

Acts 11

by Bill Gallatin

God's plan is to unite all people, regardless of race or culture, and the gospel is for whosoever.

Duration: 1:18:38

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, John 4:18, Acts 11:1-16

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal experience of how God has spoken to him through His word and guided him in his Christian journey. He then focuses on the story of Peter in the Bible, where Peter has a vision of a vessel descending from heaven with various animals. God tells Peter to slay and eat, but Peter objects, saying that he has never eaten anything unclean. The speaker emphasizes the importance of praying for others to have their hearts softened and their eyes opened to the truth of God's word and His love and grace. He also mentions a Bible school at a college where students are passionate about sharing the gospel and doing outreach in the city.

Transcript

This Bible study was recorded at Calvary Chapel of the Finger Lakes and was taught by Pastor Bill Gallatin. This evening we're in the Book of Acts, starting with verse 1 of chapter 11. We have a blessing tonight.

Before I begin the study, one of our missionaries from Austria is visiting and happens to be my lovely niece, who serves in Milstadt, Austria, in Spital, Calvary Chapel. She also serves in the castle that we do many of our conferences in every year. She's here with us tonight.

She's going to share a little bit about what God's doing in Austria, and you're part of it because of your prayers and your support in the ministry. So, Celeste, why don't you come up here? Hello, everyone. My name is Celeste, and like Uncle Bill said, I'm his niece.

And I serve in Spital. Actually, I first went over March of last year, or almost two years now, so almost two years ago, to serve at the castle. And I served there initially as the gardener for the first year that I was there, and I learned about plants and just about God's grace.

He is just gracious that he would allow me to be in such a place to serve, and I couldn't be there unless people back home were praying for me. I'm studying in the Old Testament, the Book of Nehemiah, and he

talks about how the Lord put a burden on his heart for the Jewish people. And then when the king sent him out, they kept him there.

And when he was given just what he needed, the necessities to go and be a servant of the Jews, to rebuild the walls, and he went out at night and assessed the damages and then came to tell the city what needed to be done. And he asked for their help because there was no way that one person could do it. And basically that's what it's like being a missionary, that everyone has a part.

And as you read through Nehemiah, each person had their allotted portion of work along the wall, and that's every person in the living body of Christ. And so I'm just thankful for your prayers, and a lot of you I don't know because this has never actually been my home fellowship, but a few of you I know from retreats and whatnot. But thank you for your prayers, and I just encourage you, even if you don't know a missionary personally, pray for one another.

It is vital to the body of Christ. Like Uncle Will said, we cannot survive without one another. And so whether it be a missionary on the field or someone just right there sitting next to you, just commit to pray for those people, because it's important and it's a blessing for you to just watch God's faithfulness in others' lives, because it's sometimes hard to see in our own.

But I've been at the chapel, I was at the chapel serving for a year, and then I in May went over to help Rod Thompson, and due to his wife, Rod Thompson was serving in Subotica, Serbia for about four years, and the Lord raised national leadership up there, and they took over the church. And so it's a thriving national-led church there at Calvary Chapel in Subotica, Hungary. And so Rod is now in Zsutol, and our fellowship is really small.

Our core group would probably consist of about nine people that are solid, that come consistently, and then it fluctuates from 15 to 25 throughout the other studies. And God is just doing a work. The people that have been there since May, I've watched these believers grow so much, and it's been a blessing for me just to basically put me on my face and realize that I can do nothing without Him.

And as it talks about in John 15, we have to be abiding in Him to bear fruit. And so if I were here working a secular job, the thing would be that as a missionary, I have contemplated this year that that's my job, is to bear fruit for the kingdom, and to serve and live this fellowship that the Lord's brought me to. And the language is difficult.

German is a hard language to learn, and I have not mastered that yet. But God's grace has taught me that if I get... I do the secretarial work of the church, and clean, and I'm a live-in nanny. The pastor and his wife, I just recently had a baby three weeks ago.

And so, yeah, I do that. And I work, like Uncle Will said, with the castle a lot, with conferences coming up. Growing in ministry is, I guess, the title of a ministry that has been begun by some of the elders of the church in Europe, because it's just... there's things going on, and Europe is dead.

And you are so blessed to have a country founded on God's word. And the culture shock for me is most radically the fact that I watch people walk around in such luxury, and don't realize what favor you have from the Lord in this country. So, I don't go there.

But you are blessed. And yeah, God's grace is upon this land. And Austria is a hard place to be.

The people are very affluent. And I think of the word... referring to whitewashed tombs, because everything is so manicured and beautiful, and it looks like they have it going on. And 75% of the children born in that country are born out of wedlock.

There's a high rate of child molestation. It's just... it's pretty on the outside, but inside there's just hurt. And so, I would encourage you to pray for the country of Austria.

There's only one Calvary Chapel there. And we work really closely with the Baptist Church in the town of Spital. And there's... we had just three weeks ago... it's called Prochrist, and it's based out of Germany.

But it's an evangelical crusade, somewhat like the Harvard crusade that you guys have here. And it was just beautiful. It was exciting that we had it via satellite.

And some people give their life to the Lord. And God is working that they're very conservative. And we are viewed as a sect.

Anything that is not the Catholic Church is viewed as a sect. And they're really skeptical. They're bred in fear of those religious traditions and stuff like that.

So, just pray for the Lord to just soften their hearts and open their eyes. Reveal the truth of God's Word and His love and grace for them, because it's available to each one of us. I guess that's about it.

I don't want to take up too much time. So, if anyone has questions afterwards and you want to ask me, I'm totally open. I'm sure... I don't know if Frank shared here before, but there's a Bible school at the college.

And I'm sure you've heard of it from this school here. But it's exciting. We have about 40 students this semester.

And they all just are on fire for the Lord. And they have a heart to share. And they come and they do outreach safely on Saturday nights.

We go out in the city of Spital and just talk to people. And it's needed. They're lost.

And so, yeah, if you have questions, you can talk to me later. God bless you guys. The interesting thing about Austria is it's so affluent, extremely affluent, but the number one cause of death over there is suicide, with all that wealth.

It exceeds cancer, heart attack. The number one cause of death in Austria is suicide. And when you go over there, you've never seen such affluence.

They have a law over there, there's so much wealth, that you have to have a car that is so manicured and so kept up. If there's a spot of rust on it and you don't get rid of that, they have a test, you have to get it out of the country. They don't even let you drive a car with rust on it in the nation of Austria.

And so, they sell them to Eastern Europe. But it's interesting, the heaviness, as Celeste was saying. And as far as the gospel, Satan has such a stronghold and all that affluence.

You can see why Jesus said it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But the interesting thing is, then he said, but with God all things are possible. God's willing to save a wealthy man, and he's willing to save a burned out hippie, too, isn't he?

And a people like you and I. So, let's open our Bibles to Acts chapter 11 and ask the Lord to bless his word to our hearts.

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray that by your Holy Spirit you would bring things out of chapter 11 that might challenge us and minister to us and strengthen and encourage us. Lord, there's so much. Lord, you're an infinite God.

And Lord, your revelation is so wonderful that you bring to us through the power of your Holy Spirit. As you promised, Lord, the Comforter would lead us into all truth. And so, we pray now that you might speak to our hearts.

Lord, may we be flexible to yield to you and not just be hearers of the word of God, but doers of the word. May it stir our hearts to fall more in love with you. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Peter has now discovered that God saved Gentiles in Joppa. The word has spread that he has eaten with Gentiles.

And this is the thing that's so amazing to me, that God doesn't extract the traditions and the biases and the things that are so deeply ingrained in us that have nothing to do with biblical principles immediately, even though we've been saved, redeemed, and filled with the Spirit. Now, this particular portion of Scripture is some seven or eight years after Pentecost, after the Spirit of God fell upon these men and the apostles began to be used dynamically. Now, previous to this, we do know that there were isolated instances where God, according to the prophecies of Isaiah, did bring the light of the gospel to the Gentiles.

Isaiah prophesied it. The Jews knew that. But they still had this ingrained prejudice for this other race of people down deep inside, and we know certainly that God can extract that with his love.

But you remember when Philip went to Samaria, they began to respond to the gospel. They weren't the pure Jews, and so we do know that non-Jews were beginning to respond to the gospel earlier in the book of Acts. We know that God had such a deep love for Africa that that's the very first evangelical missionary sent out was to this Ethiopian from Africa, and you remember he sent Philip down there for one man after he had a dynamic ministry.

He said, now break it off. I've got this powerful man that I love. He's headed back to Africa, and I want him to know me, and so he sent Philip down there and evangelized that African of the Queen Candace court in Ethiopia.

Powerful man with influence, so he went back to believe in Jesus Christ. But the Jew, for the most part, had nothing to do with the Gentiles. They avoided them like the plague.

They were considered unclean. Now, they were to remain separate, but they felt that the only way a Gentile could come to salvation was if they converted to Judaism first, and they didn't realize that the gospel changed all that. Paul, some 23 years later, you recall, in Ephesians chapter 2, devotes a whole chapter after this.

Now, much later, he writes the letter of the Galatians, and he devotes a whole chapter 2 of the purpose of Jesus Christ coming and breaking down or removing that partition, that wall between Jew and Gentile, and then uniting them as one new man in the body of Christ through the Holy Spirit. And so, all that Levitical and Mosaic institution was done away with. But there was something about eating in those days that we

don't do today so much.

Now, we do it in our home because we assume that our immune system is developed with one another, and that's been medically proven that when you live with the same person for many years, you both strengthen each other's immune system. That's the beauty of God's plan for monogamy and staying together with one person, that automatically you begin to strengthen each other's immune system. And what they would do in those days, when they would invite someone over, they would just pass out seven plates.

They would have seven plates at a table that they'd lean against and lie in an inclined and very comfortable position, and they'd have one big pot of whatever it may be they're eating, whether it be the meat. Then they'd have the pizza, the bread, one large piece of bread, and they would all partake from the same loaf. And you see, what that was symbolically saying was that they were all being united together, being strengthened and becoming part of one another by eating from the same loaf.

They would just take a piece of bread or the pizza, break it off, they'd dip it in that lamb with that butter and that olive oil, and then they'd just kind of just soak it in there and take a piece of bread, and they'd wrap it around that meat, and they'd just bite out of it, and then put their own mouth upon that, not worrying about the other person. They'd all just dip, keep dipping back in that one bowl, and then eating together, and all partaking and getting sustenance from the same loaf. And it's interesting, Jesus used that analogy when he broke the bread and said, this is my body, take and eat.

And as he was symbolizing that he was that bread come down from heaven, that all the church partakes of together, and it sustains us and gives us life. But see, when you partook of the same loaf, you became part of that person, and that person became part of you. And so, in the Jewish mind, if you went and you ate with a Gentile, you became one with a Gentile, and you see, that was absolutely wrong in the mind of the Jew.

You were unclean. In fact, they began to spread the story about Jesus Christ, to remember, and oppose him, because he, they said, he eats with the publicans and the sinners. He becomes one with the people, because he eats with them.

Well, they avoided that like the plague. In here, you're going some eight or nine years after the day of Pentecost, and the Jews were sharing their faith, sharing the truth concerning Jesus Christ, but not with the Gentiles. They just, they ignored them.

Now, this is what's amazing to me. It didn't bother God that much. I mean, he just went ahead saving Jews, and in God's perfect timing, he was going to open their eyes, and the way he did it, first of all, was with the Apostle Peter, and even Peter had to be shown, you remember, by the sheep that was lowered, and God said, you know, that which I call clean, don't you call unclean, and he dropped all manner of beast and creeping things, bugs and worms and toads and all these other things that Gentiles would eat, you know, and drugs, but not the Jew.

And Peter said, not so, Lord, and Lord said, I say eat that which I call clean, don't you call unclean, and he was actually symbolizing the Gentiles were clean in his eyes, and you can eat with them, and you accept them because God has accepted them. Well, here we have the situation, and the news certainly spread fast back to Jerusalem that the Apostle Peter had partaken bread and eaten and mixed and come in contact with Gentiles, and they were really concerned about that. You know, I had a, well, I think I need to

share this.

I remember when we first got here from California, there was a group of Catholic believers, and they were true believers, beautiful people, up in Hilton, and I'll never forget that they had heard that something was happening down here, and we had been on the radio, and somehow they got in contact with us, and some of the people from that fellowship began to come out here to Victor and fellowship with us, and then go back and share how, you know, the Lord was blessing, and before you know it, I was invited to come up to Hilton, and they wanted me to teach the epistles of Peter, these Catholic believers, true believers, and we had a wonderful time together. It's amazing. As God's Spirit blessed and ministered, and we fellowshipped together, and at dinner, I think, just the spur of the moment, at the end of the study, it lasted maybe about nine weeks, and we got to the end of the Apostle Peter, and we all just fell in love with each other, and then I said, well, there's one thing we have to do before we call it quits, and before we head back to Victor, and we may not see each other again until glory.

We're going to break bread together, and those poor people got so frightened. You just felt the Holy Spirit grieve and just say goodbye because of their fear, because of the way they'd been taught about the Eucharist. They were afraid, and they would not break bread with us because they were frightened, because the priest hadn't blessed them, and we had the liberty.

We knew that they didn't have the freedom of the liberty, and so rather than create any kind of a ruckus, we just said, oh, praise the Lord, but I can remember that to this day, the fear that they had because of the way they'd been taught. Here they could not break bread with us. They were so afraid, and God doesn't change the person that quickly, yet they were true believers, and they just had not been given the enlightenment yet.

They hadn't been in the woods long enough yet to realize, well, here you have the same situation. You have Jews coming up out of a powerful religious system with a lot of rules and regulations and a lot of ritual, and then they apprehend the freedom all of a sudden of the blessed Holy Spirit, that it's faith in Christ, and then to be able to go beyond those things. Well, they called Peter on the carpet.

They said, you know, we want to talk to you, and so the apostles and the brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God, and when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him. Boy, they want to know, you know, they're really going after Peter. Do you realize what you've done? Now, isn't it amazing how a person can be mentally blocked thinking that the grace of God only goes to one race of people? How tragic to think that the grace of God is only designed for a certain race of people.

When it plainly states, and Jesus made it very clear, that you see that Jesus Christ, God's Son, came for the sins of all the world, every member of the human race, because again, the beauty is that God's created us all. He's got this blessed design that he just straightens us all out from all these different races and all these different cultures, as different groups of people after the flood began to congregate, and they began to adapt, and then the different little traits of maybe one family began to lock in, and that family would be married, and it would begin to grow, and it would lock in the genetic code, and then you'd get the slant of the eyes or the color of the skin or the texture of the hair or the height of the body, and all these magnificent things that God had designed, and yet they all came out of Adam, and it was all God's beautiful creation, and Jesus Christ came to redeem us all. It's for whosoever, and so he's going to show them now.

He's shown Peter, and again, Peter's the vulnerable one, the one with the powerful personality. He's the natural leader, and this is interesting, too. Paul hasn't gotten, even his ministry hasn't begun yet.

That's another interesting thing. Remember Paul, he's been to Damascus three years in the Arabian desert, getting the whole revelation of the church like none of the other apostles, comes back to Jerusalem, and then Barnabas takes him down to Caesarea, puts him on a ship, and sends him back to Tarsus, his hometown, and so this is some seven years later. Paul's ministry hasn't even begun yet.

He's still being trained, the great Apostle Paul, so at this point, the Apostle Peter is the one kind of has taken the leadership, and that's what I find interesting also. Sometimes we are in such a hurry. You know, God has touched my life.

He's baptized me with the Holy Spirit. I begin to apprehend a little bit of doctrine. I'm saying, Lord, why aren't you using me? Well, even the Apostle Paul had seven years of training after his experience.

His ministry hadn't begun yet. In fact, we'll find out here tonight that not only did he not lead, but he assisted Barnabas for a year. It wasn't God's timing yet.

He was still preparing Paul, still teaching Paul, preparing him for that ministry, just as he's doing some of you. So when Peter would come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest into men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. You ate with a Pentecostal.

You went out and you went to a Catholic retreat, or you went to a Protestant retreat, or you went somewhere with a Baptist. It's amazing how petty we can get. It doesn't bother Jesus to fellowship with anybody like that, if they know him.

He's willing to reveal himself to anybody. And he has the love, you see, that overcomes all that. Perfect love casts out all fear.

Now certainly, once you know the truth, we're to walk in the truth. We don't lower the standards. We don't compromise the truth for fellowship.

We don't stand back like some Pharisee and say, you know, you're unclean. Jesus is willing to go anywhere if he finds a heart that's open and willing. So Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them, saying, Now again, he's going to relate the whole situation, what happened to him, by his own experience.

And sometimes, isn't that the greatest way to teach? And have you ever wondered why you've gone through something in particular? And maybe you don't know yet why. Why did God have me go through this? Because maybe one day soon, you're going to share that experience with someone else. It's going to edify them and strengthen them, minister to them.

Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning and expounded it by order unto them, saying, I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. Now, it's interesting, God does take people into trances and give them visions. One of the interesting things, God took me into a trance, I recall, as a young Christian and gave me a vision of what he was going to do in a way back here.

Now, he didn't show me everything. And it's interesting to me that this was some 20 years ago, and I haven't had anything like that since. I have had many dreams.

God does speak to us with dreams. In fact, he prophesied, you know, remember in Joel, that when he would pour out his spirit in the last days, his young people would prophesy, they'd have visions. And the only sad part about that prophecy is that the old men would have dreams.

But he has spoken to me and directed me by many dreams, and he also gives the interpretation. It's an exciting thing, and he does it. But as far as visions and trances, he does do that to guide people, to direct people, to bless people, and it comes unexpectedly.

Never, ever was anybody seeking a vision or looking to go into a trance when God did it. It was unexpected, but just something on the spur of the moment when God would just invade and step in and give a tremendous blessing of something he was going to do in that life. But in my own particular life, I had several in the beginning of my Christian experience, but since then I've had none.

It's just God has spoken to me in a marvelous way through his word and directed me day by day, just by the word of God. So, Peter's saying, well, that day I was on the roof in Joppa praying. I was in a trance, and I saw a vision.

A certain vessel descended, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners, and it came even to me. So all of a sudden, God just lowers out of heaven in a vision as Peter goes into a trance, this scene. Upon the witch, when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter, slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth." Now, that's interesting. What God was saying here, you can eat like the Gentiles now.

Peter's saying no, and I have never done that in my life. Now, what's interesting, Peter doesn't realize the state of his own heart, that he's still got a prejudice toward Gentiles and a fear of what other people may think. The interesting thing is, Jesus, I think, back in Matthew 15, verse 11, says, that which enters into the mouth is not what defiles a man, but that which proceeds out of the mouth.

That's what defiles a man. And then he teaches in another place, you see, the things that are in the heart can fly out, and the defilement comes out of the heart, that deep-seated thing in the human being, and out of the mouth it can fly. And Jesus said, that which goes into the mouth can't defile a man.

You're not going to be defiled by what you eat. And Paul, you remember, instructed Timothy that everything's sanctified by the word of God in prayer when you eat something. God's created it all for our good pleasure.

And the amazing thing is, I've watched some tremendous, tremendous National Geographic specials and NOVA specials on television, and it's amazing what some of these people in the jungle eat. But you know something? They look squirmy and crawly and revolting, but I'll tell you, there's more nutrition and they're healthier than Doritos. But it's amazing what we eat.

They do a lot more for those people than Hershey Kisses and Pepsi and potato chips and Doritos. But gee, how could they eat those things? And they're loaded with protein and good rich stuff, because all those bugs eat is leaves. No fat in them, just pure protein.

But it's just, oh my gosh. And it's like their mouths are watering after they throw them in the fire and wrap them in the leaves, these big, long, you know, caterpillars. And they just drop them in their mouth, you know.

And then the tough thing is, sometimes they bite them in half and the stuff oozes out of them, you know. And you go, how could they enjoy that? I'll take a Dorito any day. But it's not as good for me.

The amazing thing is that it's good for you. Peter's saying, not so, Lord. And there again, there's just something that's mutually exclusive there.

Not so, Lord. How can you say to your Lord, no. He's not your Lord.

But then again, the patience of the Lord. He says, after he said that, the voice answered me again from heaven. What God hath cleansed that call not thou common.

You see, God's willing to cleanse us all. God by Calvary, sending Jesus Christ to the cross, has cleansed the human race, as far as he's concerned, and whoever will come to him is cleansed. It doesn't matter where they're from, what they've done, what they look like, what their race.

God's cleansed us. And it's all through the blood of Jesus Christ. All been accomplished on Calvary.

You can be cleansed tonight because of Jesus and because of God's love. But God has cleansed that call not thou common. You know, Jesus said he was concerned about people that would say raka, or refer to somebody as a fool, or look down on someone with a demeaning manner.

There's no human being that's treated like that by God. Even the foulest sinner, God would desire that they would repent and turn to him and have their sins forgiven and have eternal life. You see, he's willing to cleanse and we're all filthy, aren't we? Anybody here that really thinks they're cleaner than someone else? You can't.

After you've experienced the grace of God and you realize what a filthy sinner we really are, how can you look at someone else as more unclean than ourselves? We've been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. That's the only thing that makes us clean now, is that the righteousness of God has been imputed to us through Jesus Christ, and he looks upon us as clean. We're far from perfect.

We still sin. We sin enough every day and we don't realize that they would cast us out of heaven. The mere fact that you have not yielded to God 100% today in your own life is enough to cast you out of heaven, if it weren't for Calvary, a created being that was brilliant and beautiful and wise.

His name was Lucifer. He did not yield to the will of God and it got him cast out of heaven. We do it every day and don't even give it a thought.

We call him Lord and we don't even yield to him. We still plan our own day. We still do what we want to do, yet we call him Lord.

Because of Calvary and the cross, he continues to love us and show us favor. He's anything but our Lord. There's not a person here in this room tonight, myself included, that somewhere during this day I've done what I've wanted to do out of God's will.

He hasn't smitten me, but that got Satan cast out of heaven, not yielding to his Lord. It's nothing but pride. Self-owned pride.

I can't identify it. I'm not willing to face myself and I think I know better than God. I'm going to learn things, but he accepts me and loves me because of Jesus.

And so what God has cleansed, call that not common. And this was done three times and all were drawn up again into heaven. Now, the very next verse probably shows us why God did it three times, because there were, as far as Peter was concerned, three unclean men coming.

They were going to be standing at the door of the house. Notice, and behold, immediately there were three men. These were the Gentiles from Cornelius's house.

They already had come into the house where I was sent from Caesarea unto me. So more than likely, that's why God did it three times, because three men in Peter's mind that would be considered unclean were coming. God said, they're not unclean.

I have sent an angel to their house and these were two servants, household servants of the Roman centurion, plus a very high-ranking officer in his entourage, maybe a general or lieutenant colonel from Cornelius's house. And so the three of them, under the instruction of the angel, came down seeking Peter. And so more than likely, that's why the sheet was dropped three times to put that in Peter's mind.

There's going to be three men that are not unclean, in my eyes, knocking at your door. You receive them. And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting.

Moreover, these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house. So Peter, on his way, got six of his friends, six believers, with him, and off they go. And they went to Cornelius, or the centurion's house.

And he showed us how he had seen an angel in this house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell thee words. Now, it's interesting, it's just the simple gospel. Not give thee some kind of a routine or a ritual to go through, but just tell thee words.

The simple gospel of Jesus Christ. Whereby thou and all thy house shall be safe. God's not just willing to save an individual, but every individual in the house, the whole family.

And I can stand here and say that God has honored that. If God can touch one life, and that one life will yield, God guarantees the rest of your family will be safe. But it's important that when He touches you, you yield.

You believe. And God promises He'll save the whole house. That's a promise you can plead.

You recall in Joshua chapter two, the harlot Rahab living in Jericho. The news was on the way that this group of people, these people that escaped Egypt, God was the mighty God of the Jews. And here they heard that they were on their way, and all of a sudden they're right across the Jordan River.

And the two spies are sent in, you recall. And she hides them. She'd heard some of the stories from the caravans and the traders coming through the Sinai desert, and the story of the tremendous miracles and the power of the God of these people.

And she'd already been believing in her heart, saying, you know, this is the true God. And so she hid the spies, you recall. And they said, well, because you've done this, if you will do what we tell you, not only will we save you and we come and destroy this place, but we'll save your father and your father's house.

And she pleaded that. She interceded and said, will you really do this? And if you respond to what we're telling you, when destruction comes, not only you, but your whole house will be saved. And God did it because she responded to what they told her.

You remember later on, when we get to it in Acts chapter 16, when Paul was in the jail in Philippi, remember the earthquake hit. And God, instead of God, like he does with Peter in this chapter, uses an angel. He sends an earthquake for Paul.

And so the thing collapses and the dust clears. And you remember the jailer's going to kill himself because, according to Roman law, if your prisoner ever escapes, you take his punishment. You will die.

And he knew that no sane man, after the way he tortured them, would stay after the jail had collapsed and he had the chance to escape. And as the dust settled, plunge the sword, the Roman sword, into his own chest and kill himself rather than be punished by Rome. He heard this voice out of the darkness say, stay, stay here.

Don't kill yourself. We're here. And it was Paul.

He preached the gospel to him. He forgave him for the beatings he received as a cruel jailer. And the man was overwhelmed that someone would forgive like that after the way he was so truly treated, when he had the opportunity to escape.

And he was just astounded. You see, the work that God can do in our hearts to forgive, to forgive our greatest enemies. And you remember, he said, well, what must I do to be saved? What do I do to experience what you are? I've never met anybody who would forgive like that and express the love of God what can I do to be saved? Paul said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your whole house will be saved.

Now, as Paul just saying, you know, just some mental gymnastics with a few words, Jesus come into my heart. I think there's a cheap grace being given in the church today and people don't understand what really believing means. Believing means a sense from the heart, a willingness to change and yield to God and make him Lord.

I yield you. You're my Lord, my Savior. And it's not just some words with my mouth.

It's some automatic thing is going to take place now because I recite some words. No, there's a change taking place. I'm yielded and the Spirit of God is changing me to such a powerful degree that it affects my house.

And they respond to God honors it and he saves the family. It's got to go deeper than the mind. Real belief is active.

It's not passive. The Greek word is an active tense, which means there's an activity. There's a response.

There's a life that follows my declaration that I'm living, and there's fruits of repentance that can be seen. It is not passive. It's active and it's visible.

And it's so visible and it's so delightful and so real that the rest of the family wants it also. God honors that. That's what believing really is.

Rahab lived it, proved it, God honored it, and the Philippian jailer, and I can stand here and say it happened in my house. Every member of my house, my family. Not only my personal house, but it's spread out beyond my house to relatives that don't even live with me.

God honors it. God is faithful to his word if we truly believe and yield to him. And really, how wonderful is it? It doesn't say to strive or strain.

It just says yield. How difficult is it to yield? That's such a beautiful word. Yield.

I yield myself to you, Lord. Just respond to you. God says, I'll save your whole house.

They'll begin to see what I'm doing in you as you yield to me and they'll desire it. There's nothing, there's no substitute, no manufactured thing. There's no pleasure in that world out there that can duplicate what I'm going to do in your life and they will see it and they will want it.

But they need to see it in your life. And your whole house will be saved. Now, what was the thing they saw? What did the Philippian jailer see? The overwhelming manifestation of love and forgiveness toward someone that he was very cruel to her and mocked and treated terribly.

You see, he was referred to as nothing but a dirty Jew in a jail and he had a death sentence. He was on his way back to Rome. He could care less if he ever lived.

He's getting paid to be a guard for the Roman Empire. That's his paycheck. He's nothing but this scum, this Jew, thrown in jail.

And he treats him cruelly. He could care less about him. And then to be treated with such love and forgiveness and to have his life saved by a man who said, you know, if I wanted retribution, you're dead now.

Paul could have walked out in the darkness and the dust and disappeared and that Philippian jailer would be a dead man. And Paul, you see, wasn't the type of man that would feel good about it. He saw a lost soul.

He saw someone who was damned who needed Jesus. And see, Paul was so thankful for his own redemption, he dedicated the rest of his life just to leading people to Jesus. He says, to whom much is forgiven, that person loves much.

And Paul experienced it and he wanted others to experience it. As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them. Here's this marvelous grace of God.

And Peter didn't know this was going to happen. He had no idea, no clue. And this is what's so wonderful, too, because I have had so many cases where someone just says, you know, I was just sitting in a Bible study and I got baptized in the Holy Spirit.

I just felt the Holy Spirit come on me and all of a sudden, there it was. God just does it. And I love it when he does it that way.

You know, there's not some routine that you have to go through to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the blessing of God. He is sovereign and he just decides in a moment, an instant, just to bless you when you least expect it. But it's interesting, they were listening to the word of God.

They were hearing the word of God. And Peter probably was just as shocked. He wasn't even giving a teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

He was preaching the gospel, sharing Jesus Christ. And then the Spirit fell upon them, just as at the beginning. And then remembered I, the word of the Lord, how that he said, John, indeed, baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

So here's a text that shows you there are two distinct baptisms. There's a baptism of water and there's a baptism of the Holy Spirit. An important thing that God wants you to have.

Now, this is another interesting thing, too. He says, I remembered, then I remembered what did Jesus tell the apostles in John 14? I think it's verse 26. He says, when the comforter who is the Holy Ghost shall come, whom the Father will send, he will lead you into all truth and bring all things to remembrance that I have said unto you.

And here's a living example of here. My gosh, Peter didn't have to worry about all of a sudden, I've got to remember everything, I've got to remember everything the Lord says. No, the blessed Holy Spirit brought it to him.

And I'll bet you, I don't know how many times, the Holy Spirit of God has probably brought something to you and you haven't even realized it was the Holy Spirit. You've gone out in the car and you're out in the driveway and you go, oh, I forgot. And you pull back in and you don't even thank the Lord.

Well, you think there's some kind of mechanism in the brain called the memory bank or remembrance mechanism that's automatically always there because you forget something God says on it? No, it's the Holy Spirit and we don't even give him the glory you're thanking for it. Or you're sitting there and you just make your bowl of popcorn and you turn on the TV and you hit the button and it says 15 to 7. And you're just getting ready to relax and start really chowing down and go, I'm supposed to be in, oh, I've got 20 minutes. And you turn the TV off and out you go and you make it on time and go, man, I'm glad I remembered to be here.

And you don't even thank the Lord. You don't even know where it came from. It's the blessed Holy Spirit bringing all things to our remembrance.

Or when you're sometimes so depressed or you're just sitting in the car and it doesn't seem like things are going so good and all of a sudden the Scripture starts. Some Scripture just comes to your heart. Just all of a sudden it's in your mind that still small voice brings a Scripture and it's the Holy Spirit saying it to encourage you.

And for as much then as God gave them the light gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? I'm going to say you can't do that, Lord. You can't love Gentiles. You can't baptize someone in the Holy Spirit.

We don't believe that in our church. You can't do that. Yes, you can, you see.

How are you going to stop it? God is so sovereign and so powerful and he'll pour out love on someone that we don't even want them to love because we don't love them. I've watched that bother people. God begins to love people they hate.

You're not supposed to love them, Lord. I don't like them. I don't want you to bless them.

I'm not going to be happy until they're miserable. And then God loves them. And sometimes God does it just to spite you, you know, and spank you.

Because he loves everybody. And it's a gift. You remember how easy it is to receive the Holy Spirit.

You receive him by faith. Remember in Luke, I think chapter 11, verse 13, Jesus said, If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more does your Heavenly Father want to give you the gift of the Holy Ghost? And it's a gift. He doesn't expect us to earn it.

There's no routine or ritual. You don't have to stand in line. No one has to hit you in the forehead.

You don't even see that in the book of Acts. It's amazing what the church does today to try and get somebody baptized in the Holy Spirit. It says you receive by faith and God will give it to you.

It's a gift. And Peter realized that. And when they heard these things, they held their peace.

Notice God picked the perfect timing to let the Jews know. But yet it's some seven or eight years after the day of Pentecost. He allowed these people to love him, to worship, to grow.

He gave them revelation. They spread the gospel. They ministered the truth of Jesus Christ.

And yet God said, Well, I'm not in a hurry like a lot of people. And now all of a sudden they realize, My gosh, God will save Gentiles. It just showed that we never know everything all at once, and we never come to a point where we do know and understand.

That's what I like about walking with God. There's always something new, some new enlightenment, maybe some wonderful correction of an attitude or a dogmatic view. And God's so gracious and willing and so lovingly how he shows us something new and exciting for our own personal edification.

Then we have to deal with it sometimes, don't we? Hey, Lord, I don't want to believe this. It's going to change the way I do think. I've believed this way too many years, and this thing's locked in me.

That's about time to change. I'm showing you a little bit more. It's time to change.

And you see, if we don't, we stop the blessings of God in our life. And again, as we shared a couple weeks ago, or maybe Sunday, God is infinite. You see, the revelation never stops.

You can never read a verse of Scripture and then finally know all there is to know about it. That's like saying you're going to know all about God. Don't allow that to happen.

I know all there is to know about this verse now. That may be all you're ever going to know about that verse, but someone else is going to know a lot more about that verse and get a greater blessing and get more depth and go on further. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

And the more you read the Word of God, as we sang tonight, meditating in the Word of God day and night, God keeps revealing. He shows a little more. He takes us in a little deeper.

He brings us in closer into his presence, into the holiest of holies, and shows another aspect of his truth. It's like a many-faceted diamond that's bigger than this universe. There's so many facets, and all God has to do is take this one diamond and twist it, and his glory glances off, and you see a whole new ray of light, a whole new truth.

And you stay excited. It's exciting to read the Word of God. So they realized.

They held their feet. Notice how quickly they responded. They weren't so proud that they would admit they're wrong and they're going to be steadfast and say, we don't care.

This is the way we're going to believe, and we'll just have a smaller group, maybe, but we're going to stick with the way we believe here. No, they heard these things. They held their peace, and they glorified God.

It didn't bother them. They buried their prejudice, their fear. And again, there's the work of the love of Jesus Christ, saying, Have God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto thy life? Notice, God grants us repentance.

He says the servant of the Lord must be gentle, mustn't strive, just really have that. And I'm sure Peter was sharing a gentle way that opened their hearts and made them accept what God wanted to do. And repentance came, and the Lord gave them life.

And now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Cenas, or the Isle of Crete, and Cyprus, and Antioch, that would be up in Turkey, preaching the words of none but unto the Jews only. So here, because of the persecution and basically because of Paul, they're back in the area of Jerusalem, but the gospel is being spread all over the Mediterranean from a thousand miles beyond. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene.

There's North Africa. That's all the way over to Libya. So here the gospel is spreading all around the known world, all the way some thousand miles from Jerusalem, but it's because of persecution.

And if it wasn't for the persecution, the stoning of Stephen, and the persecution of Paul before he got converted, you see, the gospel wouldn't have spread. And many times God uses that, as we touched on that a few weeks ago. It may be a negative thing in my life right now, but the fruit later will bring glory to God.

As you are moved somewhere, maybe in a situation that you would not willingly choose on your own, God has created circumstances and providentially forced you somewhere you don't want to be, and it's your opportunity to glorify Him by sharing your faith. The interesting thing is that these people were driven out of their safety zone, their megachurch in Jerusalem, where they could all gather together and encourage and strengthen each other. They were sent into isolated areas.

They didn't bury their faith. They didn't give up and quit. They shared their faith.

The grace of God was upon them. And so often, you see, we want to stay in our comfort zone, don't we? I want to share my faith, but I want to make sure I'm surrounded with Christians. I want to work on a job where everybody's safe.

If nobody's saved, I'm going to quit. No one's saved here. There's dirty pictures on the assembly line.

I quit. I'm out of here. Filthy language.

There's drugs everywhere. There's no one saved. I just don't want to work there anymore.

And yet, that very same person will come and say, you know, I think I'm going to go in the mission field. And I think sometimes they just want to see a foreign country. They're really burdened for the lost.

They're in a mission field on the assembly line, and there's not a saved person there. And God loves that person as much as he loves the person in Greenland or Australia. There's vast mission fields.

And here, these people, because of persecution, no work. Remember, being a believer in Jerusalem, there was a small...it wasn't that many believers compared to the populace. And so here, they're losing their jobs.

They're being pushed out of the side. It was the Jews putting pressure on them. And they were driven away from their homes, their jobs.

They didn't give up. Oh, you can't trust the Lord. And then end up in North Africa or in Turkey or on the Isle of Crete.

And then all of a sudden, oh, there's not a church here. There's no other believers. I quit.

I give up. No, if you want believers in your new neighborhood, go knock on your neighbor's door and lead them to Christ. If you want a church in your area, start a Bible study.

Maybe God will bless it. And there'll be a church in your neighborhood. This is right on.

That's what was going on in the early church. Those were people who were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. And that's the dynamic.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives somebody. And the hand of the Lord was with them. Isn't it interesting? Here, they're persecuted, driven places.

God designed it and allowed it. So the hand of the Lord was with them. You never have to fear.

So you're sent to a town and there's no Calvary Chapel. Well, start a Bible study. Maybe God wants to start a Calvary Chapel with you.

There was no Calvary Chapel here twenty years ago. Now there's what? Fifteen in the Rochester area. There may not be anybody saved where you're working.

Share your faith and then there'll be people saved on the job and you'll enjoy it, maybe. I want to go to a place where there are Christians. God has put you in a tremendous spot.

And what a shame that I don't share my faith because there's no believers. Why share your faith with a believer? They're saved. God got you in a place where there's unbelievers.

Purposely. It's his design. You see.

And so here they're being scattered all around, a thousand miles from Jerusalem, and they're sharing their faith and God running. God's hand will be upon you. God will never forsake you.

And a great number believed. Not because of the Apostle Paul wasn't saved. None of these people were the Apostles.

They all were in Jerusalem. Many believed because of people like you and I. No pastors, no preachers, no evangelists. People like you and I. And many believed.

A great number. And turned to the Lord. And then tidings of these things came into the ears of the church within Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

And here Barnabas, the son of consolation, or the son of comfort, he's called. They're sending him all the way up to Turkey. And what a better person to go out and investigate and see what's happening.

Someone that is a peacemaker. The son of consolation. Who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

Notice you can see true conversion. When he got there, he saw that they'd been converted. You can see it in the light.

You can see it in the face. You can see it. There's just something about that person.

Now, he doesn't say he saw perfection. He saw the grace of God. He saw lives that were changed because of Jesus Christ.

You can see it. There were no, you know, secret agents. If someone's truly experienced conversion, it should be seen by others.

The favor of God upon someone. I've been in places, and it is true. You're around someone.

Have you ever been in like an airport or somewhere, and you come in contact with someone, and it's almost like you want to say, I know that person's a believer. You can see the expression on their face. You hear their words, the way they speak, the way they turn themselves, and before you know it, you say, you know, I knew you were a believer.

I knew it. You wanted to say something earlier, but you weren't quite sure at first, and then as you become comfortable with that person, you begin to talk and share. I know you're a believer.

You're a Christian. I've had that happen so many times. In fact, when we had our water installed, we had this purification thing put under our sink where you get all the stuff out of the water, and it was like a confirmation.

Rosemary and I prayed, you know, we've got about ten more years to live. Let's enjoy the water, and so we got this thing, and the guy came out to give us the sales pitch and everything, and it's quite impressive, and it's interesting. As soon as he walked in, there was something about him.

This was pleasant, something about him, an air about him and everything, and it really was the grace of God upon him, and finally, as we're sitting there and he gave the call to anything, I said, well, my wife and I are going to have to pray about this. Would you like to pray with us? He goes, oh yeah, sure, and so we

sat at the kitchen table and we prayed and asked the Lord to confirm that we should go through with this, and it turns out that here's a guy that the Lord sent out as a believer to install our water system, and then we just knew it. Just a great guy.

Didn't get us off the hook. We still had to pay the full price. You know, oh brother, for you, twenty percent discount, you know.

But it was a neat thing. So, he saw in these people, tomorrow, you've got one more day in Babylon out there. You know, some of you have to go out there in Babylon and you have your sirene or your creed or somewhere where God has put you to share your faith.

At the end of the day, take stock and say, did people see Christ in me today, or am I a closet Christian? Notice, he saw something. You see light. Jesus said, let your light so shine before men that they'll see your good works and glorify your Father which is better.

You don't have to hear light. In fact, you don't hear light. He said, let your light shine.

Let them see something, and it can be done. Now, is Christ's love and is his radiance in your life? Is he there in the morning with you before you go out to people and see Christ and see that light? It doesn't say you hear light or you have to hear anything. Let your light shine that they may see.

So, everywhere you go, whatever you're doing tomorrow, Father, are they seeing Jesus in me? Are they seeing Jesus in me? You see, Barnabas, as soon as he got there, he could see the grace of God is touching people. There are people here that are different. You can see it.

And so, he exhorted them. Notice, he encouraged. That word exhort means to encourage, to comfort.

That's true prophecy, by the way. It says when you prophesy, he that prophesieth exhorteth, edifies, and comforts. That's how you can tell if the prophecy is from God.

Is it comforting? Is it encouraging you? Is it building you up? That is prophecy. First Corinthians 14.3. Notice, he's going to prophesy to encourage them. He's going to strengthen and encourage them.

That with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith. And much people was added unto the Lord.

Now, you have to remember what Antioch was. It was the third largest city in the world at that time. It was a tremendous city.

It was next to, actually Rome was the greatest city, the largest city. Then you had Alexandria, and then Antioch, because of the trade routes and its position in Turkey there, from the east and the west, and the African, from Africa up into Europe, you had this amazing city. But it was really a depraved city.

Their principal goddess was the nymph Daphne. The story has it and the tale has it that Apollo had chased into the laurel woods, and she stayed there, and then from that all the wood nymphs, or the women, and out of that story of Daphne and Apollo, they designed a religion where there were female prostitutes. And Antioch was the Las Vegas of the world, with Corinth in those days.

So it was a great city, but it was depraved, sexually immoral, and very loose. And so that's where the gospel is going. It's interesting, these cities where these people were sent, that they shared their faith, how

quickly God honored it in the worst places.

I think it's wrong to think, well I want to go where it's going to be easy and I'll be received immediately, where there's not going to be any strife or any stress. I want everything to be clean and generic here, and sterile, and I'll set up a Bible study. No, this place was depraved.

You remember in Romans 5, Paul says, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. And so when you go into these areas where it's so dark, you see the light can shine the brightest, and God will give the honor to it. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

And it's interesting, in these terrible places, these licentious cities, because the world was really depraved. The Roman Empire was sexually immoral, rampant with homosexuality and pornography. The art was all pornographic.

Even their sculptures, their public sculptures, were pornographic. But that's where the gospel was being sent. That's where these people were sharing their faith, and God was honoring it.

Sin was abounding, but God's grace abounded even more. And again, you may be in a situation and there's sin all around you. Let God's grace abound upon you and share your faith.

And watch the hand of God be upon you and strengthen you. It says that the Holy Ghost was inside of Barnabas, and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul.

Saul's been there some seven years. After he left Jerusalem, after his Arabian Desert experience, after Damascus, his conversion, and again, still more training. Even the great Apostle Paul needed seven years of preparation, molding and shaping, giving him character, balance.

And so Barnabas was looking for him. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Then I think Paul was the assistant to Barnabas at this time for a year. So there was still more to learn. Maybe his personality.

Maybe there were some rough edges about this strong-willed Paul, this ex-Pharisee, that being with Barnabas maybe mellowed him. He had to see something that God wanted to put in his life. He spent another year assisting Barnabas.

And it's interesting, as people began to come to Christ, remember the Rome called Christians atheists, because they didn't believe in the pagan gods. They believed in this Jewish Savior, this Jesus. They were referred to as atheists.

And there's this Christian, or it's a Greco-Roman contraction of two words. The first one is the Greek Messiah, or Christ, Christos. The Christo ones, or Christos ones, are the ones who believed in Christ, and it was kind of a term of contempt.

It wasn't a thing of respect. It was a term of contempt. They're the Christ ones.

Kind of like back in the 60s, we were called Jesus freaks. It was a term of contempt, but for us it was a badge of honor that people would see that we believed that they saw enough. They said, you know, we can tell you believe in that Jesus.

You're a Jesus freak. Now, I see it because of what's happened in our culture. The term Christian isn't so offensive.

It's getting there, isn't it? I mean, if you're a real Christian, they tag extreme fundamentalism on you that you're one of these doomsdayers and these people who believe in hell and there's going to be a judgment. Absolutely. I'm a Christian.

I'm in love with Jesus, and I'm not ashamed of it, and I believe the Bible's literal. I believe that God meant what he said and said what he meant, and it's without error. There's no contradictions, and I live by the Bible, and it's getting to the point now where if you do that, being a Christian can maybe, there's a little bit of contempt coming toward us.

It's interesting, in Isaiah, before the fall of the nation, one of the things that was going on, they were trying to entrap people, the true believers in God in Israel, and the political leaders of Israel in that day, because the nation departed from God. It said they were making a man's word an offense. In other words, the godly Jews were offensive, and their terminology was offensive, and their declaration of God's truth were offensive.

It wasn't politically correct in Isaiah's day to stick to the biblical principles. It was an offense, their words. And you know what's happening today.

Homosexuality is an absolute perversion. God said that person is damned, and the Bible says the person who's a homosexual deserves the disease he gets. You say that in long circles.

They say, well, that's not wrong. That's not politically correct, but the Bible declares it. The Bible describes it.

They'll rot away, slowly. They will just rot and waste away, and they get what they deserve. But you say that in the wrong group, and you say that's not politically correct.

You say the National Endowment of Arts is nothing but a waste of money and filth, and they react. Oh, you Christians, you fundamentalists. It's art.

It's filthy, and our tax dollars are paying for it. It's filth, and there are perverted minds in Washington and leaders calling it art and pressuring Congressmen to keep it going and take our money to promote it and put it in galleries. It's just the same as Rome of old.

It's stupid. But you see, that's extreme Christian fundamentalism, and they're building up a contempt for people who truly want to glorify God and be faithful to the word of God. They call Broadway plays art.

It's nothing but sensuality and filth. It's nothing but grease of old. They call it entertainment.

It's nothing but pornography with a little more clothing on, little songs. They call it music. It's nothing but rock and roll filth.

It's got young people committing suicide, and they protect it by what? The First Amendment? The freedom of speech? And isn't it amazing how much they harp on the freedom of speech, but they don't want us to have our freedom of speech. They believe in the freedom of speech if it's filthy, and they can make money putting in print and selling in magazines and putting in music. But if we speak out against it and say, you know, the Bible says, Oh no, you can't speak that way.

You don't have the freedom to speak biblical truth. It's building up, and we're seeing it in our own country, just as Israel of old. But that's why it's more important for us to continue to share our faith, where sin abounded, grace does much more abound.

God honors it when you share your faith. You tired of that guy speaking so filthy next to you at work? You tired of that dirty literature in the restroom at the plant? Well, go find the guy that left it there and share the gospel, and then he might get saved and quit reading it. I'm going to quit and go get a job somewhere else.

I'm clean here. That's like, God's got you there. You're to be salt.

Jesus said, too, they were to be salt and light. He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, full of faith. And they began to be ridiculed because of their faith.

Christ ones, they could tell. You're one of those Christ ones. You didn't see it in your life.

Thank God they can see it. I would be ashamed if the world accepted me. I would feel ashamed of my Lord.

The Pergamus Church was accepted by the Lord. It got married with the world. It compromised so much, became such a chameleon to be accepted by the world, it was no longer an offense.

Jesus said, because they hated me, they should hate you. What an honor to be hated, to have so much of Christ in me that the world hates me, and I can share the love of Jesus with them and stand up for my Lord. These days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch, and there stood up one of them named Agabus, and he signified by the Spirit that there should be great girth throughout all the world which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

It's interesting that Paul's there, Barnabas is there, and they've been teaching and one's an apostle to be, and yet God uses Agabus to prophesy about the coming girth, not Paul or Barnabas. It shows you again that God uses everybody. I like that.

God will use you in a mighty way. You didn't need Paul to prophesy. Paul was teaching the word with Barnabas, strengthening the saints, but he sent Agabus and prophesied of the coming girth throughout all the world, and notice the spontaneous reaction.

There was no pressure, no manipulation whatsoever. The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. No pressure whatsoever, no manipulation.

They just all of a sudden found out and freely people just said, I'm going to help. And that's the way it should always be. The tragedy in the church today is there's such a manipulation, especially on television.

But that shouldn't surprise us, because Peter said in the last days there'll be false teachers among you, and many will follow their pernicious ways. They will make merchandise of you, always going after your money. It should be of your own free will, just a spontaneous reaction in your own heart which you want to give because God has given to you.

Always. Which also they did, and they sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Notice he's called Saul still here.

Saul. As we get further into the book of Acts, we see that the fruit of God moves Peter aside, and then all of a sudden Paul comes into the forefront and God begins to reveal the powerful mysteries of the church that he's given to the apostle Paul through the rest of the book of Acts. Shall we all stand? Father, we thank you for the opportunity to be salt and light, and we thank you, Father, that it's not left to us.

It's your marvelous hand upon us and enabling us if we'll just yield. And we thank you, dear Lord, that everyone in this room has the promise that our whole house can be saved if we truly believe. It's your promise, Lord, and you cannot lie.

And so we do, Father, put our houses before you. Together, we agree together as a body, and we put our family members, those we work with, before you. And we pray, dear Father, you'd fill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the love and the boldness to share our faith.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. P.O. Box 25099.

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