

**Series:** Acts

**Lesson:** #39

**Title:** Spiritual Abundance in Temporal Famine

**Scripture:** Acts 11: 27-30

**Date:** 9-25-08

**Place:** Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

The doctrine of Christ and him crucified is the foundation and it is that strong meat which is built upon that foundation. Multitudes regard practical teaching as the strong meat which grows the believer after they have heard the doctrine of Christ. Therefore most every Christian denomination majors on man's choice, man's doing, man's morality, man's walk and say little, if anything, about Christ and him crucified.

God the Father's purpose in Christ and Christ's accomplished redemption and Christ's work in the believer through the Holy Spirit is the same Christ who call his people out of spiritual darkness, as well as grows them in a desire to obey him. And he does it through the gospel that declares that he alone does it.

The same Word which chose sinners, redeemed sinners, and regenerates sinners and preserves sinners is the Word who is from the beginning, who reigns and effectually causes a sinner to obey him and is the Word we must major on always. Not to the exclusion of the believer's privilege of walking honorably before the Lord, but not ever leaving man room to imagine that he can walk without Christ walking in him.

**Colossians 1: 14: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18: And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. 19: For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;**

Our text tonight is in:

**Acts 11: 27: And in these days**

- This occurred over about a long period when Paul and Barnabas ministered and lived at Antioch.

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

- When our Lord Jesus *ascended on high he gave gifts unto men, not only apostles and evangelists, but prophets.*

- In the early church, the prophets in the early church served for a confirmation of what Christ was bringing to pass during those transitional days when the Old Covenant worship was fading away.
- As we see here, these prophets were used of our Lord to inform the church of events, in order to provide for his people and protect his people.
- The word of Christ's prophets went forth into the hearts of his people by the Holy Spirit just as this word goes forth into the hearts of his people by the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit no man can deliver God's message and no man can believe God's message, then or now.
- **Notice in this next verse "by whom" the prophet spoke:**

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

It came to pass...because Agabus was Christ's prophet. Deuteronomy 18: 22: When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. So we see that when these prophets spoke, they spoke by the Holy Spirit, who gave them to speak what the Lord Jesus Christ commanded to be spoken for the Lord brought this famine to pass just as he said.

**Acts 11: 29: Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.**

**Proposition:** I want to show you 3 reasons that the Lord Jesus Christ Brought This Carnal Famine and this Spiritual Plenty.

**Title:** Spiritual Abundance In Temporal Famine

**I. THE LORD GAVE A FAMINE OF TEMPORAL BREAD IN JERUSALEM BECAUSE CHRIST THE SPIRITUAL BREAD FROM HEAVEN WAS REJECTED IN JERUSALEM.**

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

A. (Turn to Luke 13: 34) A famine of physical bread, indeed, came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. But the fact that the Lord's messenger's left Jerusalem for Antioch truly signified the beginning of the famine of the Word which the Lord pronounced upon Jerusalem.

**Luke 13: 34: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35: Behold, your house is left unto**

**you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until *the time* come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**

B. When the Lord spoke of the Bread from heaven the carnally religious men in Jerusalem understood him as speaking of an earthly, physical bread. They did not discern that he is the Bread—the Life of the believer—which God gave from heaven for the spiritual, eternal life of the believer. In the same manner, folks do not understand this word merely because they claim to be believers.

1. The religious men and women in Jerusalem were too busy constraining men; too busy engaging in the service which our natural heart regards as food—so that they had no need of the true Bread from heaven.
2. Their earthly, religious devotions was their life--their constraining men to tithe, to walk a certain way, their constraining men to read scripture, to come to the temple, their constraining men to pray, this was their gospel and this was their life.
3. They killed and stoned the Lord's prophets who spoke of Christ the Life.
4. They rejected Christ the Prince of Life when he came in person.
5. They looked upon their earthly carnal duties as their life just as surely as they looked upon their daily, carnal food as life.
6. So the Lord brought a famine of both spiritual bread and physical bread.

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

**Illustration:** If \_\_\_\_\_ was mal-nourished, bones out of joint from starvation, no strength in his legs, his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth.

- And I come along telling him how fast a healthy young man can run—you ought to be running like that.
- I tell you a healthy young man is full of energy...you ought to get up off your sick-bed and show forth that kind of energy.
- A healthy young man can speak properly—you ought to stop being silent and speak.
- I tell him if you would eat you could do all this--but I give him no bread or maybe even worse, I just give him a nimble.
- Yet, I don't fill him with bread, I don't continue to nurture him with bread, then how can he do those things.
- Or if I get him healthy then cease giving him bread...go back to telling him how those who eat are healthy and tell him what he ought to do...but no bread...his health will not last. That's the gospel of the Pharisee...they tell a man what he oughta do and what he ought not to do but give him not the Bread from heaven, by which the believer is strengthened and sustained and enabled and moved in Spirit.

The Lord through Isaiah--you think this is your life, your bread--then I'll take it all away. And he shall, either in mercy or in judgment.

## II. THE LORD DECLARED HIS FAITHFULNESS TOWARD HIS PEOPLE...THROUGH THIS SPIRITUAL PLENTY AND TEMPORAL FAMINE.

A. The Lord had a people saved by grace in Jerusalem. He would not leave them without spiritual bread—he shows us that by not leaving them without physical bread.

1. So before sending this carnal famine he sent his Word of Truth into Antioch at the mouth of Paul and Barnabas.
2. He effectually created a new heart in his redeemed in Antioch.
3. He waited to give this famine until the believer's in Antioch had heard the gospel of the unspeakable gift of God—Christ the Lord.

B. They heard the message which Paul was determined to preach.

- Ruined—famished—by the fall and dead in trespasses and in sins...
- Of God *providing* for those he eternally loved...God the Father *gave*...
- He *gave*...his only begotten Son...
- His Son *gave* his life to declare God just and justifier...
- Christ *gave* himself—the just for the unjust—that God might be just in showing them mercy.
- His Son *gave* them righteousness and eternal life at no cost to them—the *free gift* of God.
- Through the Holy Spirit the Lord of glory *gave* them spiritual eyes and ears...
- God made all grace abound toward those at Antioch; so that they had all sufficiency in all *things*—SPIRITUAL AND CARNALLY--to abound in this good work he had before ordained.

**Acts 11: 29: Then the disciples,...**

**Understand me:** The believer's at Antioch did not necessarily have plenty as far as an abundance of material things goes. But they had an abundance of spiritual blessing by God's grace and it made them rich in liberality toward their brethren.

You could have an abundance of temporal wealth, and though you give much more than another person, yet you do not abound in spiritual abundance, then you haven't given if you give all.

But if you have plenty spiritually--which is the point--then it does not matter how much you have materially speaking, you will give abundantly more because you are constrained by the love of Christ NOT the religion constraints of Pharisees.

**2 Corinthians 8: 1: Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2: How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3: For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; 4: Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5: And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God....7: Therefore, as ye**

abound in every *thing*, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. 8: I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9: For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

So We See...

- THE LORD BROUGHT THIS FAMINE OF BREAD UPON THOSE WHO REJECTED CHRIST THE TRUE BREAD.
- SECONDLY, THE LORD PROVED HIS FAITHFULNESS AND POWER TO PROVIDE FOR HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THIS.

**III. THROUGH THIS CARNAL FAMINE AND THIS SPIRITUAL PLENTY, THE LORD JESUS TEACHES US HERE TODAY, THAT HE WORKS THIS GRACE IN HIS PEOPLE BECAUSE IN GIVING US TO PROVIDE FOR OUR BRETHREN, HE GLORIFIES WHAT HIS FATHER DID IN GIVING HIM FOR HIS BRETHREN.**

A. Christ gave himself for his brethren because God sent him to do so (as the Son of man, he was the servant of God the Father)...likewise, believer's give of themselves because they are the disciples of Christ.

**Acts 11: 29: Then the *disciples*...**

**Hebrews 5: 8: Though he were a Son, yet learned he [PERFECTED HE] obedience by the things which he suffered; 9: And being [PROVEN THE PERFECTION OF OBEDIENCE], he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.**

B. Christ gave that which God had fully provided him...likewise the believer gives in proportion to what Christ has given us.

**Acts 11: 29: Then the disciples, every man according to his ability...**

1. What did God the Father give the Son?...*a body hast though prepared me...*

- A body perfect to be accepted as the sin-bearer before God
- A body which was made sin in the flesh so as to not disparage his holy Divinity,
- A body of humanity which he sacrificed on the altar of his Deity

1 Peter 2: 24: Who his own self bare our sins **in his own body** on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Hebrews 9:14: Teaches us that **the blood of Christ** (LIFE OF HIS BODY), he offered **through the eternal Spirit**...(THE BODY OF HIS HUMANITY OFFERED THROUGH THE ETERNALITY OF HIS GODHEAD.)

Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by **the body of Christ**; that ye should be married to another, *even to him who is raised from the dead*, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For his brethren Christ gave that body which God had given him—likewise by his Spirit working in us we give for our brethren what

Christ has provided us to give. **Acts 11: 29: Then the disciples, every man according to his ability...**

C. Christ purposed in the everlasting covenant to give himself...willingly....Likewise, by his Spirit in us we purpose to provide for our brethren willingly.

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

- Just as God the Father declared to the Son the famine that would come upon his brethren in this world so Christ came to his sons and declared the famine coming to their brethren in Jerusalem.
- In like manner that Christ willingly determined to send his brethren relief by his own sacrifice, so the brethren **determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:** by their own sacrifice.

D. Fourthly, Christ not only purposed to be the relief of his famished children, but he came and provided their relief in his person and by his finished work. By his Spirit working in the believer's at Antioch they not only willingly determined to send relief: But **V30: Which also they did...**

- They began immediately setting aside that which would provide relief to the brethren in Jerusalem.

E. Fifthly, the brethren at Antioch not only purposed and provided the relief of their famished brethren but they sent it to their brethren at the hands of their ministers.

**Acts 11: 29: Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.**

- The Son of God not only purposed to send relief, he not only accomplished the provision of our relief, but he also sends the full provision into the hearts of his people at the hand's of his ministers.
- That's how God provides the full sufficiency to the believer so that believer's are willing and able to provide for his children.

Illustration: Just like Christ must bless the earthly bread to nourish our bodies so he gives ministers to feed us with Christ the Bread and by his Spirit he enters in and effectually works in his people, sustaining them in the spirit to do his good pleasure and they willing do his good pleasure.

**2 Corinthians 9: 7: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8: And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10: Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and***

**increase the fruits of your righteousness;)** (hold your place here and let me make one more observation)

F. Six thing...there was a famine of physical bread in Judea, but in the houses where the Lord's people received this gift from their brethren in Antioch--it may not have been much at all, it may have fed them physically but a meal or two--but Christ produced spiritual plenty in those houses as well.

**2 Corinthians 9: 11: Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12: For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13: Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; 14: And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15: Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.**

### **APPLICATION:**

1. If I would have brought you a message majoring on how you ought to give like they gave and yet did not declare Christ the Life to you then I would have fallen into the same camp with those Judaizers in Rome.

- The camp of the Pharisee's majored on what the believer ought to do and ought not to do.
- Thus they made white the outside of the sepulcher but in the heart was famine and death.
- Thus their house was left desolate and their land famished.

2. Instead, I have given to you what the Lord gave me. I have held back nothing.

- The camp at Antioch were given messengers by God who fed them with knowledge and understanding of Christ and through that gospel Christ effectually worked in the hearts of his people. He gave them plenty in spirit.
- And they held back nothing, but provided the material needs of their brethren in Judea.

3. Now I ask you what is food for your soul? Which camp causes you to delight in your Lord? Which exalts the love of Christ which constrains the believer?

- Is it the message which constrains you in the lesser matters of the law such as paying mint, anise and cumin; while leaving off the weightier matters of the law such as judgment, mercy, and faith?
- Or is it the message which declares the justice you deserved poured out on Christ and therein causes you to behold the mercy and faithfulness of God in giving his Son a ransom for your soul?
- Which causes you to behold how great a gift the Lord has given you?
- Which exalts the love which constrains you to give yourself for your brethren?

4. If it is the message that major's own what you ought to be doing and ought not to be doing then you are squarely in the camp with the Pharisee's, I would be fearful that you are in the midst of a famine of spiritual Bread.

5. But if the message that constrains you is the message of the full, sufficient, sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for you and works in your heart then, bless God, you are in the camp at Antioch who were moved by Christ working in them through the gospel which majors on his person and finished work.

- Take this message which God has given you and give it to your poor brethren who are yet left in the land of famine--
- If we won't give them this bread then the earthly bread we give them will sustain them no more than if we gave them a stone.
- But give them Christ the Bread--whether it's a radio broadcast, advertising this place in the paper, a mailer whereby we cast this Bread upon the waters, whether it's paying someone's gas money so they can hear the word, their shoe money to come here, their rent to be closer so they can hear in person or taking them out to eat when they get here--
- Whether it's providing temporal provisions for our brethren in need, or for true orphans or widows in the church--it does not matter if you see what becomes of your gift-- let us give of ourselves for their sakes just as Christ gave himself for ours.