

"The First Christians"

Acts 11:19-30

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Intro: We are all partners in the gospel.

Philippians 1:3-5 – "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."

In our study of the book of Acts...

- 1) We've seen the gospel go to Jerusalem.
- 2) We've seen it go to Samaria through Philip.
- 3) We've seen Peter take the gospel to Joppa (Acts 10).

Today we're going to look at three **marks** of a healthy church community...

1. A bold witness (vv.19-21)

Acts 11:19 – "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their ways to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone."

Acts 1:8 – "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

- If you practice Acts 1:8, the result will be Acts 8:1

Acts 8:1 – "And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Acts 11:20-21 – "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. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord."

2. Cooperative discipleship (vv.22-26)

Acts 11:22-24 – "The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³ 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; ²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord."

Acts 9:26-28 – "When Saul came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord."

So Barnabas encouraged...

- 1) With his finances (Acts 4:36-37) "laying money at the apostles' feet."
- 2) With his friendship (Acts 9:26-27) "describing to the apostles how Saul had seen the Lord."
- 3) With his follow-up (Acts 11:22-24) "encouraging them to remain true to the Lord."

Acts 11:25-26 – “And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; ²⁶ 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.”

Why was Saul the perfect choice?

- 1) He was Jewish...a Hebrew of the Hebrews.
- 2) He was a Greek by culture, being a Hellenistic Jew, and Greek-speaking.
- 3) He was a Roman citizen.

Acts 26:26-29 – “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ ‘King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.’ ²⁸ Agrippa replied to Paul, ‘In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.’ ²⁹ And Paul said, ‘I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.’”

1 Peter 4:14-16 – “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.”

3. Cross-community generosity (vv.27-30)

Acts 11:27-28 – “Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

²⁸ 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. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.”

A prophet was either a forth-teller or a fore-teller.

Acts 11:29-30 – “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. ³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.”

“A pat on the back...though it’s a few vertebrae removed from a kick in the pants...is miles ahead in results.”

Acts 10:15 – “What I have cleansed, don’t call common.”

Ephesians 4:32 – “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. Has God ever used a painful time in your life to bring about something good for others?
2. Do you ever judge people by worldly or cultural standards instead of seeing them as equal members in Christ (Galatians 3:28)?
3. Who has encouraged you the most in your spiritual walk, and whom are you actively encouraging?
4. How can you help bring others alongside you to serve and grow in the faith?
5. Do your daily actions, speech, and lifestyle reflect the name of Christ to your neighbors?
6. When you hear of a need in your community, how does our church respond? How do you respond?