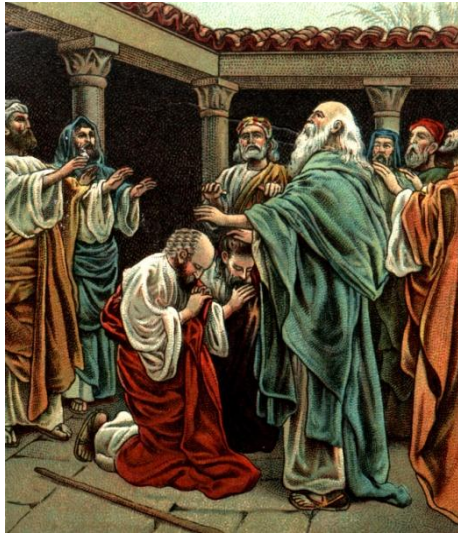


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS LESSON 9



THE CHURCH SCATTERED BY PERSECUTION

Scripture Text: Acts 11:19-30

The persecution of the brethren following the death of Stephen scattered the saints far and wide, and so, instead of extinguishing the fire of the new faith, succeeded only in spreading it. Now they were conscious that the Gospel was meant for all men everywhere. Now all nations could receive the Christian faith. Here we notice that God does great things through plain, ordinary, humble people. We observe, also, that evangelism sometimes begins not in public meeting but in private conversation.

There were many Spirit-given gifts in the Jerusalem church. Using them under the direction of the Spirit gave this church leadership, administered in love and brotherhood, not in dominion and authority. Today we get a look at the scattering of these saints and the result of their witness.

MEMORY VERSE: *And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*

—Acts 11:21

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Matthew 6:1-18** God will reward openly.

Tue.—**Proverbs 10:11-22** Love covers all sin.

Wed.—**3 John 1-12** Walk in the Truth.

Thu.—**2 John 4-11** Follow God's Commandments.

Fri.—**Colossians 3:1-17** The center of Christian life.

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 Glorify God.

Many People Believed

Acts 11:19-21 *They which were scattered . . . travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch.* Fleeing for their lives, the urge of the Spirit within was so strong that they went **preaching the word**. Some preached **unto the Jews only**. **Some . . . were men of Cyprus and Cyrene**. They preached Christ to the Greeks. Their preaching was successful because **the hand of the Lord was with them**. This again shows that it is God's will that the Gospel be taken to Gentiles. **A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.**

We read this often as we go through the Acts. Salvation work is a continual thing, not occasional, the usual, not extraordinary. We should not be satisfied to see a few saved now and then during the year. We want to see more. In Acts, we see God's normal way. This is what He will do for us if we yield to Him as these people did. Obey Him. Expect continual salvation work. Antioch was a tough place in which to found a Christian congregation. It was a place for nice people and timid people to stay away from. There was much sin there, so much that even the Romans spoke with disdain of the city's moral life. Yet it was to this wicked city that the saints who fled Jerusalem after Stephen's death brought the Gospel. And it was to the Gentiles, who the Jews believed to be beyond the boundaries of God's mercy, that these saints preached the Gospel.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 9

Barnabas Sent to Investigate

Acts 11:22-24 The church in Jerusalem, hearing of the evangelization of Greeks, sent Barnabas. He was also from Cyprus (**4:36**). He was to go **as far as Antioch**. In Antioch Barnabas saw **the grace of God**—it was God's work, these people had the real goods. He **was glad**. No objection from him. He rejoiced in the Truth. He **exhorted them to cleave unto the Lord**—to continue holding fast to Jesus. They should do it **with purpose of heart**—determination, from the heart pressing on to the goal set before them. Barnabas **was a good man**. Barnabas partook of this quality of God because God was in him. He was **full of the Holy Ghost and of faith**. While he was in Antioch, **much people was added unto the Lord**—were saved.

The Jerusalem church seems to have exercised leadership in the activities. This does not mean it held superior rights of authority or was a governing body. We see brotherly concern, investigation and advice, but no rulership. The rulership of the Holy Spirit is very evident as we move through our study. The Apostles had associated with Jesus in Jerusalem; they had greater experience than most others had. Since the Holy Spirit came first in Jerusalem, they had more time to become established. The Apostles at Jerusalem, as human instruments, had been given the Spirit's gifts and knew how to use them. If we are faithful where we happen to be and wait patiently upon the Lord, He will move us into greater areas of service when we are ready for them.

Barnabas Brings Paul

Acts 11:25-26 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus **for to seek Saul. When he had found him**—It is apparent that he had to look for him, remembering that Tarsus was Paul's home, where they had sent him for safety (**Acts 9:30**). Now the loving heart of Barnabas wanted Paul to enjoy these good meetings at Antioch and the newly saved to benefit from Paul's clear teaching. He **brought him unto Antioch**, where for a year they both **taught much people. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch**—like Christ, followers of Christ. People must have seen a resemblance strong enough to warrant the name. Do they see that resemblance in us?

Barnabas did not forget Paul. He had brought Paul to the church at first (**Acts 9:27**). His action then in bringing Paul into fellowship with the church there, and now bringing him back into active duty, may be the connecting link which gave the world the great service of the Apostle Paul.

Let us take this opportunity to stir up our minds in way of remembrance of what it means to be a follower of Christ. It means, first of all, to follow Christ in His teachings. These teachings are contrary to the teachings of the world. Once we have decided to be followers of Christ, we have to bid goodbye to the world's ways and walk the road Christ walked. This He teaches through His Word. Read and study it. The Bible is the Christian's road map.

Antioch Christians Believed the Prophets

Acts 11:27-30 **Came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch**. Prophets deliver to the people whatever message God gives them. One, Agabus, was given forecasts of the future. (**Acts 21:10-11**). He told them **by the Spirit**—not his own judgment— that **great dearth**—scarcity, want, lack of food on account of crop failure— was coming **throughout all the world**. The Antioch disciples believed the message. They **determined to send relief** to the church in Judaea. Each gave voluntarily and **according to his ability**. This is God's way. They chose **Barnabas and Saul** to carry the offering to Jerusalem to the elders for distribution.

JUST A THOUGHT

Lack of unction cannot be supplied in action.