

Sermon Title: Next Phase Of Gentile Salvation
Scripture Text: Acts 11:1-30 (Acts #27)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 11-5-23

I wasn't kidding when I quipped earlier that I am going to preach on a *whole chapter!* I've done that a few times in my life, but it takes a chapter like the one before us that is a narrative, and there are things that hold it together.

As we rejoin the Book of Acts, we know that God is inexorably moving His people precisely along the path that He designed for them. We have entered the part when the Gospel goes to Gentiles—and, *wow*, is that a *big deal!* We see God arranging circumstances so that from the very beginning, those Jews who were the first to believe in Christ are being taught that now they are going to be part of a glorious, worldwide spiritual family called the "Church" (Matt. 16:18; cf. Jn. 10:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; Col. 1:18, 24). That term has begun to show up in the Book of Acts—it showed up in Chapter 5, and then twice in Chapter 8, and once in Chapter 9. It was applied first to the gathering of Christians in Jerusalem, and then in other places where the Gospel went. Later, though the Apostle Paul, the fullness of the glory of Jew and Gentile together in one body is going to be revealed through Paul's later writings, and the Doctrine of the Church will be fleshed out in all of its fullness (e.g., Eph. 2:11-22; 3:4-6; 5:23), but we are just seeing it germinate now in the Book of Acts.

The first Gentile that we have recorded in the Book of Acts to become a Christian was the Ethiopian man that Philip led to Christ; we saw that back in Chapter 8. The first *group* of Gentiles that was saved was the ones who met in the house of Cornelius that we saw last time in Chapter 10. The Apostle Peter was at the epicenter of that historic day in the house of Cornelius. Then after he stayed awhile with *that* group—and they had met in the city of Caesarea, right on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea—now we come to our chapter for today, and a lot happens here.

And by the end, we will draw lessons for us from each of these stages in this next phase of Gentile salvation. I had a really good week: I came up with eightfold *double* alliteration! Wow! God is good!

1. The Questioners Question (vss. 1-3)
2. Peter Proclaims (vss. 4-17)
3. The Questioners Are Quelled (vs. 18)
4. The Persecuted Preach (vss. 19-21)
5. Barnabas Bustles To Antioch (vss. 22-24)
6. Barnabas Brings Saul (vss. 25-26)
7. Prophecy Leads To Provision (vss. 27-29)
8. Elders Enter The Scene (vs. 30)

And you can get to Heaven without alliterating, I promise.

But let's start with the beginning of this chapter.

It was absolutely *electrifying* news when Gentiles were saved. It was, frankly, not easy for the Jewish believers in Jerusalem to *grasp* that, let alone to welcome it. But the news of what had happened at Cornelius' house in Caesarea with Peter present—that got back to Jerusalem before *Peter* next came back to Jerusalem.

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And so we pick it up in the first three verses of Chapter 11—"Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea"—that's Jerusalem and the surrounding areas—"heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, 'You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.' " (NASB-1995—and throughout, unless otherwise noted) Now, when it says "circumcised," it is referring to Jews, obviously; and we are talking about the Jews who are the Christians.

Now, an interesting thing here: They didn't really ask a question—at least, as Luke recorded it for us. And something that you may or may not know is that in Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, originally, there is no punctuation; that's kind of a thing of our language, much more so than theirs. It is usually quite obvious, where to put punctuation; and we figure that out from the context, and make it fit our language. But there is also some wiggle room, and a little bit of room for artistic and creative was to emphasize what is there.

In this case, I really like what the translators of the New King James Version did: They put an exclamation point at the end of Verse 3, and I think that captures the nuance of the meaning. It would be something like, "Peter! You went to uncircumcised men and *ate with them?*" "That's exactly right!" "How *dare* you!" Even the Jews who had come to faith in Jesus—it still make them *gag* at the very *thought* of actually having fellowship with Gentiles!

Now, their lives had been turned upside down and *gloriously changed* by Christ. They *loved* meeting together. Remember, they kept going over and over every day to the Temple, gathering openly, publicly, gloriously joyful, proclaiming Christ to their Jewish brethren. They *thrived* on "the apostle's teaching" (Acts 2:42). They loved coming around the Lords Table. They loved just eating regular "meals together" (Acts 2:46). They rejoiced when friends and family and relatives and neighbors came to Christ. But this was stretching them to the breaking point (see Jn. 16:12).

An emotional shockwave hit them when *Samaritans* came to Christ. But when that happened—see back to Chapter 8—a visit from the Apostles Peter and John convinced them that it was real. "Wow! The *Samaritans* have the same thing we have in Christ!" But *now*—"Peter! *What did you do?*"

These folks did not question the Gospel, but they ran into an emotional brick wall of their lifelong hatred and ingrained disdain for Gentiles. *Their beloved Peter* ate with Gentiles *in a Gentile home!* "This must be the end of the world as we know it! What are things coming to?"

Well, Peter to the rescue! Peter recited for them exactly what we saw unfold last time we met in the Book of Acts, back in Chapter 10. The next 14 verses is almost verbatim from what Luke recorded that Peter had dealt with in Chapter 10.

So, Peter shares it with his questioning brethren in Jerusalem. Follow along—Verses 4 all the way through 17:

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"But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying, '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, 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. I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But I said, "By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth." But a voice from heaven answered a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky. And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea. The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. [Now you could hear the gasp: "this *Gentile* man's house!"] 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; and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household." And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 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." 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?' "

The answer to the *shock* and disbelief of his Jewish brethren was simply to tell them what happened.

So, The Questioners Question, and Peter Proclaims what happened. And now, we see The Questioners Are Quelled.

Peter was their beloved leader. They had followed him, they had heard him, they had seen him—they had seen great signs and wonders that God did through him; their lives had been forever and for eternity changed by Peter's Spirit-empowered preaching. And his explanation of what happened down in Joppa and Caesarea dealt with their shock. So we read in Verse 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.' "

They came around—but don't take that too far. It is one thing to say, "Glory to God for what He did...with *those* people over *there* in *that place*." It is quite another thing to *actually* have fellowship with *those* people. Stay tuned, and you are going to see God lead in a *very* special way to continue to batter down the walls of division between Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

The Questioners Questioned, and Peter Proclaimed, and The Questioners Were Quelled. And now we have this record: The Persecuted Preach.

The next step in this phase of Gentile salvation came without miraculous visions, without angelic visits, without any signs and wonders. God sent a special blessing to the churches in and around Jerusalem and Judea. That blessing was: persecution. Blessing? Persecution? *What?*

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Look at Verse 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."

What is he talking about? Well, look back to Chapter 8. "The persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen"—that's when Stephen, one of those original deacons, became a preacher and a proclaimer, and he got killed for it; marvelous testimony in Chapter 7. But that event launched this *rampaging* few years of *brutal* persecution of Christians wherever they could be found, and it was led by this man named Saul. Many of those first believers in Jerusalem and Judea were "scattered" after Stephen's murder. They took the Gospel with them.

Understand: Often, that is how God spreads His Church: He moves His people around. And if His people are not saying, "Ooh, Ooh, Ooh, where can I move to take the Gospel?"—He can get you there!

We are seeing this phenomenon right now, going on in our world with the war in Ukraine. Ever since the fall of Communism, Ukraine has sort of been the "Bible Belt" of Eastern Europe. The Gospel bore more fruit in Ukraine than in virtually any other—I think, indeed, in *more* than any other of the former Soviet republics. And as *horrific* as it is, what is going on there now, it has stirred the population pot rather violently, *including* scattering Christians who are refugees, *and* putting people in touch with other Christians who are helping them reach out to refugees. And you know, *entire new churches* have been born, with all brand-new believers, amidst the horrors of the war and the devastation of those who have lost absolutely everything! Now, the human suffering is *horrible*. I have friends and acquaintances in Ukraine; it is *awful*. But God is at work in the midst of it and through it.

Those who fled the persecution that Saul led after Stephen's martyrdom—well, they did the natural thing. Those who could went *where* they could, especially where they had family or friends, maybe business opportunities outside the areas where the persecution was raging the hottest. And the new life that they had in Christ—it showed rather obviously through them as they preached the Gospel wherever they went; and it was sometimes *their* testimony, *their* "peace" that is beyond "comprehension" in the midst of this incomprehensibly horrible situation (Phil. 4:7).

But it says they went "to no one except to Jews alone." That's okay—the Gospel was to go "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16). But then, there was another breakthrough. Someone other than Peter took up the task of preaching the Gospel further and further, to Gentiles. Chapter 11, Verse 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."

So now we are talking about Greek-speaking Jews who have become believers. And it says where they were from—you can look up "Cyprus and Cyrene," and I will show you where "Antioch" is in a moment. These were Jews who had become believers, but they were the ones—remember this term?—they were called "Hellenists" (Acts 6:1; 9:29).

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They were not natives of Jerusalem—not natives of Israel, even—and Greek was their first language, rather than Hebrew or Aramaic. They were more acclimated to Greek culture, and they lived in the non-Jewish world which had become pretty Greekified—Hellenized—especially in the years prior to the Romans showing up. As a matter of fact, the Greek word in here that describes them says they were "Hellenistas"—or, Greek-speaking Jews.

And they went about "preaching the Lord Jesus." And again, the Greek here is especially descriptive. They have a verb that we do not have an exact equivalent of in English, but it would be something like: "They were *Gospelizing* about Jesus." The word "gospel" means "good news." They were just "Good-news-ing" them wherever they went, and God used it mightily. Look at Verse 21—"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord." God just began this *raging fire* of Gentile salvation! And wherever an ember went, the fire spread.

Well, another news flash about this development rather quickly made its way back to Jerusalem—which leads to the next step. Questioners Question, Peter Proclaims, The Questioners Are Quelled, The Persecuted Preach, and: Barnabas Bustles to Antioch. I came up with "bustles" even without a thesaurus!

"We need to get Barnabas down to Antioch." You see, when Philip took the Gospel to the Samaritans, the Jerusalem church then sent Peter and John to visit Samaria. And God delayed the arrival of the Holy Spirit until the Apostles got there, saw what was going on, heard the message, prayed for them, and laid hands on them. And in that way, it was confirmed to all who saw and heard that the phenomenon of salvation was *the very same* in every place, to every kind of person of every ethnic background in whatever their native language was—one Gospel for the whole world (cf. Is. 49:6; Gal. 1:8-9; 3:28; Col. 3:11; Rev. 5:9).

Now *this* time, the church at Jerusalem hears about *this* rather spectacular evangelism going on in and around "Antioch"; and *this* time, they did not send Peter and John—maybe they were off doing other things; we don't know. But they sent the beloved and trusted assistant to the Apostles: this man named "Barnabas." Chapter 11, Verse 22—"The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch."

So the epicenter of *this* outbreak of salvation was the city of "Antioch," which was actually in Syria. You can get confused; there are two "Antiochs" in the New Testament—"Antioch of Pisidia" and "Antioch of Syria." This one was the better-known one. Antioch was about 200 miles to the north from Jerusalem. It was about 15 miles inland from the Mediterranean, so you can tell any business ground trade would pass through Antioch; it was a bustling place. There were many Jews there, and among them there were some Gentile proselytes—the ones who had gone all the way through the process of conversion to Judaism (cf. Est. 8:17b). Remember, I told you the "God-fearers" were the ones among the Gentiles who had rejected *their* native religion, and they were believing in the one true God; but the proselyte had gone all the way through and jumped through all the hoops and circumcision and all that, to become official Jews. *Some* of them from Antioch had been in Jerusalem in Acts Chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit actually came.

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Antioch is to become a very significant city in the first-century church: Antioch is the city from which the Apostle Paul was dispatched on his missionary trips. Antioch is *really* significant—probably, next to Jerusalem, maybe the most significant city in the first generation of the church.

In my life, personally, and the life of Heritage Bible Church, reference to "Antioch" is *very significant*: Since Antioch was the first Gentile church to raise up, train, support, send, and receive back the first missionaries to target Gentiles, it was decided that when we wrote a curriculum for training pastors and missionaries in Russia, it would be called "The Antioch Initiative." They know their Bibles really well in Russia; for 75 years, they had nothing but a Bible—no commentaries or anything. When we would say "Antioch," they knew what we were talking about.

You may not know this, because Heritage Bible Church is 20 years old—today is actually the last Sunday of our 20th year, so next Sunday is our *official* 20th Anniversary, even though we already celebrated it. But for the first five years of Heritage Bible Church, I lived a dual life: I was the pastor here—the best church that any pastor could ever *hope* to serve—and I also wrote the curriculum for "The Antioch Initiative"; that was my part-time job. And by choosing that term, we admittedly, joyfully, intentionally proclaimed that we are standing on the shoulders of the likes of Barnabas and the others who ministered at Antioch—and of course, eventually the Apostle Paul.

That "Antioch Initiative"—it is a sequence of courses that started out with 16; it is about 22 or 23 now. Americans would go and teach a course at a time in various places in the former Soviet Union. It has been used in *dozens* of the regions of Russia. It has been used in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, several other former Soviet republics; and, interestingly, in *Israel*—it's being used there *now*, if they are not blowing each other up. It has also been translated into a few other languages; one of them is Amharic—that is the official language of Ethiopia. And after this church in Montana taught that, not only in Russia but then in Ethiopia, the concept caught on: "This could work in other places in Africa!" And the curriculum has now been adapted and expanded, and it is now being used by an organization called "Spread of Grace Ministries" in several *other* African countries; and *now* it has broken out in Mexico.

Well, 17 years after we began working on "The Antioch Initiative," God sent to us, here at Heritage Bible Church, Scott Basolo. He is now carrying on the ministry—sort of the grandchild ministry of "The Antioch Initiative"—through "Spread of Grace," and he is now going to Africa and to Mexico; he has gone each of the last two years, and Lord willing, will continue to do so.

So I say all that to say not only, "We have connections here," but my friends, what we are seeing here in Acts 11 is *directly* related, by way of example, to the work of the Gospel in which *we all share*. I have been to Russia 22 times and counting—and holding—and more than 40 people from around here have gone from here to Russia in various capacities, all spinning off from "The Antioch Initiative"; and there have been *hundreds more* from all around the U.S. who have done the Antioch Initiative in other regions.

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We are praying that others from our church family will be able to accompany Scott on future trips with SGM. And beyond that, *all* the other missions and evangelism efforts that we support—they are *all* built on what *first* broke out in Antioch: the first Gentile training-equipping-sending-supporting church in the world.

So when Barnabas arrived in Antioch, he dove right into the ministry to all these new believers there, and God blessed them with even more coming to faith in Christ. Look at Verses 23 and 24—"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; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord." We have already seen two headcounts: "many" and "considerable numbers"—*it was a lot!* People were coming to the Lord *all around*.

So, what's next? After Barnabas Bustles To Antioch, Barnabas Brings Saul.

Barnabas realized right away that what he was seeing there in Antioch was part of God's plan that involved that guy "Saul," whom we will soon know as the Apostle Paul. Do you remember, we saw back in Chapter 9, Verse 27: Saul had come to faith, and he had been in Damascus for a little while, and he got persecuted out of there, and he went to Jerusalem; and the Jews got angry, and they persecuted him there; and the brethren took him down to Caesarea, and then dispatched him up to Tarsus, where he has been—in his hometown. Well, when he first went to Jerusalem, he got rather a cool response from the Christians there, including the Apostles: [with suspicion] "Oh, you're one of *us*, now. That's what *I* would say if I wanted to infiltrate this group and blow it up!" It was Barnabas who stepped up and went to the trouble to get to know Saul, and it was Barnabas who bridged the gap and introduced Saul to the rest of the Apostles.

So he had come to understand Saul's intended role in the plan of God. And I'm sure Saul had shared with him [Barnabas], what Ananias had said to *him* [Saul] on that road outside of Damascus. Ananias was saying, "You want me to go talk to *who*—that guy that's trying to kill us?" And in Chapter 9, Verse 15, he is told: "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." So, Barnabas figured out what was going on.

The verb tense in Verse 23 means that Barnabas was spending some time ministering to the new believers there in Antioch, and it was clear to him that someone else needed to get involved.

So look at Verses 25 and 26—"And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 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."

So they spent over a year there. It is a little bit tough to get super-precise about it, but if you have been counting, we are about 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 years since Jesus ascended. For us—ten and a half chapters; we could read that in 20 minutes. But this was a big deal, and they were really pouring their lives into them at Antioch.

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So, several years had elapsed now since they had sent Saul back to his home of Tarsus. And Paul later rather cryptically refers to the fact that he was taught directly by Christ while he was there (Gal. 1:11-12). We are not given a whole lot of information about that. I wish we had it written down—it would save me a lot of time writing that "Antioch Initiative."

But Barnabas was tenacious to do whatever it took to find Saul. Now, understand: No airplanes, no trains, no buses, no cars, no bicycles, no Ubers. It's like, "Okay, um, I think I'll just walk from Boise over to Mountain Home [44 miles], and I will start asking people if they know this guy named Saul, and where I can find him." He did that, and he found him. That would have been a fun story! But we are not given anything except that he went there, and when he found him, he brought him back.

But whatever conversations took place between Saul and Barnabas, it was used by God to convince Saul: "It is time to launch. It is time for you to be involved in fulltime ministry among Gentiles."

And notice that last little phrase there in Verse 26: "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Would you notice: The term "Christian" is not what they chose for themselves; they were "called Christians"—it was a label given to them by non-Christians. The essence of the word means "of the party of Christ" or "Christ-ones" or "little Christs"; it was not meant to be a flattering term. The mayor of Antioch did not call the city council together and say, "These people are *so wonderful*, they are doing *so many things* for our community, and lives are being *transformed*! We have to come up with a label for this movement! Let's call them 'Christians'! All in favor?" No, it was, [with contempt] "Oh, you are one of those 'Little Christs'? What do you think you are?" It was not flattering.

But always keep in mind: People who do not love Christ are likely not to think highly of *you* for following Him (see Jn. 15:18-19). And they are doing it *right now*. When it comes to abortion: If you are all for it, you love "women's healthcare." And if you think that that is murder, you are a "radical extremist." That is what outsiders do to people who stand for the truth.

Now, file for future reference that we have just seen that for an entire year, Saul, along with Barnabas, is ministering in Antioch. We are going to get back to that in coming weeks, but this has become headquarters now.

Alright, there are two more tidbits to round out this chapter. The next one is: Prophecy Leads To Provision.

Keep in mind that the Book of Acts is a transitional book; it is the record of the history of the transition from Old Covenant to New Covenant, from Israel to the Church. The New Testament is not completed yet—they did not have the 27 books that we have; *not one book* of the New Testament had been written by the time of Acts Chapter 11. So, in some special situations, God gave *direct revelation* to certain people. We have seen it happen to Peter, we've seen it happen to Saul, to Ananias, to Cornelius—it is going to go on a little bit more, too.

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Well, such a thing happened in Antioch. News got back from Antioch to Jerusalem, and they said, "Well, let's send Barnabas down there." Barnabas went down there. Probably, news came back of all that was going on, and some prophets from Jerusalem visited Antioch.

Verses 27 to 29—"Now at this time"—What time? During the year that Saul and Barnabas were there—"some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 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." Now, that's a little bit of a hyperbole; it means the *known* world, the Roman world. We are not saying that *Fiji* had "a great famine" in 45 A.D. But there was going to be this "great famine" all over the empire. "And this took place in the reign of Claudius." Check out your list of Roman Emperors before Nero. "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."

Now, this is getting interesting. This was during Saul's first year in Antioch. Agabus comes along with this message. By the way, he is going to intersect again with the life of the Apostle Paul years later, and God is going to use him to let Paul know of the imprisonment that awaited him in Rome (Acts 21:10-11). So he is a man through whom God sometimes gave revelation. Otherwise, we do not know anything about him.

Several ancient writers—extra-Biblical writers—corroborate that there *was* "a great famine" that took place around the eastern Roman Empire during the reign of the Roman Emperor "Claudius." It actually happened.

Now, think all the way back—I'm going to really tax your memory here—think back to the beginning of this chapter. Some of the Jews in Jerusalem who were Christians were *shocked* at Peter having fellowship with Gentiles. *How marvelous is it* that the first interaction that flowed between the Gentile believers in Antioch and the Jewish believers in Jerusalem was a contribution *from Gentiles* for "the relief of the *brethren*"—the Christian brothers and sisters—"living in Judea"? Why, you would think God is knitting together Jew and Gentile into "one body" (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Ep. 2:16).

One more tidbit: Elders Enter The Scene. Chapter 11, Verse 30—"And this they did"—they sent the "contribution"—"sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders."

A couple of things to point out there:

"In charge of Barnabas and Saul"—that is evidence of the New Testament principles of handling money that included accountability and transparency (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:3-4; 2 Cor. 8:17-21). They wanted to make sure this was well-supervised.

And then notice also, "Barnabas and Saul" went to the trouble of *personally* establishing fellowship between the Gentile believers in Antioch and the Jewish believers in Jerusalem and Judea. They *could* have sent it by messenger, they *could* have sent it with the next brother that was taking a business trip from Antioch down to Judea, but they took it themselves.

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And notice: They took it "to the elders." Now, I just want to plant a seed here: We see that the office of "elders" was *already in place* among the early believers in the first ten years of the Church. Now, a lot more is going to be written in coming years about that, and we will see that—especially through Paul. But the transition was already underway from the leadership of the Apostles to the leadership of the "elders" in each local "church" (Acts 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; Jas. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1). So, keep that in mind: Part of the transition of the Book of Acts is the transition to the leadership of elders.

Alright—*30 whole verses!* It's *me!* This is not some impostor. *I did it!* Now, what can we take away from that? Let me suggest to you that each aspect of this chapter teaches us something—"Don't do this, but *do* this."

The Questioners Questioned: *Don't* let yourself get sucked into that thinking that "Our group is the only group" or "Our group is the best group for the Gospel." But *do* everything you can to take the Gospel *wherever God allows you an opportunity* (Matt. 28:19; Lk. 24:27).

Then, Peter Proclaimed: When they questioned him, Peter explained. And draw from that: *Don't* be the kind of person who is slow to learn the lessons about God's grace. They "heard" from Peter what God had said, "they quieted down," and they gave God the glory. So *do* ask the Lord to open your eyes to Gospel opportunities within your reach, or within reach of your support and encouragement.

Well, that did Quiet The Questioners: So from that, learn: *Don't* resist learning from those who teach you, those who pave the way in evangelism. Receive what they say, be an encourager, and *do* be teachable so that *you* learn whenever God's truth is opened up to you through His Word or through His people.

We saw that The Persecuted Preached: Oh, my friends, realize: *Everything in your life* is in your life by the providence of God (Is. 46:9-10; Eph. 1:11b, 22a), who is *always* "good" (Ps. 119:68), *always* "sovereign" (Ps. 103:19), *always* "gracious" (Ps. 103:8), *always* loving (Lam. 3:22; Mic. 7:18). So, *don't* let something tragic, painful, inconvenient in your life stop you from preaching Christ. You know, it *hurts* when a loved one dies. It hurts when you get that *bone-chilling* word from the doctor. It hurts when you see injustice. It hurts when you lose your job, and you didn't do anything wrong. It hurts when you lose your job and you *did* do something wrong, right? *Any* of those things—that is *God's plan for your life*, to put *you* where *you* could best be used *for His glory!* That is harder to swallow than those really good things that happen. *Do* keep your "eyes on" Him (Heb. 12:2). Know that everything in your life happens according to His providence.

Barnabas Bustled Off To Antioch: What do we learn from that? Well, *don't* fall into thinking that you can do it all (Ex. 18:18), but *do* join forces with the most helpful people that you can find. *Anytime* you take on *any* ministry, as soon as you learn how to do it, the next thing you ought to do is figure out how to teach somebody else how to do it, so that there can be *twice as much* giftedness, *twice as much* manpower, *twice as much* prayer, *twice as much* encouragement (see 2 Tim. 2:22).

Sermon Title: Next Phase Of Gentile Salvation
Scripture Text: Acts 11:1-30 (Acts #27)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 11-5-23

So that's why Barnabas Brought Saul: And remember, that comes right after them being called names—"Oh, you *little Christs!* You think you're so *special!*" *Don't* let being called names stop you from maintaining a shining testimony (see Lk. 6:22-23), but *do* invest as much time as you can in building up other believers (Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:11) and sharing the Gospel (Acts 8:4; 26:29; 1 Pet. 3:15). Isn't that interesting: *Barnabas* played a role in teaching *Saul*—the great Apostle Paul—about doing ministry? He is the one who had to introduce him in Jerusalem; he had to introduce him again to all the people in Antioch. The teamwork is *astounding*.

And Prophecy Leads To Provision: You know, God gives you stuff—*don't* be foolish with it; be a good steward with the provisions that He entrusts to you so that you can *be* willing to "share" with those who are in "need" (Eph. 4:28). I love the bookends on this chapter! The Jews are *appalled!* "Peter—you went and ate with Gentiles!" In the first service I said that, and left out "went": "Peter, you went and ate Gentiles!" That's probably what they would have *preferred*. That's on one end, and on the other end: Those brand new Gentile believers, who *didn't know anything* about Jerusalem—they are sending this generous "contribution" to help "the brethren," their brothers and sisters in Christ in Jerusalem.

And finally: Elders Enter The Scene: *Don't* be a lone wolf in serving the Lord (Prov. 18:1). *Always*, a team is the way to do it. And *do* seek accountability for all *you* do. They cared enough to send the very best; they sent their *top two guys* back to Jerusalem with that offering to show their love. May we do likewise.

And let's pray:

Father, how we thank You for Your glorious grace to us. Thank You for this clear unfolding of Your plan. And as we trace our spiritual family tree all the way back to those first Gentile believers in that first Gentile-sending church anywhere—Antioch—we pray that You will continue to make Heritage Bible Church a place where people know the Lord, thrive in the Lord, grow in the Lord, give in the Lord, serve in the Lord, and send others to serve for Your glory. Have Your way with us to those ends, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.