

He Saw the Grace of God

The early chapters of Acts describe a young church under pressure. Persecution had broken out — the stoning of Stephen scattered Christians out of Jerusalem — and many of them landed in Antioch. Something happened there that nobody expected. Ordinary Christians — Luke doesn't even give us their names — just *men from Cyprus and Cyrene* - started talking to people about Jesus. And a large number ... turned to the Lord ... in a place nobody targeted ... through people no one sent, and a harvest comes. This is where we'll be today, because it models what we should do.

I. What Barnabas Saw

- A. Acts 11:23: *When he arrived and saw **the grace of God**, he was glad and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lord with devoted hearts.* What does it mean to “see grace?” He saw people.
- B. Barnabas teaches us the best way to see. The grace of God ... moving right here among us.

II. Why He Was Glad

- A. Acts 11:24: *for he was a good man, full of the **Holy Spirit** and of faith.*
 - 1. Being glad about somebody else's blessing is a spiritual achievement. It's the fruit the Spirit.
- B. Barnabas the encourager...
 - 1. Acts 4:36: *Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus by birth, the one the apostles called Barnabas (which is translated **Son of Encouragement**),* You get a name like that because it's *who you are*.
 - 2. In chapter 9, it was Barnabas who took Saul, and vouched for him.
 - 3. Acts 9:27: *Barnabas, however, took him and brought him to the apostles and **explained** to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road and that the Lord had talked to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.*
- C. The good news for us — we can *become* that kind of person. Ask God to grow it in you.
- D. Never forget you are standing on grace yourself.
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 3:6: *I planted, Apollos watered, but **God** gave the growth.*
 - 2. You can't take a victory lap for a harvest you didn't cause. You can only be glad.

III. What He Told Them to Do

- A. Acts 11:23: *(he) encouraged all of them to **remain true** to the Lord with devoted hearts,*
 - 1. He tells them to “stay.” *Remain true.* Don't let this be a moment; let it be your life.
- B. Acts 11:23: see how he mentions “**devoted hearts.**” This is a commitment. A fixed decision. Something that remains — long after the feeling of joy has waned.

IV. What It Cost

- A. Acts 11:25-26: *Then he went to Tarsus to search for **Saul**, and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. For **a whole year** they met with the church and taught large numbers. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.*
 - 1. New Christians do not disciple themselves. Barnabas goes and gets help.
 - 2. The two of them spend a year teaching. That's what the growth cost.
- B. What does God do with a congregation that is willing to pay that price:
 - 1. Acts 11:26: *The disciples were first called **Christians** at Antioch.*
 - 2. Growth created a demand for help, and the church rose to meet it, and out of that came an identity.

V. As We Close...

- A. **To those of you who are new** — you who came up out of that water this year, some of you just weeks ago — That water was a beginning, not a finish line. You were saved to follow Jesus all the way home.
- B. **And to the rest of us** — Be a Barnabas. Be the one who sees grace in them and won't quit believing the best about them.
- C. If you need Jesus, won't you come?