

ANTIOCH: AN ACTIVE CHURCH
Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3

Introduction:

1. Sometimes the question is asked, “How is the church at your place doing?”
2. The reply may be:
 - a. “We’re still keeping house for the Lord.”
 - b. “We’ve lost some members, but we are still hanging on.”
 - c. “We are losing our young people.”
 - d. “We’re still holding on.”
3. This is in marked contrast with the congregations in the book of Acts.
 - a. They were persecuted, but aggressively evangelistic.
 - b. They were made up of new converts, but all taught the Gospel.
 - c. They were poor, but they gave unselfishly to others.
4. As Jerusalem was a model church among the Jews, so Antioch is a model church among the Gentiles.
 - a. It was the first congregation with both Jewish and Gentile members.
 - b. The members were first called Christians at Antioch.
 - c. The first foreign missionaries were sent out from Antioch.
5. Antioch of Syria was the third largest city in the Roman Empire with a cosmopolitan population of more than 500,000.

Discussion:

- I. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH WELCOMED EVERYONE (11:19,20).
 - A. The church was started by Jews who had fled the persecution in Jerusalem.
 1. They were originally from Cyprus and Cyrene.
 2. They preached to the Greeks as well as to the Jews.
 - B. A church must be open to all ages, races, and classes.
 1. Do we mean it when we sing “The Gospel is For All?”
 2. A preacher who worked among the poor was told, “We don’t want that kind of people in our church.”
- II. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH WAS VERY EVANGELISTIC (11:21, 24, 26).
 - A. “A great number believed and turned to the Lord” (21).
 1. The world is filled with lost souls; they are all around us.

2. We must go to them rather than expect them to come to us.
- B. “A great many people were added to the Lord” (24).
1. Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the church at Jerusalem.
 2. “He was a good man, full of faith, and of the Holy Spirit.”
 3. He had once vouched for Saul, now he sought Saul to share in the harvest of souls.
 4. Together “they taught a great many people” (26).
- C. It is no wonder the Holy Spirit chose this church to send out the first missionaries!

III. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH WAS BENEVOLENT AND UNSELFISH.

- A. The Lord has always been concerned for the poor.
1. “Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble” (Psa. 41:1).
 2. “He who despises his neighbor sins, but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.” (Prov. 14:21).
- B. Agabus prophesied a great famine was coming throughout the world (11: 27-30).
1. This included Antioch and the region around it.
 2. Their first thought was not for themselves but their brethren.
 3. Judea was poor and further impoverished by persecution.
 4. They determined to give “each according to his ability” (1 Cor. 16:2).
 5. They sent it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.
 - a. This is the first mention of elders in the church.
 - b. This shows the elders are over the physical as well as the spiritual work of the church.

IV. THE ANTIOCH CHURCH WAS MISSION-MINDED (13:1-4).

- A. They truly believed “the Gospel is for all” (Mark 16:15).
1. They were the first congregation to have Gentile members.
 2. They understood that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34,35).
- B. The Antioch church was blessed with many teachers (13:1).
1. Barnabas, the exhorter, was their first located preacher.
 2. Simeon, called Niger, was evidently a gifted teacher.
 3. Lucius of Cyrene was also a teacher or prophet.
 4. Manaen, foster brother of Herod Antipas, shows the Gospel was penetrating all areas of society.
 5. Saul was Barnabas’ co-worker, but will soon be known

as Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

- C. Christians today often seek the big churches with good leadership, teachers and various programs of work.
 - 1. They should go where they are most needed.
 - 2. “Missionaries are like fertilizer. They must be spread around to do the most good” (Ira Y. Rice, Jr.).
- D. The Holy Spirit took the initiative in sending missionaries.
 - 1. He chose the best teachers to go.
 - 2. Barnabas was an effective, experienced evangelist.
 - 3. Saul was highly educated and very zealous.
 - 4. Too often today we send out the young and inexperienced.
- E. Sending out missionaries is a serious matter:
 - 1. The church fasted and prayed.
 - 2. They laid hands on the missionaries thus formally setting them apart for the work.
 - 3. They sent them away with their blessing.

Conclusion:

- 1. There is a clear transition in Acts between chapter 12 and 13.
 - a. In chapters 1-12, Jerusalem is the most prominent church, but in chapters 13-28, Antioch is the most prominent church.
 - b. In chapters 1-12, Peter is the most prominent apostle, but in chapters 13-28, Paul is the most prominent apostle.
 - c. In chapters 1-12, the emphasis is on taking the Gospel to the Jews; in chapters 13-28, the emphasis is on taking the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- 2. The “disciples were first called Christians at Antioch” (11:26).
 - a. “Called” is from the Greek “chrematidzo” which means “to be called by an oracle;” that is, to be Divinely called (Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible).
 - b. The name “Christian” was given by God (Isa. 62:2; Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).
- 3. Let us be simply Christians as were the members of the church at Antioch.
 - a. Believe in Jesus Christ Who died for your sins (John 8:24).
 - b. Repent of your sins (Luke 13:3).
 - c. Confess your faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:32,33).
 - d. Be baptized for the remission of your sins (Mark 16:16).

