

“BEARING ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS”

Acts 11: 27-30

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INTRODUCTION

The discipleship and training program of Barnabas and Saul that lasted for an entire year was continuing successfully when the church of Antioch received some visitors from Jerusalem—some prophets. These prophets did not come to Antioch **to spy** on the church, nor **to find fault** with the church that was winning so many Gentiles; but, they came to **assist** and **encourage** Barnabas and Saul and the “Christians” in the Church of Antioch.

The Church at Antioch was grateful for the assistance, and after learning from the prophets that a severe famine would soon take place, they leaders and the individual believers took steps to alleviate the severe financial burden that existed in Jerusalem that would soon be aggravated by famine. They collected funds that they later sent to Jerusalem—to the elders of the church—by the hands of their most trusted workers—Barnabas and Saul.

A. HELP FROM JERUSALEM (27)

- Identification of the “Prophets”—first mention of NT prophets
- The time of this incident is likely about 44 AD—likely during the persecution taking place in Jerusalem under Herod Agrippa I which is described in Acts 12.
- The prophets came in order to minister through their teaching, preaching, and prophetic ministry.
- One of these prophets is named Agabus; he later appears in chapter 21:10 predicting the binding and imprisonment of Paul on a trip to Jerusalem following his third missionary journey.
- Agabus and the other prophets spoke “by the Spirit—the Holy Spirit.

B. PROBLEM FOR JERUSALEM (28)

- Agabus predicted a “great famine” that would affect “the world”—that is large portions of the Roman Empire.
- This famine is known by various historical writings to have actually occurred just as mentioned here by Luke—in the reign of Claudius [AD 41-54].
- Several different authors give dates for various parts of the empire dating from early ‘40’s to late 40’s AD.

C. HELP FROM ANTIOCH (29-30)

- Notice that individual disciples (“each of them”) got involved here—not merely the leaders.
- They saved and gave “proportionately” to their individual means.

- They made direct “determination” to do something to help Jerusalem
- Their action was a “ministry”—literally a **service** (from the same word we get our term “deacon”).
- The believers in Jerusalem are their **brothers** in Christ—they share a common bond, though separated by distance.
- They had received help from Barnabas, and now from these prophets; now it is their turn to **repay** their spiritual and material indebtedness.
- They sent **THEIR BEST LEADERS** to conduct this charitable business in Jerusalem.
- They returned Barnabas to Jerusalem **with interest!**
- The contribution was sent to the responsible leaders of Jerusalem—the elders—so that all things “would be done decently and in order.”

We can and must learn a great deal from this passage and incident.

WE MUST BEAR ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS. What Kind of Burdens?

I. FINANCIAL

- Food, clothes, furniture, housing, air-conditioning, etc.
- We have individuals in our fellowship who have needed and do need such assistance.

II. SIN ISSUES (Gal. 6:1)

- Whether great or small.
- Some are openly known; some are known only to one or a few.
- “Spiritual persons” must come to help.
- The object is to “restore.”
- The attitude must be “in the spirit of meekness.”
- Caution must rule so that one does not become “tempted” by the same sin.

III. SPIRITUAL GROWTH ISSUES—Discipleship as in Acts 11!

IV. FAMILY CONFLICTS

A. Raising children

- Training, discipline, dealing with rebellion, children with learning disabilities, etc.

B. Husband/wife Conflicts

C. Unsaved loved ones

V. SICKNESS AND DISABILITY

VI. DEATH

VII. WORK PROBLEMS

VIII. ADDICTION ISSUES

- Believers must offer a better support than AA, NA, etc.
- The Word of God and a solidly Biblical methodology must be used.

IX. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

- Our nation tends to classify everything as a “disease.”
- Sin is the real root cause, and most of these issues are not totally genetic or medical in their origin.
- Even issues that become so serious that medical intervention is required can still be powerfully influenced by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.
- Psychological issues often result from a long succession of unbiblical responses to life problems.

CONCLUSION

We need to be a “support group” for those in need.

Secular “support groups” are generally **humanistic** in their approach, devoid of **the divine perspective**, missing genuine **Biblical principles** for application to solutions, and are **lacking divine power**.

Remember the song, “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother”? This must certainly be true for believers and their brothers in need.

- **There is someone in this church whose burden you need to bear—probably several!**
- **If you are a person with a burden, SHARE IT WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY AND LET US HELP YOU!**
- **If you are not saved—we want to help you!**