

THE MINISTRIES OF PETER, BARNABAS, & SAUL (Acts 9:32-11)

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9: 31).

In Acts 1-7, the church was building a foundation. Then they began to reach out to others in Judea and Samaria in chapters 8-12.

What’s so special about Caesarea?

Look at Acts 10-11

A. Believers grow _____

Spiritual growth is not sudden. All believers must grow in grace. In fact, even Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

PETER is one that grew—Acts 9:32 reports that he traveled around the country.

In Acts 9 we see Peter doing miracles. But in Acts 10, we see God doing a miracle IN Peter. He was finally seeing the WORLD and that the gospel is for everyone. His view of the world grew in SLOW stages—10 years to be exact.

1	He stood up among Jewish believers and guided them (Acts 1:15-26)
2	He preached the good news to fellow Jews in Jerusalem (Act 2-5)
3	He followed Philip and prayed for the Samaritans who were half Jewish (Acts 8:14-24)

A Study of the Book of Acts

Class 5 – Student Notes

4	He preached in other Samaritan towns as he returned to Jerusalem
5	He began to move about the country and preach in places such as Lydda (Acts 9:32-38)
6	He stayed in the home of Simon the tanner whom Jews considered unclean (Acts 9:36-43)
7	He preached the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile in Caesarea (Acts 10)
8	He returned to Jerusalem to tell of his ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18)

Growth is slow. But it is certain for those who walk in the Spirit.

B. Sometimes a person must choose to obey _____ or God.

Culture=values, beliefs and behavior patterns of a group of people. It includes traditions handed down from generation to generation.

Peter believed it was better to obey God than man. He had to stand up against the Sanhedrin.

- His culture taught that Jews do not associate with the Samaritans (John 4:9). Peter prayed for them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- His culture taught that it was wrong to stay with Simon the tanner—who worked with the skins of dead animals. Mature Christianity does not divide people into groups of clean and unclean.
- His culture said it was wrong to go into the house of a Gentile.

Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean” (Acts 10: 27-28; Compare Luke 10: 25-37).

C. God does not show _____

Cornelius was a Gentile centurion—commanding 100 men.

Luke mentions several centurions—one reason being to commend Christianity and Paul to the government. He always shows a good relationship between the centurions and Christianity.

CENTURION	SCRIPTURE
1. The centurion with a sick servant: This centurion built a synagogue for the Jews. He asked Jesus to “speak the Word.”	Luke 7:1-10
2. The centurion at the cross: He praised God and declared that Jesus was a righteous man.	Luke 23:47
3. Cornelius, a centurion in the Italian Regiment: He was saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit.	Acts 10:1-48
4. The centurions who protected Paul and permitted him to speak to the crowd: One of these spoke up for Paul’s rights as a Roman citizen.	Acts 21:30-22:29
5. The two centurions who commanded the army that escorted Paul from Jerusalem to Caesarea	Acts 23:17-35
6. Julius, a centurion of the “Imperial” Regiment: He was kind to Paul and spared his life.	Acts 27:1-3, 43

This centurion was saved through Peter’s ministry. The believers in Jerusalem were angry. They criticized Peter for visiting and eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:1-3). They were prejudiced. Peter told them the whole story with SIX witnesses. Notice their response:

*“When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, God has granted **even** the Gentiles repentance unto life’ ” (Acts 11: 18).*

BARNABAS & SAUL’S MINISTRY AT ANTIOCH

Antioch was 300 miles north of Jerusalem. It was one of the largest cities in the ancient world. Only Rome and Alexandria were bigger.

Temple to Apollo, the Greek god of the sun. It was vilely immoral with temple prostitutes. However this city became the center of Christianity. It was Antioch, not Jerusalem, that became the key to reaching the world for Christ.

A. God has many faithful workers who are not _____.

Barnabas and Saul made the headlines in this section. But there are some other people who are just as important.

19Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 20Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11: 19-21).

Heaven will be full of faithful men and women who were never famous.

Revelation 11:18 assures us that God will reward the small and the great.

Even those who give a cup of cold water in Christ's name will be rewarded (Matt. 10:42).

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them" (Heb. 6: 10).

People on earth may never see you as a hero. But God is keeping a record. *"Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matt. 19: 30).*

B. There are many cultures, but only one _____.

To reach a person for Christ requires two things:

1. We must speak a *language* the lost person understands.

2. We must speak a *message* the lost person understands.

C. Barnabas saw God’s grace and encouraged new believers to remain true to the Lord.

22News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts (Acts 11: 22-23).

1. Barnabas saw the evidence of the grace of God. He was a positive person and loved to encourage people. He did not compare the Antioch believers with the Jerusalem believers.
2. He “*encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord*” (Acts 11:23). Don’t give up. Be careful of falling away.
3. He “*encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord **with all their hearts.***” Pursue an undivided heart that longs for Jesus.

Barnabas was “*a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith*” (Acts 11:24). He needed help, but did not return to Jerusalem to find it. Instead, the Holy Spirit sent him to Tarsus to find Saul.

D. Few are prophets, but _____ may prophesy.

27During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) (Acts 11: 27-28).

A prophet is a person who speaks a revelation from God to others.

Jesus was the Prophet about whom Moses prophesied. (Acts 3:22-23).

The New Testament emphasizes apostles more than prophets. Still, there are prophets included in the New Testament.

Prophets are part of the Lord's gifts to the Church (Eph. 4:11). The New Testament teaches several things about prophets:

- One of the prophet's purposes is *"to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"* (Eph. 4:11-12).
- The message of a prophet may be to encourage, strengthen, and comfort (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor. 14:3). It may also be to warn or tell about the future (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1-2; 21:10-11).
- We need prophets *"until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13). In other words, we need prophets until we reach heaven!

It takes a calling from God to be an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher. Few are called to be prophets. Still, all may prophecy. Joel gave us a special promise about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

17" "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" " (Acts 2: 17-18).

Acts 12 is the final chapter in the second part of Acts. Luke uses this chapter to give us a brief update. The fire of persecution in Jerusalem had died down. Some believers had returned. But the coals of persecution were still hot.

HOMEWORK:

1. Describe some ways you have grown as a witness for Jesus.
2. Why do you think God wanted Saul to travel with Barnabas?
3. Respond to this statement: **"Few are prophets, but all may prophecy."**