

The Life of Paul – Week 6

8/2/2026

Last week we learned that Paul was taken to Caesarea and then sent back to his hometown of Tarsus to escape a plot against his life. After spending approximately seven years in Tarsus, Scripture shifts its attention to events that prepare for Paul's next appearance. Although this passage is not directly about Paul, it establishes the setting for the ministry that will soon unfold. (Acts 11:19–25)

The Gospel Continues to Spread: Following Stephen's martyrdom, believers were scattered throughout the region. Instead of silencing the church, persecution became the means by which the gospel spread.

The believers traveled to: Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch

Rather than stopping God's work, opposition expanded His Kingdom.

Reflection: How has God used difficult circumstances to accomplish His purposes throughout Scripture? How have you seen God work through hardship in your own life?

Understanding Antioch: Antioch was one of the largest and most influential cities in the Roman Empire.

It was known for: Commerce and business, wealth and culture, religious paganism, sexual immorality, and Idol worship. Spiritually, Antioch represented one of the darkest cities of its day.

Key Truth: God often shines His brightest light in the darkest places.

A Challenge to the Early Church: Acts tells us that many believers shared the gospel only with Jews.

Although Jesus had commissioned His followers to reach all nations, many Christians naturally stayed within familiar relationships and comfortable environments. Their hesitation revealed that old habits and traditions can continue influencing believers even after genuine faith in Christ.

Discussion: Why is it often easier to share our faith with people who are like us?

The Barriers They Faced: Sharing Christ with Gentiles meant overcoming several obstacles.

They risked: Rejection from fellow Jews, entering unfamiliar homes, associating with people involved in pagan religions, breaking long-standing religious traditions. Following Jesus required courage to cross cultural boundaries.

Safe Evangelism: The pastor challenges the church to examine whether we practice "safe evangelism."

Many believers naturally seek people who: Already believe in God, already attend church occasionally, and share similar values and lifestyles. Meanwhile, people who seem difficult or different are often ignored because they lie outside our comfort zones.

Personal Reflection: Who do you naturally find easiest to share Christ with? Who might God be calling you to reach that stretches your comfort?

The Turning Point: Acts 11 records that a small group of believers from Cyprus and Cyrene intentionally shared the gospel with Greeks. Their willingness changed history. "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." (Acts 11:21).

Principle: God often moves powerfully when His people step beyond familiar boundaries in obedience.

Jesus' Example: Jesus consistently pursued those whom religious society avoided.

He ministered to: Tax collectors, Prostitutes, Lepers, Samaritans, Roman soldiers, Demon-possessed individuals. Rather than waiting for people to become acceptable, Jesus entered their world with grace and truth.

Reflection: How does Jesus' example shape the way we should view people who are far from God?

The Church's Mission Today: The pastor highlights ministries that intentionally reach people who are hurting, struggling, or marginalized.

The goal is not to approve of sin but to extend Christ's love so people can experience transformation through the gospel. The church should be known as a place where: Grace is offered freely. Truth is proclaimed faithfully. Everyone has the opportunity to hear about Jesus. Lives are transformed by the power of the gospel.

Final Challenge: The unnamed believers in Antioch crossed barriers, trusted God, and witnessed many people come to faith. The same challenge remains today. Will we run toward the places and people who need Christ, or will we remain within our comfort zones? When God's people are willing to cross the street, cross the aisle, and cross-cultural barriers, God continues to transform lives.

Key Reminders:

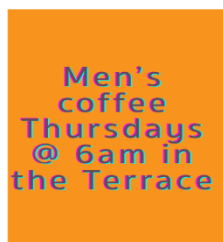
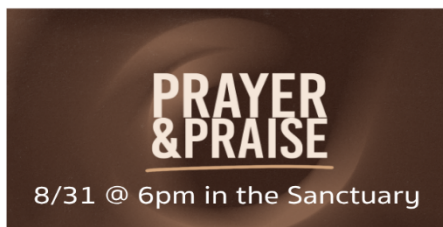
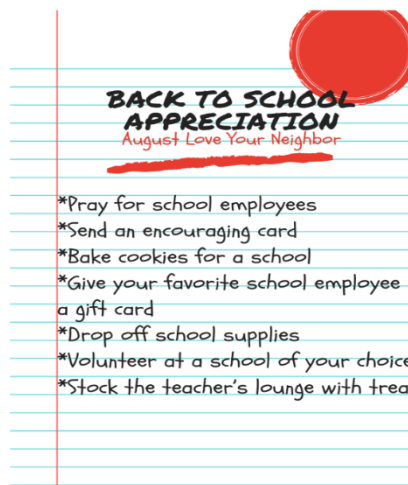
- God uses persecution and difficulty to spread His Kingdom.
- The darkest places often become the greatest opportunities for the gospel.
- Comfort can become a barrier to evangelism.
- Jesus intentionally pursued those whom others rejected.
- God blesses faithful obedience that crosses cultural and social boundaries.
- The mission of the church is to lovingly bring the gospel to everyone.

Scripture for Further Study:

- Acts 8:1–4
- Acts 11:19–26
- Matthew 28:18–20
- Luke 19:1–10
- Matthew 9:9–13
- Romans 10:13–15
- James 2:1–9

Questions for Personal Application:

1. What stood out most to you from today's message?
2. Where have you become comfortable in your faith?
3. Is there someone outside your normal circle whom God may be calling you to love and reach?
4. How can our church continue reflecting the ministry of Jesus to those who feel forgotten?
5. What is one practical step you can take this week to intentionally share the love of Christ?



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