

## THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### NOTES

- A. A review of Saul's ministry since salvation.
1. Damascus: Jesus appeared to Saul (Acts 9:3–22)
  2. Arabia: Saul grew in his faith in the Lord Jesus (Galatians 1:17)
  3. Damascus: Saul was threatened with death and went to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23–25; Galatians 1:17; 2 Corinthians 11:32–33)
  4. Jerusalem: Saul was threatened with death again (Acts 9:26–29; Galatians 1:18–20)
  5. Caesarea: Saul was taken to Caesarea to sail by boat to Tarsus (Acts 9:30)
  6. Tarsus: Saul ministered in his home region (Acts 9:30; Galatians 1:21–24)
  7. Antioch: Barnabas looked for Saul in Tarsus and took him to Antioch so they could minister as a team.
- B. A change of emphasis in Acts, chapter 11.
1. Up to this point, the focus of the Book of Acts is on evangelism of Jews.
  2. It will now turn to evangelism of Gentiles with Saul moving into the calling placed on him by the Lord Jesus.

## THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH, ACTS 11:19-30

- A. The spiritual emphasis of the church at Antioch (11:19-26)
1. The Gospel continued to spread with Jews and Gentiles believing in Antioch (19-21)
    - a. Jews were evangelized by those who had been scattered due to Stephen's persecution (19), ***Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.***
      - 1) The Gospel spread throughout Judea and Samaria as a result of Stephen's death.
      - 2) Now, the impact of Stephen's death was being felt throughout the Mediterranean.
        - a) Phoenicia is the region north of Caesarea, along the coast.
        - b) Cyprus is an island west of Antioch in the Mediterranean Sea .
        - c) Antioch is 15 miles from the coast in what is now northern Syria. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire.
      - 3) The message of the Gospel was being proclaimed only to Jews.
        - a) The broadness of the Gospel was yet to be understood.
        - b) An explosion of God's grace was soon to take place.
        - c) Persecution strengthens a Christian's witness.
    - b. Some from Cyprus and Cyrene gave witness of Jesus Christ to Gentiles (Greeks) (20-21), ***But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.***
      - 1) Those from Cyprus and Cyrene witnessed to Gentiles, also.
        - a) Cyrene was a city in North Africa in what is now Libya.
        - b) As noted, Cyprus is an island west of Antioch and is now divided between Turkey and Greece.
      - 2) They were preaching the Lord Jesus to Hellenists.
        - a) This time the term *Hellenists* refers to Greek Gentiles (non-Jews).
        - b) This is the first time that Jews initiated evangelistic efforts to Gentiles.
        - c) For Gentiles, the term *Lord* would be more significant than *Christ* or *Messiah* because Caesar was considered *Lord* (God) in the Roman Empire.
      - 3) Antioch would soon become the staging point for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, the base of operations for Paul's missionary journeys.
        - a) It was a commercial center with a large Jewish community.
        - b) The city was immoral with ritual prostitution as part of its temple worship.

- c) Roman writer Juvenal complained, *The sewage of the Syrian Orontes has for long been discharged into the Tiber*. He meant that Antioch was so corrupt it was impacting Rome, more than 1,300 miles away.
  - d) Bad places can't stop the good news.
  - e) William Barclay, *It seems incredible but nonetheless it is true that it was in a city like that that Christianity took the great stride forward to becoming the religion of the world. We have only to think of that to discover there is no such thing as a hopeless situation.*
  - f) Richard Longenecker, *In Christian history, apart from Jerusalem, no other city of the Roman Empire played as large a part in the early life and fortunes of the church as Antioch of Syria.*
- 4) *a great number*
- a) There was a very positive response by non-Jews to the message of the Gospel.
  - b) Those who responded were possibly *God-fearers* who went to synagogue and it probably included pagans who were dissatisfied with their lives in such a corrupt city as Antioch.
- 5) *who believed turned to the Lord*
- a) It is literally, *in believing they turned to the Lord.*
  - b) It describes belief placed in the Lord which results in salvation.
  - c) Belief and repentance are two sides of the same coin.
2. Barnabas went to examine what was happening in Antioch (22-24)
- a. He was sent by the church in Jerusalem to determine what was taking place in Antioch (22), ***The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.***
    - 1) News of evangelization of non-Jews was made known to the church in Jerusalem.
      - a) The apostles had sent Peter and John to check on Philip's ministry in Samaria, Acts 8:14-15, *Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,*
      - b) Now, they sent a team to evaluate what was happening in Antioch, more than 300 miles away.
      - c) The purity of the Gospel must be maintained.
    - 2) The team included Saul and Barnabas.
      - a) The selection of Saul indicates that the apostles now trusted that Saul was a true believer.
      - b) Barnabas was a good choice.
        - 1] He was from Cyprus like some of the evangelists in Antioch.
        - 2] He had a Hellenistic background which enabled him to better relate to the people.
        - 3] He was an encouraging individual, Acts 4:36, *Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus,*
        - 4] He was full of the Holy Spirit, faith, and goodness as noted in Acts 11:24.
  - b. He was encouraged by what was taking place in Antioch and exhorted them to remain faithful (23), ***When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,***
    - 1) Barnabas affirmed that what was happening in Antioch was of the Lord.
      - a) Barnabas, as always, was an encourager, who concluded that God was genuinely at work in Antioch.
      - b) He encouraged those who were evangelizing to continue.
        - 1] Faithfulness to the Lord demands knowledge of one's purpose.
        - 2] Faithfulness is continuing to serve despite the obstacles.
    - 2) It is believed Luke came from Antioch; perhaps he was one of the converts.
  - c. He was a godly man who was used by God in growing the church in Antioch (24), ***for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.***
    - 1) A description of Barnabas
      - a) He was a good man (he lived what he believed).
      - b) He was full of the Holy Spirit (he was led by the Holy Spirit).
      - c) He was full of faith (his trust was in the Lord Jesus).
      - d) God uses those who live the truth.

- 2) The fruit of a life that abided in Christ.
    - a) The work of others was affirmed.
    - b) Many people came to faith in Jesus.
  - 3) Barnabas' impact on the future of the church.
    - a) His positive report of the work in Antioch gave credibility to the evangelization of non-Jews.
    - b) The result was the soon spread of Christianity throughout the entire world, then and now.
3. Barnabas recruited Saul to teach believers at Antioch (25-26)
- a. He went to Tarsus and brought him back to Antioch (25-26a), ***So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch.***
    - 1) Barnabas knew of Jesus' call on Saul's life.
      - a) He saw the results of evangelizing non-Jews.
      - b) He knew that Jesus called Saul to be the apostle to non-Jews.
      - c) He felt it was time for Saul to take the next step in his apostolic calling.
    - 2) Barnabas had probably heard of what had been happening in Saul's life.
      - a) By now, Saul had about nine years of ministry experience since his conversion.
      - b) Some believe Saul was rejected by his family for coming to faith in Christ, Philippians 3:8, *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.*
      - c) Some believe the sufferings described in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 took place while he was ministering in the area of Tarsus, *Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*
      - d) Saul possibly received the revelation noted in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, during this time period, *I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.*
    - 3) Saul agreed to go with Barnabas to Antioch.
      - a) Saul was probably wondering when he would become what Jesus had called him to be.
      - b) He probably saw serving with Barnabas as an answer to prayer.
      - c) God's timing is always perfect but it often doesn't feel that way while praying for patience.
  - b. Barnabas and Saul taught many people at the church in Antioch for one year (26b), ***For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.***
    - 1) Barnabas and Saul served together in Antioch for a year.
      - a) They were still close to home but the doors were opening wide for the ministry Jesus promised Saul on the road to Damascus.
      - b) This partnership would soon take them worldwide in service of their Savior.
    - 2) Followers of Christ were first called Christians in Antioch.
      - a) The term, *Christian*, followers of Jesus Christ, was used two other times in the New Testament.
        - 1] Acts 26:28, *And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"*
        - 2] 1 Peter 4:16, *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*
      - b) Christians were being recognized as a group distinct from Judaism.
        - 1] Jewish Christians were coming to realize that one did not have to become a Jew to become Christian.
        - 2] Non-Jews were seeing the essence of Christianity is in who He claimed to be and in what He claimed He did.

- B. The church at Antioch had a concern for physical needs, as well (11:27-30)
1. A prophet from Jerusalem shared a coming famine (27-28), *Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).*
    - a. Prophets visited the church at Antioch.
      - 1) *Down from Jerusalem* refers to elevation not direction.
      - 2) Prophets were still active in the church until the completion of the New Testament, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
      - 3) A prophet was one to whom God gave the ability to speak for Him, including new revelation.
      - 4) Prophets were ranked next to the apostles in the early church.
    - b. Agabus, one of the prophets gave a prophecy empowered by the Holy Spirit.
      - 1) He was also mentioned in Acts 21:10-11, *While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"*
      - 2) The prophecy foretold a great world-wide famine which probably was one of the reasons the church in Antioch chose to send aid to Christians in Judea.
      - 3) The famine occurred during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.).
  2. The church chose to send aid to Christians in Judea by Barnabas and Saul (29-30), *So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*
    - a. Funds were sent by the church in Antioch to suffering Christians in Judea.
      - 1) *everyone according to his ability.*
        - a) Participation was based on ability to give.
        - b) This requirement is noted elsewhere in the New Testament.
          - 1] 1 Corinthians 16:2, *On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.*
          - 2] 2 Corinthians 9:7, *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*
      - 2) It was delivered to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.
        - a) This is the first mention of church elders in Acts.
        - b) *Elders* are official church leaders, Titus 1:5, *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.*
    - 3) The visit took place around 46 A.D.
  - b. A spiritual bond developed between the two churches.
    - 1) The church in Jerusalem provided spiritual support to the church in Antioch.
    - 2) The church in Antioch helped supply the physical needs of the church in Jerusalem.
    - 3) Romans 15:27, *For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.*
    - 4) We should care about the needs of others.

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Saul did not become Paul through his own efforts.
  1. Christians are inter-dependent: we need each other.
  2. Churches are inter-dependent: Antioch needed Jerusalem and Jerusalem needed Antioch.
- B. God cares about our spiritual and physical needs.
- C. God uses men and women who are committed to Jesus Christ, in word and deed, to impact the world for His glory.