

(Acts) Repentance Granted to Gentiles

by Brian Brodersen

God's plan is to include all people in his family, and he has extended the offer of peace to each and every one of us through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 53:10

Topics: "Repentance And Forgiveness", "Holy Spirit Power"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that despite humanity's rebellion against God, He offers peace and forgiveness to all who are willing to turn away from sin. Jesus came to extend this offer of peace and ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit, healing and delivering people from the oppression of the devil. The preacher also highlights the role of Jesus as the judge of the living and the dead, a concept often rejected in today's culture. Peter's experience with the Gentiles in Acts 10 is used as an example of how God's plans and actions cannot be withstood, and how even those who initially opposed it were silenced and glorified God.

Transcript

Acts chapter 10, if you'll remember Cornelius, Cornelius, a Roman centurion, but a man who was a devout man. He was a man who feared God. He was a man who gave to the poor.

He was a man who prayed. And as he was spending some time in prayer, an angel appeared to him and told him that he was to send for a man named Simon, whose surname was Peter. He was abiding with Simon the Tanner in Joppa.

And Peter would come and show him the way to salvation. And so as we pick up the story, Peter has arrived at the house of Cornelius. He himself, perhaps you remember, had seen a vision.

He fell into a trance and he had seen a vision. And in that vision, God was communicating to Peter that he wasn't to call anything common or unclean that God had cleansed. And Peter began to realize that God was trying to speak to him and to show him that the Gentiles who were deemed as unclean by the Jews were not to be considered that way at all, and that God had a plan to bring them into his family, into his kingdom.

So that's the overall message that's being communicated to Peter. He goes to the house of Cornelius, and when he arrives there, he's really stunned because he realizes now that God is no respecter of persons,

that God was not only the God of the Jews, but that God was interested in all people. And he's interested in this man, Cornelius, and his family as they're gathered together.

And so in verse 36, where we pick up here in chapter 10, Peter begins to declare to Cornelius and to his household words by which they will be saved. And so he says this, the word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all that word, you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea and began from Galilee after the baptism, which John preached. It's interesting to me that Peter speaking to Cornelius, this Gentile, this Roman centurion, that he says to him, you know about this, you're aware of these things.

And so it shows you how far spread the ministry of Jesus was. It shows you how it was common knowledge later on in the history that Luke gives us here. Paul will stand before King Agrippa and he will testify to King Agrippa.

And in the course of that, he'll say, Agrippa, I know you know about these things. This thing wasn't done in secret. It wasn't done in a corner.

Agrippa, this is common knowledge. What do you think about it? And so likewise, Peter here is indicating that the knowledge of Jesus Christ had gone out into all the land. And so.

Verse 38 says how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth. This is what was known. God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.

For God was with him and we are witnesses of all things, which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day and showed him openly not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is he who was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

To him, all the prophets witness that through his name, whoever believes in him will receive remission of sins. And so this is a synopsis of the message that Peter was there declaring to those gathered together in the house of Cornelius. Now, there's many things in the message that we could pause and consider together, and there are a couple of things that I think we ought to do that with.

First of all, notice back in verse thirty six, when it speaks of preaching peace through Jesus Christ, it's not inferring that Jesus, you know, went about preaching peace like he was an anti-war demonstrator or something of that nature. But God sent a message of peace to the people and the message of peace came through Jesus Christ. You see, the fact of the matter is there is a war going on.

But it's a war between man and God. You see, man is at war with God. That's really the big problem.

The problem tonight is not simply over in Iraq. The problem is not over in North Korea. The problem is right within the bosom of every single human being, because every single person is.

At enmity with God, every single person is at war with God, every single person that hasn't yet come and made peace with God through what God did through our Lord Jesus Christ. So God, interestingly to me, even though he isn't the one who started the conflict. We are the ones who rebelled.

We are the ones that turned against him, even though we are the ones that started the war. God has extended the offer of peace to each and every one of us. And that's what Jesus came to do, to extend to us an offer of peace that if we would be willing to give up, surrender, turn away from our sin and our rebellion to God, God would forgive us and God would receive us.

And so that's the message that was being communicated through the ministry of Jesus. Now, in verse 38, Peter describes to us the activity of our Lord. And this is just sort of, you know, a summary of what we read in the Gospels, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit.

We remember that when Jesus came up from his baptism, that the spirit of God descended on him like a dove. And from that point on, Jesus went about ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit. He went about doing good and healing all those who are oppressed of the devil.

You know, this is a good picture of ministry for all of us. Jesus went about doing good. That was the reputation he had.

And, you know, sometimes I think we we think, Lord, I want to do something for you. I want to serve you. And in our minds, we're wondering, well, what could that be or what, you know, would that look like? And sometimes we sort of develop in our minds some scenario that maybe is not a reality.

But, you know, you can serve the Lord by just going about doing good, just doing good to people. Sometimes we forget that it's so simple by just going about doing good, just being a blessing to people, helping people, encouraging people, being kind to people, doing good things for them. And as you do them, doing them in the name of the Lord.

That is powerful. And that, of course, is what Jesus went about doing. He just went about doing good.

And of course, through the power of God upon him, he was healing all who were oppressed of the devil. The Lord can use us to do that as well. Heal those who are oppressed by the devil.

Of course, when we lead somebody to Christ, they come out from under that authority of the devil. But we can also pray for people and see them delivered from the oppression of the devil. Sometimes we can speak an encouraging word to them that can bring them out from under the oppression of the devil.

And so a model for ministry here, Jesus exemplified it for us. And then as we go a bit further into verse 42, Peter describes the commission that he himself and the other apostles had received. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is he who was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.

This is a role that we sometimes forget that the Lord functions in. Sometimes we forget about his role as judge, but that is very much a part of who he is and what he's going to do. He is the judge of the living and the dead.

You know, I think most people today. Well, I don't know, maybe that's an overstatement to say most people, but certainly in our culture, a lot of people have just completely erased from their minds the very concept of a judgment to come. They just completely reject such a thing.

They pay no attention to it whatsoever. I was reading an article today in the news. You remember a while back, one of the appellate courts here in California declared that the phrase under God was

unconstitutional and needed to be erased from the Pledge of Allegiance.

And they had been reconsidering their decision on it. And, you know, there was a great outcry from all quarters when that decision came down. Well, I just read in the paper today that they decided to hold fast to their position because they don't want to be swayed by public opinion.

They want to stick with enforcing the Constitution as though that's what they were actually doing. That's so ridiculous. It's not even funny.

But the man who brought the lawsuit and lied in the process about his poor little girl who was being offended by the in God or one nation under God, the child happened to be a Christian. Her mother denied that she was offended at all. And, you know, so there's so much deceit and hypocrisy in this whole thing.

But, you know, they were interviewing the man and he was just so glad to see. That justice was being done, just so proud of the court for standing up and protecting the rights of these people that are offended by the name of God. And, you know, that fellow has forgotten something.

As have many others, the judges sitting on the court, they've forgotten that there's a greater court. It's higher than the United States Supreme Court. It's higher than the Hague.

It's the most powerful court in the universe. It's the court of God. And one day, every single human being is going to arrive there before the judge.

And Jesus Christ is himself the judge. He is the one that God has ordained to be the judge of the living and the dead. I pray that people would begin to realize that again.

When people forget that there's a judgment coming, they sin fearlessly. It's when people anticipate a judgment that they are not as anxious or as careless in their approach to life as we see them being today. But the reality is this.

Jesus Christ is the judge of the living and the dead. And every single human being that's ever lived, ever will live. Everybody is going to stand one day before the Lord.

And as we're told in Philippians, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Those in heaven will do it. Those on earth will do it.

And those in hell will do it. He is the judge of the living and the dead. So Peter goes on to say that to him, all the prophets witness.

And of course, we've already considered that in a previous study. But going back over the prophets, the prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah and how through his name, whoever believes in him would receive the remission of sin. So this is the message.

Peter's there presenting this message to Cornelius and to his family and to his friends that are gathered. And while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word and those of the circumcision, meaning those Jews that were with Peter who believed were astonished as many as came with Peter because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. Now, here's where it's really beginning to roll.

What Jesus said initially would happen. This is where it's going to really begin to take off from this point that the gospel would go from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, into Galilee and throughout the land of Israel and predominantly among the Jews. But then eventually it would go to the uttermost parts of the world and it would touch the Gentiles.

And so here we have it. You see, the Samaritans, you remember, they were converted earlier under the ministry of Philip. The Samaritans were not really considered Gentiles because they were part Jewish.

They were not embraced fully by the Jews and there was a division between them, but they were not considered Gentiles. And then we saw the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. But it would seem that he was probably a convert to Judaism.

But now here we have a full blown Roman, a Gentile. Cornelius is not a convert to Judaism. He has come to fear the one God, but yet he is a bona fide Gentile.

And now we have the first Gentile brought into the church and not just this man, Cornelius, but evidently all of those that were gathered together with him. So as Peter's speaking. Evidently, as Peter was speaking, they were embracing his message in their hearts, they were believing it, they they were receiving what he was saying.

And God, who knows the heart as they're receiving the word, God then pours his spirit upon them. You see, God looks at the heart and sometimes we put a big emphasis on someone maybe coming forward or say this prayer with me and and that's fine. But we have to remember that God's not limited to those things to bring a person to himself.

God sees a person's heart and the moment a person in their heart embraces the message. I've talked to a lot of people who have come and, you know, actually have come because they say, well, you know, I want to get saved. And then after 20 minutes of talking to him, I say, guess what? You're already saved.

I am. Well, what do you mean? How do you figure? I never said the sinner's prayer. I didn't go forward anywhere.

Well, that's all right. It's evident that you've believed. It's obvious that you have embraced Christ already by, you know, what you're telling me is going on in your life.

And you see, God isn't limited to those kinds of things that we so often look to. God looks at the heart. And when a person responds in their heart, when a person like Cornelius listens to that message and in his heart, he just bears witness and says, that's true.

I believe that's true. That instant. He's converted and God confirms his conversion by pouring the Holy Spirit out upon him.

Now, these Jews that are with Peter. Now, remember, Peter's the one who's been getting all the insight from the Lord. He had the vision when he was in a trance on the roof of Simon's place.

God told him not to call anything common or unclean that he had cleansed. And Peter's having this revelation. But it doesn't appear that the other Jews with them were quite getting it like Peter was getting it because they're astonished.

They can't believe it. That God is actually giving the Holy Spirit to these Gentiles, just like he did to us, that will give you an idea of how twisted the Jewish mind had become in regard to God's attitude toward those outside of the nation of Israel. These were good men.

These were believers. These were now actually Christians, but they still were so had that, you know, prejudice so ingrained in them. They were stunned.

They were amazed when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon these Gentiles. But they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. And so Peter answered and he said, Can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized to have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Then they asked him to stay a few days. So Peter realizes God is overruled all of our prejudice, all of our bias. God has obviously saved these people.

He's given us the spirit just like he'd given them the spirit, just like we had received. And he says, can anyone would anyone dare forbid these to be baptized? God has shown that he's accepted them. Would we dare keep them back from full entrance by holding or withholding baptism from them? That's what Peter's communicating here.

Now, just a bit of a side note. This goes to show us. That baptism is not essential for salvation.

This is one of those places in scripture where we see that now a lot of people do have questions about this, and there are certain groups that go about informing others wrongly, but nevertheless informing others that unless you're baptized, you can't possibly be saved. And they go even further and say, unless you're baptized into our organization, you can't be saved. But scripture doesn't teach that.

And here's a good illustration of. What the scriptures do teach that baptism is not the way salvation is obtained, but baptism is really an outward demonstration of what's already occurred in one's heart. A baptism is a public display of one's conversion.

And so here these guys are. They're not even baptized in water, but they're clearly baptized in the Holy Spirit. They're speaking in tongues, they're magnifying God.

It's quite obvious that these people are converted, but they haven't yet been baptized. And so is the case with many, because, again, baptism is not the means to conversion. It's just the outward testimony that conversion has taken place.

Now, the apostles and brethren who were in Judea, they heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him. So they got they heard about this conversion among the Gentiles.

Peter got back and you would have thought that they would have said, Peter, that is phenomenal. That is so great that Gentiles have been brought into their part of the family. But no, they contended with Peter.

They were upset. They said you went into uncircumcised men and ate with them. Peter, what are you thinking? What are you doing? You're a Jew.

These guys are Gentiles. You actually went in and ate with them. Peter's about to say, hey, I got news for you.

We did a lot more than eat. And it wasn't just me that was there. Obviously, God was there to based upon what happened.

But Peter, he explained it to them in order from the very beginning. And so he goes back over the whole thing. He talks about how he was in Joppa.

He was praying. He fell into a trance and he talks about the vision he saw of the various beast and so forth. And the Lord calling him to rise and kill and eat and showing him that that he had basically cleansed these things.

And then he tells him how at that very moment that he was through having that vision that these men arrived at the house of Simon and they were inquiring about Peter and how the spirit, it says in verse 12, Peter says, the spirit told me to go with these men doubting nothing. And then, Peter, he says, and I would imagine he turned in motion. He said, moreover, these six brethren, they accompanied me.

We entered the man's house. He said, look, these guys are with me. They they can tell you I. What could I do? You know, it's interesting here, too, to note that Peter.

Is being grilled by those back in Jerusalem . And, you know, he's sort of under the gun. And it's just one of those subtle sort of almost incidental types of things that you see in scripture that do show us that this whole idea of a hierarchy and of a pope and that sort of thing in the early church, it just didn't exist. You know, if that was the case, if the case was indeed as it is represented by the Roman Catholic Church, Peter would have just said, hey, shut up.

I'm the pope. Don't tell me what I can do and can't do. Let me tell you, I want to speak ex cathedra right now and bring to you divine revelation.

But Peter didn't do that. Peter was one of many elders. And right now, Peter is on the hot seat because these guys don't quite know what's going on.

And so Peter goes on and he he then tells him about Cornelius and how he saw this angel. And verse 14, he said that the angel told Cornelius that Peter would tell you words by which you and all your household would be saved. And then Peter says, and I and as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them as upon us at the beginning.

Then I remembered verse 16, the word of the Lord, how he said John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If therefore, Peter's response, God gave them the same gift as he gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was I that I could withstand God? Peter's just saying, look, what was I supposed to do? God sent me there.

And then when I got there, I was just beginning my message. And suddenly the spirit of God came upon these people. And then I remembered what Jesus said about the baptism with the spirit.

And who was I to withstand God? Who was I to say, wait a second, Lord, you can't do this. These are Gentiles, don't you know that they're not welcome? But when they heard these things, they became silent and they glorify God. So they themselves were amazed.

I would have liked to have been there when they heard Peter's explanation. They just they became silent. They couldn't argue against it.

What could they say? God had done it. So they glorify God, saying then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life. Wow.

Amazing. They were stunned. They were astonished.

They just didn't see it. They didn't realize it. They had been blind to the message of their own scriptures, even those that had embraced the Messiah.

They were still thinking that this was, you know, mainly a Jewish thing. But then they realized that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance to life. And there's an important message in this statement here that God has granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.

You know, a lot of times people think. In terms of, you know, receiving Christ or whatever, they think, well, you know, yeah, I'm going to do that, I'm I'm getting there, I'm realizing that I need that. And, you know, I can see it coming somewhere down the road, but, you know, I'm not quite ready for it yet, they say.

But here's something that we need to realize. We don't choose those things. If God has given you an invitation to be saved, the wisest thing you could do is take it the minute you realize it, because to put it off could be to put yourself out eternally because you don't know how long the invitation is going to be open.

You don't know that that invitation is going to be there when you decide that, you know, I think I'm ready now to stop living my life of sin and start thinking about God. You don't know that the opportunity is going to be available to you at the point. And that's a mentality that I think a lot of people have today.

And you see, it's based on a totally false understanding of God and of our own predicament and of salvation and everything else. The fact that we can even be saved at all is a miracle. The fact that there is an invitation extended is an absolute act of God's grace and mercy.

And to presume upon that to say, oh, well, you know that that salvation, you know, that sounds all right, but I've got a few things I want to do and then I'll think about it. That is a very dangerous way to live because you don't know that that door is going to be open. There's nothing in scripture to imply that it's open indefinitely.

And therefore, Paul, the apostle, would write and say. Today is the day of salvation. So today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart.

You see, now is the acceptable time today. Don't procrastinate, you can procrastinate on a lot of things in life and still survive. This is when you can't afford to procrastinate on because you don't have any guarantee that the opportunity is going to be there when you finally get around to it.

God is. Granted to the Gentiles repentance to life, God has granted us the opportunity to be saved. We need to take that opportunity the moment we realize it's there and not procrastinate about it.

And so. Verse 19 says, now those who were scattered. After the persecution that arose over Stephen, now Luke is kind of catching us up on.

What everybody else is doing, you remember after the persecution that occurred there with the death of Stephen, he went on and he talked about the ministry of Philip. He talked about Peter and John coming to Samaria. Then he went into the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and he spoke about Saul's ministry.

And then he went back in and he's been talking to us about the ministry of Peter. So now he's going to go back in the historical chronological narrative and he's going to pick up with those that were scattered after the persecution. So you remember when Stephen was stoned to death, everyone but the apostles was scattered and they started going out to different areas and they were preaching as they went, we read.

But now here we're going to discover that there were certain who traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. Now, Phoenicia would be modern day Lebanon. And then, of course, Cyprus is still the island of Cyprus off of the coast there.

And then Antioch would be over in the region of Syria. And so they went up north from Jerusalem and they as they went there, they were preaching the word. But as was the practice and as was the thinking, they were only preaching to the Jews.

But some of them. They were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they had come to Antioch, they spoke to the Hellenist. So there were a couple of.

I don't know what you'd call them, just sort of adventurous. Guys who were out there and they decided, well, why don't we just speak to the Hellenist? Why don't we share this message with the Gentiles? We've been sharing it with the Jews and we're getting occasionally a decent response. Most of the time we're getting in trouble.

Maybe we ought to share with the with the Gentiles. And so a few of these adventurous souls, they just sort of step out and start sharing the Lord with the Gentiles preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. And the hand of the Lord was with them.

And a great number believed and turned to the Lord. So shockingly. They're finding that the Gentiles are receptive.

As they begin to share with them now, an interesting point that one of the commentators I was reading today brought out here, you know, this is major stuff here. Apart from the conversion of Cornelius now and remember, Cornelius pretty much sought out Peter. Peter wasn't going looking to convert Gentiles.

He was sort of dragged there by the Lord because Cornelius was seeking God. But here are guys who are actually taking the initiative. They're going out and they're preaching the gospel to Gentiles.

And the point that this particular commentator was making was, although this was such a significant moment in the history of the church, when the gospel began to go to the Gentiles that there aren't any names mentioned here. There's just some men from Cyprus and Cyrene, they were the ones that went out and decided, hey, let's try this out in the Gentiles. And the Lord began to move.

But yet we have no idea who those people were. There's no record given to us. And the point that this particular author was making was how so often and sadly.

When God is working, when ministry begins to really explode, people want to get their name attached to it. People want recognition. People want notoriety.

People want other people to know, hey, look what I'm doing or hey, did you know that I was responsible for this move or whatever the case? And yet. You know what an unfortunate. Thing that is that it does occur.

Because we have to remember, it's really all just the Lord's work anyway. And it doesn't matter whose name is attached to it, you know, as as a person, that's not the important thing because it isn't really that person's work. It's God's work.

George Whitfield, that great evangelist back in the 1700s. He himself had the motto, let the name of Whitfield perish in the name of Christ, live on forever. People were constantly encouraging him to, you know, put your name on something, let people know that you're the one behind this whole thing.

You see, there was a there was a dispute that had developed back then between Whitfield and his friend, John Wesley. And many of Whitfield's friends were feeling like Wesley was getting all the glory for what Whitfield had actually begun doing. And so they were urging Whitfield to step forward and let these people know that you're the one that started this thing.

You were the guy doing the open air preaching that Wesley, that he's even part of it because you invited him to be part of it. And Whitfield wisely would say, no. It's all right, it's not the issue.

God's work is being done and that's what I'm going to rejoice in and my name doesn't need to be attached to it. And, you know, subsequently, when you talk about the great 18th century revival, Whitfield isn't the more well-known person John Wesley is. And Methodism rose, you know, from the efforts of John Wesley.

And so his name became quite well-known, while Whitfield's didn't really. But yet, in the end, it was all the Lord's work anyway. And so here are these men.

They're going out preaching, who were they? We don't know. But God used them powerfully and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

So they couldn't have chosen a better man. They send out Barnabas. Now, remember, Gentiles are getting converted now.

Just back up a moment. The Jewish attitude was not idealistic toward the Gentiles, even now that they realize that God is, you know, welcoming them in. There certainly would have been a tendency to, you know, sort of come down heavy upon them and to probably try to bring them under all of the little aspects of Judaism.

But Barnabas was the one guy out of the whole bunch that wouldn't really have that kind of a of a spirit. You remember, he was the one who, when everybody else was afraid of Saul, he was the one who came alongside of Saul. He saw the hand of the Lord upon him when they went to Jerusalem and everybody was saying, oh, no, we don't believe in his conversion.

Barnabas stood up and said, no, I can testify on his behalf. And Barnabas was one of those kinds of people that, as one man said, he had the biggest heart in the church. He was just a gracious man.

And so he could come and he could view the work in Antioch. He could see these Gentiles getting saved and he could appreciate what God was doing and yet not feel compelled to somehow put them under some sort of a heavy yoke, you know, to say, all right, wait a second now. OK, you know, you Gentiles were understanding that God's letting you in.

But listen. You've got to toe the line, you've got to become Jews. Barnabas was probably the one guy that wouldn't have done that and didn't do that.

And so he was the one that was chosen and he was sent and he went to Antioch. Now, Antioch, as we're going to see, is going to become, in a sense, the center of. This fresh work of God that's going to go on among the Gentiles.

Antioch was a very appropriate place for something like this to happen. It would actually become the place where the first international church would be developed. It would also become the springboard for the worldwide Christian mission.

Now, the city of Antioch was founded in 300 B.C. by Seleucus Nikator. We've been studying a little bit about him and his relatives in the book of Daniel, but he was one of the great generals under Alexander. Now, he was the one who founded the city and he named it Antioch after his father, whose name was Antiochus.

Over the years, it became known as Antioch the Beautiful because there were some very beautiful buildings in that city. Although it was a Greek city by foundation, its population, which was estimated at at least a half a million, was extremely cosmopolitan. There was a large colony of Jews.

There were people from Persia, from India and even from China. And so Antioch was actually referred to as the Queen of the East. Now, it was brought into the Roman Empire in 64 B.C. by Pompeii, and it became the capital of the imperial province of Syria.

And so there were Romans there in the city as well. So the Greeks, the Jews, the Orientals and the Romans, they formed the mixed multitude that would have made up the city of Antioch. And the city was actually referred to as the third city of the empire behind Rome itself and Alexandria.

So this was a great city from the human standpoint, from the standpoint of the Roman Empire. And it was a city with people from all over the world. The ideal place to set up a church and the ideal place from which to carry on mission activity.

And so that's where Barnabas ended up stopping and encouraging the saints there. He went as far as Antioch. And when he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart, they should continue with the Lord, for he was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas goes to Antioch, he finds these people that have been converted to these unknown evangelists, and then he begins to encourage them and the Lord begins to use him. And so more and more people are being added.

And then Barnabas, it says he departed for Tarsus to seek for Saul. And I would imagine that as Barnabas was there in Antioch and as he was seeing this great work that God was doing, I would imagine he was feeling a bit overwhelmed and thinking to himself, I need some help. I need a partner.

I need someone that can minister with me here. And Saul was the one that came to mind. Now, remember, Saul had gone back to Tarsus, and now some scholars estimate anywhere from seven to 10 years have transpired since Paul left Jerusalem might have been that long.

We don't really know. During that time, according to the Book of Galatians, Saul says that he was ministering in the regions of Cilicia. And so evidently he was already involved in ministry among the Gentiles that we know nothing about really.

But somehow Barnabas must have had some ongoing contact with him. And Barnabas senses that I need Saul. He's the man to work with here.

And so when he had found him, he went to Tarsus and met up with him and found him and he brought him to Antioch. And it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. So they were there for a year just ministering to those saints, building them up in the faith, more and more people getting saved.

They were there to get the church established. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. First called Christians.

Now, this term Christian is found only three times in the Bible. I was teaching last night. I said it was found two times.

I made a mistake. It's found three times. I forgot about the one other time here in Acts where it's mentioned as well.

It was actually Agrippa who said to Paul later, Paul, are you trying to persuade me to become a Christian? But one other time, Peter and first Peter four, 16, Peter, he says, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him commit himself to God who is faithful. But the term. Was not a term that the people took to themselves, but it was a label that was tagged upon them.

Now they say historically that the people of Antioch, you know, different peoples and different regions and different cultures and things, there are certain characteristics and traits that are sort of common to different groups of people. Well, they say that historically those in Antioch, they were famous for giving nicknames to people. And when one of the Roman emperors visited the city because he had a goatee, they called him the Billy Goat.

And here they were the ones who actually labeled the people as Christians. Now, the word Christian means the people of Christ. And they would have, of course, heard this group of people talking about Christ, and so this was a label they just tagged on to this group of people.

They were called Christians first in Antioch, and although it was probably a bit derogatory, it was something that eventually the Christians took to themselves because, of course, that's indeed who they were and that's indeed who we are. We are the people of Christ. But notice that it was the disciples who were first called Christians.

In our first session of Christianity 101 last night, we talked about what is a Christian. There's so much confusion about that today, but in a nutshell, here it is. A disciple is a Christian, somebody who follows Jesus Christ.

Those were the ones that were first called Christians. And so in these days. Prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch, then one of them named Agabus stood up and showed by the spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

So there were prophets now, prophets were. Men who were gifted by God to speak forth his word and occasionally, as we see here with Agabus, they were gifted to speak about the future, like the Old Testament prophets. But what they primarily did in the early church was that they were preachers of the word of God and they would preach under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

There are prophets today in the church, not people who speak with absolute authority in the sense that the ancient prophets did or the apostles did, but people that as they minister the word of God, there is this prophetic thing that's happening. There's there's an accompanying of their word by the power of the Holy Spirit. And there's this thing that's happening.

God is speaking through them. And addressing issues and getting down to the heart of the matter and those kinds of things, those for me personally, I love to sit and listen to guys who have that gift, that prophetic gift, because every time I do, I feel like, man, they're speaking right to the situation. They're speaking right to my situation.

And of course, those who are gifted to teach will oftentimes have the gift of prophecy accompanying that. And that's a wonderful thing. But the prophets were.

They're a group of leaders in the early church who would speak a direct word of God into a situation on occasion, and Agabus will find another occasion later on where Agabus comes onto the scene. But here he prophesies about the famine, which did indeed come in about 46 a.d. during the time that Claudius Caesar was reigning. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.

This they also did, and they sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. So. A lot has happened.

Cornelius is converted, and so the church in Jerusalem realizes that the Gentiles are part of this thing as well. Certain Jews that had been preaching to Jews only decided, let's let's speak to the Gentiles and to their amazement, the Gentiles received the message. And so Barnabas goes and then he brings Saul.

And now this church in Antioch is being established and it's growing and it's becoming strong. And then this this famine occurs. And notice the church in Antioch.

They want to bless their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem, so they put together a gift to help. The famine was particularly hard on that area of Judea. The famine impacted that area quite severely.

And so the people in Antioch would have not been affected as adversely by it. And so they were able to send help. And here we just see that that gesture, that loving gesture of just saying, you know, God bless you.

We're glad to be part of the family and hope you're encouraged by this thing. And Barnabas and Saul were the ones to take the gift up to Jerusalem. And so the story continues.

And as we pick up in the 12th chapter next week, we will deal with the final episodes, recorded episodes of the ministry of Peter. And from that point on, Luke will focus his attention on Barnabas and Paul and then primarily on Paul throughout the remainder of the book of Acts. But as we close tonight, one final closing word, and that is once again just that whole thing of not taking for granted the gift of salvation.

God has granted the Gentiles repentance to life. We don't want to take the things of the spirit for granted at all. We need to realize that God is the one who is the author of salvation.

And God is the one who lays out the requirements for salvation. God is the one who decides things, not us. And God has graciously extended the invitation to save us.

We need to respond the moment we realize that and not to put it off at all. And so as we close tonight, if you're here and you've heard the gospel, you've heard about salvation, but yet you haven't responded. God is granted.

He is granted repentance to life. Don't take it for granted. Embrace it while you have the opportunity.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you, Lord, for this record here in the book of Acts and Lord, just to see what was happening back then and Lord, to know that that history that began so long ago, we're living it right now. That we are the church today and that just as you were working and doing things with them and through them and spreading your word, you want to do that among us and in us and through us as well.

And so, Lord, have your way with us, your people, your church today. And Lord, we pray, especially for any among us tonight. That might not have yet responded to your gift of eternal life.

Oh, Lord, help them not to neglect it. Help them not to procrastinate or to postpone. Help them to realize, Lord, that there might not be another opportunity.

Help them to receive your gift of grace tonight, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11283.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brian-brodersen/acts-repentance-granted-to-gentiles/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net