

Acts 11:19-31

V19-21

The gospel comes to Antioch

After the martyrdom of Stephen, there were disciples who went to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch.

Antioch- In Roman times, Antioch was the principal city of the Roman Province of Syria, and the fourth largest city of the Roman Empire, after Rome, Ephesus and Alexandria. In the first century it was a city of more than half a million people; today it is a Turkish city with a population of about 3,500. Known for its business, idolatry of Greek gods and immorality.

Many disciples shared gospel to Jews. But some shared with Hellenists.

They were truly pioneers. Many came to the faith.

V21 the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number of them became believers and turned to the Lord.

Emphases

1. Ordinary unnamed disciples who brought the first gentiles to Christ. Every believer has a responsibility in the Kingdom of God.

2. Further breaking of the dividing walls between Jews and Greeks was possible in Antioch because the church spread among the Greeks here.

V22-26

Ministry of Barnabas and Paul

This happy news was welcomed by the church in Jerusalem which sent Barnabas to Antioch.

That shows the church in Jerusalem willing to engage and nourish the new gentile converts. This breaking of the dividing wall between Jewish and gentile converts could have been aided by Peter's testimony in the previous verses.

Barnabas does his ministry of encouragement in faith. That increased the number of believers. The increase in ministry there caused him to seek out Paul who was now in Tarsus (Acts 9:30). Barnabas just wouldn't let Saul be an idle believer in Tarsus. Barnabas was inviting him to a ministry that would later become Saul's ministry and style. They came and ministered in Antioch for a year. The ministry and size of believers grew to such an extent that the group was significant enough to be well known as "Christians".

V27-30

Ministry of the church in Antioch.

Prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch – prophesied about the impending global famine. The believers in Antioch mobilized resources to help the believers in Judea and they sent it through Barnabas and Saul

Emphasis

The church in Antioch becomes mature enough to become a giving church, as much as it is a church of fellowship, praying, learning and worshipping.

Illus – faith, worship and lifestyle of new believers have often surprised me

e.g. visit to Andhra mission field - Cuddapah

Questions:

1. What qualities of Barnabas make him an ideal missionary?
2. What does Acts teach us about our own role in mission?
3. Why do you think the believers in Antioch got labelled as “Christians”? what are the implications of the title for me?