the barrier crossing over doorstep and entering this Gentile man's home!

Guzik on we entered the man's house - This may have surprised Peter's questioners, because it seemed like an admission of guilt —Peter admitted entering the home of a Gentile, something prohibited by Jewish custom and tradition (though not by the Law of Moses.). Yet Peter was careful to add that before he ever entered the man's house, an angel had been standing in his house. If it was permitted for an angel of God to go into Cornelius' house, it must be permitted for Peter also.

Acts 11:13 "And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here;

KJV Acts 11:13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

- **And he reported to us how he had seen the angel** Acts 10:3-6,22,30-32; 12:11; Hebrews 1:14
- **Send to Joppa** Acts 9:43

GOD'S SUPERNATURAL SOVEREIGN WORK AMONG THE GENTILES

And he - Again note Peter refrains from mentioning his name or nationality. He does not have to because his critics already knew it was a Gentile. Peter is not lying. He is simply not wanting to stir up their emotions more than they already are stirred. This is a good pattern to imitate. When we are attempting to explain something to others that they have clearly misunderstood for whatever reason, we should be truthful but also should wisely avoid any unnecessary details that might stir up their emotions.

Reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house- Peter says **the angel** whereas Cornelius had described "**a man stood before me in shining garments.**" (Acts 10:30+). Note that in Scripture angels are always depicted as men.

Related Resources:

- [Do angels appear to people today?](#)

- [Are angels male or female?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about angels?](#)
- [Are there angels among us?](#)

And saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here - See commentary on Acts 10:32 which is similar.

Acts 10:30-32 (see commentary) gives more detail...

Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments, 31 and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.'

John Phillips sums this up - So with a quick thumbnail sketch Peter carried his Jewish audience across the miles to the home of a devout Gentile God-fearer in the Roman garrison town of Caesarea. He recounted for them the fact that God had been just as much at work preparing the soul of the centurion as He had been at work preparing his own heart for this new move. (Exploring Acts)

Acts 11:14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

KJV Acts 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

- words Acts 10:6,22,32,33,43; 16:31; Ps 19:7-11; Mark 16:16; John 6:63,68; 12:50; John 20:31; Romans 1:16,17; 10:9,10; 1 John 5:9-13
- all Acts 2:39; 16:15,31; Genesis 17:7; 18:19; Ps 103:17; 112:2; 115:13,14; Proverbs 20:7; Isaiah 61:8,9; Jeremiah 32:39; Luke 19:10

ANGELIC MESSAGE TO CORNELIUS REGARDING HOW TO BE SAVED

And he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household- This detail is not mentioned in Acts 10:32 which only says "send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you." Here we discover that the angel had explained to Cornelius why he was to send for Peter -- Peter would bring the message of salvation. We also learn that the angel describes (? prophesies or promises) that not only would Cornelius be saved but so would all his household. This latter detail would most likely explain why Cornelius "**had called together his relatives and close friends**" (see note Acts 10:24). Even though he himself was yet unsaved, he wanted to share this incredible gift with not just his household but his close friends. This is an amazing and convicting thought -- here is a man not yet saved who is showing a zealous "evangelistic" mindset! How sad that so many who have received the incredible gift of salvation fail to demonstrate anything even close to this pagan's "evangelistic mindset!" We who have experienced every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ should surely be motivated to share this with all our yet unsaved household and close friends and not so close friends. Of course it is always much easier sharing with total strangers than close associates, because if they refuse the invitation of the Gospel of their salvation, we still have to interact with them and that interaction might become a bit "cold" (or even worse). Let's face it, we fear men and we fear their rejection! If we feared God more and feared more for their "rejection" by Him which will result in their eternal destruction in hell, we might be more motivated to share the Gospel despite the "cost!"

As an aside be a Berean when you read commentaries (including this one) because there are some commentaries that actually say Cornelius was actually saved before Peter's visit to this house and his proclamation of the Gospel. For example..

ESV Study Bible note says "Some think this implies that Cornelius was saved for the first time here. Others think he previously had saving faith (as a Gentile "God-fearer" looking forward to the Messiah), but that this meant he would experience the fullness of new covenant salvation in Christ when he heard the gospel message (see notes on 10:2; 10:35)."

COMMENT: THERE IS NO AMBIGUITY IN ACTS 10-11. THE TRUTH IS CLEAR - CORNELIUS WAS NOT SAVED! THAT IS WHY THE ANGEL TOLD HIM TO SEND FOR PETER! HE NEEDED TO HEAR THE GOSPEL, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN IS SAVED! THAT IS THE GOSPEL TRUTH.

So as we have discussed a person can be devout, fearing God, giving much to the poor (the Jews in general are very philanthropic),

and prayerful, but still be lost ([unregenerate](#), not [born again](#)) and headed to eternal punishment in Hell unless they believe in Jesus Christ!

Words (4487)([rhema](#) from verb **rheo** = to speak - to say, speak or utter definite words) refers to spoken words, especially words uttered by a living voice. **Laleo** is another word translated speak but it refers only to uttering a sound whereas **rheo** refers to uttering a definite intelligible word. **Rhema** refers to any sound produced by the voice which has a definite meaning. It focuses upon the content of the communication, in this case the Gospel of their salvation!

All of **Luke's** uses of **rhema** -

Lk. 1:37; Lk. 1:38; Lk. 1:65; Lk. 2:15; Lk. 2:17; Lk. 2:19; Lk. 2:29; Lk. 2:50; Lk. 2:51; Lk. 3:2; Lk. 5:5; Lk. 7:1; Lk. 9:45; Lk. 18:34; Lk. 20:26; Lk. 24:8; Lk. 24:11; Acts 2:14; Acts 5:20; Acts 5:32; Acts 6:11; Acts 10:22; Acts 10:37; Acts 10:44; Acts 11:14; Acts 11:16; Acts 13:42; Acts 16:38; Acts 26:25; Acts 28:25

My favorite use of **rhema** is Luke 1:37 which in the 1901 [Authorized Standard Version](#) (the precursor of the NASV/NASB) is more literal and says

For no word from God shall be void of power.

For nothing will be impossible with God. (Luke 1:37)

THOUGHT: You are probably asking "Where is **rhema** in the more modern NASB?" The Greek can be rendered "No word of God can fail." Only a few English translations render **rhema** in this way. The **Weymouth** has "For no **promise** from God will be impossible of fulfilment." The **Amplified** has "For with God nothing is ever impossible and no **word** from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment." This is a powerful verse about God's powerful spoken word! **IT BEGS A SIMPLE QUESTION - DO YOU BELIEVE THIS IS TRUE?** If you do, then do your priorities in your daily life truly [validate](#) what you say you believe? Beloved, if you believe it, you will "eat" the Word daily for nourishment (Mt 4:4, Lk 4:4+, read Dt 32:47 = "it is your life", Php 2:16+, 1 Jn 1:1+). You will **memorize** it as if your life depended on it (Ps 119:9,11, read Ps 119:116, 144). You will **meditate** on it knowing that such a practice will surely bring spiritual prosperity (Joshua 1:8+, Ps 1:2-3+). Now...let me ask you again do you really believe that **"no word from God shall be void of power?"**

Jack Arnold - Here we have a clear case of **household salvation**. God saved an entire family. Apparently this did not include infants because only those who heard the words of the gospel were saved. Infants cannot comprehend the message of salvation in Christ. Because God does save households, this is a biblical basis to claim the salvation of our children from God. There is no absolute guarantee our children will be saved, but it is reasonable to assume that if God saves households, we can claim our children for the Lord, believing God will save them in His timing.

You will be saved (4982)([sozo](#)) has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril, especially **'saved** (sozo) from the wrath" of God (Ro 5:9+). Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. Salvation through Christ is God's powerful hand extended down to lost souls to lift them up. Salvation too often is restricted to being saved **FROM** something (Hell), but what needs to be remembered is that salvation is **TOO** something (Life). Yes, that life is in eternity, but that eternity is NOW, and the life is not a plan but a person, Jesus Christ, Paul writing that "Christ is our life." (Col 3:4) and "He came that we may have life, and have it abundantly." (Jn 10:10).

Acts 11:15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.

KJV Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

- **And as I began to speak** Acts 10:34-44
- **the Holy Spirit fell upon them** Acts 10:45,46; 19:6
- **just as He did upon us at the beginning** Acts 2:2-12; 4:31

PETER DESCRIBES THE "GENTILE PENTECOST"

God gives His "stamp of approval" to the salvation of these Gentiles.

And as I began to speak - Peter leaves out the Gospel message that he spoke to the Gentiles (see Acts 10:34-43+) which supports

that the Jews he was speaking with were already believers (otherwise he surely would have proclaimed the Gospel to them). Here Peter says the moment he began to speak his next words, the Spirit fell upon the Gentile believers and Peter could discern He had fallen because the Gentiles began speaking in tongues just as the believing Jews had done on Pentecost.

The "falling" of the Holy Spirit is a description of their being baptized with the Holy Spirit, just as the Jewish believers had been baptized with the Spirit on Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit fell upon them - See commentary on Acts 10:44-46 which gives a more detailed discussion.

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

Related Resources:

- [What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [Is there a second blessing subsequent to salvation?](#)
- [What is the baptism of/by/with fire?](#)
- [What is the gift of speaking in tongues? Is the gift of speaking in tongues for today?](#)

Just as He did upon us at the beginning - The **beginning** refers specifically to the day of Pentecost, the **beginning** of the Church. See a description of **at the beginning** in Acts 2:2-12+. While this recounting of the story does not specifically state that the Gentiles spoke in tongues, clearly that is implied for in Acts 11:17 Peter describes the gift to the Gentiles as **the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ**.

Stephen Ger on at the beginning - Peter emphasized the remarkable fact that what had happened with the apostles *en archē*, "in the beginning" at the fulfillment of Pentecost, the original Spirit baptism, experienced seven years earlier on the birthday of the church (Acts 2:1-4), had now been repeated with the Gentiles.

NET Note on at the beginning - The **beginning** is a way to refer to the start of the period of the realization of Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49+ and Acts 1:8+. Peter was arguing that God gave Gentiles the same benefits he gave the Jews at the start of their mission.

Larkin - From the content of Peter's report we learn again that the real hero of the Cornelius conversion narrative is God, "the gracious prodding One who makes bold promises and keeps them, who finds a way even in the midst of human distinctions and partiality between persons" (Willimon 1988:99). Where distinctions born of racial, ethnic, class or gender prejudice stand as obstacles to the advance of the gospel, we can be sure that God will prod us to eliminate them. (Ibid)

Moody Bible Commentary agrees that **beginning** in this context is "a reference to the **beginning** of the church. This demonstrated that the universal church began at Pentecost in Acts 2, **not** with Abraham or Adam."

THOUGHT - This point is important because one of the most popular systematic theology books by Dr Wayne Grudem teaches that "**The church is the community of all true believers for all time....The church is the community of all true believers for all time.**" (Systematic Theology, Page 853). Grudem holds that the traditional understanding of the church beginning at Pentecost is the result of belief in dispensational theology. I personally believes that is a theological "**straw man!**" Grudem writes that the dispensational view teaches "**that the church and Israel must be thought of as distinct groups. In this book, I have taken a non-dispensational position on that question, though it should be pointed out that many evangelicals who agree with much of the rest of this book will differ with me on this particular question.**" I am one of those non-dispensational, reformed evangelicals that strongly disagree with Grudem's conclusion. If we just allow the Word to speak for itself, the Bible seems very clear that the Church began on Pentecost and to say the Church was present in Israel in the Old Testament is to state something that Scripture DOES NOT state. The more serious problem with this genre of belief leads to the teaching that the Church is the **Israel of God** a statement Grudem emphatically states noting that he can say "**with assurance that the church has now become the true Israel of God and will receive all the blessings promised to Israel in the Old Testament.**" (page 863)

As much as I respect Dr Grudem and his excellent book, on this specific point, I think he is sadly and clearly in error. To call the church the **Israel of God** is biblically indefensible. The name "**Israel**" is used 77 times in the NT and 76 times refers without doubt to the **literal nation of Israel**. Proponents of this genre of teaching are

forced to strain and stretch one passage, Galatians 6:16, but they do so inconclusively and against the overwhelming witness of the remainder of the NT uses of "Israel!" To base a doctrine on one passage unsupported by any other passage is always suspect and almost always leads to an erroneous interpretation.

The nation of Israel is still the nation of Israel. And to the amazement of many who have tried to combine the Church with Israel, this tiny nation miraculously was re-born after World War II against ALL ODDS. In all the history of the world there has never been such an occurrence as a nation being re-born after hundreds, even millennia of years of non-existence. And not only was it re-born but it was re-born with the same language. For a relatively small people group like the Jews to maintain their national identity, their traditions and their language is absolutely unheard of in all of world history and is surely clear evidence of their miraculous preservation by God. The point is crystal clear, that the faithful, covenant keeping God is not finished with the tiny nation of Israel.

Finally, to merge the Church with Israel as Grudem does makes many of the Old Testament prophecies given to Israel virtually impossible to accurately interpret! If one adheres to the literal interpretation of Scripture as the most natural (and safest) way to interpret the Bible, great prophetic passages like Zechariah 12-14 (e.g., see Zechariah 12:1 commentary, or see the commentary on Daniel 12:1-2, etc, etc) only make good sense if they interpreted as given to the literal nation of Israel. To arrive at any other interpretation on these OT prophecies given to Israel requires that one is spiritualize or allegorize ([See the rise of allegorical interpretation](#)) the text which results not in sense but in nonsense! And the ultimate nonsense that results from calling the Church the "true Israel of God" is the anti-Semitic teaching of [replacement theology](#). One has to wonder if any of the proponents of this doctrine have read and understood Paul's clear warning in Romans 11:17-21+.

Related Resources:

- [When did the church begin/start?](#)
- [What is replacement theology / supersessionism?](#)
- [What does it mean that the church has been grafted in Israel's place?](#)
- [What is spiritual Israel?](#)

Acts 11:16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

KJV Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

- **remembered** Acts 20:35; Luke 24:8; John 14:26; 16:4; 2 Peter 3:1
- **John baptized with water** Acts 1:5; 19:2-4; Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26,33
- **but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 44:3-5; Ezekiel 36:25; Joel 2:28; 3:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5,6

And I remembered the word of the Lord - Peter again uses the specific Greek word [rhema \(see preceding note\)](#).

Remembered (3403) ([mimnesko](#)) means to bring to mind or think of again. It means to keep in mind for attention or consideration. Most of the NT uses convey this sense of recalling information from memory.

All of **Luke's** uses of [mimnesko](#) - Lk. 1:54; Lk. 1:72; Lk. 16:25; Lk. 23:42; Lk. 24:6; Lk. 24:8; Acts 10:31; Acts 11:16;

NET Note on the word of the Lord - The **word of the Lord** is a technical expression in OT literature, often referring to a divine prophetic utterance (e.g., Gen 15:1, Isa 1:10, Jonah 1:1). In the NT it occurs 15 times: 3 times as $\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\omicron\upsilon$ (rhēma tou kuriou; here and in Luke 22:61, 1 Pet 1:25) and 12 times as logos tou kuriou (Acts 8:25; 13:44, 48, 49; 15:35, 36; 16:32; 19:10, 20; 1 Th 1:8, 4:15; 2 Th 3:1). As in the OT, this phrase focuses on the prophetic nature and divine origin of what has been said.

How He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' - It is interesting that in Acts 10:47 Peter specifically stated the new Gentile believers should be baptized in water, but here in Acts 11 his emphasis is on the baptism of the Spirit and not the baptism in water. The former was clearly a gift from God. The latter was a human response to God's gift of salvation. Peter is all about emphasizing to his Jewish brethren that what happened in Caesarea by the Sea was the result of the sovereign work of God.

Luke had recorded John's words in Lk 3:16+ "John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Peter may have been aware of John's words but without question he would have **remembered** his Lord's words in Acts 1:5+ that "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Jesus prophetic promise to the Jews was fulfilled on Pentecost.

Utley comments "This shows the pattern of the early Apostles' approach to theology: quote Jesus, use Jesus' example, or quote the OT (cf. Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5+). Peter is establishing that the Lord Himself foresaw this development (i.e. sign)."

Acts 11:17 "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

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

- **if God gave to them the same gift** Acts 11:15; Acts 15:8,9; Mt 20:14,15; Ro 9:15,16,23,24; 11:34-36
- **who was I that I could stand in God's way?"** Acts 10:47; Job 9:12-14; 33:13; 40:2,8,9; Daniel 4:35; Romans 9:20-26

IT IS BEST NOT TO STAND IN GOD'S WAY

Therefore if - This "if" does not introduce doubt but is a [first class condition](#) and assumes what follows is true. **If** (when [first class conditional](#)) is translated "**since**" by some versions. (Acts 11:17NLT)

God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ - The gift was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit falling on the Gentiles (Acts 11:15) for in Acts 10:45 Luke recorded that "All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit** had been poured out on the Gentiles also."

Gift (1431) ([dorea](#) from [didomi](#) = to give) refers to a free gift and emphasizes the [gratis](#) character of the gift. In the present case the Holy Spirit was bestowed freely, without price or merit, but by God's grace (His unmerited favor).

Believing (4100) ([pisteuo](#)) in this context indicates that the Gentiles believed in their hearts, not just their heads. We have to intellectually hear the truth, but if that is all that happens to a person, then all that individual possesses is intellectual faith. Head knowledge of Christ never saved anyone! One must believe in his or her heart (cf Ro 10:9,10+), and it is a belief that is shown to be genuine by subsequently bringing forth good works (compare Eph 2:8-9 with Eph 2:10). In this particular unique time in history in the house of Cornelius, it was not good works by the Gentiles that demonstrated that their faith was genuine, but it was God's "work" of sending His Holy Spirit and causing the Gentiles to give visible, audible evidence (and one might argue these were their "good works") indicating that they had indeed been saved and had received **the same gift** that the Jews had received at Pentecost.

Lord ([kurios](#)) **Jesus** ([Iesous](#)) **Christ** ([Christos](#)) - This is the first of 63 NT uses of Jesus' full Name. **Lord Jesus Christ** is used 4x in Acts - Acts 11:17, Acts 15:26, Acts 20:21, Acts 28:31.

Peter used the same irrefutable, factual argument to defuse the tension at the Jerusalem Council show down in Acts 15 when Jewish legalists (Acts 15:5+) were calling for Gentile converts to be circumcised and observe the Law of Moses. Luke records...

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And **God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;** 9 and **He made no distinction between** (same word [diakrino](#) used 3x in Acts 10:20, Acts 11:2, 12) us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? (Acts 15:7-10+)

Who was I that I could stand in God's way- (**NET** = "who was I to hinder God?"; **NIV** = Who was I to think that I could oppose God?) This rhetorical question parallels Peter's rhetorical question in Acts 15:10 (see above). This is always a good question to ask ourselves!

Stand in...way (hinder, prevent) (2967) ([koluo](#)) means to keep back something from someone. **Koluo** is used in Acts 10:47+ (Surely

no one **can refuse** the water) and also used by the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:36+ ("Look! Water! What **prevents** me from being baptized?")

So who could stand in God's way now that He had clearly opened wide the door to the Gentiles to receive the Gospel without having to first become practitioners of Judaism? Answer? No one, including these Jews who had come to contend with Peter.

John Phillips - The men of the circumcision in the Jerusalem church had been effectively checkmated by the Holy Spirit. They must have looked at each other, looked hard at Peter, and looked at Peter's witnesses, solid citizens of the kingdom, standing by, nodding their heads. They must have looked at the Hellenists beaming at Peter's story. It was a large and bitter pill to swallow. Two thousand years of growing Jewish prejudice against Gentiles had to be gulped down. But it was evident, even to the narrowest, most exclusive, and insular of them, that there was nothing they could possibly say against Peter. His story was evidently an account of God's clear leading, and his earnestness was unmistakable. The conclusions he had reached were incontrovertible. Cornelius and the Gentiles had been accepted by God as equal heirs of the grace of God, first-class citizens in the kingdom, fellow members of the Body of Christ.

Guzik points out that "There are many today who look at some work or another and say, "Look what God is doing." But activity alone isn't enough to validate a work of God. It must also be in line with God's Word. This work among the Gentiles passed both tests."

Acts 11:18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

KJV Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

- **When they heard this** Leviticus 10:19,20; Joshua 22:30
- **and glorified** Acts 15:3; 21:20; Isaiah 60:21; 61:3; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 1:24
- **hath** Acts 11:1; 13:47,48; 14:27; 22:21,22; Romans 3:29,30; 9:30; 10:12,13; 15:9-16; Galatians 3:26,27; Ephesians 2:11-18; 3:5-8
- **God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance** Acts 3:19,26; 5:31; 20:21; 26:17-20; Jeremiah 31:18-20; Ezekiel 36:26; Zechariah 12:10; Romans 10:12,13; 15:9,16; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Timothy 2:25,26; James 1:16,17

OPPOSITION CEASES AND PRAISE BEGINS!

See [Chart of God's Sovereignty in Salvation](#) in the Book of Acts.

When they heard this - Heard what? Peter's recounting of the divine vision, the Spirit's instruction, the effect of the Gospel and the evidence of the Gospel reception by the Gentiles. Note the three effects - cause them to withdraw their criticism, exalt their God and accept God's Gospel open door flung wide open for the Gentiles.

ESV Study note - The fact that the Spirit came to Cornelius and other Gentiles without them having done anything in relationship to the Law is God's answer to the debate and settled matters as far as Peter was concerned.

They quieted down (cf Lk 14:4; Acts 21:14) - Peter as God's spokesman had reviewed the story sincerely, truthfully and Biblically, so who were they to argue with God's spokesman? This is a good pattern to employ when accused or criticized for doing God's bidding. The result may not always be to quiet down the opposition, for Stephen spoke similarly and was stoned to death! The fact that these men responded to Peter's words is further evidence that these Jews were all believers and that they had a certain degree of maturity and were Spirit filled men (cf fruit of Spirit which includes self-control - Gal 5:23).

Quieted down (2270) ([hesuchazo](#) from **hesuchos** = quiet, still) means to be still or to be silent. **Hesuchazo** basically means "to be at rest" and was used of silence after speech, rest after labor, peace after war, and the like; it was also used of tranquility or peace of mind. **John Phillips** adds that "We find the word used, significantly enough, in Luke's account of the burial of Jesus. When Joseph of Arimathea and the women followers of Jesus had put Jesus' body in the tomb we read, "And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and **rested** [hesuchazo](#) the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56+). Those of the circumcision did what those women did. They stopped working. They had to. What else could they do? A "Sabbath rest" on the issue (of the Gentiles being saved) came over the church. With those of the circumcision it was a somewhat reluctant and grudging cessation of active opposition, just as those devout women had grudgingly ceased ministering to the mortal remains of Jesus. The same word is used by Luke in another connection. When the enemies of Jesus brought Him, on the Sabbath day, a certain man who

had dropsy, they watched Him like hawks. Would He violate the Sabbath? Jesus was not intimidated. "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" He said to the lawyers present. Luke says, "And they **held their peace** [[hesuchazo](#)]" (Luke 14:3-4+). It was the grudging silence of those who were cornered and who decided it was best to say nothing."

Ray Stedman adds that Peter shows us "the way to answer arguments. Just tell what God has done. Recount the actions of God. When these men saw how God had acted, there was nothing further they could say. Peter silenced them by reminding them of the actions of God. That is where faith always rests. It rests on what God has done." ([Acts 10:23-11:18 Life For All](#))

Glorified God - Not Peter's careful recitation of the story, but the God Who sovereignly saves sinners from every tribe, every tongue, every people and every nation.

Larkin on glorified God - Such praise usually occurs in Luke-Acts in response to a miracle or to news of the Gentile mission (Lk 5:25-26; 13:13; 18:43; compare Acts 2:20; Acts 13:48; 21:20; compare Lk 23:47)

Glorified (1392)([doxazo](#) from [doxa](#) = glory) in a secular sense means to cause to have a good opinion of someone (cf [doxazo](#) in Mt 6:2 = "honored", cf 1 Cor 12:26). In a spiritual sense as in this context it means to praise, honor or magnify God. These Jewish converts critical of Peter now clearly recognized the divine aspect of his "good deeds" in Caesarea and thus glorified God just as Jesus had prescribed in Mt 5:16+. (read Mt 9:8, 15:31, Mk 2:12, Lk 2:20, Lk 5:25, 26, Lk 7:16, Lk 13:13, Lk 17:15, Lk 18:43, Lk 23:47, Acts 4:21, Acts 13:48, Acts 21:20, Ro 15:6, Gal 1:24, 1 Pe 4:16, Rev 15:4, 1 Pe 2:12 = NON-BELIEVERS WILL GLORIFY GOD! NOTE HOW BELIEVERS CAN GLORIFY GOD WITHOUT SPEAKING! = 1 Cor 6:20)

Jack Arnold observes that "Their prejudice gave way under the truth. These legalists began to glorify God because of Gentile salvation. One of the obvious marks of a legalist is his sadness of countenance, but here we have them glorifying God. Sadness was turned to joy, and that is the first step in freedom from the slavery of legalism."

GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT OF REPENTANCE

Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also - Note that the critics did not just say God had granted salvation to Cornelius and his household **to the Gentiles**. By saying **Gentiles** they acknowledged that God had flung wide open the door of salvation to even non-Jews.

The repentance that leads to life - Repentance is not a pre-condition as if a man must first by his will determine to repent before he can believe. This passage makes it clear that **repentance** is not self energized but Spirit energized (**God has granted**). Men cannot repent relying on their own natural state, for our natural state is [adamantly](#), [inveterately](#) opposed to God. In Acts 3:26 Luke record that "God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you **by turning every one of you from your wicked ways**" which is an excellent description of repentance. In Acts 5:31) "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, **to grant repentance** to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." It was God's gift to Israel even as it is God's gift to the Gentiles. In Romans 2:4 Paul asks (rhetorically) "do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God **leads you to repentance**?" In Paul's last letter he instructs Timothy to teach "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps **God may grant them repentance** leading to the knowledge of the truth,." (2 Ti 2:25) In short, repentance is a gift from God's gracious hand.

Jack Arnold on repentance - Repentance, therefore, is a change of mind that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change of action and behavior. Repentance is to do an "about face" in attitude which will affect one's life style and produce a hatred of sin. We have not preached the whole gospel if we have not preached repentance as well as believing in Christ for one to be truly saved. We must call upon men to repent, to surrender their minds and wills to Christ. This is absolutely necessary for reception of eternal life. The old children's hymn defines repentance this way:

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

Repentance (3341)([metanoia](#) from [meta](#) = after + [noéo](#) = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and implies a change of mind. From the NT uses, it is clear that **metanoia** means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. **Metanoia** is a conversion in every sense of the word. Jesus' teaching clearly associated repentance as an intrinsic element of salvation when He declared "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents (metanoeo)**, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no **repentance (metanoia)**. (Luke 15:7)

Bishop Ryle offers this descriptive definition of repentance...

Repentance is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "**repentance.**" The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." ([Repentance](#))

(**In another article Ryle wrote**) There can be no true repentance without faith. You may cast away your old habits, as the serpent casts off his skin—but if you are not resting all upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and looking to be saved by simple faith in Him, you may be wise in your own eyes—but you are just ignorant of the root and fountain, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, in all true gospel religion. You may tell us you have repented—but if you have not at the same time laid hold on Christ, you have hitherto received the grace of God in vain. ([The Grace of God in Vain](#))

One of the best illustrations of **genuine repentance** is found in Paul's description of the saints at Thessalonica...

For they themselves (other believers in Macedonia and Achaia) report about us (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) what kind of a reception we had with you, and **how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Th 1:9 [+](#); 1 Th 1:10⁺)

C H Spurgeon in a sermon entitled The Plumbline (Amos 7:7, 8) wrote that...

Side by side with that **faith**, God puts **true repentance**. When a man attempts to convert his fellow-man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation, and that there is no need of repentance; or if repentance is needed, it is merely a change of mind. That is not the doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the doctrine that we have believed. That faith, which is not accompanied by repentance, will have to be repented of; so, whenever God builds, he builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together; the man just as much regrets and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away. ([Amos 7:7-8 The Plumbline](#))

Related Resource:

- Spurgeon's Sermon - [Repentance Unto Life](#)
- [Great articles on repentance primarily from Puritan writers](#)
- [What is repentance and is it necessary for salvation?](#)

Acts 11:19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

KJV Acts 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

- **those who were scattered because of the persecution** Acts 8:1-4
- **made their way to Phoenicia** Acts 15:3; 21:2
- **Cyprus** Acts 4:36; 13:4; 15:39; 21:16
- **Antioch** Acts 11:26; 15:22,35
- **speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone** Acts 3:26; 13:46; Matthew 10:6; John 7:35

PERSECUTION SCATTERS

SEED OF THE GOSPEL

A "hinge" verse, opening the door for the Gentiles (most of you reading this note) to hear and receive the Gospel! Acts 11:19 represents a major turning point in the book of Acts, not only in manifesting a wider circumference for the Gospel but also a new center for the launching of subsequent missionary efforts. And so Antioch becomes the base church for Paul's three historical journeys as God's Spirit uses him to spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

Barclay introduces this next section - In restrained sentences these few words tell of one of the greatest events in history. Now, for the first time, the gospel is deliberately preached to the Gentiles. Everything has been working up to this. There have been three steps on the ladder. First, Philip preached to the Samaritans; but the Samaritans after all were half Jewish and formed, as it were, a bridge, between the Jewish and the Gentile world. Second, Peter accepted Cornelius; but it was Cornelius who took the initiative. It was not the Christian Church who sought Cornelius; it was Cornelius who sought the Christian Church. Further, it is stressed that Cornelius was a God-fearer and, therefore, on the fringes of the Jewish faith. Third, in Antioch the Church did not go to people who were Jews or half Jews, nor wait to be approached by Gentiles seeking admission; of set purpose and without waiting for the invitation, it preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Christianity is finally launched on its world-wide mission. (Barclay's Daily Study Bible).

So then those who were scattered because of (causal = on account of) **the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen** - Keep in mind that in a real sense the fruit of the martyrdom of Stephen is the inception of the mission of the Gospel spreading to the Gentiles! Oh, to live such a life, that your death bears more fruit than your life! (see John 12:24).

As we previously discussed, God sent divine "[centrifugal force](#)" in the form of **persecution** to "*encourage*" the Jewish church in Jerusalem to go outward toward "**Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth**" as Jesus had instructed in Acts 1:8+. Luke summarizes the repercussions of the **persecution**...

Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him (STEPHEN) to death. And on that day a great persecution began (A [REFLECTION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD](#)) against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered **went about preaching the word** ([euaggelizo](#) in the present tense = announcing the good news, preaching the Gospel - the same verb used in Acts 11:20). (Acts 8:1-4+)

While one cannot be dogmatic (because the Bible does not clearly tell us), the **persecution** of Acts 8 occurred about AD 35 and the events in Acts 10-11 about AD 43. If this is an accurate approximation, it would seem that these scattered Jews continued **preaching the word** (Acts 8:4b) for the 7-8 years following their scattering from Jerusalem, but unfortunately focused solely on the Jews.

Now in fairness, it should be noted that not everyone sees Acts 11:19ff as following in sequence after Peter's encounter with the Gentiles at Caesarea. Some writers feel that because Luke specifically mentions the **persecution** in Acts 8:1ff, that "the gospel began to penetrate the Gentile world almost from the very beginning." (Ray Stedman). While I respect Ray Stedman, I do not think he is correct in this assessment, primarily because Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem church to Antioch and then went to Taurus to retrieve Saul, where he had been for a number of years **after the persecution** of Acts 8:1ff. If one accepts Stedman's timing of the Gentile evangelism in Antioch, one has to say that there was a gap of many years between the **persecution** in Acts 8 and Barnabas' visit to Antioch. It is difficult to believe the Jews in Jerusalem would not have sent someone to Antioch very early to examine the Gentile conversions, much like they sent Peter and John to examine the Samaritan conversions in Acts 8 (Compare Acts 8:4-13+ with Acts 8:14-25+).

Persecution (more literally = "tribulation")([2347](#))([thlipsis](#) from **thlibo** = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. Thlipsis is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships. Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together as of grapes. Thlipsis conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. **Thlipsis** is therefore a strong term which refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty.

Martin Luther a man well acquainted with afflictions wrote "Whatever virtues **tribulation** finds us in, it develops more fully. If anyone is carnal, weak, blind, wicked, irascible, haughty, and so forth, tribulation will make him more carnal, weak, blind, wicked and irritable. On the other hand, if one is spiritual, strong, wise, pious, gentle and humble, he will become more spiritual, powerful, wise, pious, gentle and humble."

John MacArthur writes that "**Thlipsis** (tribulations) has the underlying meaning of being under pressure and was used of squeezing olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice ." ([Romans 1-8](#))

Figuratively **thlipsis** pictures one being "crushed" by intense pressure, difficult circumstances, suffering or trouble pressing upon them from without. Thus persecution, affliction, distress, opposition or tribulation, all press hard on one's soul. In the Scripture **thlipsis** is most often used of outward difficulties, but it is also used of emotional stress and sorrows which "weighs down" a man's spirit like the sorrows and burden his heart. **Thlipsis** then includes the disappointments which can "crush the life" out of the one who is afflicted.

Finally, note that the English word "**tribulation**" is derived from the Latin word **tribulum** (literally a thing with teeth that tears - [see video](#)), which was a heavy piece of timber with spikes in it, used for threshing the corn or grain. The **tribulum** was drawn over the grain and it separated the wheat from the chaff. As believers experience the "tribulum" of tribulations, and depend on God's grace, the trials purify us and rid us of the chaff.

All of **Luke's** uses of **thlipsis** - Acts 7:10; Acts 7:11; Acts 11:19; Acts 14:22; Acts 20:23. We do well to take note of the use of thlipsis in God's promise to believers (you probably will not find in a book on "God's Promises!") -- "Through (THE [INSTRUMENTALITY](#) OF) many (NOT FEW) **tribulations** we must (SPEAKS OF NECESSITY) enter the kingdom of God." Woe! Better to be forewarned so we can be spiritually forearmed!

Made their way to Phoenicia ([Map showing Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, Tarsus](#)) **Phoenicia** was a coastal territory about 7.5 miles wide and 75 miles long located to the north and west of Galilee, extending from Cape Carmel north to the river Eleutheros in the area of modern Lebanon. The main towns in Phoenicia were Ptolemais, Tyre, Zarephath and Sidon, and we hear later of Christian groups in three of these places (FOR LOCATION OF THESE CITIES ENLARGE MAP BELOW and [Ptolemais](#) see Acts 21:4, 7; 27:3).

And Cyprus (Modern Crete - See [map](#)) - The island is about 50 miles west of Syria and the birthplace of Barnabas (Acts 4:36). Today the site of a large Jewish colony. Wikipedia has an interesting note that "Cyprus occupies an important role in [Greek mythology](#) being the birthplace of [Aphrodite](#) and [Adonis](#)," thus it must have been like much of the ancient pagan world, heavily steeped in idolatry. As noted the Jewish itinerate "evangelists" apparently did not attempt cross-cultural proclamation of the good news. This is a sad note, but does serve to illustrate how entrenched the Jews were in their man-made traditions and [exclusivism](#). Here in Acts 11:19-30 Dr Luke records what would appear to mark a watershed moment in the history of Gospel proclamation/penetration, a story which wonderfully dovetails with Peter's good beginning among Gentiles in the "church plant" at Caesarea some 275 miles south of Antioch. It is interesting that Cyprus was to be the first place evangelized by Barnabas and Paul when they later went out as missionaries together (Acts 13:4-12+)

And Antioch - In southern Turkey and today a town of only a few thousand. Archaeologists have excavated ruins of the old city of Antioch. ([see more detail](#) on Antioch below)

Speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone - While this event follows God's "flinging open Gospel doors" to the Gentiles in Caesarea, it would seem that the message of God's interest in both Jews and Gentiles has not yet either been heard or been received ("welcomed") by the Jews who had been scattered from Jerusalem. Thus they continue their [parochial, provincial](#) proclamation of the Gospel. As an aside we see a similar problem in some of our churches who are not interested in world-wide missions.

Related Resource:

- [Is suffering for Christ always going to be a part of being a follower of Christ?](#)

Bearing The Name

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. —Acts 11:26

Today's Scripture: Acts 11:19-26

Hans Geiger, Marie Curie, Rudolf Diesel, Samuel Morse, and Louis Braille share something in common. They all invented or discovered something significant that bears their name. Their names, along with many others, appear in the "Encyclopedia Britannica's Greatest Inventions," a list of "325 innovations that have had profound effects on human life."

We who follow Christ bear His name. In Luke's record of the early church, he said: "The disciples were first called Christians in

Antioch” (Acts 11:26). Later, Peter urged the early believers not to be ashamed of suffering as “a Christian” (1 Peter 4:16). The term Christian, once directed at Jesus’ followers in scorn, was embraced by them as a badge of honor, a mark of allegiance to Him.

E. M. Blaiklock, former Chair of Classics at the University of Auckland, wrote that in the first century the term Christian had “a certain appropriateness, for it implied loyalty and acceptance of a person, and that person, the Messiah (Christ). . . . The true modern use of the word follows the same tradition. . . . The Christian is one who accepts, with all its implications, the lordship of Jesus Christ.”By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

As followers of Christ today, we gladly bear His name as our Savior, Lord, and Friend.

Just what do Christians look like?

What sets their lives apart?

They’re ordinary people

Who love God from the heart.

—D. De Haan

Time Out

Read: Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3

Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. —Acts 13:3

El Bulli restaurant, 2 hours north of Barcelona, is so popular that customers must reserve a table 6 months in advance. But noted Spanish chef Ferran Adrià decided to close the doors of his award-winning restaurant for 2 years so he and his staff could have time to think, plan, and innovate. Adrià told Hemispheres Magazine, “If we are winning all the prizes, why change? Working 15 hours a day leaves us very little time to create.” In the midst of great success, they took time out for what is most important to them.

The first-century church in Antioch experienced a time of exciting growth when “a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21). As a result, Barnabas and Saul came to teach the new believers (vv.25-26). But along with the hard work, they took time to seek the Lord through prayer and fasting (13:2-3). Through this, God revealed His plan for taking the gospel into Asia.

Few people can take 2 years off to think and plan. But all of us can build time into our schedule to seek the Lord earnestly through prayer. As we open our hearts and minds to God, He will be faithful to reveal the steps of life and service that honor Him. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

There is a blessed calm at eventide

That calls me from a world of toil and care;

How restful, then, to seek some quiet nook

Where I can spend a little time in prayer.

—Bullock

Prayer is as important as breathing.

Tonsillitis Jones

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. —Acts 11:26

Today's Scripture: Acts 11:19-26

A psychologist made the observation that children often develop lifelong complexes because of their names. That may have been true in the case of a boy I read about. His parents gave him the name Tonsillitis Jones, and it caused him difficulties in school and again when he tried to enlist in the navy.

I know from personal experience that our names have a definite bearing on how we feel about ourselves and the way we behave. Because my father was a well-known preacher by the name of De Haan, I felt that people had higher expectations of me than of my peers. But the family name was also a helpful reminder of many positive values that were to guide my behavior.

According to today’s Bible reading, the disciples of the Lord Jesus in Antioch were the first to be called Christians. It’s a name that could never be improved on because it identifies believers as followers of Jesus Christ. And what an honor to bear a name linking us to God’s Son, our Savior and Redeemer! This should shape and mold our manner of living so that it becomes increasingly consistent with the way Jesus spoke and conducted Himself. By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand](#)

If we want to call ourselves Christians, let's live up to our name!

O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer!
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.
—Chisholm

Acts 11:20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

KJV Acts 11:20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

- **men of Cyprus and Cyrene** Acts 2:10; 6:9; 13:1; Matthew 27:32
- **began speaking to the Greeks** Acts 6:1; 9:29
- **Preaching the Lord Jesus** - Acts 8:5,35; 9:20; 17:18; 1 Corinthians 1:23,24; 2:2; Ephesians 3:8

NAMELESS MISSIONARIES TO THE GENTILES

But - Don't read over this term of contrast too quickly. This **but** has to be one of the greatest "changes of direction" in all the Bible. Why so? It marks the change of focus from evangelizing the Jews to evangelizing the Greeks (the Gentiles). Most of us reading this note are Gentiles, so we should pause and praise God for this sovereignly created watershed in the spread of the Gospel to all the people of the inhabited earth. Thank You Lord. Amen!

The exact date of this bold new mission thrust to Gentiles is not stated by Luke, but it would appear to occur after the initial Gentile break through with Cornelius at Caesarea Maritima which was about 275 miles south of Antioch.

There were some of them - Nameless among men but not before God. Faceless but not faithless nor fruitless. These men were on the front line of missions and were clearly on fire spiritually, surely energized by the Spirit, enabling them to spread the message of the Lord Jesus. Won't heaven be wonderful, for there we will meet these men who God used to begin the spread of the Gospel which eventually reached each of us centuries later and continents apart.

Ray Stedman on some of them - In many ways this is one of the greatest events in all history. And amazingly, the evangelization was conducted by obscure men and women, laymen like most of you here. They made no headlines on earth, but extra editions were published in heaven because this was such a fantastic event. At

William Barclay - It has always been one of the tragedies of the Church that men have wished to be noticed and named when they did something worth while. What the Church has always needed, perhaps more than anything else, is people who never care who gains the credit for it so long as the work is done. These men may not have written their names in men's books of history; but they have written them forever in God's Book of Life. (Ibid)

Men of Cyprus ([map](#)) and Cyrene - Cyrene was a city on the Mediterranean coast of modern Tunisia on the coast of North Africa almost 500 miles west of Alexandria.

We need to understand the **cultural context** of the city of Antioch (described below) to be even more amazed that God choose this moral "cesspool" of a city as the major launching point of the Gospel to the Gentiles, to Europe and to the World, eventually reaching most of us who are reading these notes! In a word Antioch was the birthplace of foreign missions (cf Acts 13:2). Amazing grace to be sure! All we can do is read and agree with God's Own testimony in Isaiah 55:8-9

For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways

And My thoughts than your thoughts.

As is invariably the case when the night is darkest, even the smallest light will shine forth brightly, which is exactly what the Gospel did in Antioch, once again testifying to the truth that the Gospel "is the (SUPERNATURAL) **power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Ro 1:16+). No nation or city is too dark for the Gospel (LET US PRAY FOR REVIVAL IN AMERICA!) and no soul too depraved to be saved by His good news! How great is our God and His sovereign plan of redemption.

Who came to Antioch ([map of ancient Antioch](#), [an engraving of the city](#)) - Antioch, called "Antioch the Great, Queen of the East," "Antioch the Beautiful" or "Antioch on the Orontes" (so designated because there were 16 cities at this time all named Antioch!) was a strategic city, located about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, 15-20 miles from the Mediterranean, one of sixteen cities built by the Seleucid general Seleucus I Nicator and named for his father Antiochus (founded in 300 BC), capital of the Roman province of Syria, a planned city carefully laid out in a grid pattern to maximize exposure to the cool afternoon breezes, a population of over a half million (some say up to 800,000) (predominantly Gentiles but including a Jewish colony of 70,000), the third greatest Roman city (after Rome and Alexandria according to Josephus Jewish Wars 3.29), located in a large fertile plain near the mouth of the Orontes River which allowed navigation over the fifteen miles to the Mediterranean Sea ("Las Vegas on the Orontes" - Hughes) , a major hub for commerce (crossroads of trade routes south to Palestine and Egypt, east to Persia and west to the Asia Minor peninsula) which made it idea for the spread of Christianity throughout the Gentile world, the location of the famous (infamous) "suburban resort" of Daphne (a symbol and center of moral depravity) ("Near it was Apollo's licentious sanctuary, Daphne." Fausset Bible Dictionary)

Steven Ger - Antioch was the New York City of its day, at the crossroads of the Roman Empire, a bustling melting pot where East met West. Like the "Big Apple," it attracted a steady flood of immigrants from all corners of the Empire, trusting that "if they could make it there, they could make it anywhere." The city also resembled New York by reputation, known as the "sin city" of its day, a major center of pagan worship, notably, the goddess Astarte....Antioch is often referred to as the "mother of Gentile Christianity." Antioch was to prove an important center of Christian faith and theological development for the following four centuries to come, serving as headquarters for the bishop Ignatius, the coiner of the term "catholic (universal) church," and later the renowned preacher, John Chrysostom. (Acts-21st Century Commentary)

Hastings Bible Dictionary on Antioch - Antioch was called 'the Beautiful' (te kale [Athen. i. p. 20]), but its moral repute was never high. '*In no city of antiquity was the enjoyment of life so much the main thing, and its duties so incidental, as in "Antioch upon Daphne," as the city was significantly called* (Mommsen, Prov. 2, 1909, ii. 128). The **pleasure-garden of Daphne**, 5 miles from the city, 10 miles in circumference, with its sanctuary of Apollo, its groves of laurel and cypress, its sparkling fountains, its colonnades and halls and baths, has come down through history with an evil name. Daphnici mores were proverbial, and Juvenal flung one of his wittiest jibes at his own decadent Imperial city when he said that the Orontes had flowed into the Tiber (Sat. iii. 62), flooding Rome with the superstition and immorality of the East. The brilliant civilization and perfect art of the Greek failed to redeem the turbulent, fickle, and dissolute character of the Syrian. Instead of either race being improved by the contact, each rather infected the other with its characteristic vices. Cicero flattered Antioch as a city of 'most learned men and most liberal studies' (pro Arch. iii.), but the sober verdict of history is different.

(A DEROGATORY DESCRIPTION BY MOMMSEN) 'Amidst all this luxury **the Muses** (GREEK MYTHOLOGICAL TERM) did not find themselves at home; science in earnest and not less earnest art were never truly cultivated in Syria and more especially in Antioch....**This people valued only the day.** (THEY REMIND ME OF THE MINDLESS SONG BY THE GRASSROOTS - **LET'S LIVE FOR TODAY!** WOE!) No Greek region has so few memorial-stones to show as Syria. The great Antioch, the third city of the empire, has to say nothing (in comparison to) the land of hieroglyphics and obelisks (Egypt) and left behind fewer inscriptions than many a small African or Arabian village' (Mommsen, op. cit. 130, 131f.)(See [Hastings lengthy article on Antioch](#))

Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands on **Antioch** - The ancient critics emphasized the Oriental sensuality of Antioch's citizens wholly devoted to luxury, ease, and licentious pleasure. The pleasure garden of Daphne became the hotbed of every kind of vice and depravity. Juvenal, a Roman satirical poet writing in the second century A.D., scored his society for its decadent morals and complained:

Obscene Orontes, diving underground,
Conveys his wealth to Tiber's hungry shores

And fattens Italy with foreign whores.

But Muller makes something of an apology for the Antiochenes:

In fairness to Antioch, it was born too late. It never knew independence, never was a genuine Greek polis. It was just Greek enough to be sophisticated, satirical in its wit, notoriously critical in spirit, often hostile to its rulers, always turbulent. Having been denied real freedom, its citizens took to license. They exercised their lively wit in ridiculing the traditional virtues of manliness and womanliness, honoring the arts and the vices of luxury. They expressed their civic pride in the magnificence of their games, festivals, and spectacles

Herod the Great paved the main street in Antioch with polished marble because of the mud in the street, and, as a protection from the rain, he adorned it with a colonnade.

New American Commentary – Five miles from the city was a major cult center for the Greek goddess Daphne and her consort Apollo. The Antioch version of the cult seems to have been but a weak Hellenization of the worship of the ancient Assyrian goddess Astarte, in which sacred prostitution played a major role. This practice evidently continued because Antioch was notorious throughout the Roman Empire for its immorality.

Hughes - Apollo's famous pursuit of Daphne there was reenacted night and day by the men of the city and by the priestesses, who were in fact ritual prostitutes. Throughout the world "the morals of Daphne" was a euphemism for depravity...(Hughes adds that Antioch) "had the greatest preachers—in the first century Barnabas, Paul, and Peter; in the second Ignatius and Theophilus; in the third and fourth Lucian, Theodore, Chrysostom, and Theodoret. God's light can shine in the darkest pit. God's flowers can blossom in the most putrid bog. (Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire)

David Guzik notes that "One might say that Jerusalem was all about religion; Rome was all about power; Alexandria was all about intellect, and Athens was all about philosophy. Adding to that, one might say that Antioch was all about business and immorality."

Larkin on Antioch - Cicero (Pro Archia 3) praised its art and literature. Juvenal referred to its reputation for immorality, writing of "the Orontes pouring pollution into the Tiber" (Satires 3.62)—the invasion of Rome by eastern superstition and profligacy (see Barclay below).

Note that this Antioch in Acts 11 is in Syria and is not [Antioch in Pisidia](#), which Saul and Barnabas will visit in Acts 13:14+ on Paul's First Missionary Journey.

Longnecker says **Antioch** was "a melting pot of Western and Eastern cultures, where Greek and Roman traditions mingled with Semitic, Arab, and Persian influences"

Ray Stedman says that "Antioch was a strategic city, the third largest in the Roman empire. It was noted all over the empire as a sports center. Chariot races were a specialty. If you have read Ben Hur, or have seen the movie, you know that it is in Antioch that Lew Wallace places the exciting chariot race which is the prominent feature of that novel....About five miles outside the city was the temple of Daphne, where sex was enthroned and worshipped through priestesses who were really religious prostitutes. "

Barclay on Antioch - She was lovely and cosmopolitan; but she was a byword for luxurious immorality. She was famous for her chariot-racing and for a kind of deliberate pursuit of pleasure which went on literally night and day; but most of all she was famous for the worship of Daphne whose temple stood five miles out of the town amidst its laurel groves. The legend was that Daphne was a mortal maid with whom Apollo fell in love. He pursued her and for her safety Daphne was changed into a laurel bush. The "priestesses" of the Temple of Daphne were "sacred" prostitutes and nightly in the laurel groves the pursuit was re-enacted by the worshippers and the priestesses. "The morals of Daphne" was a phrase that all the world knew for loose living. It seems incredible but nonetheless it is true that it was in a city like this that Christianity took the great stride forward to becoming the religion of the world. We need only think of that to be reminded that no situation is hopeless.

And began speaking - This is apparently a number of years after the initial persecution and scattering in Acts 8. The word for **speaking** is **laleo** (imperfect tense = began speaking and continued), suggesting that they not always speaking in formal gatherings in coliseums but were speaking to the Gentiles they encountered in everyday life.

Jack Arnold writes that "The word **speaking**" represents a simple, common, natural speech such as is used in everyday conversation. This does not represent preaching from behind a pulpit or lectern but gossiping the gospel in the street language of the people. The pulpit of these anonymous Christian saints was the market place, back yards, and porches, as they shared the simple gospel in simple terms so the average man could understand."

Related Resources:

- [What is personal evangelism?](#)
- [What is lifestyle evangelism?](#)
- [What is friendship evangelism?](#)

To the Greeks also - In context, these are not Greek speaking Jews, but "pure" Gentiles to whom the Spirit filled Jews were speaking the good news and proclaiming the Lord Jesus. The cultural corner had been "turned" so to speak, and the effects are still rippling 2000 years later as we seek to reach every hidden people group with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Preaching (the gospel, good news)(present tense - continually)(2097)([euaggelizo/evangelizo](#) from **eu** = good, well + **aggéllō** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) means to announce good news concerning something. This Greek word gives us our English [evangel](#) and [evangelize](#). **Euaggelizo/evangelizo** in its original sense could be used to refer to a declaration of any kind of good news, but in the NT it (with 2 exceptions discussed below) refers especially to the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God and of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Most of NT uses of **euaggelizo** are translated "preach" or "preach the gospel," whichever fits more smoothly into the context. There are two passages that illustrate the original meaning of simply to "bring glad tidings" or "bring good news" of any nature. The first is in Luke...

The Lord Jesus - The good news is not a 4 step plan, but a Person. Without Christ you have no creed, no saving message, no hope for sinners! Although they are Jews proclaiming the good news, they do not appear to emphasize His Old Testament Messiahship for this is truth that would be foreign to most of the Gentiles. They preached Jesus as Lord.

Lord (master, owner)(2962)([kurios](#)) indicates the Jewish evangelists preached Jesus as the Possessor, Owner, Master, the Supreme One, Who is sovereign . They preached Jesus as Lord and as the One Who possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power. See Ligonier devotional "[Jesus is Lord.](#)"

The Gentiles would have been familiar with **kurios** for it was used of the Roman emperors (cf Acts 25:26). In addition in classical Greek, kurios was used of the false gods, such as Hermes, Zeus, etc.

Boice writes that "Citizens of the empire were required to burn a pinch of incense to the reigning Caesar and utter the words **Kyrios Kaisar** ("Caesar is Lord!"). It is this that the early Christians refused to do and for which they were themselves thrown to the wild lions or crucified. It was not that Christians were forbidden to worship God. They were free to worship any god they chose so long as they also acknowledged Caesar. Romans were tolerant. But when Christians denied to Caesar the allegiance that they believed belonged to the true God only, they were executed."

John MacArthur - That the Hellenists were **preaching the Lord Jesus**, the facts of His life, death, and resurrection, as Peter had to Cornelius and his household, seems obvious. To have presented Him as the Jewish Messiah would have had little meaning to predominantly Gentile audiences. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

F F Bruce makes the point that ""Many (Greeks) were trying to find in various mystery cults a divine lord who could guarantee salvation and immortality to his devotees" As **Larkin** says "The good news is that "this can be found in **the Lord Jesus**" (compare Acts 10:36; 16:31; 20:21; 28:31)."

Jack Arnold has some interesting insights on evangelism by the local church - There has been much study done recently on church growth at the Fuller Theological Seminary School of Missions. While there are many secondary reasons why a local church may grow, such as a T.V. ministry, expository preaching, bus ministry, home Bible classes and so forth, the one common denominator is that all these churches have an active lay ministry who are faithfully witnessing for Christ. In these churches, laymen are being mobilized and trained. It has also been pointed out that about ten percent of any congregation has been given the spiritual gift of evangelism. While it is the responsibility of all Christians to witness verbally for Christ, about ten percent will show definite skill and ability in evangelism. It is the task of the ten percent to help train the ninety percent. It has also been shown that the most effective time for effective witnessing for the average Christian is the first three years after his conversion to Christ. Why? Because it is during these years that the new Christian has many unsaved family, friends and acquaintances, and this sphere of people will be witnessed to by most people within a three year period. As a Christian grows deeper in Christ, he develops mainly Christian friends and finds himself mainly doing Christian ministries. In any local church, the greatest potential for evangelistic effectiveness comes from a combination of the ten percent of the mature Christians who have the gift of evangelism coupled with the recent converts of less than three years. It becomes obvious that new converts to Christ are essential for a normal, healthy development of a local church.

R Kent Hughes reminds us that "Antioch was evangelized not by apostles but by **average members of Christ's Body** who were willing to share their faith. Wherever these fugitives landed, they kindled a blaze. Sharing Christ was to them as natural as tears to sorrow or a smile to happiness. **Everyday believers empowered by the Holy Spirit of God blew away the hold of paganism on needy souls.** What an example!"...A heavenly vitality now burned in the midst of the materialistic and spiritual darkness of Antioch. This was so foreign to its bleak environment that it would alter the vocabulary of the city—and indeed of the entire world. A similar

thing happened to [George Fox](#) and his followers in 1640 when he stood before a certain Justice Bennet and "bid him to tremble at the word of the Lord." In response the justice called Fox and his followers "[Quakers](#)." Elton Trueblood comments: "One of the best evidences that the image which Fox and his associates conveyed to their contemporaries was a dynamic one, is that provided by the nickname Quaker..." The same thing happened to the **Methodists**, who were so named because of their systematic, methodical pursuit of holiness. If a spiritual dynamic operated among us causing people to reach for a new word to describe us, what would the word be? What words do they use now? (**CHRISTIAN**) When God's people live for Christ in such depth and power that those around them have to strive for a new term to describe what they see—that is awesome! (Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire)

Gotquestions adds that "George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, said the name **Quaker** was first used as a derogatory term in court, "because we bid them tremble at the Word of God." Quakers were persecuted widely in England and the American Colonies and were often imprisoned or put to death for their beliefs. Because of this widespread persecution, William Penn founded the Pennsylvania Colony to provide a safe haven for Quakers. The practical emphases of Quaker doctrine have always been 1) reliance on the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, 2) love for one another, 3) love for enemies (pacifism), and 4) the sufficiency of truth-speaking (not taking any oaths). With their emphasis on "the inner light" and the movement of the Spirit, Quakers typically shun systematic theology and doctrinal creeds. Most Quakers hold to evangelical doctrines, but a small minority holds to liberal theology and universalism. Some support a traditional view of marriage, while others affirm and support gay marriage. One of the distinctives of Quakerism is the practice of "group spiritual discernment," whereby the Friends wait on God to lead them in whatever business is at hand. This sensitivity to the Spirit's moving is indeed valuable and often lacking in other churches. On the other hand, if the people in the group have not sufficiently studied the Scriptures for God's revealed will, the group may "feel led" to something that violates Scripture. This is why the apostle John commanded us to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). Historically, the Quakers have always tried to emphasize the social aspects of the gospel. They were involved in ending slavery and increasing the rights of women and minorities. One of Amnesty International's founders was a Quaker, and the Quakers have been strong supporters of that organization ever since. ([Quakers](#))

Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

KJV Acts 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

- **the hand of the Lord** 2 Chronicles 30:12; Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Nehemiah 2:8,18; Isaiah 53:1; 59:1; Luke 1:66
- **and a large number who believed** Acts 11:24; 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 1 Corinthians 3:6,7; 1 Th 1:5
- **turned to the Lord** Acts 9:35; 15:19; Acts 26:18-20; 1 Th 1:9,10

GOD'S POWER FOR SAVING

And - Unfortunately most modern versions like the NET, NIV, HCSB, NAB, NJB, GWN, NRS, NLT omit the **"and"** which is a strategic and significant conjunction in this passage. **And** is the Greek word "[kai](#)" which clearly links the former passage with the following. What do we see in the former passage? **They preached the Lord Jesus**. What do we see in the following passage? The good **hand of the Lord was with them**. Do you see the clear association? So what is the practical application? If you desire the good **hand of the Lord** upon your ministry, you will **preach the Lord Jesus**. And conversely, if you preach the Lord Jesus, you need the good hand of the Lord upon you as you preach! I am an avid reader of the sermons of C H Spurgeon and as I pondered this passage in Acts and began to think about the content of his sermons, it was clear that Spurgeon invariably preached **the Lord Jesus**. Is there any wonder that the good **hand of the Lord** was upon his ministry which was probably the most prolific and powerful of any man since the apostle Paul who "determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Cor 2:2)! And one other aspect which I love about Spurgeon's sermons is that He almost always begins by acknowledging that he can do absolutely nothing of eternal value unless the Holy Spirit empower his preaching (cf the good **hand of the Lord**). Here are a few representative quotes...

May the Spirit of God prepare our hearts for our meditation, and impress the truth upon them...I must press the question again and again, and I do pray **the Holy Spirit to let His power** be felt by every one of us. ([Lovest Thou Me?](#) John 21:16)

If the objection is not driven away by my feeble sentences, may God drive it away by **his mighty Spirit**. ([A Remonstrance and A Rejoinder](#) - Galatians 5:6)

I shall try to set forth the astounding grace of God, as **his Spirit** shall enable me ([Amazing Grace](#) Isaiah 57:18)

About this matter we will talk this morning as the Lord shall help us, and **may his Holy Spirit bless us therein**....We vex the **Holy Spirit** every time we go into sin, for he loves us much and cannot bear to see us so dreadfully hurting ourselves....If you are willing he will grant you the power; nay, in making you willing he has already begun the work. If this morning he has made you truly willing to give up sin, **his blessed Spirit** will never leave you till sin is overcome....Deliverance from sin is not a work of the flesh, but a work of grace: it does not spring from legal bondage, but from the gracious work of **the blessed Spirit**: but you must have it, you must have it, and if you will not have holiness neither shall you have heaven. ([Reasons for Parting with Sin](#) - Isaiah 1:18)

This morning we will commune together upon the trials of Joseph, and our own afflictions. Our first reflections shall be spent upon the importance of trial; secondly, we will consider the peculiarity of the believer's trial—"the word of the Lord tried him;" and thirdly, we will observe the continuance and the conclusion of the trial,—"until the time that his word came." **May the ever blessed Spirit direct our meditations**. ([Trial by the Word](#) - Psalm 105:19)

Now we come to that part of our discourse in which we must earnestly pray God **the Holy Spirit** to help us doubly. ([Unconditional Surrender](#) - James 4:7 If you have time read this one!)

As Paul explains in his letter to the Thessalonians "our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in **power** and in **the Holy Spirit** and with **full conviction**; (NLT says "for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true.") (1 Th 1:5). This is undoubtedly as apt description of these unnamed men who were **preaching the Lord Jesus**. In a word, these men were not just proclaiming the Word of God the Gospel, but they doing it in the power of the Holy Spirit. Does this describe your preaching and/or teaching? It should! It can! It must!

MacArthur - In the Old Testament the phrase **the hand of the Lord** meant two things. First, it spoke of God's power expressed in judgment (cf. Ex. 9:33; Deut. 2:15; Josh. 4:24; 1 Sam. 5:6; 7:13). It also referred to God's power expressed in blessing (Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Neh. 2:8, 18). In this case it was related to God's blessing, so that **a large number who believed turned to the Lord**. (Ibid)

Ray Stedman wisely writes that in this section "we learn afresh of the movement of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit at work is like a great river, cutting a fresh channel, going wherever it (HE) wishes. Sometimes we Christian flood control experts are disturbed by that. We do not like the way the Holy Spirit moves. We like to dig a channel, line it with concrete, and say, "Come, O River of God. We have dug the channel. Flow through it now according to our desire." (cf. Jn 7:38, 39) But God does not work that way. He makes His own channels. We build dikes and dams and attempt to direct the Spirit's flow. But, as the Lord Jesus said, the Spirit is like the wind; he blows wherever he wishes (Jn 3:8). No one can tell where He comes from or where He is going. It is refreshing to recognize that. The Holy Spirit has cut new channels repeatedly throughout twenty centuries of church history. Every now and then He breaks out in a fresh way. Unfortunately we Christians consider that to be some special kind of activity. We view it as emergency procedure on God's part when we ought to recognize that it is the normal pattern of God at work. As the book of Acts makes perfectly clear, God expects to act this way all the time, and He will, if we are ready to move with him. Beginning with Verse 19 of Chapter 11, we find an interesting account of the moving of the Holy Spirit in fresh and vital ways." ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

Guzik - A ministry can't turn people to the Lord unless the hand of the Lord is with them. You can turn people to a personality without **the hand of the Lord**. **You can turn people to a social club without the hand of the Lord**. **You can turn people to a church or an institution without the hand of the Lord**. **But you can't turn people to the Lord without the hand of the Lord**.

The hand of the Lord was with them (see Acts 4:30+) - The phrase **hand of the Lord** is an OT [anthropomorphic](#) idiom. The **hand of the Lord** speaks of the spiritual power provided by the Lord. For example, Luke uses this phrase to describe John the Baptist about whom all the people were saying (even before his birth) "the hand of the Lord was certainly with him." (Lk 1:66). Luke does not say this included signs and wonders. Whatever the manifestation, the Source of this power was the Holy Spirit, specifically the convicting and convincing ministry of the Spirit described by Jesus in John 16:7-11 ([sermon by Steve Lawson](#)) which resulted in the large number who believed.

THOUGHT - This fact is the key to success in ministry. Ministry can either be done (attempted) in our power (our hand) or done in the power of the hand of the Lord. The former is eternally fruitless, regardless of how big the church becomes. The latter is eternally fruitful, whether the church is small or large. This is God's formula for "church growth." I have witnessed several "church growth programs" over the last 35 years and they all began with enthusiasm but each of them eventually fizzled out with the church no better for having gone

through the programs. And sadly these "church growth" programs were initiated by the church leaders, pastors and elders, who felt like these programs were so successful in other churches that surely they would be successful in their local church. So here in Acts 11:21 gives us in one phrase the single most important truth regarding "**church growth.**" -- **the hand of the Lord was on them!** This fact coupled with the fact that they preached the **Lord Jesus** resulted in a "bumper crop," a fruitful ministry. When will we learn to "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the **ancient paths**, where the good way is, and walk in it?" (Jer 6:16)

In the OT we see the **hand of the Lord** repeatedly mentioned in the life of godly Ezra, in Ezra 7:6 giving him **provision**, in Ezra 7:27, 28 giving him **power** and in Ezra 8:22,23 giving him **protection**. But the question must be asked -- **why was the had of the Lord so evident in his life?** God's Word gives us the answer in Ezra 7:9-10 (in depth commentary)...

For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him. 10 **For** Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

THOUGHT - Notice the **for** a strategic term of explanation in Ezra 7:10, and before reading further ask the simple question **what is this passage explaining?** This passage shows the pattern of a life of a man or woman upon whom the good hand of the Lord will rest. Notice the components in Ezra's life - **(1)** Set his heart (cf "made up his mind" = Da 1:8+), **(2)** studied the Word of God (Joshua 1:8+, Ps 1:2-3+), **(3)** obeyed the Word of God (cf James 1:22+), and **(4)** taught the Word of God (cf 2 Ti 4:2+). This is why the **good hand of the Lord** was upon Ezra and this is still God's pattern for experiencing His blessing. Are you imitating the godly example of Ezra? While it is not a mechanical "formula," it is surely a pattern that will result in God's good hand of blessing on your life and ministry for Christ.

We must be careful to avoid
All self-sufficiency;
If sinful pride gets in the way,
God's hand we will not see.
—Sper

Related Resources:

- In Depth Commentary on Ezra 7:9-10
- Multiple Resources related to the Hand of the Lord

BELIEVED AND TURNED: FAITH AND REPENTANCE

And a large number who believed turned to the Lord - (large number, considerable numbers repeated in Acts 11:24, Acts 11:26) They must have held a "church growth seminar!" This seminar was "entitled" "The hand of the Lord was with them!"

Steven Ger on a large number - Throughout Acts, Luke regularly reports on the increasing numbers of believers. Although only twice providing specific totals of new batches of believers (the three thousand of Acts 2:41 and the five thousand of Acts 4:4) he nevertheless presents numerical growth as a positive phenomenon and unambiguous evidence of God's blessing. (Ibid)

Do you see the spiritual dynamics illustrated in this passage? **Believed** speaks of faith and **turned to the Lord** speaks of repentance. So once again we see the two sided salvation coin that describes God's sovereign method of saving those who repent and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. A salvation without repentance is no salvation at all. Many today in the church pews have professed to believe in Jesus, but they have never evidenced the authenticity of their belief by turning to the Lord. In short, they have a profession of faith without a repentance validating their faith and they are yet unregenerate and dead in their trespasses and sins.

We see a living example of repentance beautifully illustrated in the birth of the church at Thessalonica Paul recording

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you (THESSALONIAN GENTILE BELIEVERS), and how **you turned to God** (NOTE FIRST TO GOD THEN) from idols (THEN AWAY FROM IDOLS) to serve a living and true God (NOT DEAD IDOLS), 10 and to wait (EXPECTANTLY, PRESENT TENSE, AS THEIR HABITUAL MANNER OF LIFE - THEY WERE LOOKING FOR THE SECOND COMING AND LIVING IN LIGHT OF THAT MOTIVATING TRUTH. SADLY THIS ANTICIPATION FOR HIS RETURN HAS BEEN LOST IN MOST AMERICAN CHURCHES!) for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.(1 Th 1:9-10+).

We see a similar pattern of repentance among the Gentiles who were turning from idolatry to the Living God in Acts...

Acts 14:15+ and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you **should turn from these vain things (IDOLS) to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.**

Acts 15:19+ "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are **turning to God** from among the Gentiles,

Larkin makes an pithy point - In a day when a misapplication of church-growth theory's "homogeneous unit principle" can produce monocultural churches, God's blessing on [inclusive](#) evangelism across ethnic lines at Antioch is a necessary reminder of where God's heart is. While he may indeed give growth within homogeneous ethnic units, such units are not his ideal, and neither should they be ours.

Believed (4100) ([pisteuo](#) from [pistis](#); [pistos](#); related studies [the faith](#), the [obedience of faith](#)) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust. To accept as true, genuine, or real. To have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something or someone. To consider to be true. To accept the word or evidence of. In the present context their belief is not just "intellectual" belief ("profession") but is a heart belief ("possession" so to speak), as shown by their turning to the Lord.

Turned to is literally "turned upon (epi)." I like the literal for it depicts a sinner casting his or her sin burden UPON the Lord, the only One Who is able to carry that load away "into the wilderness" as foreshadowed by the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:8, 9, 10+)

Turned (1994) ([epistrepho](#) from [epi](#) = motion toward + [strepho](#) = twist, turn quite around or reverse) means to revert, to turn about, to turn around, to turn toward, to return and figuratively to convert. The idea is a definite turn to God in conduct as well as in one's mind. This is the verb used in the passage quoted above (1 Th 1:9) where the Gentiles "**turned to** God from idols." Notice the association of turning with repentance...

Acts 3:19 "Therefore **repent and return**, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 9:35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they **turned to the Lord.**

Acts 14:15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you **should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.**

Acts 15:19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are **turning to God from among the Gentiles,**

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes so that **they may turn from darkness to light** and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

Acts 26:20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should **repent and turn to God**, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

Comment - Notice that in this passage repentance is a change which has demonstrable effects (**fruit** in Mt 3:8, Lk 3:8+). If there is no fruit, there is no root, there is no genuine repentance and there is no genuine salvation but only an empty profession.

See **Harry Ironside's** book - [Except Ye Repent by Harry A. Ironside](#) From Ironside's introduction to this treatise...

Fully convinced in my own mind that the **doctrine of repentance** is the missing note in many otherwise orthodox and fundamentally sound circles today, I have penned this volume out of a full heart. I hope and pray that God will be pleased to use it to awaken many of His servants to the importance of seeking so to present His truth as to bring men to the only place where He can meet them in blessing. That place is the recognition of their own demerit and absolute unworthiness of His least mercies and a new conception of His saving power for all who come to Christ as lost sinners, resting alone upon His redemptive work for salvation, and depending upon the indwelling Holy Spirit to make them victorious over sin's power in daily life.

Since many of the uses of **epistrepho** refer to conversion it behooves us to have proper understanding of that term. **George Peters** offers the following description...

Conversion is that principal act of faith in which the soul by the initiative and the enablement of the Holy Spirit on the basis of the finished work of Christ on Calvary and in response to the Word of God voluntarily turns to God from sin and ungodliness and enters into an abiding relationship with the Lord which vitally and permanently affects life in its various aspects and relationships and leads to its eventual and complete restoration.

Our definition establishes the following principles:

- (1) Conversion is a principal act of faith;
- (2) Conversion is an act of the soul by the initiative and the enablement of the Holy Spirit;
- (3) Conversion is based upon the finished work of Christ on Calvary;
- (4) Conversion is an act of the soul in response to the Word of God;
- (5) Conversion is a voluntary act;
- (6) Conversion is an act of turning to God from sin and ungodliness;
- (7) Conversion is an act which results in a relationship with the Lord;
- (8) Conversion is an act which vitally affects life in its various aspects and relationships;
- (9) Conversion is an act which leads to a process in the restoration of life.

These principles are illustrated by the various Biblical records on conversion. Conversion is essentially a turning to God and a turning away from sin. The two elements are unusually expressed by the two Biblical terms of faith and repentance. It is very important to realize that the Bible emphasizes both aspects, although the emphasis upon the positive definitely outweighs the negative, far more passages speaking of turning to God than turning away from sin. It must be understood, however, that both aspects are always present, the one expressed, the other implied. They form an indissoluble unit in a Biblical conversion. (Peters, George: The Meaning of Conversion. Volume 120, Issue 479, page 240. Dallas TX: Dallas Theological Seminary)

Steven Cole on The Church God Blesses -

If we want the **hand of the Lord** to be with us, then we would do well to study and follow the example of this church at Antioch. There are seven principles I want to point out:

1. God blesses a church where every member is a minister.

The founding and prospering of the church at Antioch was arguably one of the most significant events in the history of Western civilization. It led to the distinctiveness of the Christian church apart from the Jewish synagogue, in that it blended together in one body both Jews and Gentiles. It was here that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. From Antioch, the church launched the first mission to Europe. You and I conceivably would not be Christians today had it not been for God's blessing on this church.

One remarkable feature of this church was how it started. It was not founded by apostles or pastors or trained missionaries. Rather, some unnamed men who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen came to Antioch and began talking, not just to the Jews, but to the Greeks (Gentiles), telling the good news about the **Lord Jesus** (Ac 11:20). The Greek word for "**speak**" (Ac 11:19, Ac 11:20) is the word for normal conversation. The implication is that these men didn't preach as orators in the marketplace. Rather, in their everyday contacts, they told others about Jesus Christ. There is reason to believe that Luke himself was a native of Antioch. Perhaps as a doctor, he was treating a man who told him about Jesus Christ, leading to his conversion.

But surely Luke either knew or easily could have found out the names of these evangelists. He mentions where they were from. Yet they remain unnamed, I believe, for a reason. If they had been named, we would hold them up as missionary heroes, and view them as men a notch above the average church member. We would think that what they did was something that we could never do. But their remaining unnamed tells us that they were common men who had met the Lord Jesus and who wanted others to know Him, too. We all can do what they did.

Note also that even when Barnabas and Saul later rose to positions of leadership through their teaching ministry, this church did not depend on them in order to function and grow. They could send both of them off on a relief mission to Jerusalem, which would have taken at least a couple of months, and keep operating.

Later, when the Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for the first missionary journey, the church could send off these two key leaders and keep right on rolling. This was because this church knew the principle of the body, that **God has gifted every member and each one is expected to exercise his or her gift in ministry.**

If the spreading of the gospel or the functioning of the church depends on the labors of full-time missionaries or pastors, ministry will be severely limited. But if every person who has trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord feels the obligation of serving Him and of telling others the good news about Him, the gospel will spread and the church will be built up. Every Christian should sense his or her responsibility to serve Christ and bear witness of Him.

2. God blesses a church where the gospel is proclaimed as the power of God to save sinners.

To understand our text, you need to know something about Antioch. It was located 300 miles north of Jerusalem and was the third largest city in the Roman empire, behind Rome and Alexandria, having more than 500,000 residents. It was a center for commerce and a crossroads for travel and trade between Europe and the Orient. This made the city a melting pot of various races, including the Romans, the local Syrians, Jews, and others. The city was proverbial for sexual immorality. Five miles outside of town was the grove of Daphne, where worshipers of Artemis and Apollo pursued their religion of pleasure with temple prostitutes. The Roman satirist Juvenal criticized the moral pollution of Rome by saying that the sewage of the Orontes (a river flowing through Antioch) had for too long been discharged into the Tiber (flowing through Rome). He "meant that Antioch was so corrupt that it was impacting Rome, more than 1, 300 miles away" (Stanley Toussaint, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* [Victor Books], 2:383).

It is significant that when God picked a city that would become the center for missionary endeavor, He picked a cosmopolitan, morally corrupt city like Antioch. In this secular, pagan environment, common Christians began telling the simple gospel message that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, that whoever believes in Him receives eternal life and forgiveness as God's free gift. The same gospel that is the power of God for salvation to the Jews proved to be the power of God for salvation to these pagan Gentiles as well.

The end of verse Ac 11:20 literally reads, "**telling [or preaching] the good news [of] the Lord Jesus**" But in telling the good news, they didn't dodge the hard matters of sin and repentance, since we read that a large number who believed turned to the Lord. This means that these former pagans gave up their idols, their sexual immorality, their lying, and their corrupt business practices when they put their trust in Jesus as Lord. When Barnabas came, he witnessed the grace of God (Ac 11:23). You can't see God's grace, but you can see the effects of it in a person's life. He could see that God had changed these people. **Faith in the good news about Jesus as Savior cannot be divorced from repentance from sin.**

One remarkable proof that the gospel is from God is that wherever it goes, it has the same powerful effect. The message does not need to be changed when it is taken to a tribe of primitive headhunters. It does not need to be intellectualized when it is taken to a sophisticated university crowd. Whatever their culture or background, people are all sinners who need to know how to be reconciled to God before they face Him in judgment. If we will tell the simple gospel message to the people we come into contact with, God will bless us with conversions.

3. God blesses a church where His grace, not legalism, permeates the body.

Not only I, but also many commentators, sense that there was a note of concern behind the Jerusalem church's sending **Barnabas** to Antioch. Word had gotten back to Jerusalem, "Have you heard what's going on in Antioch?" "No, what?" "A bunch of laymen are sharing Christ with the pagans, and they're all meeting together, Jews and Gentiles, as one church!" Alarms went off! Red lights started flashing! It was one thing when the God-fearing Gentile, Cornelius, had become a Christian through the preaching of the leading apostle, Peter. That stretched the limit. But when raw pagans from a notoriously immoral place like Antioch started coming into the church through the witness of a bunch of laymen, it was time for the mother church to check things out! So they sent **Barnabas**. Some of the circumcision crowd might have said, "Make sure that Barnabas gets that Antioch situation under control!"

Note what Barnabas saw and how he responded: He saw the grace of God and he rejoiced (Ac 11:23). If the apostles had sent a legalistic member of the circumcision party, he might have seen something else and had a very different response. He would have seen Jews and Gentiles eating together (Ga 2:12), not keeping the ceremonial laws. Instead of rejoicing, he would have been horrified.

But Barnabas was a man who lived by God's grace, and so he saw the grace of God and rejoiced. No doubt

he also saw a lot of imperfection in these new converts. New believers do not drop all of their pagan baggage the day they get saved. A church made up of people from such different backgrounds as those in Antioch was bound to have some irritations and conflicts. But rather than focusing on the imperfections and problems, Barnabas focused on God's grace in saving these people. Instead of slapping a bunch of Jewish rules on them, he rejoiced at what God was doing, and then began to encourage them to remain true to the Lord.

What do you see when you see a new convert? Let me describe him: He's 20 years-old, he wears a baseball cap on backwards, a T-shirt, and jeans to church. He has a tattoo and an earring. But here he is in church, lifting his hands in praise to God as he sings of God's salvation. Do you see a young man who doesn't look like what you think a Christian young person should look like, and grumble in your heart? Or, do you see the grace of God who has saved that young man, and rejoice?

Howard Hendricks tells of the time he brought his neighbors, whom he was trying to reach with the gospel, to the Dallas Seminary Founder's Banquet. The Founder's Banquet is a major fund-raising event. The seminary wants their supporters to come and see the kind of quality young leaders that Dallas is producing. When Hendricks got there with his neighbors, he discovered that his table was front and center. When they dimmed the lights, the spotlight on the stage shined right over their table. His neighbor's cigarette smoke curled up through the light for everyone in the hotel ballroom to see. Hendricks says that he could almost hear some dear old supporter in the back grumbling, "That's how liberalism gets started in the seminary!"

God's grace teaches us to accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God (Ro 15:7). We need to treat others as God has graciously treated us.

4. God blesses a church where grace is the motivation to remain true to the Lord.

God's grace also teaches us to deny worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age (Titus 2:12+). Barnabas could see that these new believers needed to grow in their faith. Every pastor knows that it's one thing to make a profession of faith, but it's another thing to persevere and grow in holiness when temptations and trials hit, as surely they will. God's grace in Christ is what motivates us to live holy lives (Ga 2:20+).

Genuine conversion is a matter of the heart. Thus Barnabas, true to his name ("Son of Encouragement") began to encourage these new Christians with purpose of heart to remain true to the Lord (lit., Ac 11:23). **Steadfastness** in the Christian life is not an accident (**ED**: NOR IS IT "LET GO, LET GOD!"), but a matter of resolute purpose (**ED**: "LET GOD, LET'S GO!"). (cf 1 Cor 15:58+) I can hear Barnabas preaching to these new believers, "Because God has been gracious in saving us, we must resolve in our hearts to follow Him and cling to Him no matter what kinds of hardships we encounter. We must purpose to deny ourselves and follow the Lord Jesus. Abide in Him! He is the all-sufficient One who can meet your every need. He has done the greatest thing by loving you and giving Himself for you on the cross. He will not abandon or forsake you, even if He calls you to go through persecution or even martyrdom. Let His grace motivate you to resolve in your heart to follow Him and walk with Him no matter what!"

Thus the church that God blesses is made up of members who see themselves as ministers of Christ. They proclaim the gospel as the power of God to save sinners from every kind of background. Grace, not legalism, permeates this church, and grace is the motivation to go on in holiness with the Lord.

5. God blesses a church where godly leaders set the example of holiness and faith.

Luke states that Barnabas "**was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith**" (Ac 11:24). I hope to explore Barnabas' character more next week, so I will be brief here ([Acts 11:23-24 How to Become a Good Person](#)). But note that he was a man of integrity. He practiced what he preached. Those who knew him well said, "He is a good man." The reason he was a good man was that he was full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith in the living God.

Barnabas' heart was to seek the glory of God through the building up of His church, not to seek a name for himself. At some point, he began to realize that the work in Antioch was more than he could handle. Maybe he realized that he did not have all the gifts that were needed to see this church prosper. So he left Antioch and traveled the 100 miles to Tarsus to search for Saul. Barnabas was not threatened to bring this gifted man back to Antioch to share in the work with him. Eventually, he took a back seat to Paul's leadership in their missionary endeavors.

God will not bless a church in the true sense of the word if the leaders are not setting a godly example. I say,

“in the true sense” because I know of many large, seemingly thriving churches where it has come out that the pastor was not living a holy life. So we need to be careful not to mistake a large church with God’s true blessing. I hope you pray for all of our pastoral staff here, that we will walk in holiness with the Lord Jesus every day.

6. God blesses a church where godly leaders are devoted to teaching God’s Word.

Barnabas and Saul met with the church for an entire year and taught considerable numbers (Ac 11:26). Then we read, “**and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.**” Probably this was a nickname that the pagans in town gave them. It meant, “**Christ-men.**” It’s only used in the Bible three times: here; in Ac 26:28, where Agrippa chides Paul for trying to make him a Christian; and, in 1Pe 4:16, where Peter urges his readers not to be ashamed if they suffer as Christians.

F. F. Bruce imagines a group of two or three of the unofficial missionaries in the streets of Antioch, with a small group gathered around them, listening to the gospel. Someone watching asks another bystander, “Who are these people?” The other answers, “O, these are the people who are always talking about *Christos*, the Christ-people, the Christians” (The Book of Acts [Eerdmans], p. 241). The nickname stuck, just as Jesus people or Jesus freaks was the description that came out of the Jesus movement in the 1970’s. While it may have been meant as a term of derision, it really was a supreme compliment for the pagans to notice that these men were “Christ-men.”

It is implied that the reason people could identify these men as **Christians** was that they lived in accordance with Barnabas’ and Saul’s teaching of God’s Word. **The point of all Bible teaching should be to change the way we think, our attitudes, the way we talk, and the way we act, beginning at home and extending into the world. Others should recognize that we are like Jesus Christ because we obey His Word.** Finally,

7. God blesses a church where the members are devoted to spontaneous, generous giving.

The apostles and prophets were the foundation of the New Testament church (Eph 2:20). Once the foundation was laid and the canon of Scripture was complete, those gifts passed off the scene. The function of a prophet was to edify, exhort, and console from God’s Word (1 Co 14:3), and also to receive direct revelation from God to impart His message to the church. A group of prophets came to Antioch, and one of them, Agabus, predicted a coming famine. The church’s response was spontaneously to give toward the relief of the believers living in Judea, and to send the gift with Barnabas and Saul. Luke shows that they didn’t just come up with this great idea; they actually did it (Ac 11:30), without any pressure or organizing from the leaders.

God will bless a church that sees a brother or sister in need and quietly, spontaneously, without pressure, gives to meet that need. The famine easily could have hit Antioch as well as Judea. The church members in Antioch could have said, “We need to look out for our own needs; let the Jewish brethren take care of themselves.” But they trusted God and gave to meet the needs of others. God will pour out His blessing on a generous church.

Conclusion -

So Antioch is set before us as an example. It was a church founded by simple believers who knew that God has called every Christian to serve Him. They proclaimed the gospel as the power of God for salvation to every one who believes. They operated by God’s grace, not by legalism. They saw grace as the motivation to go on with the Lord. Their leaders set the example and taught them from God’s Word. They were generous givers, trusting God to meet their needs. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. I covet that for our church! I want to be a part of a church, like Antioch, where growth clearly comes from the Lord and where, also like Antioch, we become a center for worldwide impact for Jesus Christ. Then the glory won’t go to church growth principles or to any man, but to the Lord of the church, who strongly supports those whose hearts are completely His (2 Chr 16:9). ([Acts 11:19-30 The Church God Blesses](#))

Acts 11:22 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

KJV Acts 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

- A. M. 4047. A.D. 43.
- **The news about them** Acts 1; 8:14; 15:2; 1 Thessalonians 3:6
- **they sent Barnabas off to Antioch** Acts 4:36-37; 9:27; 13:1-3; 15:22,35-39

ASTOUNDING NEWS OF GOD'S GOSPEL AND HIS SPIRIT MOVING AMONG GENTILES

The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem- This news surely spread like the proverbial "wild fire!" The church in Jerusalem at this time was of course almost entirely Jewish, so the word about this movement among Gentiles would have definitely "rocked their boat!"

Ray Stedman - The result of this first preaching was that a great many Gentile converts came to Christ. This news was a bit disconcerting to the disciples at Jerusalem. They did not know what to do about this movement of the Holy Spirit. Since they were themselves Jews, raised in the tradition that they were God's chosen people, you can imagine what happened. They never thought that God would move to reach the Gentile world and so they hardly knew what to make of it. When word came to them that Gentiles were becoming converts of Jesus Christ, they were utterly astounded. Were these real Christians? Was it possible that Gentiles could actually come to Christ just as a Jew could? These thoughts came to their minds. To settle the issue, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. What a great choice they made! Barnabas is a great individual. He had one of the largest hearts recorded in all of the New Testament. He did not come to attempt to control this new thrust by the Holy Spirit; he came down to investigate it, to see what God had been doing. ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

And they sent Barnabas off to Antioch - Again we see the hand of providence. The Jews did not send just any man but a man named Barnabas, a man nicknamed "Son of Encouragement." Although Jewish by birth, he was not enmeshed in the legalism and traditions that dominated the lives of many of the Jews, even Jews who believed in Jesus.

We first encounter Barnabas in Acts 4

Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),³⁷ and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

William Barclay wrote that "One of the highest of human duties is the duty of encouragement.... It is easy to laugh at men's ideals; it is easy to pour cold water on their enthusiasm; it is easy to discourage others. The world is full of discouragers. We have a Christian duty to encourage one another. Many a time a word of praise or thanks or appreciation or cheer has kept a man on his feet. Blessed is the man who speaks such a word."

Acts 11:23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

KJV Acts 11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

NET Acts 11:23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts,

- **witnessed the grace of God** Mark 2:5; Colossians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:3,4; 2 Timothy 1:4,5; 2 Peter 1:4-9; 3 John 1:4
- **began to encourage them** Acts 13:43; 14:22; John 8:31,32; 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 3:2-5; Hebrews 10:19-26,32-39; 2 Peter 3:17,18; 1 John 2:28
- **with resolute heart** Ps 17:3; Proverbs 23:15,28; Daniel 1:8; 2 Corinthians 1:17; 2 Timothy 3:10
- **to remain true to the Lord** Deuteronomy 10:20; 30:20; Joshua 22:5; 23:8; Matthew 16:24; 1 Corinthians 15:58

THE GRACE OF GOD MADE VISIBLE

Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God- The Greek sentence literally reads "he arrived and he observed." Barnabas was intentional the moment he **arrived** at Antioch he began by observing for signs of God at work, always a good place to begin! The verb **witnessed** is not **martureo** but **horao**, in this context describing Barnabas' mentally and spiritually seeing or perceiving, and what did his spiritual eyes see but the **grace of God** on full display!

THOUGHT - When you visit a church, a Sunday School class (if you can still find one!), a missional community, etc, do you enter expectantly, desiring to see evidence of God's grace on display? Or do you come in with a critical spirit, looking for flaws, imperfections, things with which you might be able to take issue? God by Your Spirit (and it was by His Spirit in Barnabas - cf Acts 11:24), please give all who are reading this note a Barnabas-like spirit!

R Kent Hughes observes that **Barnabas** "could easily have seen the situation in a different light. These people were new, untaught Christians. They still carried the mire of Antioch with them. Some of them had miles to go in their language and relationships and ethics. But Barnabas "saw the evidence of the grace of God." He could see Christian grace and charm in their lives—the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace..."—and "he was glad." (Ibid)

MacArthur - The grace of God may be invisible, but its effects are readily seen.

Grace can be difficult to define, but here we see that God's grace can be seen. How so? Changed lives, transformed temperaments always give off the pleasing aroma of God's grace (cf 2 Cor 2:14-16, like "letters" to be "read" = 2 Cor 3:2), which is manifest as God's saving ([justification](#)) and transforming ([sanctification](#)) power as seen by changed conduct identifying them indelibly as new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). Idol worshipers who are now God worshipers.

Surprisingly the Greek word **charis** occurs only 4 times in Acts (Acts 4:33; 15:11; 18:27; 20:24). On the other hand of the 4 Gospel writers, Luke uses **charis** most often (No uses in Matthew or Mark and 3 in John - Jn. 1:14; 1:16; 1:17, compare 8 times in Luke = Lk. 1:30; Lk. 2:40; Lk. 2:52; Lk. 4:22; Lk. 6:32; Lk. 6:33; Lk. 6:34; Lk. 17:9)

Grace (favor) (5485) ([charis](#) from from **chairō** = to rejoice. English = charity. Beggars need "charity" even as sinners need *grace*, for we are all spiritual paupers outside of Christ, but "*God gives where he finds empty hands*"-Augustine [cp Mt 5:3-note]) is a word which defies a simple definition but at its core conveys the sense of favor while the specific nuances of **charis** depend on the [context](#) in which it is used. Someone has written that the word **grace** is probably the greatest word in the Scriptures, even greater even than "love," because **grace** is love in action, and therefore includes it. It is hardly too much to say that God has in no word uttered Himself and all that was in His heart more distinctly than in this word grace (charis)!

THOUGHT - Adrian Rogers says the best definition of grace that he has ever heard is that God's grace is "both the **desire** and the **ability** to do the will of God." It is striking that almost the same words occur in Php 2:13NLT-note "**For** ([term of explanation](#) - explains how it is possible to Work out our salvation - Php 2:12-note) God is working in you, giving you the **DESIRE** and the **POWER** to do what pleases Him." When you have a godly desire, that desire is from God, because no good thing can come out of our old vile heart! And only God the Spirit in us can give the supernatural power necessary to accomplish that godly desire! So we could paraphrase Php 2:13, in simple words, by saying that God's Spirit is continually giving us the grace (desire and power) to do what pleases Him! This practical definition of grace ought to free many of us who are "trying to clean ourselves up!" **It can't be done!** We need His grace to give us the desire to "clean up" and the power to "clean up!" Are you resisting His grace? You can either receive it or resist it! The first way leaves us filled, while the second way leaves us empty, dry, and spiritually barren. O beloved, tell God you desperately need and want Him to pour out His grace on the situation you find yourself entwined. Do you have a root of bitterness? Then confess it (even that act is a reflection of His grace) and cry out for His grace to give you the desire and the ability to eradicate that deadly root and its caustic fruit. And keep crying out until He removes the root, for it is in His will that no child of His should ever have a root of bitterness! And when He removes it, celebrate with a praise and worship service! (See also [What is free grace? What is Free Grace Theology?](#))

In Acts 4:33 Luke writes that "with **great power** the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant **grace** was upon them all." And so in this verse we see an association between power and grace. In 2 Cor 12:9 Paul writes that after asking Jesus to remove the "thorn" in his flesh, Jesus answered "My **grace** is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." So again we see the grace from Jesus is associated with power (dunamis). We see this same association in 2 Ti 2:1 Paul exhorting young Timothy "be strong (be empowered - endunamoo in present imperative) in the **grace** that is in Christ Jesus." Christ is the source of grace and that grace gives power.

Larkin - Unlike "those of the circumcision" in Acts 11:2, but very much like the hosts of heaven (Lk 15:7, 10), Barnabas rejoices at seeing the evidence of the grace of God

Ray Stedman on seeing invisible grace - Now, how do you see grace? It is an invisible quality. Grace, of course, means the graciousness, the goodness of God poured out into a life. How do you see that? It is interesting that in the original language this word is charis, from which we get the English word, charisma. It is the same word that the Apostle Paul employs in Ephesians 4 where he speaks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift,"

(Ephesians 4:7 RSV). The grace referred to is a gift of the Spirit, one of the gifts mentioned in Romans 12 and First Corinthians 12: the gift of love, the gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith, discernment, prophecy, teaching, etc. In Ephesians 3 Paul speaks concerning himself, "To me this grace was given..." (Ephesians 3:8a RSV). What grace? "...to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ..." (Ephesians 3:8b RSV). He had the gift of preaching. **When Barnabas saw the gifts of the Holy Spirit in evidence he knew these were real Christians.** In Hebrews 2 we are told that the gospel "was first declared by the Lord, then was preached by those who knew him, and it was confirmed by signs and wonders and by the distribution of the gifts of the Holy Spirit..." (Hebrews 2:3b-4RSV). **So the possession of one or more of these gifts is the sign that somebody is a real Christian.** That is what Barnabas saw when he came; therefore he was glad. He saw also that they were a church. They shared together the common life of Jesus Christ. Every one of them had in him the life of Jesus. That is what makes a body -- the sharing of life by each individual cell. We could all be gathered here as an ordinary assembly of people -- perhaps as members of the Democratic Party, or the Republican, or whatever -- but we would not be a body. **But because we all share the life of Jesus we are a body.** (That is, presumably we all do. There may be some here who do not; if so, they are not a part of this body, the body of Christ.) It is the life of Jesus that makes us a body. **When Barnabas found all these Christians sharing the same life he knew that here was a real church. They were sharing the gifts of the Spirit and operating as a church. That is what makes a church.** It is not the fact that people gather together on Sunday that makes them a church. It is not that they meet and celebrate the Lord's table, or are baptized. That is not what makes them a church. It is the fact that they have the same life and that they manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit. ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

JOY IN THE LORD

He rejoiced - Why did he rejoice? Because he had witnessed the grace of God! Barnabas is a good model for us to emulate. Do we rejoice when we see the supernatural effects that can only be explained by the effective working of the grace of God and the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29)? Or do we envy these workings of grace in fellow believers, spurred on by fleshly jealousy?

Rejoiced (5463)(**chairo**) means to be "cheer" full, calmly happy or well-off. Notice that **'grace'** (charis) is derived from **"rejoice"** (chairo) and so it should not surprise us as Page says that "Grace brings gladness." **Chairo** implies and imparts joy. **Chairo** is used in a whole range of situations in which the emotion of joy is evoked. To be in a state of happiness and well being (often independent of what is happening when the Source is the Spirit!). **Chairo** means to enjoy a state of gladness, to be delighted.

Luke's uses of **chairo** -

Lk. 1:14; Lk. 1:28; Lk. 6:23; Lk. 10:20; Lk. 13:17; Lk. 15:5; Lk. 15:32; Lk. 19:6; Lk. 19:37; Lk. 22:5; Lk. 23:8;
Acts 5:41; Acts 8:39; Acts 11:23; Acts 13:48; Acts 15:23; Acts 15:31; Acts 23:26

F F Bruce applies Barnabas' experience to our lives today asking - Do we, with Barnabas, rejoice "at the spectacle of God's free favor, unlimited by racial or religious frontiers, embraced and enjoyed by all without distinction"?

Began to encourage them - **Barnabas** encouraged again and again (imperfect tense), over and over living up to his nick name "Son of Encouragement!" Would it be true of all brothers and sisters in Christ that we would be called by others sons or daughters of encouragement! Amen!

Encourage (exhort, implore) (3870)(**parakaleo** from **para** = side of, alongside, beside + **kaleo** = call) means literally to call one alongside, to call someone to oneself, to call for, to summon. **Parakaleo** can include the idea of giving help or aid but the primary sense in the NT is to urge someone to take some action, especially some ethical course of action. Sometimes the word means convey the idea of comfort, sometimes of exhortation but always at the root there is the idea of enabling a person to meet some difficult situation with confidence and with gallantry. See the following discussion for elaboration on the nuances of this great Greek verb. One writer has said that Paul's use of parakaleo in verses like Eph 4:1, Ro 12:1, 1 Th 4:1 is "one of the tenderest expressions in all the Bible."

Swindoll observes that **encouragement** is "what new Christians need—lots of encouragement. He (BARNABAS) didn't draw out a list of dos and don'ts or mark up a local map with places to avoid around Antioch. He mainly **"encouraged."** The verb is **parakaleo**, a multifaceted word that carries the idea of standing alongside someone in order to provide counsel, courage, comfort, hope, and positive perspective. **Like an athletic coach, an encourager challenges without condemning, instructs without lecturing, inspires without condescending, and helps another toward excellence.** Barnabas, like a coach encouraging and challenging an athlete to reach a particular goal, urged the new believers in Antioch to grow in grace while remaining true to their Savior.

Kent Hughes illustrates the root idea of **parakaleo** "to come alongside and encourage" with the following example - I see this exemplified every time my church has a roller skating party, and the parents put their little ones on skates for the first time. Mom and Dad skate with their child, holding on to his or her hands, sometimes with the child's feet on the ground and sometimes in the air. But all the time the parents are alongside **encouraging**....[exhortation] is a wonderful gift, and we are to place it at Christ's feet and

be willing to be worn out in its use.

Our English word "**encourage**" means literally "with heart." To encourage in a sense is to give them new heart. Shallow sympathy makes people feel worse --- true spiritual encouragement makes them feel better. It brings out the best in people.

ENCOURAGING YOUNG SAINTS TO FOCUS ON CHRIST

Alexander Maclaren once said that "Many of us are so busy thinking about Christianity that we have lost our hold of Christ."

Barnabas called for purposeful perseverance.

Wiersbe notes that Barnabas "emphasized dedication of the heart as he taught the people the Word of God. The phrase "cleave [cling] to the Lord" does not suggest that they were to "keep themselves saved." The same grace that saves us can also keep us (1 Cor. 15:10; Heb. 13:9). The phrase reminds us of Joshua's admonition to Israel in Joshua 22:5. To "cleave to the Lord" includes loving the Lord, walking in His ways, obeying His Word, and serving Him wholeheartedly. It means that we belong to Him alone and that we cultivate our devotion to Him. "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24).

Resolute (consecrated)(4286) (**prothesis** from **protithemai** = set before oneself to be looked at or exposed to view and then to purpose or plan) is literally placing before or setting before and so means the setting forth of a thing or placing of it in view, a putting forward openly -- a presentation, setting forth, plan, design, purpose, resolve, will.

Robertson on why Barnabas called exhorted them in this manner - "The glow of the first enthusiasm might pass as often happens after a revival. Barnabas had a special gift (4:36) for work like this....**Persistence** (prosmeno) was needed in such a pagan city."

With resolute heart to remain. (NET = "to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts;" ESV = "to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose;" HCSB = "to remain true to the Lord with a firm resolve of the heart") - In English **resolute** is defined as single-minded, unyielding, firm in purpose or belief; characterized by firmness and determination, determined, resolved.

Pastor Jack Arnold applies the principle in this passage - Notice that Barnabas did not tell these new Christians in the early stages of organization to form committees, plan a budget, hire a staff, program a social life in the church or bring in special speakers. No, he encouraged them to **remain true to Jesus Christ** in holiness and doctrine. It is not wrong to have committees, or a budget, or a staff, but we must always put our emphasis upon **remaining true to Christ**. If we cleave to Christ, individually and as a church, we shall grow in power and fruitfulness. Furthermore, all church organization, budget planning and hiring of staff should have as the final Goal activities that will aid Christians to **remain true to the Lord. It is possible for lives to become barren and dry in the midst of activity if there is not real heart devotion to Christ.** (ED: AND "ACTIVITY" WITHOUT THE SPIRIT'S POWER IS DECEIVING! LOOK OUT!) Notice, also, that Barnabas did not tell these new Christians to seek a **second blessing** ([Is there a second blessing subsequent to salvation?](#)) or search for the experience of tongues ([What is the gift of speaking in tongues?](#)), or tarry for a second work of grace. No, he told them to be true to the Lord. When they were saved, they received all they were ever going to get from the Lord. Salvation had been given to them and there was nothing more they were going to receive after salvation. However, they were to develop what they had by faith which was a progressive experience as one remained true to the Lord. Therefore, we can conclude that Christians do not need anything new. Christians are to remain faithful to what they have and not to go after something else. No Christian will ever be able to use up what resources he already has. His resources will never run dry. What is the key? The key is to remain true to the Lord.

ILLUSTRATION - It was the middle of winter and the electricity had been knocked out by an ice storm. As we listened to our battery-powered radio the announcer said, "*The following churches will be closed due to lack of power.*" What a provocative statement! What would the announcer say about many American churches today? They probably wouldn't be closed for lack of *activity*, but lack of *power* is another matter!

A.W. Tozer some 50 years ago made a similar pronouncement "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the NT church (in Acts), 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference." (See A Spirit Filled Church)

MacArthur to **remain true to the Lord** "reflects the concern that every pastor feels for new converts, that they continue in the faith. In Acts 13:43, Paul and Barnabas exhorted new believers to "**continue in the grace of God.**" In Acts 14:22, they exhorted the Christians of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to "**continue in the faith.**" The only way to remain true to the Lord is to continue in His Word, where He reveals Himself to the believer. The apostle John wrote, "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:24). "If you abide in My word," Jesus said, "then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). It is through the Word that the Holy Spirit, the resident truth

Teacher (1 John 2:27), instructs believers.

Wiersbe - Barnabas emphasized dedication of the heart as he taught the people the Word of God. The phrase “cleave [cling] to the Lord” (Acts 11:23KJV) does not suggest that they were to “keep themselves saved.” The same grace that saves us can also keep us (1 Cor 15:10; Heb 13:9). The phrase reminds us of Joshua’s admonition to Israel in Joshua 22:5KJV. To “cleave to the Lord” includes loving the Lord, walking in His ways, obeying His Word, and serving Him wholeheartedly. It means that we belong to Him alone and that we cultivate our devotion to Him. “No man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24).

Heart (2588) (kardia) is in essence the "control center" of one's being, influencing our thoughts, words and actions. Because of the importance of the heart in remaining resolute, we do well to heed Solomon's exhortation to "Watch over your **heart** with all diligence, for from **it** flow the springs of life." (Pr 4:23+) **Kardia** gives us medical terms such as **cardiac**, **cardiovascular**, etc. Just as the integrity of our physical heart is vital to our physical life, in a similar and even more important way the integrity of our spiritual **heart** is vital to our spiritual life, for our spiritual life impacts not just our divine employment in time, our enjoyment of time but our employment (cf Lk 19:17) and enjoyment (cf Mt 5:12) throughout eternity.

To remain true to the Lord - Remain is present tense calling for continual loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Such steadfast continuance is tantamount to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which ultimately is only possible in one indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus and Whose role it is to glorify Jesus. The use of the **middle voice** for **remain** indicates these new believers were to initiate this endeavor and participate in the effects of it. It would thus appear that while [perseverance of the saints](#) is a mark of genuine believers, such perseverance is not a passive acquiescence but a personal involvement is seeking to remain true to Jesus.

Note the phrase **to the Lord** - Do you think Barnabas had any equivocation about encouraging these new believers to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ which many do even in evangelical circles? (See [lordship salvation](#))

Remain (4357) (prosmeno from **pros** = + **meno** = abide, remain) means to stay on, remain, "to stay on at a place beyond some point of time" (BDAG) (Acts 18:18, 1 Ti 1:3), to stay with someone, "to be steadfast in association" (BDAG) (Mt 15:32, Mk 8:2), figuratively to remain loyal to (Acts 11:23), to continue in, persevere in, keep on doing (1 Ti 5:5).

Prosmeno - 7x in 7v - continue(1), continues(1), remain(2), remained(3). Not used in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Matt. 15:32; Mk. 8:2; Acts 11:23; Acts 13:43; Acts 18:18; 1 Tim. 1:3; 1 Tim. 5:5

Related Resources:

- [Perseverance of the Saints - is it biblical?](#)
- [How can I keep the faith?](#)
- [What is Calvinism and is it biblical? What are the five points of Calvinism?](#)

Ray Stedman - He gave them a message designed for a new church. It had just two points, but both are extremely important. He exhorted them first to remain faithful to the Lord. He did not say, "Look, you have started out in the Christian life, but there is so much more that you haven't yet received. You need a second blessing. There is a new crisis you haven't come to yet, a new provision from God still ahead that you haven't yet received. I want you to strive on now and seek that." He did not say anything like that. You hear that all too often today. But Barnabas was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, and he would not say a thing like that. What he said was, "Look, you have received the Lord. You have received therefore all that he is ever going to give you once you have received him. You have all there is; there is nothing more for him to give you. It is true you have not laid hold of it all yet. You need, through the years, to develop what you have. But there is nothing to be added. It is all there when you have received Jesus Christ." As Peter puts it, "His divine power has granted us [has granted us] all that pertains to life and godliness..." (2 Peter 1:3a RSV). You do not need anything else. So Barnabas says, "Remain faithful to what you have. Don't go after anything else. You don't need anything new. You have received the Holy Spirit, all that God will give you. You will never be able to use up what you already have, you will never run dry, never touch bottom, as you develop the resources in Christ already yours. Remain faithful to the Lord."

But, second, do it intelligently and with purpose. "Remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose." The Greek here means, "according to a set plan." They were not simply to come to church and enjoy the fellowship, and the feelings of glory and excitement that knowing the Lord gave them. They were to remember that they needed to learn more of him. They had to seek the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ intelligently, through the Word of God. That is his provision. Already they had the Old Testament Scriptures which were full of Christ. And the New Testament Scriptures were gradually beginning to come into being. They were to gather and learn to understand what God was doing in Jesus Christ. They were to seek, and read, and study, because the Scriptures reveal Christ. That is what they needed to do. They did not need more beyond him; they needed to know more of him. So Barnabas exhorted them to work intelligently at learning about Jesus. That means reading the Scriptures. It means prayer, seeking his face, learning to pray all through the day in every situation. New Christians need to learn this more than anything else. That is why

Barnabas so wisely instructed them along this line.

You see, many Christians make a fatal mistake at this point. They come to Christ and enjoy the fellowship and excitement of being a Christian. At first they have their face fixed on Jesus, and it is wonderful. They sense immediately the joy that fills their heart as they come to know this glorious living Lord. But gradually their focus shifts. Instead of seeing Jesus they begin to look at themselves. They start examining how they are enjoying this relationship and how much it is doing for them. They start feeling of their feelings. Did you ever try to grope around inside and feel of your feelings? And, of course, they are like Peter, walking on the water, who, whenever he took his eyes off Jesus and put them on the circumstances, began to go down. This is the story of many, many young Christians. They fail to concentrate on the Lord, to find joy in him and to glory in his presence. They get all occupied with what the Lord does for them. They lose the sense of his presence and fail to seek his face. That is why they sink and oftentimes disappear for awhile from Christian fellowship. That is what Barnabas is trying to help them to avoid. He urges them to remain faithful to the Lord with a steadfast purpose. ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

Giving Others A Push — by Anne Cetas

Read: Acts 11:19-26

[He] encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. —Acts 11:23

When Jean was a teenager, she often walked through a park where she saw mothers sitting on benches and talking. Their toddlers sat on the swings, wanting someone to push them. “I gave them a push,” says Jean. “And you know what happens when you push a kid on a swing? Pretty soon he’s pumping, doing it himself. That’s what my role in life is—I’m there to give others a push.”

Encouraging others along in life—that’s a worthy purpose. Joses, a godly man mentioned in the book of Acts, had that gift as well. In the days of the early church, he sold some land and gave the money to the church to use for the less fortunate (4:36-37). He also traveled with Paul on missionary journeys and preached the gospel (11:22-26; 13:1-4).

You may know Joses as “Barnabas,” which is the name the apostles gave to the “Son of Encouragement.” When the Jerusalem church heard that people in Antioch were coming to know Jesus as Savior, they sent Barnabas because “he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (11:24). He “encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” (v.23).

We too can give others a “push” of encouragement in their walk with the Lord. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Lord, I would be to others
A cheering ray of light,
Inspiring them with courage
To climb some new-found height!
—Bosch

A little spark of encouragement can ignite great endeavors.

Acts 11:24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

KJV Acts 11:24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

- **He was a good man** Acts 24:16; 2 Samuel 18:27; Ps 37:23; 112:5; Proverbs 12:2; 13:22; 14:14; Matthew 12:35; Matthew 19:17; Luke 23:50; John 7:12; Romans 5:7
- **full of the Holy Spirit and of faith** Acts 6:3,5,8; Romans 15:15
- **considerable numbers were brought to the Lord** Acts 11:21; 5:14; 9:31

AN EXAMPLE TO BE IMITATED

The writer of Hebrews encourages his readers (who were being tempted to go back under the law and Jewish traditions) in two passages to be imitators of godly examples...

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that (term of purpose/result) you will not be sluggish, but **imitators** ([mimetes](#)) of those who through **faith** (LIKE BARNABAS) and patience ([makrothumia](#)) inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:11-12+).

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God (THE GOSPEL) to you; and considering the result of their (MEN LIKE BARNABAS') conduct, **imitate** (present imperative = command to let this be your lifestyle!) **their faith**. (LIKE THE FAITH OF BARNABAS) (Hebrews 13:7+)

Meditate on the life of this godly man Barnabas, asking God's Spirit to enable you to be an imitator of his life, which was in turn an imitation of the life of Jesus Christ while He was on earth. Here are all the passages that mention **Barnabas** - set aside some time to ponder them in context and purposefully, intentionally interrogating the text.

Acts 4:36; Acts 9:27; Acts 11:22; Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1; Acts 13:2; Acts 13:7; Acts 13:42; Acts 13:43; Acts 13:46; Acts 13:50; Acts 14:12; Acts 14:14; Acts 14:20; Acts 15:2; Acts 15:12; Acts 15:22; Acts 15:25; Acts 15:35; Acts 15:36; Acts 15:37; Acts 15:39; 1 Co. 9:6; Gal. 2:1; Gal. 2:9; Gal. 2:13

THOUGHT - Other than reading the Bible itself, one of the most rewarding, fruitful things you can read is Christian biographies, which give you wonderful examples of how other saints lived out a Biblical life, as you see the highs and lows in their lives. Other than [memorizing Scripture](#), this has been one of the most rewarding practices I have ever undertaken in the past 35 years. And of course the best place to begin is with the biographies of men and women in the Bible. So if you have never read a Christian biography, I challenge you to take some time away from Facebook, etc, instead substituting Barnabas' (Biblical) "Facebook" page which will challenge you, stimulate you and enable you to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to Whom be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pe 3:18). The Spirit of Truth will richly reward your living and holy sacrifice!

Pastor Steven Cole adds that "Other than from reading and studying the Bible, I have found more help in my Christian walk through reading the biographies of great Christians than from any other source. If you have never read the stories of John Calvin, Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, Hudson Taylor, George Muller, and the many other saints who have gone before us, you are impoverished as a Christian!"

Another resource that I highly recommend is **Pastor John Piper's discussions of the biographies** of faithful men used by God in ages past. At the very least you can download his Mp3's and listen to them while you drive (instead of listening to the godless, irritating, anxiety producing secular news!). Dr Piper has done an incredible service to the body of Christ in making these biographies available at no charge. You will be challenged mightily by the examples of the lives of these godly, "sold out" saints. **Here is the link - [Biographies](#).**

For (because) (**hoti**) - A term of explanation. What is Luke explaining? How was Barnabas interacting with the new Gentile believers? As Robertson says **for** or because "is the explanation of the conduct of Barnabas. The facts were opposed to the natural prejudices of a Jew like Barnabas, but he rose above such racial narrowness."

He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith - Note the relationship - why was he as "good man?" Because he was "**full of the Holy Spirit and of faith**" a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). There is really no other way to truly be a "**good man**" in the sight of God because as Paul says men left to their own are not good (cf Ro 3:10, Mt 19:17, Mk 10:18). To be a **good man** one needs a "good (God)" Source (cf Pr 12:2).

Barnabas as a Spirit filled man clearly had a bold witness for Christ and out of his life came the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Ray Stedman on **full of the Spirit** - That, of course, is the supreme qualification. In other words, he was a man to whom were imparted continually the wisdom, understanding, and love of God. Being full of the Holy Spirit meant that the fruit of the Spirit was evident in his life (cf Gal 5:22-23). He was filled with love, joy, longsuffering, patience, and gentleness. He lived this way not by virtue of his own easy-going character but **because he was drawing upon the power of an indwelling Holy Spirit** (ED: MAY HIS TRIBE INCREASE IN YOUR CHURCH WORLDWIDE LORD GOD. AMEN) ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

The ability of Barnabas to recognize grace, rejoice over grace and encourage continuance in grace reminds us of Jesus' description of the Source that surely flowed like refreshing water from Barnabas' innermost being (another good example for all of us to emulate). John records...

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him

come to Me and drink. 38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, **'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'**" 39 But this He spoke of the **Spirit**, (WHO FILLED AND "OVERFLOWED FROM BARNABAS) Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39+)

THOUGHT - Is my presence among other believers like "rivers of living water?" Or is my presence more like a murky swamp?

Good (18)(**agathos**) means intrinsically good, inherently good in quality but with the idea of good which is also profitable, **benevolent**, useful, benefiting others. **Agathos** is one whose goodness and works of goodness are transferred to others. Good and doing good is the idea.

Full (abounding) (4134)(**pleres** from **pleos** = full, **pletho** = to fill) means filled up as opposed to empty (hollow vessel - Mt 14:20, 15:37, Mk 6:43). Of a surface, covering every part (leprosy in Lk 5:12).

Pleres is used figuratively, as it is here in Acts 11:24, to describe one who is full of, filled with, abounding in, thoroughly endowed with the Holy Spirit. **Barnabas** was giving us a great example to imitate, for **Barnabas** was in turn imitating **Jesus' example** (Read 1 Pe 2:21+, 1 Cor 11:1+, 1 Jn 2:6+) of how we are to **effectively carry out our ministry** (YOU MAY WANT TO PONDER THIS TRUTH A MOMENT BECAUSE IT IS SO CRITICAL TO EFFECTIVE, FRUITFUL MINISTRY! DON'T MISS THIS VITAL TRUTH!). And so we see Luke's description of our **Example** to follow, even using the same adjective to describe Jesus' "*spiritual condition*" at the very beginning of His 3+ year ministry -- "Jesus, **full of (pleres) the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led around by (SO EVEN HERE WE SEE THE IDEA THAT FILLING WITH THE SPIRIT SPEAKS OF CONTROL BY THE SPIRIT EVEN FOR THE SON OF GOD! HOW MUCH MORE DO I NEED THIS!) the Spirit in the wilderness." (Lk 4:1+, cf teaching "in the power of the Spirit" = Lk 4:14,15+ and anointed for preaching the Gospel = Lk 4:18+, See summary of Jesus' 3 year ministry = Acts 10:37, 38+. **JESUS IS OUR EXAMPLE FOR POWERFUL, FRUITFUL MINISTRY!**). In Acts 9:36+ Luke described Dorcas as "**abounding (pleres)** with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did."

Pleres is used repeatedly of **Stephen** who like Barnabas is a godly example for all disciples to imitate ([see note](#))...

Acts 6:3+ "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, **full of (pleres)** the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

Acts 6:5+ The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man **full of (pleres)** of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

Comment - Note Luke uses virtually an identical description of Barnabas!

Acts 6:8+ And Stephen, **full of (pleres)** grace and power (WHY? BECAUSE HE WAS FULL OF THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES SUPERNATURAL POWER AND GRACE - HE IS CALLED THE "SPIRIT OF GRACE" in Heb 10:29), was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

Acts 7:55+ But being **full of (pleres)** the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

In short, the early church was full of men who were full of the Spirit and faith. Oh, to see such a revival of Spirit filled faithful, fruitful disciples in America, a revival beginning in your church, in my church and spreading like fire from church by church, as men and women become imitators of the first church - men and women aflame for the Gospel of God and the glory of God. Let it happen again, Lord God Almighty, for Thy Name's sake. Amen.

Jack Arnold on Barnabas **full of faith** - Barnabas was also a man of "faith" in that he had an unwavering confidence in God to release His power in any situation. He merely acted upon what God said. He did not wait for feelings, but he believed God's Word and promises. This attitude, of course, was catching, and Barnabas had a real impact upon everyone with whom he came into contact. One of the main reasons this local church at Antioch prospered was that its leadership was dedicated to Christ.

Ray Stedman on **full of faith** - That means he acted upon what God said (**ED: IN OTHER WORDS FAITH OBEYS - SEE the [obedience of faith](#)**). He did not wait for his feelings. He did not depend upon whether or not he woke up in a blue mood. He did not even need a cup of coffee to get him started in the morning. A man of faith simply believes God and expects him to act. He doesn't even think about how he feels himself. A very false idea of faith is popular today. Many people feel that they are filled with faith only when they have a tremendous sense of expectation or excitement within them. If they do not have that feeling then they say, "Well, I'm sorry, I don't have any faith." But that is a dead giveaway that they do not understand what faith is. **Faith is not a feeling**. Faith has nothing to do with your feelings. Faith is simply a recognition that God has promised something, and, since he is God, to expect Him to do it, and therefore to act on that basis. A man of faith does. And that is the kind of man who gets something

done. When Barnabas came to Antioch, a man of faith, he came expecting to be led of God, expecting his eyes to be opened to what God wanted him to see, expecting God to give him the wisdom to handle whatever situation developed. ([Acts 11:19-30](#) [Expanding Horizons](#))

Warren Wiersbe notes that Barnabas "appears to be the kind of Christian all of us would do well to emulate. He was a righteous man who obeyed the Word in daily life so that his character was above reproach. He was filled with the Spirit, which explains the effectiveness of his ministry. That he was a man of faith is evident from the way he encouraged the church and then encouraged Saul."

Faith (4102)(**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God (especially Jesus) and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it.

Pistis is used in Acts 6:5 (see above) to describe Stephen and in Acts 6:7+ to describe "a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the **faith**." In the present context, clearly Barnabas had already exhibited saving faith, so the fact that he is described as **full of...faith** speaks of the practical daily faith he exercised in order to live the Christian life.

By **faith** we are **justified** (one time event Barnabas had experienced in the past). Now that we are justified by faith, it is also by faith that we are **progressively sanctified**. In our time on earth, living a supernatural life can never be divorced from dependence on faith, even as Paul taught the Corinthians declaring that "**we walk by faith not sight**." (2 Cor 5:7) Too many believers have forgotten that the way we entered salvation (past tense salvation, justification), BY FAITH, is the same way we continue in salvation (present tense salvation, progressive sanctification). But sadly, instead of continuing to daily rely on faith, many believers default back into a works-based mentality, the pattern we had before we were justified. And so Paul was calling the saints at Colossians not to fall into this trap but to walk by faith writing "**Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk** (present imperative) **in Him**." (Col 2:6+). Notice that in this passage Paul commands a lifestyle of godly conduct, but one that is not based on our our natural "abilities," but based on the truth that we are "**in Him**" in Christ, and, Christ, by His indwelling Spirit now enables us to habitually live out the God pleasing Christian life. There is no "Plan B" beloved.

This message is difficult for saints to accept by faith, which is why Paul had to ask rhetorically in Galatians 3:3- "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit (HOW DID THEY BEGIN? HOW WERE THEY INITIALLY JUSTIFIED? BY FAITH!), are you now being perfected (GROWING TOWARD THE GOAL OF CHRIST-LIKENESS, PROGRESSIVELY BEING SANCTIFIED) by the flesh?" "Of course not!" is the expected reply. Just as it was the Spirit Who swept us into the Kingdom of God by grace through faith (Eph 2:8,9), it is the same Spirit by Whom we are to be continually filled (Eph 5:18+) and to continue to walk by grace through faith (Gal 5:16+), where **faith** is the belief that what God has taught us in these passages is true and that in believing them and obeying them we too can truly live a life like Barnabas -- **full of the Spirit and of faith!**

And let me encourage you dear brother or sister in Christ. If your faith is **flagging** and at low ebb, you can always do what the apostles did when they asked the Lord "**Increase** (see **prostithemi** below) **our faith!**" (Luke 17:5+, cf Mk 9:24)

Related Resource:

- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord - These new additions to the body of Christ in Antioch were in addition to the "**large number who believed and turned to the Lord**" in Acts 11:21. Note carefully the little conjunction "**and**" (kai in Greek) which links the man to the manifestation. In other words, these additional **numbers** were associated with the arrival of a man **full of the Holy Spirit and of faith**. This is clearly more than "coincidence" and speaks of the catalyzing effect that a good and godly man can have on a congregation! Father in Heaven, please raise up Barnabas-like men in Your churches all across America, before the night comes when no man can work. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Related Resource:

- [Chart of God's Sovereignty in Salvation](#) in the Book of Acts

Considerable (Greek adjective **hikanos**) means sufficient, enough, adequate and in this context pertains to being a large number.

Jack Arnold on **were brought** - The words "**brought to the Lord**" can be translated "**added to the Lord**." People were being added to Christ and not just added to a church roll. The way to build a local church is to lead men to Christ and the local church roll will take care of itself.

Were brought (4369)(**prostithemi** from from **prós** = to or besides + **tithēmi** = to put) means to add to that which is already present

or exists (in this case the believers already present in Antioch). **Prostithemi** is in the passive voice emphasizing that it was the Holy Spirit Who accomplished this "divine addition." (SEE Jn 3:5-8, Jn 16:8-11, 1 Cor 12:13).

Were brought is better translated **were added** by the ESV and CSB. Note also the passive voice which in this context is the "divine passive" picturing this as "*supernatural addition*," something only the Spirit of God could bring to pass. Note also they were added **to the Lord**, before they were "added" to the church rolls. How wonderful it would be if this were the pattern of church growth today, where all professors of Christ were indeed true possessors of Christ and were therefore first added to Him, brought into covenant with Him by grace through faith, and in unbreakable union and oneness with Him. Indeed, that was the church at Antioch! Little wonder that God used this church to penetrate the pagan world with the Gospel!

As **Robertson** says "These people were **added** to the Lord Jesus before they were added to the church. If that were always true, what a difference it would make in our churches."

Luke used **prostithemi** in similar descriptions previously...

(Acts 2:41+) So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day **there were added** about three thousand souls.

(Acts 2:47+) praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord was adding** to their number day by day those who were being saved.

(Acts 5:14+) And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, **were constantly added** to their number,

Related Resources on life of Barnabas - But before going to these consider performing your own Spirit led study of his life and then checking your observations with those of other men...

- **Whyte's Bible Characters** [Barnabas](#)
- [What can we learn from the life of Barnabas?](#)
- American Tract Society [Barnabas](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Barnabas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Barnabas](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Barnabas](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Barnabas](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Barnabas](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Barnabas](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Barnabas](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Barnabas](#)

Known For Compassion

Read: Acts 11:19-26

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. —Acts 11:24

During Major Gen. Mark Graham's 2 years as commander of Fort Carson, Colorado, he became known and loved for the way he treated others. One US Army colleague said: "I have never come across another general officer who was so compassionate and so concerned about the well-being of soldiers and their families." After losing one son to suicide and another who was killed in action, Mark and his wife, Carol, dedicated themselves to helping soldiers and their families cope with service-related stress, depression, and loss.

In the book of Acts, a follower of Christ was well known for his care and concern toward others. His name was Joseph, but in the early church, the apostles called him Barnabas—"son of encouragement." It was Barnabas who vouched for the newly converted Saul when others doubted the sincerity of his faith (Acts 9:26-27). Later, Barnabas brought Saul from Tarsus to teach the believers in Antioch (11:25-26). And it was Barnabas who wanted to give John Mark a second chance after his failure on a previous missionary

journey (15:36-38).

Compassion is an inner feeling resulting in outward action. It should be our daily uniform of service (Col. 3:12). By God's grace, may we be known for it.

Lord, help us be compassionate
To people in their grief;
Then tell them of the love of Christ,
Who'll bring their souls relief. —Sper

True compassion is love in action.

By David C. McCasland | ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Acts 11:25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

KJV Acts 11:25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

- **he left for Tarsus** Acts 9:11,27,30; 21:39

SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT SEEKS SAUL

John MacArthur observes that "**Several years had passed** since Saul fled Jerusalem for his home in Tarsus (Acts 9:30+, bold added)." Again, this time lag pointed out by MacArthur makes it highly unlikely that the Gentile conversions in Antioch were the **immediate** result of the persecution in Acts 8:1-4+ for these Gentile conversions occurred some 7 years later (an approximation). Nevertheless, it is still clear that the Gentile conversions are related to the **persecution and scattering** of Jewish believers described in Acts 8, for otherwise the Gentiles would never have heard the Gospel. The table below shows the approximate dates of the events in Acts 10-11.

Let's review the last series of events surrounding Saul's conversion in Acts 9 - Notice that not only does Barnabas play a pivotal role in the life of Saul/Paul in Jerusalem in Acts 9 but again here in Acts 11 in Antioch, fully living up to his nick name as "**Son of Encouragement!**":

When he (SAUL) came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple (NOTE BELIEVERS WERE CALLED "DISCIPLES"). 27 But **Barnabas** took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews (NON-BELIEVING JEWS); but they were attempting to put him to death. 30 But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea (BY THE SEA, THIS WAS 300 MILES NORTH) and **sent him away to Tarsus** (ABOUT 36 AD - THEN WE HAVE A GAP OF ABOUT 7 YEARS IN SAUL'S LIFE UNTIL ACTS 11:19-30 ABOUT 43 AD). (Acts 9:26-30+)

EVENT IN ACTS	CHAPTER	AD
Conversion of Saul (Illustration)	Acts 9:1-9	36
First Gentile Converted	Acts 10:1-11:18	40
Founding of Church at Antioch	Acts 11:19-30	43
Paul receives his "thorn in the flesh"	2 Cor. 12:7	42-44

Comment - As noted at the [beginning of the notes](#) on Acts 11, these dates are at best approximations (Swindoll for example thinks Saul was in Tarsus as long as 10 years, but most other resources say more in the range of 5-7), and are given so you have some sense of the timing of these key events. You may be wondering why I placed Paul's "**thorn in the flesh**" in this table? Good question! Notice first that 2 Cor 12:7 clearly gives us the purpose of the "**thorn in the flesh**" - to keep Paul from exalting himself. In other words, the

"thorn" was allowed by God to keep Paul humble, to keep him continually in the optimal "position" so that grace might flow down ([Grace Flows Down](#)) into and through his life! (Read James 4:6+, 1 Peter 5:5+, cf 1 Cor 15:9,10+) And after considerable study on the "secret" of Paul's ministry, one can piece together the timelines (as much as that is possible 2000 years later), which places the event of the "thorn" in Paul's life near the **beginning** of his ministry. I would propose that it was **'the thorn in the flesh'** that was the "tool" the Almighty God used to make Paul "mighty" in the Word of God. It was not Paul, but Jesus in Paul by His indwelling Spirit, even as He attested in Galatians 2:20+. In conclusion from the very inception of his powerful ministry, Paul's "[mantra](#)" (so to speak) would have been the powerful, "power filled" declaration of Jesus to him and his receptive response...

And He has said to me, **"My grace is sufficient for you, for power ([dunamis](#) = supernatural power) is perfected in weakness."** Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the **power ([dunamis](#)) of Christ** may dwell (episkenoō = literally reside in a tent and thus depicting [dunamis](#) taking up its abode or residence) in me (VIA THE HOLY SPIRIT OF POWER, cf beginning of Jesus' ministry = Lk 4:14+). 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor 12:9,10- see comments regarding possible association with the stoning of Saul in Acts 14:19+)

And - The NAS has "and" but it is better translated "Then" (Acts 11:25ESV, Acts 11:25NET, et al).

He left for Tarsus to look for Saul (cf Acts 21:39+) - [See Map](#) (find Cilicia in SE corner of modern Turkey and Tarsus is just below) - Remember that Barnabas was a **Spirit filled man**, so there is no doubt that he was in some way moved or urged by the Spirit to fetch Saul for the great work God was preparing in Antioch. Once again we see God's sovereign hand in orchestrating providential circumstances and events -- recall how it was Barnabas who had introduced Saul to the **Church at Jerusalem** and now he would also be the one to introduce him to the **Church at Antioch**.

THOUGHT - Oh, that God would grant for us to be in the center of His will for our lives, like Barnabas and Saul, and that He would energize us so that our daily goal and desire would be to be fully filled with and guided by His Spirit (cf Gal 5:18, Gal 5:25ESV), that we might be ready, willing and able to discern His providential hand in the variegated circumstances in our lives for the expansion of His Gospel and the glory of His Son. Amen.

Tarsus - 5x/5v - Acts 9:11; Acts 9:30; Acts 11:25; Acts 21:39; Acts 22:3

Fausset's Bible Dictionary article on **Tarsus** -

Paul's birthplace and early residence. Capital of [Cilicia](#), in a plain on the river Cydnus ([pix](#)) at the foot of the passes northward over Mount Taurus into [Cappadocia](#) and [Lycaonia](#). Through these passes a road led to [Lystra](#) and [Iconium](#) (Acts 14:1-18, Lystra being the site of Saul's stoning - Acts 14:19+), another road by the [Amanian](#) and [Syrian gates](#) eastward to Antioch. Founded by [Sennacherub](#) of Assyria; the Greeks too took part in its colonization (Strabo xiv. 673), [Xenophon](#) mentions it (Tarsos in the Ariabasis). [Julius Caesar](#) rewarded Tarsus for fidelity, and [Augustus](#) made it a **free city**, i.e. governed by its own laws and magistrates and free from tribute, but without Roman citizenship, which Paul must have acquired in some other way. Ranked by [Strabo](#) above Athens and Alexandria for its school of literature and philosophy; Athenodorus, Augustus' tutor, the grammarians Artemidorus and Diodorus, and the tragedian Dionsides belonged to Tarsus.

Here Paul received providentially that training which adapted him for dealing with the polished Greeks on their own ground, quoting [Aratus](#) a Cilician poet, [Epimenides](#) a Cretan, and [Menander](#) the Athenian comedian. Paul resided in Tarsus at intervals after his conversion (Acts 9:30; Acts 11:25); after his first visit to Jerusalem and before his ministry with Barnabas at Antioch, and doubtless at the commencement of his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 15:41; Acts 18:23). (See also [in depth article on Tarsus in ISBE](#)).

Swindoll - How fitting that Tarsus should prepare Saul for ministry among the Gentiles. As one scholar noted, "Tarsus has been described as 'the heart of the Greco-Roman world' and 'a meeting place of East and West.' From such an environment, a man like Saul of Tarsus, at home with Greek and Roman culture and educated at the feet of Gamaliel, was singularly equipped to bring the gospel to the Jew first and also to the Greek....**Barnabas** was humble and wise: humble enough to recognize his limitations and wise enough to seek the best man to assist him in these responsibilities. Note that he didn't send to Jerusalem for Hebrew scholars; he journeyed 100 miles in the opposite direction for the man God had set aside for a ministry to Gentiles. Saul agreed to come. The two men harmoniously ministered together in Antioch with great success, not only evangelizing, but establishing the believers as a church (11:26). This is where Saul learned the basics of church formation, organization, and stabilization. They had as their goal an

independent community, led by indigenous elders, sustained without outside help, and perpetuated by its own evangelistic efforts. If a church is a living organism, Barnabas and Saul wanted the congregation in Antioch to breathe, eat, grow, and live on its own."

Jack Arnold - Barnabas was not a preacher who wanted to be a one man show. In fact, he probably saw the great danger of this, for often a flock tends to follow one man more than they follow Christ. Barnabas believed in a multiplicity of pastors ministering to one flock and this brought tremendous blessing. Notice also that Barnabas wanted the best possible man to be his assistant and he went outside the local church at Antioch to find this man. Probably there was not enough trained leadership yet in Antioch for anyone to become Barnabas's associate. The basic temptation of a preacher is to build a work around himself so as to attract men to himself and gain disciples for himself. This is always the danger of a one man ministry.

Ray Stedman speaks of what he thinks God was doing in Saul while he was in Taurus (other commentators have made similar analyses) - Saul learned one great secret. He has discovered that what he had regarded as his credentials for activity, all that he had previously reckoned upon as useful in his life -- his ancestry, his orthodoxy, his morality, his zeal -- all has been wiped out. He has learned that they are not what make you an effective worker for Jesus Christ, but that only your dependence upon Jesus at work in you makes the difference. As he tells us in Philippians 3, "he learned to count as manure all this other stuff, in order that he might gain Christ..." (Philippians 3:8RSV), and reckon upon his power at work. When he had learned that, the Lord sent Barnabas over to Tarsus to find him. Now God had his address all the time. Barnabas didn't; he had to look for him. But when he found him he brought him to Antioch, ready to begin his great worldwide ministry, that marvelous ministry of the Apostle Paul that shook the world and has changed the course of human history time after time. ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

HUNTING DOWN A HELPER!

Some men might not have sought out a helper because they would not be inclined to share the leadership, but to take the "glory" to themselves, always a dangerous goal to pursue because God His Name is "[Jealous](#)" (Jehovah Qannah - Ex 34:14). Barnabas was clearly not such a man but a man who desired God to receive all the glory.

A T Robertson suggests why Barnabas went for Saul and not back to Jerusalem for help - "Barnabas probably knew that Saul was a vessel of choice (Acts 9:15+) by Christ for the work among the Gentiles. He knew, of course, of Saul's work with the Hellenists in Jerusalem (Acts 9:29+) and echoes of his work in [Cilicia](#) and Syria had probably come to him. So to Tarsus he goes when he saw the need for help. "He had none of the littleness which cannot bear the presence of a possible rival" (Furneaux). Barnabas knew his own limitations and knew where the man of destiny for this crisis was, the man who already had the seal of God upon him. The hour and the man met when Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch. The door was open and the man was ready, far more ready than when Jesus called him on the road to Damascus. The years in [Cilicia](#) and Syria were not wasted for they had not been idle. If we only knew the facts, it is probable that Saul also had been preaching to Hellenes as well as to Hellenists. Jesus had definitely called him to work among the Gentiles (Acts 9:15+). In his own way he had come to the same place that Peter reached in Caesarea and that Barnabas now holds in Antioch. **God always has a man prepared for a great emergency in the kingdom** The call of Barnabas was simply the repetition of the call of Christ. So Saul came."

Look for (327) ([anazeteo](#) from **ana** = from the bottom up or used to intensify meaning + [zeteo](#) = seek) mean to seek up and down (back and forth), to seek carefully, to search for, to try to locate, to discover, or to investigate. Robertson says it means "to seek up and down (ana), back and forth, to hunt up, to make a thorough search till success comes." **Anazeteo** was often used in the context of hunting for criminals or fugitive slaves (BDAG). This verb speaks of the thoroughness with which Jesus' parents were looking for Him. As we might say today they were searching "high and low" to find Him (used twice - Lk 2:44,45).

Robertson points out why Barnabas had to "hunt for" Saul noting that "It is plain from Gal. 1:21+ that Saul had not been idle in [Cilicia](#) (province in which Tarsus was located)."

Moulton and Milligan note that **anazeteo** "is specially used of searching for human beings, with an implication of difficulty." "make every effort to search for them" etc. with reference to certain slaves who had deserted. "the culprits having been searched for." "to look for hay,"

Thayer on **anazeteo** - `to run through with the eyes any series or succession of men or things, and so to seek out, search through, make diligent search

Anazeteo is used only by Luke -- Lk 2:44, 45, Acts 11:25. There are 2 uses in the Septuagint - Job 3:4, Job 10:6.

Related Resources:

- [Wikipedia article](#)

- [What is the story of Saul of Tarsus before he became the apostle Paul?](#)
- American Tract Society [Tarsus](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Saul of tarsus Tarsus](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Tarsus](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Tarsus](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Tarsus](#)
- Hitchcock Bible Names [Tarsus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Tarsus](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Tarsus](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Tarsus Saul of Tarsus](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Tarsus](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Tarsus](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Tarsus](#)
- Condensed Biblical Cyclopedia [Saul of Tarsus](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Tarsus](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Tarsus](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Tarsus](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Tarsus](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Paul of Tarsus Saul of Tarsus Tarsus](#)

Charles Swindoll has some interesting thoughts about **Saul's** absence from Acts 10 and most of Acts 11 - Benched. Shelved. Set aside. Taken out of circulation. If we go by what Luke reveals about Paul's activity during Peter's historic evangelism among the Gentiles in Acts 10, we might get the impression that Paul was out of action for ten years after his dramatic conversion. The truth is, Paul was never inactive. He certainly wasn't in the limelight or in the mainstream of activity, but he was doing ministry like the vast majority of faithful servants of God throughout history—in the background, in obscurity. But why? Why would God send him to "small time" ministry in Tarsus for ten years after such an explosive conversion? Think about it. No Christian had a more impressive résumé for ministry among the Jews. Yet in His wise providence and for His own purposes, God often places such people in small-scale, nonglamorous ministries for a season. He hones their theology, whittles at their character, rearranges their priorities, and teaches them the techniques of walking in the Spirit and not walking in the flesh. Not as rejection, but as refinement, God set Paul aside in this way. Again, from a human perspective, Saul seemed the ideal candidate for fast-tracking into ministry to his fellow Hebrews. The Lord, however, doesn't recruit like a corporate headhunter. He chooses people based on His own omniscient insight and prepares them through His own sovereign omnipotence. God selected Saul to become His witness among Gentiles.

Acts 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

KJV Acts 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

- **for an entire year** Acts 13:1,2
- **they met with the church** Acts 14:23,27; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 11:18; 14:23
- **taught considerable numbers** Matthew 28:19
- **were first called Christians in Antioch** Acts 26:28; Isaiah 65:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 3:15; 1 Peter 4:14; 1 John 2:27; Revelation 3:18

ALL BELIEVERS ARE DISCIPLES AND CHRISTIANS

And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch - Brought is not forced but the Greek verb ago meaning to lead or bring along to accompany him back to Antioch.

Found (2147) (**heurisko**) means to find after searching and so to discover (Mt 7:7) which is an apt description of Barnabas' search for Saul. It can mean to find accidentally or without seeking, which is clearly not the meaning in the present context (but see Mt 12:44). Heurisko is the origin of the English exclamation "**Eureka**" as when they found gold. One can imagine Barnabas' shouting

"[Eureka](#)" when he found God's man!

Luke's uses of *heurisko* -

Lk. 1:30; Lk. 2:12; Lk. 2:45; Lk. 2:46; Lk. 4:17; Lk. 5:19; Lk. 6:7; Lk. 7:9; Lk. 7:10; Lk. 8:35; Lk. 9:12; Lk. 9:36; Lk. 11:9; Lk. 11:10; Lk. 11:24; Lk. 11:25; Lk. 12:37; Lk. 12:38; Lk. 12:43; Lk. 13:6; Lk. 13:7; Lk. 15:4; Lk. 15:5; Lk. 15:6; Lk. 15:8; Lk. 15:9; Lk. 15:24; Lk. 15:32; Lk. 17:18; Lk. 18:8; Lk. 19:30; Lk. 19:32; Lk. 19:48; Lk. 22:13; Lk. 22:45; Lk. 23:2; Lk. 23:4; Lk. 23:14; Lk. 23:22; Lk. 24:2; Lk. 24:3; Lk. 24:23; Lk. 24:24; Lk. 24:33; Acts 4:21; Acts 5:10; Acts 5:22; Acts 5:23; Acts 5:39; Acts 7:11; Acts 7:46; Acts 8:40; Acts 9:2; Acts 9:33; Acts 10:27; Acts 11:26; Acts 12:19; Acts 13:6; Acts 13:22; Acts 13:28; Acts 17:6; Acts 17:23; Acts 17:27; Acts 18:2; Acts 19:1; Acts 19:19; Acts 21:2; Acts 23:9; Acts 23:29; Acts 24:5; Acts 24:12; Acts 24:18; Acts 24:20; Acts 27:6; Acts 27:28; Acts 28:14;

And for an entire year they met with the church - The year is probably A D 44, the year before Barnabas and Saul visited Jerusalem with the contribution (Acts 11:30). What is Luke describing? Clearly this is discipleship 101, showing the early church's obedience to the command of Jesus to **make disciples** (Mt 28:19+), a command that tragically many (most) churches in America have neglected to their great loss! One of my "pet peeves" is young churches (or led by younger pastors and elders) who fail to avail themselves of the mature older believers in their church, men and women, who may have walked with Jesus longer than many of the members of the church have even been alive! Young Timothy had his older Paul and young men in the church desperately need an older Paul. When I was born again, I began attending a well-known local Bible Church, but even after asking (almost begging) several pastors in that church, they could not give me a single name of an older man who would be able/willing to disciple me (I was 39 at the time and hungry for the pure milk). God provided godly men in my life through media (John MacArthur, C H Spurgeon, Wayne Barber, Chuck Swindoll, et al), but that was not the same as having another man walking alongside as I sought to grow in grace (and frequently stumbled). It borders on arrogance by younger leadership to "write off" the inestimable value of godly older saints in their body of Christ, as if they have nothing to offer! How sad that they do not take advantage of the wisdom of [hoary](#) heads! Young leaders, if you have godly, mature, Word saturated older men (and women) in your church, I strongly encourage you to use them to disciple younger saints! Your local Body will be spiritually stronger and wiser for following this Biblical template! If you doubt me, than just consider the spiritual fruit borne by the church at Antioch, which was fruitful because it was faithful to heed Jesus' command to **make disciples**.

Note that **the** (definite article in Greek) **church** ([ekklesia](#)) indicates it was a distinct assemblage of disciples in Antioch.

Barnabas put Saul to work immediately. **Wiersbe** comments "What Barnabas did for Saul needs to be practiced in our churches today. Mature believers need to enlist others and encourage them in their service for the Lord. It was one of D.L. Moody's policies that each new Christian be given a task soon after conversion. At first, it might be only passing out hymnals or ushering people to their seats, but each convert had to be busy. As previously mentioned, he said, "It is better to put ten men to work than to do the work of ten men." Many of Mr. Moody's "assistants" became effective Christian workers in their own right and this multiplied the witness."

And taught considerable numbers - In Acts 11:21 "**a large number believed**," and here we see the great turnout of "considerable numbers." Luke does not tell us what percentage were Gentile and what percentage were Jewish, but undoubtedly there was a significant component of Gentiles give the fact that Antioch had up to 10x as many Gentiles as Jews. Would this describe your church? What percentage of Sunday attendees are zealous for the Word and seeking to grow in grace by making time in their busy schedules to attend serious, in depth Bible studies?

Jack Arnold on some who were **taught** - While they (BARNABAS AND SAUL) team taught every saint in the local church at Antioch for one year, one of the main thrusts of their ministry was to recognize the Christ appointed leadership in the Church at Antioch and train them. When Barnabas and Paul left for the first missionary journey in Acts 13, there were three other leaders (probably elders) in the local church in Antioch. "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and **Simeon** who was called Niger, and **Lucius** of Cyrene, and **Manaen** who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul (Acts 13:1+). Notice, also, that the local church at Antioch did not fold up when their two teaching elders (Barnabas and Paul) left for a few weeks to take a love offering to the needy saints in Jerusalem. These two men apparently had been very successful in the training of good leadership in the local church.

Taught (1321)([didasko](#) from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see study of related noun [didaskalia](#) and the adjective [didaktikos](#)) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting.

John MacArthur writes that **didasko** "refers to the passing on of information-often, but not necessarily, in a formal setting. It focused on content, with the purpose of discovering the truth-contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about of various ideas and opinions was the primary concern (see Acts 17:21). Synagogue teaching, as illustrated

by that of Jesus, was basically expository. **Scripture was read and explained section by section, often verse by verse** ([Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#)) (Bold added)

In another source **MacArthur** writes that **didasko** (and related words) - In all the various forms, the root meaning carries with it the idea of systematic teaching or systematic training. It is the word that is used to refer to a choir director who trains a choir over a long period of rehearsals until they are able to perform. The gift of prophecy could be a one-time proclamation of Christ, but the gift of teaching is a systematic training problem to take a person from one point to another. What is the curriculum for the teacher? The Bible, the Word of God. The gift is to teach systematically the truth of God. It can be used with men—one on one, one on two, one on three, one on five thousand. It can be used with women—one on one, one on two, one on three, one on five thousand. It can be used by a lady in a little group of children. It can be used by a mother to a son. It can be used by a husband to his wife. It can be used in any conceivable way that the Spirit of God desires. It is the ability to pass on truth in a systematic progression so that someone receives it, implements it, and a change of behavior takes place. In fact, it is a gift that belongs to a lot more of us than we realize. (MacArthur, J. *Spiritual Gifts*. Includes index. Chicago: Moody Press)

The word **considerable** is the Greek adjective [hikanos](#) which means sufficient, enough, adequate and in this context pertains to being a large number, presumably a large number of all who attended the weekly worship services.

And the disciples - Notice what these first Gentile believers were called - **disciples**. Clearly Luke is not using this to describe an elite group of believers, some who may have advanced to a higher level of spiritual maturity. Early on in my Christian life, I was taught that all believers were believers but not all believers were disciples and was very confused by this aberrant teaching for many years. I was taught there are two main classes of Christians, carnal and spiritual, and only the latter were worthy of the appellation "disciples." After studying Acts it became crystal clear that Luke believed that **all believers were disciples**, which corrected my earlier mistaken beliefs. Only recently have I come to understand the genesis ("pathogenesis") of this spurious teaching regarding who is a **disciple**. and the spurious classification of believers as either carnal or spiritual. That is an aberrant teaching and opens the door for someone to live as "carnal Christian" their entire life, and end up in Hell! To be sure, **all believers have their carnal moments** (yours truly for sure!), but to have a lifestyle of carnality (THIS IS THE KEY QUALIFIER-LIVING HABITUALLY IN SIN) is not to ever live as Christ, but to live like the devil and the destination of those who live in this deception will be eternal punishment like their father, the devil! Here is a quote from a very interesting book entitled "[Let Go and Let God? A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology](#)" by Dr Andrew Naselli who writes that...

Hodges (See also [Zane Hodges unusual teachings - Troubling Teachings](#)) contends that the only condition for salvation is intellectually believing (ED: CF "HEAD KNOWLEDGE") and that other elements such as repentance and surrender are **heretical additions** to the Gospel that result in salvation by works rather than by faith alone. (ED: [What is free grace? What is Free Grace Theology?](#)) Hodges denies that a person who believed in Christ must continue believing to possess eternal life and that he can "drop out" of the Christian life just as a student can drop out of school (ED: SEE [Perseverance of the Saints](#)). **Ryrie**, (Charles) though not as extreme as Hodges, also argues that neither the Gospels nor the rest of biblical revelation support Lordship salvation (ED: [What is lordship salvation](#)). His main argument is that belief in Jesus Christ is the only requirement for salvation (ED: AMEN TO THAT!). **He nevertheless defends the view that Christians may be in a state of lifelong carnality and may even become unbelieving believers; those who once believed are secure forever—even if they turn away....**Hodges's (Zane Hodges) and Ryrie's (Charles Ryrie) distinction between **salvation** and **discipleship** (ED: WHICH IS WHAT I WAS TAUGHT FOR YEARS) is Chafer's (Louis Sperry Chafer) adoption and adaptation of [Keswick theology](#), namely, his categories of **carnal** and **spiritual believers**. ("The Tradition Behind the Free Grace Belief That the Christian Life Has Two- Stages [sic]: Keswick Theology," Ph.D. dissertation., Baylor University, 1995, 343–7)

Related Resources: All from Dr Andrew Naselli

- [What is a carnal Christian?](#)
- [What is easy believism?](#)
- [What is cheap grace?](#)
- [Handout on Keswick Theology](#)
- [A Historical and Theological Survey of the Early Keswick Movement](#) (Mp3) - excellent summary of this issue if you are not familiar
- [A Theological Analysis of the Early Keswick Movement – Part 1](#) (57:20)
- [A Theological Analysis of the Early Keswick Movement – Part 2 \(with Q & A\)](#) (49:24)

Disciples (3101)(**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". Gives us our English = "*mathematics*") describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or

informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher.

Steven Ger - Whether **Christian** was originally coined by believers or pagans, meant derisively or not, the name certainly stuck, and most assuredly, it correctly identifies believers as partisans of Christ, the Messiah. Whether we like it or not, in the world in which we all live, believers in Christ are universally identified as "Christians." This author's opinion is that "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." The lively aroma of Jesus is present in all who have given themselves to Him, Jew or Gentile, no matter by which name they wish to be identified. This author (**GER IS JEWISH**) gladly answers to **Messianic Jew, Messianic, Jewish Christian, Jewish believer, Hebrew Christian, Christian Jew, or simply, Christian**. (Just don't call this author "late for dinner!") Grammatically, if we translated *christianos* by way of its Hebrew equivalent, we would get the term, "messianic." Both terms, "Christian" and "Messianic," mean exactly the same thing and can be used interchangeably. Today, the term "Messianic" communicates a decidedly Jewish ethnic flavor. That may not hold true tomorrow, however, or the next day, as trends, fads and preferences move in and out of vogue among our community of faith. (Ibid)

Ray Stedman on **called Christians** - It is clear from this brief statement (**ED: IT DOES NOT SAY "THEY CALLED THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS"**) that it was not the Christians themselves, but the people of Antioch who called them that. The word means, "those belonging to Christ," or "Christ's men." As these Christians talked about Jesus to men everywhere -- Jesus the Christ, the Messiah -- the Gentiles around them labeled them "Christ's men." You can tell from this that they didn't talk about the church; they talked about Jesus. (**ED: WOULD THOSE WHO KNOW YOU CALL YOU CHRIST'S MAN OR WOMAN BECAUSE THAT IS WHO YOU SPEAK ABOUT?**) At first it was a contemptuous term, a term of reproach. "Look at these crazy people! They come into our city, they don't worship our idols, don't observe our moral (or immoral) standards, they live lives entirely different from ours." So, contemptuously they called them "Christ's men," Christians. But the disciples thought it was wonderful to be called Christ's men, so they adopted the name and called themselves Christians. ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

Ralph Earle writes that "As **followers** of Jesus we are to be, first of all, **learners**. We are to learn from Him by listening to Him, learn the truth that will set us free (John 8:32) and keep us from error. But we are also to learn from Him by looking at Him- learn how to live a life of beauty and blessing." (Word Meanings in the New Testament)

John Piper has some solemn comments on John 8:31 - What this phrase "truly my disciples" implies is that there are disciples who are not truly disciples. The word "truly" means "really"—"really my disciples." In other words, there are real and unreal disciples. There are authentic and inauthentic disciples. There is discipleship that is merely outward, and discipleship that goes down to the root. The world is not just divided into two groups: disciples of Jesus and non-disciples. It is divided into three groups: non-disciples, unreal disciples, and real disciples—people who make no pretense of following Jesus, people that say they follow him and have a surface connection with him, and people who truly follow him. Why did Jesus bring up this distinction? It's disturbing. It makes us squirm and ask ourselves the question which one we are. He brought it up because verse 30 says, "As he was saying these things, many believed in him." There had been a large response to what he was teaching. And whenever there is a large response to anything you may guess that some are being carried along by the crowd. If your friends are going, it's easy for you to go, even if you wouldn't go on your own. You are along for the ride. So Jesus doesn't assume that all this belief is real. What he does is give a test that we can use to see if we are real. And in giving us this test Jesus helps us be real. It is not just a test of reality. It is a pathway to reality. (Full message - [If You Abide in My Word, You Are Truly My Disciples](#) - John 8:31).

Were first called Christians in Antioch - We have seen that those who had placed their faith in Christ and been born again by the Spirit were referred to by several different terms in the Book of Acts:

1. **Believers** (Acts 5:14, Acts 10:45, Acts 16:1)
2. **The Church** (Acts 5:11, 8:1, 3, etc)
3. **Disciples** (learners of Jesus - Acts 6:1; Acts 6:2; Acts 6:7; Acts 9:1; Acts 9:10; Acts 9:19; Acts 9:25; Acts 9:26; Acts 9:36; Acts 9:38; Acts 11:26; Acts 11:29; Acts 13:52; Acts 14:20; Acts 14:21; Acts 14:22; Acts 14:28; Acts 15:10; Acts 16:1; Acts 18:23; Acts 18:27; Acts 19:1; Acts 19:9; Acts 19:30; Acts 20:1; Acts 20:30; Acts 21:4; Acts 21:16)
4. **Saints** (set apart ones for God - Acts 9:13, 32, 41, Acts 26:10)
5. **Brethren** (sharers of a common birth and common life - Acts 6:3, et al - However note that not every use of *ofbrethren* refers to genuine believers but to Jewish brethren, e.g, Acts 2:29, 2:37).
6. **Witnesses** (Acts 5:32 - one might argue that this was not a specific name, but more reflective of what they did).
7. **The Way** (Those belonging to the Way - see comments on Acts 9:2+, Acts 19:9, Acts 19:23, Acts 24:14, Acts 24:22)
8. **Christian** (Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16)
9. **Nazarenes** ("sect of the Nazarenes" = Acts 24:5)

10. The Flock (Acts 20:28-29)

The first four designations were "self-designations" or what believers called each other. The designation of "Christian" is not so clear and most authorities interpret this as a designation given to the believers in Christ by others who were not believers. Most (but not all) writers feel that "Christian" was given as a **pejorative**, a name of derision or ridicule. It reminds me of the name **Jesus Freaks** given to believers in the 1960's which was eventually made into a song ("[Jesus Freak](#)")!

Ray Stedman - I saw a wonderful incidence of this type at the meeting I spoke of in Southern California. The large home just off the UCLA campus had a sun porch that ran the length of the house. On the porch when I came in was a group of Christian World Liberation Front people who had set up an assembly line. They were all working diligently at producing something. I saw, hanging on a clothesline they had rigged up, a lot of blue denim work shirts. Then I saw that they were printing something in white paint on the backs of the shirts, using a silk-screen process. They were printing these words: **I AM ANOTHER JESUS FREAK** I understood then what had happened. On the Berkeley campus they had been witnessing for Christ. Others, observing them, called them "Jesus freaks." Freak, a common word in the hippy culture, denotes someone who is a devotee of a certain practice or power or drug. There are heroin freaks, speed freaks, and various other kinds of freaks. It means that someone is intimately associated with the subject of the label. So when they were heard witnessing about Jesus, they were called "Jesus freaks." These Christians were not offended in the least. They thought it was a great compliment. And now they parade the avenues with this proudly emblazoned across their backs: "I am another Jesus Freak." ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

Gaebelein notes that "Antioch was famous for its readiness to jeer and call names; it was known by its witty epigrams."

Guzik on the name **Christian** - Christians was sort of like saying "Jesus-ites," or "Jesus People," describing the people associated with Jesus Christ. Boice thinks the idea was that they were called "Christ-ones." Also, soldiers under particular generals in the Roman army identified themselves by their general's name by adding *ian* to the end. A soldier under Caesar would call himself a Caesarian. Soldiers under Jesus Christ could be called Christians....Eusebius, the famous early church historian, described a believer named **Sanctus** from Lyons, France, who was tortured for Jesus. As they tortured him cruelly, they hoped to get him to say something evil or blasphemous. They asked his name, and he only replied, "I am a Christian." "What nation do you belong to?" He answered, "I am a Christian." "What city do you live in?" "I am a Christian." His questioners began to get angry: "Are you a slave or a free man?" "I am a Christian" was his only reply. No matter what they asked about him, he only answered, "I am a Christian." This made his torturers all the more determined to break him, but they could not, and he died with the words "I am a Christian" on his lips. (Eusebius, Church History)."

Wiersbe on **Christian** - Unfortunately, the word **Christian** has lost a great deal of significance over the centuries and no longer means "one who has turned from sin, trusted Jesus Christ, and received salvation by grace" (Acts 11:21–23). Many people who have never been born again consider themselves "**Christians**" simply because they say they are not "pagans." After all, they may belong to a church, attend services somewhat regularly, and even occasionally give to the work of the church! But it takes more than that for a sinner to become a child of God. It takes repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ, Who died for our sins on the cross and rose again to give us eternal life. The believers in the early church suffered because they were **Christians** (1 Peter 4:16). Dr. David Otis Fuller has asked, "If you were arrested for being a **Christian**, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" A good question! And the answer is a matter of life or death! (Bible Exposition Commentary)

Christian ([5546](#))(**Christianos** from **Christos**) one who follows Christ. One who is associated with Christ. A Christ-partisan. The suffix *-ianos* denotes partisanship, "the party of" or identity with the leader of a movement or community. For example, the Gospel writers used "Herodian" to denote someone who supported or worked for the dynasty of Herod the Great (Mt 22:16). Someone has pointed out that if you take the the word "Christian" and move the letter "a" to the front of the name you end up with an interesting designation "**A Christ In.**" (cf Col 1:27b+).

Thayer - The name was first given to the worshippers of Jesus by the Gentiles, but from the second century (Justin Martyr (e. g. Apology 1, 4, p. 55 a.; dialog contra Trypho, sec. 35; cf. `Teaching' etc. 12, 4)) onward accepted by them as a title of honor.

Gilbrant writes that "The formation of the word (CHRISTIAN) follows the Latin pattern, frequently copied in the Greek of this period, of attaching an *-ian* suffix to a proper name to designate the followers or adherents of a particular person. Other examples include the Herodians in the New Testament and the Caesariani (imperial slaves) and the Pompeiani...the name Christian was at first applied to believers only by nonbelievers. All three uses of Christianos in the New Testament fit this pattern. In Acts 11:26 "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" by nonbelievers. Agrippa used the name Christian for one who believes in Christ in Acts 26:28. And in 1 Peter 4:16 believers were persecuted by nonbelievers because they were Christianos. Apart from these uses in the New Testament, the earliest occurrences of Christian are to be found in the secular writers Josephus (Antiquities 18.3.3), Pliny the Younger (Epistles 10.96,97), Tacitus (Annals 15.44), and Suetonius (Life of Nero 16.2). The first appearances of Christianos as

a self-designation by a Christian writer are found in the early second-century writings of Ignatius who was bishop of Syrian Antioch. Even the formation of the word Christianos (see the first paragraph above) suggests that it was coined by Gentile nonbelievers who thought Christ was a proper name and did not recognize it as a title (Greek Christ = Hebrew Messiah). Though it is often stated that nonbelievers used the name Christian as a term of derision or ridicule (so Cremer, *Lexicon*, p.582; Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*; and Rengstorf, "Jesus Christ," Colin Brown, 2:343), this would not necessarily always have been the case (see Grundmann, "chriō," *Kittel*, 9:537)..([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Steven Ger has an interesting insight noting that "today some Jewish believers in Jesus [chafe](#) at the title "**Christian**" and seek to disassociate themselves from the term. Generally, there are three basic reasons for this dissociation. For some, the appalling quantity of Jewish persecution carried out for seventeen centuries in the name of "Christianity" leaves them searching for an acceptable alternative to this emotionally sensitive designation. Although often misunderstood as separatism or elitism, this is usually motivated by emotion. For others, it is because they desire to use terminology that will effectively communicate to their unsaved Jewish friends and family, who, because of culture and history, would not intuitively understand what it means to be a Christian. For still others, it is because they have been taught that the term "Christian" was originally a derogatory term for Gentile believers, coined by Antioch Gentiles derisive of the new movement. Therefore, these Jewish believers in Jesus generally like to be called "Messianics," or more commonly, "Messianic Jews."" (Acts-21st Century Commentary).

Barclay on Christians - It was in Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. The title began as a nickname. The people of Antioch were famous for their facility in finding nicknames. Later the bearded Emperor Julian came to visit them and they christened him "The Goat." The termination -iani means belonging to the party of; for instance Caesariani means belonging to Caesar's party. Christian means: "These Christ-folk". It was a contemptuous nickname; but the Christians took it and made it known to all the world. By their lives they made it a name not of contempt but of respect and admiration and even wonder.

Hughes reasons that "the Jews would never have named them "Christians" because Christ is the Greek word for Messiah; to call them *Christians*, followers of the Messiah, would have been unthinkable....We live in a time when the term *Christian* has become one of the vaguest epithets in the English language. During the British colonial era it became synonymous with "Englishmen" in India—it did not make any difference how godly or perverted the man was. In our own century "Christian" nations have engaged in two world wars. Some people think that everyone who is not a Jew or a Muslim is a Christian. Dr. Harry Ironside once handed a gospel booklet to a man on a train, and the man turned to him and asked, "What did you give me that book for?" Dr. Ironside replied, "I thought you might be interested; and, may I ask, are you a Christian?" "Well," he replied indignantly, "take a good look at me—do I look like a Jew or a Chinaman?" "You look like an American." "Then," he responded, "that is your answer." [72] Even today many people are willing to say, "**I am a Christian**" but would balk at saying they are "**believers**" or "**disciples**." **They are cultural Christians who have not experienced saving commitment to Jesus Christ.** (see Mt 7:21-23+)(Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire)

Kistemaker (Baker NTC - Acts) - Why are you called a Christian? The name Christian means that you identify completely with Christ because you are his disciple. But for many Christians this identification seems to apply only in a Sunday worship service. During the week, many Christians appear to have put aside the Christian nametag that they display on Sundays when they sing praises to God, read Scripture, pray, and listen to a sermon. How do some Christians live? Some live for the sake of money; others are in the process of destroying their bodies through chemical dependence; and still others use vile and profane language as part of their daily speech. The question, "Why are you called a Christian?" is personal and to the point. It makes many Christians blush. In the sixteenth century, German theologian Zacharius Ursinus asked this same question and formulated the following answer:

Because by faith I am a member of Christ
and so I share in his anointing.
I am anointed
to confess his name,
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this
life,
and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for all eternity.

([Heidelberg Catechism](#), question and answer 32.)

Bruce Barton - SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF A USABLE CHRISTIAN

1. Unstained by our Culture. (Acts 11:19–20, 22, 26)

At Antioch the believers were first called Christians, the Christ-ones. There are some distinctions of a church

that must be kept intact. We bear the name of our Savior.

2. Stretched to our Limits. (Acts 11:19; 12:1–3)

From a close look at the early church, we see clearly that struggle, rejection, criticism, and even death for believers was the norm.

3. Adhering to the Savior. (Acts 11:21, 23, 26)

Barnabas encouraged the believers to make a serious, solid attachment to Christ and Christ alone.

4. Bold in our Witness. (Acts 11:19–21, 24)

This church spoke, told, and preached the Good News. People believed and turned to the Lord.

5. Liberal in our Giving. (Acts 11:22, 24, 27–30)

The Antioch church gave. They were unselfish, other-centered, and giving-oriented, even to a culturally and racially different congregation.

6. Equipped in the Scriptures. (Acts 11:23, 26)

This church was taught. The picture here is of classrooms, courses, study, memorization ... work. Before Antioch became a sending place it was a studying place. We have the picture of an equipping church and an equipped people. No wonder they changed the world.

Marked By His Name

Read: Acts 11:19-26

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. —Acts 11:26

In July 1860, the world's first nursing school opened at St. Thomas Hospital in London. Today that school is part of the King's College, where nursing students are called Nightingales. The school—like modern nursing itself—was established by Florence Nightingale, who revolutionized nursing during the Crimean War. When prospective nurses complete their training, they take the "Nightingale Pledge," a reflection of her ongoing impact on nursing.

Many people, like Florence Nightingale, have had a significant impact on our world. But no one has had a greater effect than Jesus, whose birth, death, and resurrection have been transforming lives for 2,000 years.

Around the world, Christ's name marks those who are His followers, going back to the earliest days of the church. "When [Barnabas] had found [Saul], he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

Those who bear Christ's name identify with Him because we have been changed by His love and grace. We declare to the world that He has made an eternal difference in our lives and we long for that in the hearts of others too.

Father, give me the grace and wisdom to honor You. May my life be so marked by the person of Christ that His great name—and salvation—will be embraced by others as well.

Followers of Christ—Christians—are marked by His name.

INSIGHT: Antioch was a significant city for the early church. An assembly of believers was birthed there, and Barnabas ("the son of encouragement") was sent from Jerusalem to help them (Acts 11:22). Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, stayed with this growing church for a year, which helped prepare him for his role as an apostle.

By Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Living Up To The Name

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

[God] made us alive together with Christ. —Ephesians 2:5

A new Christian was reading through the Gospels. After she finished, she told a friend she wanted to read a book on church history. When her friend asked why, the woman replied, "I'm curious. I've been wondering when Christians started to become so unlike Christ."

We can understand why this new convert was perplexed. There is a great disparity between the life of Christ and the lives of many

who bear His name. In fact, some believers are even imitating the world instead of trying to live like Jesus.

Almost 2,000 years have passed since followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Today, we who have placed our trust in the Savior still bear that name and march under the same banner as those early believers.

The Bible says that we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). When we call ourselves Christians, we are saying to the world that Christ is our Savior and that we are following Him.

Christians have a glorious name. It is a great privilege to be identified with Christ—and a great obligation to live up to His name!

More like the Master I would live and grow,
More of His love to others I would show;
More self-denial, like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be.
—Gabriel

When you walk with Christ, you'll be out of step with the world.

By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What's In A Name?

Read: John 1:35-42

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church. —Matthew 16:18

My friend wrote a letter to his newborn child that he wanted him to read when he was older: "My dear boy, Daddy and Mummy wish that you will find and stay focused on the Light. Your Chinese name is xin xuan. Xin means faithfulness, contentment, and integrity; xuan stands for warmth and light." He and his wife carefully chose a name based on their hopes for their baby boy.

When Jesus renamed Simon as Peter/Cephas (John 1:42), it wasn't a random choice. Peter means "the rock." But it took a while for him to live up to his new name. The account of his life reveals him as a fisherman known for his rash ways—a shifting-sand kind of guy. Peter disagreed with Jesus (Matt. 16:22-23), struck a man with a sword (John 18:10-11), and even denied knowing Jesus (John 18:15-27). But in Acts, we read that God worked in and through him to establish His church. Peter truly became a rock.

If you, like Peter, are a follower of Jesus, you have a new identity. In Acts 11:26, we read, "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The name "Christians" means "Christ-ones." You now are one of the Christ-ones. This title lifts up who you are and calls you to become what you are not yet. God is faithful, and He will complete His good work in you (Phil. 1:6).

Dear Father, thank You for the incredible privilege of being called Your child. May we understand more fully what it means to be identified with Your Son, Jesus Christ. Work in us and through us.

We honor God's name when we call Him our Father and live like His children.

INSIGHT: Today's reading records a call to discipleship. After John the Baptist identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God," two of his disciples followed Jesus. Andrew is named, but the second spiritual seeker is not. Many commentators believe that the apostle John is the second disciple. Notice the easy conversation which takes place between the two disciples and Christ. He asks what they seek. They inquire about where He is staying, and He invites them to come and see. The tenth hour by Jewish reckoning was 4:00 p.m. Obviously, the day was coming to an end. Andrew became so excited about Jesus' invitation that he went to find his brother Simon and brought him to meet the Master.

By Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What's In A Name? By C. P. Hia

Read: Acts 11:19-26

Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. —Ephesians 4:1

My Chinese family name sets me apart from others with different family names. It also confers on me a family responsibility. I am a member of the Hia family. As a member of the family, I am expected to carry on the Hia line and uphold the honor of my ancestors.

Believers who have been saved by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ have a spiritual family name. We are called “Christians.”

In the New Testament, the name Christian was first given to the disciples in Antioch by those who noted their behavior (Acts 11:26). Two things defined these early believers. They talked about the good news of the Lord Jesus everywhere they went (v.20). And they eagerly learned the Scriptures as Barnabas and Saul taught them for a whole year (v.26).

The name Christian means an “adherent to Christ”—literally, one who “sticks” to Christ. Today many people call themselves Christians. But should they?

If you call yourself a Christian, does your life tell others who Jesus is? Are you hungry for God’s Word? Do your actions bring honor or shame to Christ’s name?

What’s in a name? When the name is Christian, there is much indeed!

Teach us that name to own, While waiting, Lord, for Thee, Unholiness and sin to shun, From all untruth to flee. —Cecil

A Christian reflects Jesus Christ. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What Else Can We Be?

Read: Acts 11:19-26

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. —Acts 11:26

During an interview, the great Polish pianist Ignace Paderewski said, “It is not from choice that my life is music and nothing more, but when one is an artist what else can he be? When a whole lifetime is too short to attain the heights he wants to reach, how then can he devote any of the little time he has to things outside of his art?”

The interviewer then inquired, “And you have not yet attained the heights you seek?” “I am nothing!” replied the artist shaking his head. “If you could know the dream of what I would like to be, you would realize how little I have accomplished.”

Paderewski’s words spoke to me of the goal and attitude that every Christian should have. He had declared, “When one is an artist, what else can he be?” I would ask, “When one is a Christian, what else can he be?”

In the early church, the disciples were called Christians, which means “those belonging to Christ.” Their love and service for the Lord was obvious. If a great pianist can recognize who and what he is, and give his entire life to the development of his art, how much more should we strive to be like our Lord and Savior! With the noted pianist we should be able to say, “What else can we be?”

O to be like Thee! blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear. —Chisholm

Every child of God should grow in likeness to the Son of God.

By Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Acts 11:27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

KJV Acts 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

- **prophets** Acts 2:17; 13:1; 15:32; 21:4,9; Matthew 23:34; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:32; Ephesians 4:11

PROPHETS FROM JERUSALEM

Now at this time - Literally "in these days." What time or what days? From the context it would be during the year that Barnabas and

Saul were discipling the church at Antioch. What is the year? These prophets came down in (approximately) in the year of A D 44 (the famine Agabus prophesied occurred about AD 45-46).

Some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch - Came down reflects the fact that Jerusalem is elevated and thus is frequently described as either going up to Jerusalem or coming down from Jerusalem. Clearly these were **prophets** who had the gift to foretell the future and this was a gift that existed in the early days of the formation of the Church.

Messianic author **Stephen Ger** points out that "The Jewish rabbis taught that the last prophet was Malachi, and with his death in the fifth century B.C., prophecy formally ceased. As on so many spiritual issues, the "teachers of Israel" were again mistaken. Indeed, several prophets are mentioned within the Acts narrative, including Agabus (Acts 11:27; 21:10), the entirety of the Antioch church's leadership (Acts 13:1), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32) and Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9)." (Ibid)

Prophets (4396)(**prophetes** from **próphemi** = literally to tell beforehand in turn from **pró** = before, in front of, forth, on behalf of + **phemí** = speak, tell) is primarily a forth-teller or one who speaks out God's message, primarily to their own generation, usually always calling the people to God's truth for them at that moment, often using the phrase "Thus saith the Lord." The prophet is one who speaks before in the sense of proclaim, or the one who speaks for, i.e., in the Name of (God). A prophet is someone who is specially endowed or enabled to receive and deliver direct revelation of God's will. "As distinct from the sacral figures of pagan antiquity the biblical prophet is not a magician. He does not force God. On the contrary, he is under divine constraint. It is God Who invites, summons, and impels him--e.g., Jer 20:7" (Lamorte and Hawthorne)

Utley - It is not always certain whether their function is primarily foretelling, as here, or forth-telling, as in 1 Cor. 14 and Acts 2:17 (cf. Acts 13:6; 15:32; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:1–5, 29–33; Eph. 2:20; 4:10).

Warren Wiersbe - There are people today who claim to receive special "words of revelation" or "words of wisdom" from the Lord, but such revelations are suspect and even dangerous. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20). "Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you," warned Jeremiah. "They make you vain [fill you with false hopes]; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord" (Jer. 23:16). (BEC)

Ray Stedman on **prophecy** - Unfortunately this word, and therefore the gift of prophecy, have become associated only with the ability to predict the future. But that is not the primary meaning. Primarily it means, "to cause to shine." It is the ability to illuminate the Word of God and to make it shine. Peter speaks of this: "We have a more sure word of prophecy which shines as a light in a dark place..." (2 Peter 1:19 KJV). These were men who could take the Word of God, the Old Testament -- or who were given the words by the Holy Spirit of what became the New Testament, before it was written -- and could make it shine. They illuminated the darkness in people's lives with the truth of God. Occasionally they were also able to illuminate the future and that is done here. This is not the whole gift of prophecy but it is a part of it. ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

Related Resources:

- [What is a prophet in the Bible?](#)
- [Are there prophets in the church today?](#) (Excerpt) - Are there true prophets today? If the purpose of a prophet was to reveal truth from God, why would we need prophets if we have the completed revelation from God in the Bible? If prophets were the "foundation" of the early church, are we still building the "foundation" today? Can God give someone a message to deliver to someone else? Absolutely! Does God reveal truth to someone in a supernatural way and enable that person to deliver that message to others? Absolutely! But is this the biblical gift of prophecy? No. Whatever the case, whenever a person claims to be speaking for God (the essence of prophecy) the key is to compare what is said with what the Bible says. If God were to speak through a person today, it would be in 100% complete agreement with what God has already said in the Bible. God does not contradict Himself. 1 John 4:1 instructs us, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 declares, "Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good." So, whether it is a "word from the Lord" or a supposed prophecy, our response should be the same. Compare what is said to what the Word of God says. If it contradicts the Bible, throw it out. If it agrees with the Bible, pray for wisdom and discernment as to how to apply the message (2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5).
- [Is God restoring the offices of apostle and prophet in the church today?](#)
- [Prophecy in the New Testament](#) - Bob Utley
- In fairness, for another view from the perspective of the respected non-cessationist, Dr John Piper see [The New Testament Gift of Prophecy - Definition, Theses and Suggestions](#)

Acts 11:28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

KJV Acts 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

- **Agabus** Acts 21:10
- **there would certainly be a great famine** Genesis 41:30,31,38; 1 Kings 17:1-16; 2 Kings 8:1,2
- **the reign of Claudius** Luke 2:1; 3:1

FAMINE FORETOLD

One of them named Agabus stood up - While Luke does not specifically state where this prophecy was uttered, the words "stood up" ([anistemi](#)) suggest that this prophecy was uttered in the assembly of the disciples. Notice that the next verse speaks of what appears to be an almost "reflex response" by the disciples to offer aid, which would also suggest this utterance was in the gathering of the disciples.

Luke mentions **Agabus** again in Acts 21:10-14+

"As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named **Agabus** came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what **the Holy Spirit** (cf "by the Spirit" here in Acts 11:28) says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!"

And began to indicate by the Spirit - This prophecy was initiated and enabled by the Holy Spirit in Agabus. The imperfect tense indicates Agabus continued to make this prophecy (possibly to other disciples who had not heard it originally).

Wiersbe reminds us that "The purpose of true prophecy is not to satisfy our curiosity about the future but to stir up our hearts to do the will of God."

Indicate (made it clear)([4591](#))(**semaino** from **semma** = a mark or sign) has a basic meaning of give a sign, to signify especially with the purpose of revealing, explaining or interpreting something (See Rev 1:1). It means to intentionally produce an impression and thus to signal or signify something, to make known, to report, to communicate (Acts 25:27 = "indicate the charges", Rev 1:1 = served to communicate and give a prophecy). John uses **semaino** three times in describing how Jesus would die (Jn 12:33, 18:32) and how Peter would die (John 21:19). In the context of making known before it means to prophetically foretell (Jn 12:33 - Jesus predicting His death). In the Lxx of Nu 10:9 the idea is to give a public sign or signal. In the Lxx uses in Ezekiel the idea was to sound an alarm, blow a trumpet (Ezek 33:3, 33:6, cf Jer 4:5).

Semaino - 6x in 6v - communicated(1), indicate(3), signifying(2).

Jn. 12:33 ("He was saying this [Jn 12:32] to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die");

Jn. 18:32 ("signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.");

Jn. 21:19 ("signifying [Jn 21:18] by what kind of death he would glorify God.") ;

Acts 11:28; One of them named Agabus stood up and began to **indicate** by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world....

Acts 25:27

Rev 1:1 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and **communicated** (**semaino**) it by His angel to His bond-servant John.

Semaino - 21 verses in the Septuagint - Exod. 18:20; Num. 10:9; Jos. 6:8; Jdg. 7:21; 2 Chr. 13:12; Ezr. 3:11; Neh. 8:15; Est. 2:22; Est. 3:13; Job 39:24; Job 39:25; Prov. 6:13 (signals with his feet); Jer. 4:5; Jer. 6:1; Ezek. 33:3; Ezek. 33:6; Dan. 2:15; Dan. 2:23; Dan. 2:30; Dan. 2:45; Zech. 10:8

That there would certainly be a great famine all over the world - This famine fixes the date firmly at AD 45-46. Since this prophecy precedes the actual occurrence it would date the foundation of the church in Antioch about AD 43-44. Notice also the fact

that the famine occurred, authenticated Agabus as a true prophet of God and not a false prophet. Read the OT guidelines "exception clause" regarding a prophet even if his prediction comes true! - Deuteronomy 13:1-5. In context, the world is either the inhabited world known at that time and/or the Roman Empire.

Famine (3042) (**limos** from **leipo** = to fall short, be destitute or be in need) can refer to a literal hunger or famine, and in a metaphoric sense one's mind might be said to be "hungry, starved." **Famines** will be part of the end times scenario according to Jesus (Mt 24:7-[note](#), Mk 13:8, Lk 21:11).

Josephus wrote in Antiquities 20 -1.3-2.5: "Herod, the brother of Agrippa who had perished, was allowed to govern over Chalcis. He asked Claudius Caesar for control over the temple along with the sacred treasury, and the ability to choose the high priests, and he was given all that he had asked for. Around this time lived queen Helena of Adiabene, along with her son Izates. They both began to follow the Jewish way, turning away from their past lifestyle . . . Her arrival was of great help to the masses in Jerusalem; for **there was a famine in the land that overtook them, and many people died of starvation**. When it became necessary to obtain food abroad, queen Helena sent some of her attendants, with money, to the city of Alexandria to purchase as much grain as possible. She also sent others to the island of Cyprus to bring back dried figs. This whole process happened very quickly, and as soon as they had returned, they handed the provisions out to those who were in dire need of them. Because of this, she left behind a legacy and was held in great respect by the people and the nation at large. **And when her son Izates became aware of this famine, he sent a large gift to the leaders in Jerusalem.**"

Suetonius also mentions this famine in 'Life of Claudius' chapter 18: "There was a scarcity of food, which was the result of bad harvests that occurred during a span of several years."

Roman historian **Tacitus** mentions the famine in his Annals, chapter 11:4 "A vision that came to him at night was the reason charges were filed against the man. In this dream, he claimed to have seen Claudius crowned with a wreath made of wheat, the ears of which were folded downward. And from this vision, he predicted lean harvests to come."

The fourth century historian **Orosius** mentions this famine in Syria which occurred in 46 and 47 A.D. A translation of Orosius was later made by King Alfred of England during the middle ages and was quoted in what is known as 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle'. The Chronicle lists British history from 1 A.D. to 1154 A.D. and contains the following remarks: "A.D. 46 . In this year, Claudius, the second Roman emperor to invade Britain, put much of the island under his control and added the Orkneys to Rome's kingdom. This took place in the fourth year of his rule. In this same year, a great famine in Syria took place which Luke mentions in his book, "The Acts of the Apostles." Due to his incompetence, The Emperor Claudius Nero almost lost control of the British isle.

A.D. 46: In this year, the Emperor Claudius invaded Britain and conquered much of the island. The island of Orkney was also added to his empire.

A.D. 47: In this year, the evangelist Mark began to write his gospel in Egypt.

A.D. 47: During the fourth year of his rule, there was a great famine in Syria which Luke mentions in his book "The Acts of the Apostles."

A.D. 47: In this year, Claudius, ruler of the Romans, invaded Britain with an army, and took control of the island, and Roman rule was forced on all the Picts and the Welsh.

Related Resources:

- Torrey Topical Textbook [Famine](#)
- Biblehub topic - [Famine](#) (huge list including a number of resources below)
- American Tract Society [Famine](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Famine](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Famine](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Famine and Drought](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Famine](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Famine \(2\)](#) [Famine](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Famine](#)
- Wikipedia - [Famine](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Famine](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Famine](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Famine](#)

World (3625) (**oikoumene** from oikeo = to dwell or abide) has several different meanings depending on the context - (1) to the

inhabited earth (PROBABLY THE BEST SENSE IN Acts 11:28 - option #2 is a possibility) - the portion inhabited by the Greeks in distinction from the lands of the barbarians, (2) the Roman Empire (Acts 17:6) (3) the Jews in the world (Acts 24:5), (4) Palestine and adjacent countries (Lk 2:1, Acts 11:28). (5) Oikoumene also came to mean the habitable globe, the earth, the world as known to the people of ancient times (Matt. 24:14; Luke 21:26; Rom. 10:18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 16:14). It is used as hyperbole in Lk 4:5. Lxx - Ps. 19:4; 24:1; Isa. 23:17). It is used metonymically, to stand for or represent the world or the inhabitants of the earth, mankind (Acts 17:31; 19:27; Rev. 3:10; 12:9; Lxx = Ps 24:1, Ps 33:8, Ps 49:1, Ps 50:12, Ps 90:2, Ps 93:1, Ps 96:13, Ps. 98:9).

Gilbrant on the classical use - Opinions vary as to what oikoumenē originally denoted. It could designate the “inhabited earth,” as opposed to those areas that were uninhabited. From a technical perspective, oikoumenē is the present passive participle from oikeō (3474), “to dwell,” and designates the portion of the earth that was inhabited (in Greek writings, the world inhabited by Greeks, as distinct from the lands of the barbarian peoples). In those writings that speak of matters touching Roman affairs, oikoumenē is used to designate the lands of the Roman Empire. As will be seen later, the connotation of the Greco-Roman pagan world that accompanied this word is never contested in the New Testament. Oikoumenē has an extraordinary reference to the whole world including the spirit world. From about the Fourth Century B.C. oikoumenē came to indicate the inhabited world in a more general sense. Thus it can be seen that oikoumenē could have geographical, cultural, or political nuances in its various usages. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

Oikoumene - 15x in 15v - inhabited earth(1), world(14).

Matt. 24:14; Lk. 2:1; Lk. 4:5; Lk. 21:26; Acts 11:28; Acts 17:6; Acts 17:31; Acts 19:27; Acts 24:5; Rom. 10:18; Heb. 1:6; Heb. 2:5; Rev. 3:10; Rev. 12:9; Rev. 16:14

Oikoumene in the **Septuagint** -

2 Sa 22:16; Est. 3:13; Ps. 9:8; Ps. 18:15; Ps. 19:4; Ps. 24:1; Ps. 33:8; Ps. 49:1; Ps. 50:12; Ps. 72:8; Ps. 77:18; Ps. 89:11; Ps. 90:2; Ps. 93:1; Ps. 96:10; Ps. 96:13; Ps. 97:4; Ps. 98:7; Ps. 98:9; Prov. 8:31; Isa. 10:14; Isa. 10:23; Isa. 13:5; Isa. 13:9; Isa. 13:11; Isa. 14:17; Isa. 14:26; Isa. 23:17; Isa. 24:1; Isa. 24:4; Isa. 27:6; Isa. 34:1; Isa. 37:16; Isa. 37:18; Isa. 62:4; Jer. 10:12; Jer. 51:15; Lam. 4:12; Dan. 2:38; Dan. 3:2

And this took place in the reign of Claudius - Claudius, aka [Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus](#) who ruled after Caligula and before Nero. The fact that Claudius reigned from 41-54 AD helps date the foundation of the church at Antioch as during this period and also substantiates that this was several years after the persecution and scattering in Acts 8:1-4.

Romans Rulers in Period of Acts	
EMPEROR	YEARS REIGNED
Tiberius	A.D. 15-35
Caligula	A.D. 35-41
Claudius (Acts 11:28; 17:7; 18:2)	A.D. 41-54
Nero (Acts 25:11)	A.D. 54-68

[Wikipedia](#) - **Claudius** (1 August 10 BC – 13 October 54 AD) was Roman emperor from 41 to 54. A member of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, he was the son of Drusus and Antonia Minor. He was born at Lugdunum in Gaul, the first (and until Trajan, only) Roman Emperor to be born outside Italy. Because he was afflicted with a limp and slight deafness due to sickness at a young age, his family ostracized him and excluded him from public office until his consulship, shared with his nephew Caligula in 37.

Ger - Later that year (A D 44), (Agabus') prophecy would be fulfilled when a cataclysmic series of famines began which were to continue sporadically for the next five years during the reign of the Emperor Claudius. Ancient historians, in particular, Josephus, record that the Roman Empire was beset by several severe famines between the years A.D. 44-49.

Acts 11:29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

KJV Acts 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

- **in the proportion that any of the disciples had means** Ezra 2:69; Nehemiah 5:8; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:2-4,12-14; 1 Peter 4:9-11

- **determined to send a contribution** Acts 2:44,45; 4:34; Ecclesiastes 11:1,2; Luke 12:29-33; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 13:5; 16:1; 2 Corinthians 9:1,2; Galatians 2:10; Hebrews 13:5,6

GENTILE GRACE GIVING

And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means - The first words in Greek are "**the disciples**" which places emphasis on them and then on their act of generosity. Recall the root idea of **disciples** is "learners" and these Gentile believers had already learned the truth of Jesus' words that "**It is more blessed to give than to receive**" (Acts 20:35+). And so we see the "full circle" learners show themselves "learners" by being "doers" of the Word! What a model! Are you as convicted as I am? **In the proportion** is the Greek word **kathos** most often translated *just*, but in this context means "*to the degree that*." Some disciples had little but still proportionately gave. Absolutely less, but proportionately the same (cf the poor widow's convicting gift - Lk 21:2-3, 4+). God, of course, looks not at the absolute amount they gave but upon their transformed hearts (cf 1 Sa 16:7) filled with kindness and love for men and women they had never even seen and likely of a race (Jewish Christians) they heretofore had despised. Notice also how Jesus words (Acts 20:35) are verified (as if anything Jesus said need verification!) - the "boomerang" thrown by the saints in Judea, returned to them at their time of need! In other words, the brethren in Judea had ministered spiritually, and now the brethren in Antioch were moved by the Spirit to minister financially (which is also ministering spiritually!)

There is another aspect of their giving in **proportion**. As **Guzik** says "It also means that they gave according to the ability of their faith, trusting that their gift to God's work was a worthy investment in His kingdom, and not a loss."

NET Note adds that "The financial relief reflects the oneness of the church (cf 1 Cor 12:13), meeting the needs of another (even racially distinct) community. Jerusalem, having ministered to them, now received ministry back. A later collection from Greece is noted in Rom 15:25-27, but it reflects the same spirit as this gift."

Had means (2141)(**euporeo** from **eu** = well + **poreuomai** = to go) is a verb means have plenty, be well off, be prosperous (relative to those starving in Judea, the believers in Antioch were prosperous!).

Each of them - Note it does not same "some" but "each," and you are probably saying "So what's your point?" This phrase **each of them** is easy to overlook, but that would be a mistake and cause you to miss a crucial (convicting) truth! **Each** is the adjective is **hekastos** which means each, every one or every single one (every family of believers). The early church "got it" -- nothing belonged to them, but it was all God's property and these believers responded accordingly. One wonders how many churches today manifest such a uniformly, universally giving spirit, giving proportionately to their means, giving to those they don't even know, giving to those who previously they had contempt (with a mutual feeling by the Jewish recipients)! Oh, **the power of the Gospel to change hearts** and make us all one in Christ, by His Spirit (cf Gal 3:28+, Col 3:11+, cf Eph 4:2-6+), for the glory of the Father! When we truly grasp the gracious "**gratuity**" ("given without claim or obligation") of God's Gospel, we are more likely to cheerfully (cf 2 Cor 9:7) obey Jesus' charge "**Give** (aorist imperative) **as freely as you have received!**" (Mt 10:8NLT)

Barton comments that the opposite of cheerful giving is "Reluctant giving (which) reflects a lack of concern for people and a worldly focus (Matthew 6:19-21). When you remember how much God has done for you and when you focus your concern on the needy, you will be motivated to give." (Life Application Commentary).

Determined to send a contribution - **Send** is the Greek verb **pempo** which means to send from one place to another (sometimes persons Lk 4:26), but in this case sending their relief through intermediaries, Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:30).

Determined ("marked off the horizon")(3724)(**horizo**) means first to separate entities and thus establish a boundary and then to set limits, and to make a determination about something, in this case they **determined** (active voice = speaks of their volitional choice, a choice of their will, this grace giving undoubtedly energized by the Spirit of grace) to give.

Robertson says "The worst of the famine came A.D. 45."

For the relief of the brethren living in Judea - The brethren in Judea would have been primarily Jewish believers. But here we see the now presumably predominantly Gentile church at Antioch was willing to demonstrate their unity not just in words but with their "pocketbooks!"

James Montgomery Boice makes an interesting comment - As far as I know, this is the first charitable act of this nature in all recorded history—one race of people collecting money to help another people. No wonder they were first called Christians at Antioch.

Warren Wiersbe - An important spiritual principle is illustrated in this passage: if people have been a spiritual blessing to us, we should minister to them out of our material possessions. "Let him who is taught in the word share in all good things with him who

teaches" (Gal. 6:6NKJV).

Relief is a surprising Greek noun **diakonia** which is most often translated "**ministry**" (19/34x) and next most frequently as **serve/service/serving**. (10/34x). What a "word picture" of how God's inspired Word sees our giving! It is a ministry! It is an act of service or serving! Isn't this a wonderful picture of God's grace flowing through redeemed sinners? When we give to poor and widows, God sees it as if we were serving them or ministering to them. Of course, this does not preclude face to face service and ministry but that is not always possible, as with missionaries in foreign countries.

Swindoll - Secular historians note his having to deal with at least two severe grain shortages in Rome due to famines in several parts of the empire. These grain shortages affected Rome in AD 42 and 51. According to hints from Egyptian records of the time and Josephus's Antiquities, Judea felt the effects around AD 46. That year, the church in Syrian Antioch took up a collection and sent it to Jerusalem in the care of Barnabas and Saul. **This is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. First**, the autonomous body of believers in Antioch viewed themselves as part of a greater whole and, therefore, responsible to care for their needy brothers and sisters in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 4:34-37). **Second**, the Antioch church had grown strong enough to send tangible help to Jerusalem instead of requiring assistance themselves. This signaled a subtle shift. The Jerusalem church would become less vital while Antioch would grow more important. (Acts-Swindoll's Living Insights)

Acts 11:30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

KJV Acts 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

- **sending it** Acts 14:23; 15:4,6,23; 16:4; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1
- **in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders** Acts 12:25; 1 Corinthians 16:3,4; 2 Corinthians 8:17-21

FOLLOWING THROUGH

William Arnot observes that "In the beginning of Acts 11 we learned that sufferings **separated** those who were united; and so the truth was spread: in the end we learned that sufferings **united** those who were separated and so, by contributing food to the Jewish Christians, the Gentile Christians bridged with love the dividing gulf, and permitted the body of Christ to flow into one. When the converted Greeks at Antioch learned by prophecy that the brethren in Judea would soon be in straits, they forthwith began to make contributions. Evidently they were cheerful givers. They would not murmur when the subscription list came round. They counted it blessed to give, and were ready. Before the calamity came, it was provided for.

And this they did - The disciples followed through on their determination. Have you ever said you would do something (in ministry) and then failed to follow through. Many of us have said "I'll pray for you," only to find ourselves a little embarrassed when a some time later they come and thank us profusely for praying because "God clearly heard your prayers!" And yet we did not do as we had declared (This is "true confessions"!)

As we have often heard, love is an "action" word. These new believers at Antioch were rapid "learners" (disciples) putting into action the inspired words that John would later pen on parchment...

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**.
17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:16-18+)

Paul described another situation when the Gentile church reciprocated with material benefits in light of the spiritual benefits they had received from the Jews in Jerusalem...

But now, I (PAUL) am going to Jerusalem **servicing** (**diakoneo** - present tense) the saints. 26 For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a **contribution** (**koinonia**) for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 Yes, they were **pleased** (**eudokeo**) to do so, and they (SAINTS IN MACEDONIA AND ACHAIA) are **indebted** (**opheilo** - present tense) to them. **For** (TERM OF EXPLANATION - WHAT IS PAUL EXPLAINING?) if the Gentiles have **shared** (**koinoneo**) in their spiritual things, they are **indebted** (**opheilo** - present tense) to **minister** (**leitourgeo**) to them also in material things. (Ro 15:25-27+)

Steven Ger has a suggested chronology - The chronology of Acts 11:30 must be clarified. Luke, who is generally quite conscientious to list events in careful chronological order, seems to have inserted this verse here for thematic reasons, but

chronologically it should be placed adjacent to Acts 12:25, following the events of Acts 12:1-24. Some three years later, at the height of the famine, Saul and Barnabas are sent by their church to Jerusalem with this financial aid package. This would allow sufficient time for the church in Antioch to have raised the notable benevolence collection, which Saul and Barnabas delivered to the elders leading the Jerusalem church, likely during the Feast of Tabernacles celebration of autumn A.D. 47.

Sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders - Barnabas and Saul had been discipling for a year and thus the church knew that they could trust them with their contribution for they had been handling the Word of God in a trustworthy manner (cf 2 Ti 1:14+).

Don't miss the order of the names as it is significant - **Barnabas and Saul**. (Acts 11:30, Acts 12:25, Acts 13:1, 2, 7) As **Jack Arnold** points out "Paul did not come to Antioch as the main leader. He came as Barnabas's assistant. In Acts 11:30 the reference is to "Barnabas and Saul," not Saul and Barnabas. However, after Acts 13, we see Barnabas taking a second place to Paul for the references are to "Paul and Barnabas." (see Acts 13:9 and then Acts 13:42, 43, 46, 50) Even the great Apostle Paul needed training under an older, wiser pastor and Barnabas was the perfect man for the job."

Sending (649) ([apostello](#) from **apo** = from, away from + **stello** = to withdraw from, avoid) means to send off, to send forth, to send out. Here Barnabas and Saul were send out as a representative of the body of Christ at Antioch.

Ray Stedman on sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul - What wonderful instruction in the Holy Spirit they must have had under the leadership of these two men! How clearly they understood the essential character of the church -- that it is a body that shares life, one member with another. You notice that there is no sense of hierarchy here, no priesthood. There is no super-spiritual class of saints called the clergy. There is just the body of Christians together, one group in Jerusalem and one in Antioch. One has need and the other has plenty. And so the body in Antioch sent to the body in Jerusalem what was required to meet their need and to share together in the life that is in Jesus Christ. What a wonderful picture this is of the church. The essential characteristics of a church are all here: The gifts of the Spirit, the shared life in Jesus, the proclamation of the Word, the teaching of the Scripture, the sharing of the body; it is all here. **Every now and then the Holy Spirit breaks out afresh and starts the pattern all over again, when men drift away from it.** You and I are living in one of those days. What an exciting day this is, as God is renewing the pattern of the church once again in our own time! How we ought to rejoice in that great fact! (**ED: THIS SERMON WAS PREACHED IN AUGUST, 1970 - IT SEEMS THAT THE MODERN CHURCH HAS DRIFTED AWAY AND NEEDS ANOTHER "EXCITING DAY" - IT HAS BEEN ALMOST 50 YEARS SINCE THE "EXCITING DAY" AT PENINSULA BIBLE CHURCH! SEND US THE FIRE OF REVIVAL LORD GOD. AMEN).** ([Acts 11:19-30 Expanding Horizons](#))

Arnold on to the elders - It was not taken to the deacons or to a finance committee. This indicates that elders are the overseers of all finances in a local church. The elders received the money and distributed it as the people had need. It is also wonderful to note that Paul, who persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem as an unsaved man, now is chosen to bring the relief to the same church. **Oh, how beautiful is the grace of God!**

Elders (4245) ([presbuteros](#) comparative of **présbus** = old man) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of veneration. **Presbuteros** in this context does not speak of men of mature age but men of spiritual maturity. In first Timothy Paul says "Let the **elders** (presbuteros) who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching... Do not receive an accusation against an **elder** (presbuteros) except on the basis of two or three witnesses." (1Ti 5:17,19) It would appear that the early church followed the pattern of used in the Jewish synagogues, in which several mature men were selected to provide leadership to the local congregation.

Presbuteros in Acts - Note that while presbuteros is used by Luke earlier in Acts to describe Jewish leadership, the use in Acts 11:30 is the first time that he uses the designation "elder" to describe the leadership of the Church (cf. Acts 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18). Presumably, **elders** were appointed to oversee the church in Jerusalem because the apostles were traveling to different regions to fulfill the charge given them by Jesus to be His witnesses.

Acts 2:17; Acts 4:5; Acts 4:8; Acts 4:23; Acts 6:12; Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:2; Acts 15:4; Acts 15:6;
Acts 15:22; Acts 15:23; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17; Acts 21:18; Acts 23:14; Acts 24:1; Acts 25:15;

Ger adds this note - Unlike today's church, which is so often confused regarding the issue of whether a Jew may be saved and, once he is saved, how much of his Jewish culture (if any) he may still retain, the question which so greatly perplexed the early church was precisely how one goes about saving a Gentile. Indeed, there was a question as to whether seeking Gentile salvation was even a desirable activity. Although the tentative conclusion was reached that Gentiles could be saved and that, like Jews, they are saved solely through trust in Jesus apart from any other activity or belief, the exact nature of the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers still remained to be fleshed out. How exactly were the two groups of believers to not only mingle together but also successfully blend together in affectionate coexistence? Was that even possible? Should they attempt to unite? Should they go their separate ways? How much Jewish practice did a Gentile believer need to adopt, and conversely, how much of his culture could or

should he retain? These controversial issues would eventually come to a head at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, an astonishing nine years after Cornelius had turned to the Lord. (Ibid)

Charles Swindoll applies the truths especially in the life of Saul - **Set Aside for Good Works** - No one likes to feel set aside. After Saul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus and then his "furlough" in Tarsus ministry, he undoubtedly felt bewildered and disillusioned during those "silent" years back in his hometown. Thankfully, he submitted to a humbling decade of soul-shaping preparation in the shadows of the church. His patience allowed him to emerge later as the most influential man in the history of the New Testament age. As I observe the Lord's preparation of Saul, two principles emerge.

First, only the Lord can prepare a person for ministry. After the Lord confronted Saul personally (Acts 9:4-6) and then revealed his future role in ministry (Acts 26:15-18), Saul got to work right away, confronting his kindred Jews in the synagogues. When that failed, he wisely retreated to Arabia for nearly three years. Perhaps thinking his experience had sufficiently prepared him and feeling ready to engage in ministry again, he returned to Damascus—to disastrous results there and again in Jerusalem. Clearly, he wasn't ready. Ten years passed (ED: SOME THINK LESS THAN 10 YEARS) with the great Saul of Tarsus pushed to the sidelines in a pagan university city, far from the action in Jerusalem, a town he once owned. Then, when the time for Saul was right, and when Saul was right for the times, the Lord allowed this humbled Pharisee to step into the spotlight. He reentered, a wiser man with a clearer understanding of the work of the Spirit in his life and his ministry. Almost every seasoned minister can relate. After I received my call to ministry, I knew immediately I needed to prepare. But when I enrolled in the four-year program at Dallas Theological Seminary, I had no idea that a large percentage of my preparation would occur outside the classroom! Certainly, the professors gave me crucial knowledge and insight, but it was the Lord who prepared me. During that time, He whittled and filed and chipped away at my character to shape me into a suitable vessel. Then, after my formal schooling, I spent another two years assisting an older pastor and another two years struggling in a ministry not suited to my personal style and bent. As I look back, I realize that nothing could have prepared me for my future role in ministry like the Lord's personal touch during those difficult years out of the limelight. At the time, it was unclear what the Lord was doing. Looking back, it all makes sense.

Second, the Lord must prepare the ministry for the person. During his face-to-face encounter with the Lord and his three-day fast, Saul learned that he would minister to the Gentiles. The Lord told him, "For this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:16-18) At the time, however, Peter had not yet visited Cornelius. The Gentiles were only beginning to consider this strange Jewish teaching from Jerusalem, and the church leaders had not even considered evangelism outside the Jewish community. Simply put, the world was not yet ready for Saul's ministry with such a marked emphasis on grace. While the Lord prepared Saul for evangelism and church planting among the Gentiles, He also prepared the Gentiles and the church for him. In ministry—like a lot of things—timing is everything. (Acts-Swindoll's Living Insights)