

## “A RESOLUTE HEART”

Acts 11:19-26

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### INTRODUCTION

Are you a Christian? Notice the circumstances here in Acts 11 under which this term was first applied to people:

- People believed and turned to the Lord—**Repentance and faith** (v. 21)
- Purpose of heart to remain true to the Lord (23)—**faithfulness**
- Evangelization of many others (24)—**soul-winning zeal**
- Regular training and discipleship (26)—**fellowship and growth in the study of the word.**

No one had ever been called a “Christian” before this; many would be called “Christians” after this. **You must prove yourself worthy of the name “Christian.”**

**As a church, we must evangelize the lost and must remain true to the Lord with a resolute heart.**

Let us note some important events that occur at this point in the History of Christianity:

- 1) Antioch is introduced to us at this point; it now becomes the *new center of activity for the spread of the faith around the world.*
- 2) For the first time we see widespread preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles.
- 3) We are reintroduced to Saul of Tarsus—after his conversion and brief visit to Jerusalem of chapter 9.
- 4) We now see Christianity becoming noticed by the Greco-Roman world.

#### I. THE SOULWINNERS (19-21)

##### A. Limited Outreach (19)

- This incident occurs chronologically after Acts 10, but takes us back to the time of the persecution arising with the death of Stephen in Acts 7-8.
- The spread of the gospel went northward into Phoenicia, westward to Cyprus, and further north to the city of Antioch.
- Antioch was an extremely strategic city—third most important in the world next to Rome and Alexandria. It had been the capital of the Greek Seleucid empire. It was wealthy, corrupt, and cosmopolitan. It had Roman, Greek, and Jewish influence. In the providence of God, Antioch was chosen to be the new epicenter of the spread of Christianity.
- Note that the people who were scattered from their homes used their suffering and loss as an opportunity to spread their faith! **Would we do this today?**

- However, they still had a restricted viewpoint, preaching only to Jews.
- B. Expanded Outreach (20)
- Some Hellenistic Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene (N. Africa—Libya) came to Antioch and recognized the strategic importance of this city.
  - They began speaking (preaching the gospel) also to the Greeks. Although this term could refer to Hellenistic Jews, in this context it refers to ordinary Greeks—Gentiles. Otherwise, what is the contrast with v. 19?
  - The content of their preaching was “the **LORD Jesus**—Jesus as Lord. This was the common emphasis to Gentile audiences who would not understand the emphasis upon the “Christ” or Jewish Messiah.
- C. Results (21)
1. Divine Sanction: the “hand of the Lord”—common expression for the evidence of mighty power from God Himself. It could be that miracles were manifested in addition to powerful preaching. The Lord’s hand was *with them*.
  2. Salvation of Souls: a **large number** of people became believers.
    - They **believed**
    - They turned to the Lord—**repented**

**How we need to enlarge our vision and reach those not being reached.**

## II. THE DISCIPLES (22-26)

### A. Their Identity

*Similar to Acts 8 when the word was preached in Samaria by Philip, the church of Jerusalem heard about this gospel outreach also—the news “reached their ears.”*

#### 1. Barnabas (22, 24a)

Notice that the **church** sent Barnabas as their representative—yet, there is no record that he reported back to the Jerusalem church; he was evidently a **permanent emissary**.

- Barnabas was again true to his name—“son of consolation”
  - He was a good man”
  - He was full of the Holy Spirit..
  - He was full of faith.
  - He was wise—he observed the situation and left for Tarsus to look for Saul (v. 25), realizing the strategic importance of Antioch and the unique opportunity to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles *in Antioch* and from there *around the world!*
- #### 2. Saul
- We have no evidence that Saul was already preaching to Gentiles, even though his commission was that he would do so. About a dozen years

had passed since his conversion but he abided his time until the Lord gave him his orders.

- The fact that Barnabas had to look for Saul shows that Saul was not living at his home—he had likely been disowned.

B. Their Method (23, 24, 26)

1. Observation (23)—Barnabas “observed the grace of God”—outward evidence of that grace in the *saved people* and their *changed lives*, and the evident *joy* and *unity* of the believers—**both Jew and Gentile**.
2. Joy (23)—No *jealousy* over the success of others.
3. Encouragement (23)  
“The son of encouragement” **encouraged them!**
  - To have a “purpose driven” heart—a **resolute heart**.
  - “To remain with the Lord”—**adhere to Him, be faithful**
4. Evangelism (24b)—“Considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”
  - Once again the term “added” is used.
  - Records were kept.
  - Numbers of souls saved mattered.
  - Note that the union with **the Lord** is most important—though they were members of the church as well.
5. Instruction (26)—in depth Biblical training; **The same multitudes who were saved were now being trained**. This does not happen in all churches! NEW BABIES MUST BE FED!
  - a. Extensive in time—one entire year—**don’t rush discipleship**.
  - b. Extensive numbers—“taught considerable numbers.”

C. Their Results (26)—“The disciples were first called ‘Christians’ in Antioch.”

- This is not the name they chose for themselves—that was “the Way,” or “disciples,” or “believers.”
- The name was given to them by the outsiders.
- The term seems to mean “little Christ” or “one who follows Christ.”
- The outside world likely knew little about “Christ” in the Jewish sense, but surely heard Jesus Christ being discussed constantly.
- They may have confused “Christ” with Chrestus—a common Greek name.
- Whatever the case, from this point on, “**Christian**” became the common expression for the followers of Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

Probably if we would follow the example of these believers, the world would also have a clear picture as to what **Christians** really are:

- People believed and turned to the Lord—**Repentance and faith** (v. 21)
- Purpose of heart to remain true to the Lord (23)--**faithfulness**
- Evangelization of many others (24)—**soul-winning zeal**
- Regular training and discipleship (26)—**fellowship and growth in the study of the word.**

How we need **resolute hearts to remain true to the Lord and to His purpose for us!**

**You must prove yourself worthy of the name “Christian.”**

**As a church, we must evangelize the lost and must remain true to the Lord with a resolute heart.**