



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 11:19-26

"The Worker Awaiting the Work"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege that is ours again. We rejoice in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and especially in the way in which he has used Thy servant, the Apostle Paul. We thank Thee for the preparation of him, for his work, and for the preparation of the work for him. And we recognize in it, Lord, the hand of our great sovereign God. And we are grateful to Thee because we know we are the recipients of the blessing which Thou hast wrought. We Thank for Paul's faithfulness and we pray, Lord, that we may have some of that same view of the relationship to Thee that he had. Enable us as he has exhorted us, to imitate him just as he imitates the Lord. We pray that Thou will be with us in this hour, and may our study of the Scriptures be helpful to us and useful to us in our Christian life. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We are following the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul and we have considered that apostle's conversion, how he has come to be in possession of his gospel. And particularly recently we've taken look at the commission that the Lord gave him to preach this wonderful gospel to the Gentiles. We have seen, of course, that he ministered in the earliest days in Damascus for a time, then he was for a while in Arabia. We are not

actually sure of the exact length of that time. We know that he came back to Damascus and escaped from Damascus and went to Jerusalem. And there he spent a couple of weeks. He saw Peter and James, but the rest of the apostles largely he did not speak or see. That, of course, was intended to show that the blessing of the gospel that Paul had received was something that had come directly to him, and was not something given to him by others. So that the divine origin of his ministry is not in doubt.

Well, we know from the passage that we looked at last week in Acts chapter 9, at the end of that chapter that the apostle was sent away to Tarsus and Cilicia. Now, that of course, was his home. And one might ask the question immediately, why was Paul sent away, and why did he spend possibly as many as seven or eight years in Tarsus before he begin his work as apostle of the Gentiles? Well, one might think, of course, that the apostle needed, in spite of his maturity, some discipline from the hand of God, some experience of the life of God.

Most of the servants of the Lord have had some kind of spiritual discipline in their lives. We think of some of the Old Testament prophets, for example, like Elijah. Elijah spent a great part of his life, evidently, not in any active service and suddenly as if he is beginning his ministry he suddenly appears in the court of Ahab and pronounces judgment upon him because of the life that he's lived. And then immediately he leaves, having delivered his message, and goes and sits by the brook Cherith. Now of course, he set there for some time, and he learned again to wait on the Lord. Someone said, "You must spend time in Cherith before you can stand on Mount Carmel and perform the work that he performed there."

John the Baptist, who is the counterpart of Elijah, had a similar experience. He was brought up in the desert. So far as we know he did very little ministering of the word that had come to him, but when the time came he appears on the scene as someone has said, "fully armed" and announces that they are to repent for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand. He carries out his ministry and then is beheaded. And he passes

off the scene. And of course, the Lord Jesus Christ is an illustration, too, of the necessity of a period of time in quietness and in the silence. For he spent almost thirty years with almost practically total silence. He did appear at the age of twelve, carried on a conversation in the temple area with some of the scholars of the day, but those silent years were years of preparation of our Lord on the human side for the ministry that he was to perform. So Paul's seven or eight years or more, how long they were we're not absolutely certain, but they were a good many years, may have had some connection with the discipline of God, that the Lord wanted to put him, who is to be the great apostle of the Gentiles through.

Now, that does not mean, of course, that he was not useful at all, but it was a necessary thing for him even though he was useful. And as we will see in a few moments, there is some reason to believe that when he was in Tarsus he did carry on some ministry. Perhaps also, there is a more public reason why the apostle spent six or eight years away from the land. After all Paul was too divisive a character. He was the one who had advanced in Judaism beyond his contemporaries. He was the great defender of Judaism against the newly rising Christian cult. And so for this one upon whom they depended on for the defeat of Christianity to turn to Christianity, that would provoke them much more than some disinterested third party, or some third party in whom they were not interested turning to Christianity. So it may have been that he was thought too divisive. His life was in danger wherever he went in the land. They sought to kill him in Jerusalem. They sought to kill him in Damascus. And therefore, it may have been that he was sent back to Tarsus for a period of time in order to allow that situation to die down a bit.

In chapter 9, in verse 23 we read, "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him," this was in Damascus. And then in chapter 9, verse 29, when he was in Jerusalem, "He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians," that is the Hellenistic Jews, "but they went about to slay him." So

putting these two things together, evidently the Lord thought that his servant, his great apostle to the Gentiles should go back to Tarsus and Cilicia and spend some time there and let things cool down a bit. And also give him a chance to grow and mature in the faith into which he has been so suddenly brought.

Now, let's think for a moment about the world in which Paul is going to minister. Because I think it's important for us to realize the kinds of people with whom he is to have contact. There were three important peoples in the Greco-Roman world for the student of the New Testament and the student of the life of Paul. There is first of all the Jew, and then the Greek, and then the Roman. The Jew is marked by several distinguishing characteristics. First of all, he was essentially a spiritual or a religious man. His one absorbing interest was his relationship with God. He believed in the fact that the nation had been chosen by God for a special purpose, and that special purpose was that the nations might ultimately come to the knowledge of God. He longed for the Messiah. He wanted the Messiah to come. And he thought in the Messiah there would be worldwide blessing for the Jews and also for Gentiles who would be responsive.

I think it's very interesting to read in the papers today, so many hundred of years later. And see how Mr. Begin, for example, constantly makes reference to the promises of the Old Testament. Of course, Mr. Begin does not have any faith at all in Jesus as the Messiah, but he does have a conviction that the Scriptures do give a word of God concerning the land for the nation. That's characteristic, I think, of the Jewish man, deep down within. There is, of course, a lot of worldliness, a lot of atheism, a lot of agnosticism among the Jewish people today. But essentially the Jew in Paul's day was a spiritual or religious man.

As a consequence of this, the Jew was a solitary man who dwelt apart. In fact, this characteristic is still present and marks their separation from men. We sometimes are inclined to think, we who think that we study the Scriptures and understand something about the Scriptures. We are inclined to think sometimes that the separation of Israel

from the nations of the earth is due to their disobedience and divine judgment. Well, there is something of that. Those judgments that God announced in passages like Deuteronomy and Leviticus have been carried out. And it is true that forced to live in the four corners of the earth, solitariness is characteristic of the Jewish man. But they were separate from the nations for a divine purpose as well.

Remember, back in the prophecies of Balaam in Numbers chapter 23. Balaam gives in one of his Messianic prophecies. It's amazing that this false prophet should give us four outstanding Messianic prophecies. Illustrative of the fact just as Caiaphas prophesied, even though he was not a believer, that false prophets can give a true prophecy when God controls their lips. And speaking of Israel, Balak wanted the false prophet to curse Israel and God controlled his tongue so that he said with reference to Israel, "Low it is a people that dwelleth alone." It is characteristic of them. They are separate. They are like the Gulf Stream in the midst of the Atlantic Ocean, always separate, and yet mixed at the same time. So he is a solitary man.

He is also a simple man with no genius, generally speaking, in the New Testament for art, for politics, or for speculation. I think as a result of the scattering of the Jews to the four corners of the earth. We would have to modify that today, for Jewish people have taken the lead in art, and some in politics. And some also in philosophical speculation. But in the days of the apostle the claim of the Jewish people for literary fame was largely bound up for the Psalms and for the prophets. These magnificent literary treatises, unraveled of course in their own classification. This was the man through whom God spoke the word. While he needed the Greek tongue, he also needed this man, who through his long experience with God, in their midst, knew things about him and about his ways that they others did not know.

Isn't it interesting, too, that only Luke among the New Testament writers was a Gentile? It's not specifically stated that he is, but the statement in Colossians chapter 4 seems to make it plain that he is. But he's the only one of the writers of the New

Testament who was a Gentile. The New Testament is given to us by Jewish men. The second man was the Greek. Now, the Greek was marked by some distinguishing characteristics, and the apostle had to contend with them, too. He was the intellectual man, first of all. That is, of the three, the Roman and the Jew. His mind was essentially speculative. He specialized in reason. The Greeks were the first real philosophers. They took great pains in reclaiming the domain of knowledge and mapping it out. The thing that dominated them was system. He was an esthetic man. He loved the beautiful. Consequently, he was a man of emotions, whether of joy or of sorrow. And he was an original man. Someone has said concerning the Greeks, "They had no bibliography." In other words, they were real thinkers in an original way.

Now, we of course, we don't care what we mean when we say out adjectives. We say they were creative people. And you know, of course, that I have a particular dislike for that word, because only God is creative, but the term has come to mean nothing more than original. In that sense the Greeks were very creative. They were the first to really search out philosophically the why of things. Mr. Spurgeon, commenting on this fact in one of his sermons describes an experience that he heard about when the famous naturalist Buffon had once had a large number of wise men from the academy of France visit him on his beautiful grounds. Well, they were all philosophers, and Mr. Spurgeon said, "You know what a philosopher is, if you don't know you should meet one. And I do not think your appreciation of the sect will be increased."

Well, we like to make fun of philosophy, but actually we all are philosophers, and so when we make fun of philosophy we are just simply saying our philosophy is very bad. Every man has a philosophy and it's either good or bad and we really should remember that when we make fun of them, that what they do is a very legitimate thing in itself. And if it's under the revelation of God it's exceedingly good. Anyway, these men were visiting, and as they were walking over the grounds, one of them touched a glass globe which was in this man's yard. And he noticed that it was rather cool on the sunny

side and rather hot on the shady side. And he called attention to it. He said, "This globe here is cool on the sunny side and it's hot on the other side." And the philosophers, so Mr. Spurgeon said in Buffon Garden, began to theorize. One theorized that it was by reflection in some way. And another by refraction, and still another by some form of absorption. So they went on for a lengthy period of time and finally Buffon, who was a naturalist, was not totally satisfied with their explanation. So he called his gardener over and he said, "Do you happen to know why this globe here is hot on the shady side and cold on the other?" He said, "Why yes," he said, "I noticed it was hot. The sun was shining on it, and I was afraid it might damage it so I turned it around just before y'all came out here in the yard." [Laughter]

Well, the Greeks were the true philosophers. And of course, I know when I was reading Plato in Greek I didn't realize I was reading philosophy, but of course my Greek teacher he began to teach us philosophy as we were reading classical Greek. And as you know, some of the greatest of the philosophers have been men like Plato and Aristotle and others. So they were philosophers. He was also a very conceded man. They had confidence in their own abilities. They were clever and they knew it. I always think of Dizzy Dean. Dizzy Dean was in the World Series in 1934 and I was in college at the time. I remember the morning of the seventh game, and Dean was going to pitch. And they had on the radio, TV was not with us then, and on the radio Dean said a few words in the morning before the game and he was always extremely cocky, like he was the Cassius Clay or Muhammad Ali of baseball. Dean said, "We're going to play this afternoon at one o'clock and the Cardinals are going to win. I am going to pitch, and I am going to win.

Furthermore, we are going to shut them out, and we are going to win convincingly." Well, it so happened, it turned out exactly like Dean said. The Cardinals won, they shut them out. They batted around in one inning, and Dean got two hits in one inning. And then in the locker room after the game was over they asked Dean to say a word. Well, he said, "This morning I said we were going to win. And we won. I said I

was going to pitch and win. And I pitched and I pitched and I won. And I said I was going to shut them out, and I did. I didn't say anything about getting two hits in one inning, but nevertheless I did." That was the way he did it. He was conceded, but fortunately for him he had the skills to back it up. And he did a lot of his bragging with tongue-in-cheek.

Well, the Greek was the conceded man. This man was a fitting missionary project for the logician, the Apostle Paul. It's not wonder that God called the apostle to become the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. For while he doesn't write in the style of a philosopher; he does present a revelation from God, which has been the subject of a great deal of philosophical investigation down through the years.

The third man with whom Paul had to deal was the Roman. The Roman differed from the both the Jew and the Greek. He was first of all, a very practical man. He was not speculative, as the Greek, nor spiritual as the Jew. He was a man with common sense unsanctified. The Greeks loved beauty, the Roman loved order. Consequently, they excelled in legislation. Much of their legislation is the background of our legislation today. Roman law is the foundation of our western law, and so in that sense we are indebted to the Romans. The Romans loved order and discipline in the military life, with the result that they were the finest soldiers of the ancient world. When we think of fine soldiers we think of Julius Caesar and others.

And isn't it interesting in the New Testament we have four Centurions specifically mentioned? And the striking thing about these four Centurions is that they're all looked upon with favor in the New Testament. I think that's rather striking. At the crucifixion was one of the Centurions, and he's the one who said, "This was indeed the Son of God." There is the Centurion at Capernaum, whose servant the Lord healed. He said, "I'm a man who has authority under me, and I know you have." And he called upon the Lord to heal his servant. And then, of course, there was Cornelius, the one who had not only a good reputation as a Centurion, but who had helped the nation Israel, and in whose

house the gospel was preached to the Gentiles by Peter. And finally, Julius of the Augustan band in Acts chapter 27, again looked at favorably in the New Testament. The Romans were men of order and discipline.

Now, the Greek was a man of originality, but the Roman was a man of mimicry. He was a copy-cat. I studied Latin before I studied classical Greek. And one of the reasons that Greek was so easy to me was because I studied Latin. Latin belongs to the same close family of languages, very closely related, and in many of its constructions there is a definite tendency to copy the Greeks. The Romans hired Greeks to train the children. They loved the Greeks, and they loved the Greeks' knowledge of literature, and art, and philosophy. So they had Greek tutors. The result was that the Greeks were highly regarded by the Romans. And the Romans were always willing to borrow or steal anything they could find better from other peoples, whether it was their gods, their art, or philosophy. And later on they steal from Christianity, some of the things of Christianity. The Jew was proud and self-righteous. The Greek was conceded. The Roman was course and cold-blooded. They delighted in the blood curdling cried that came from the amphitheater.

Now, these are the ones with whom the apostle must deal. And when we think about the preparation of the world for the coming of the gospel of Christ we should think about these three people. Now, the world was prepared by the Lord for the presentation of the gospel. Isn't it an interesting thing that the Greek language was predominant at the precise time that the gospel was communicated to the ancient world, and furthermore, it was the predominant language at the time in which the New Testament was written? And so, the New Testament is written in Greek. As a matter of fact, the Hebrews of that time studied the Old Testament, generally speaking in a Greek translation called the Septuagint. Greek has been called by some "the most perfect human language ever devised."

It is especially rich in constructions that enable a person who uses the language to express himself exactly. When we study classical Greek, and when we study New Testament Greek, we study a language that is rich in the ability to express doctrinal nuances, so one can almost see the intention of God in the predominance of the Greek language at this time. It was the lingua franca of the ancient world, and therefore that's why we read the New Testament in Greek. That's why it's such a marvelous language for the expression of the exactness of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. The Romans went around building roads and taking baths. Anyone who follows the Romans over the ancient world knows that. For every where you go you see their aqueducts and you see their roads. Their roads were remarkable. They were remarkable engineers. But the Greek language is magnificent for the expression of the Christian truth.

Now, of course, a worker must be prepared for the world, and so the apostle is prepared for his ministry in Tarsus. I don't know exactly what he did in Tarsus, but I'm going to ask you to just notice a couple of passages in Acts chapter 15. In Acts chapter 15, verse 23 and verse 41 we have some hints, they're only hints, of what the apostle might have done when he was in Tarsus. In verse 23 we read, now this is in the context of the Jerusalem counsel, when Antioch went up to Jerusalem to ask about whether it is necessary for a person to be circumcised in order to be saved. And they reached the conclusion given by Peter in verse 11, "But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." And so they devise a letter, which they are going to send out to all of the churches. And we read in verse 23, "And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." Now, notice that, Syria and Cilicia, now Tarsus was in Cilicia. So evidently there were brethren there. Now, we will assume that perhaps the apostle is responsible for the brethren being there in Tarsus.

In verse 41 we read, "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." Notice the plural, "confirming the churches." So there were churches in Syria and there were church in Cilicia. So we can just imagine that the apostle, even though he was confined to Tarsus, was not inactive. He was busy in that particular area preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and assisting in the formation of churches. And that's part of the silent period of the apostle's life. It would be very interesting to hear exactly what had transpired with the apostle during those years. I presume that when we get to heaven, this is one of the things that we shall hear about. We will be brought up-to-date concerning the activities of the saints not recorded in the word of God, and not found also in the histories that have been written of the Christian church since that time.

If you turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 22 through verse 33 you'll read of a number of other experiences of the apostle. Let me read a few of them. 2 Corinthians 11, verse 22, the apostle is speaking to the Corinthians about his experiences, and remember they were troubled by false apostles, that is individuals who claimed to be apostles, but they were really the apostles of Satan, rather than the apostle of God. He says in verse 22, "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more."

Now, when he says, "I speak as a fool. I am more," he doesn't want to have to brag, but he must speak the truth. "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one." Now, we don't read of all of these instances in the Book of Acts, so the apostle evidently had a lot of experiences that caused him to be beaten. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck." We read of one shipwreck experience in the Book of Acts, but we don't read of any of these others. "A night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." There's no need to

read the whole list. You can see the apostle had many Christian experiences that are not recorded in the Book of Acts nor found in his epistles. So he must have had a rather rich experience over that period of time in Tarsus.

Now, so far as intercourse with the heathen was concerned, that is with the Gentiles, Tarsus would have been a nice place for Paul to be, because Tarsus was a university city. Now, of course, Paul's experiences are different. Earlier in our studies we commented upon the fact that Paul said he was from Tarsus and some people are inclined to glamorize the fact that the apostle came from this university city and therefore he was especially prepared to minister among the Gentiles by his training. I doubt that is true. By his training he was prepared to minister in Judaism, because he was not only a Jew, he was a Pharisee, and furthermore, he was brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, so he was a, as he says, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. But having come to faith in Christ, now he goes back to his city, and now he's a Jew still, but he's not a Pharisee. And he's not a Hebrew of the Hebrews. And he's now a Christian, and unacceptable to them generally, so he is forced now to become acquainted in a fresh way with the Gentiles world. It may be for that reason that the Lord God sent him back to Tarsus, in order for him to stay there a number of years, to get acquainted with the fact that he's going to be sent as a minister of the Gentiles to the west.

When he's writing to the Galatians later on, he makes reference to this, you know, in the last part of the first chapter. He's describing his experiences, and he says in verse 21, "Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ." Now, he knew some of them, but generally he was unknown by face. They knew about him. They were fearful of him, afraid of him, but he says, "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me." Now, that would indicate, you see, that word had come back to Judea and the churches there that this individual who now, after preaching briefly, is sent away to Tarsus and

Cilicia, is carrying on a ministry among the Gentiles that is so effective that they are glorify God because of what he is doing through the Apostle Paul.

Now then, that's the preparation of the worker. The world is prepared and the worker is now prepared, and the work begins in Antioch, according to chapter 11, verse 19 through verse 26. Incidentally, the subject for the night, in case you're wondering what it is, "The Work Awaiting the Worker." Let me read beginning at verse 19 of Acts chapter 11,

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. (Notice that, "unto the Jews only," they don't yet grasp the significance of the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles.) And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, (that is the Hellenistic Jews) preaching the LORD Jesus (or Jesus as Lord). And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. 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. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: (There is a miracle, we'll talk about it in a moment.) 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."

Now, remember, in Jerusalem Stephen had been stoned to death. The lines of the expansion of Christianity to Jerusalem were three-fold. First of all, Philip ministers in

Samaria. Peter is called to Caesarea. And in Antioch, some unknown disciples begin to preach, preaching only to the Jews in Antioch. But it is from this third place that Christianity is to grow, and it will not be long before Antioch becomes the headquarters of the Gentiles Christianity, and in fact before long ultimately became the headquarters of Christianity, surpassing Jerusalem. So this third chute is the one that grew.

Antioch was the third city in the empire, after Rome and Alexandria. It was Syrian in its population. It was Greek in its culture and Roman in its government. It vied with Corinth. I heard one of the news men tonight refer to Corinth and called it Core-inth, but it's Corinth. And this city vied with Corinth for status as an evil city. Corinth was known for its wickedness. Antioch also was known for its wickedness. But it became the great Hellenistic Christian church.

Now notice some of the things that are said here by Luke. There were men of Cyprus and Cyrene who were preaching the gospel in Antioch. They were not officials, they were simple believers. They were moved by an impulse to spread the word. They were like Jeremiah, the word of God was burning in their bones like a fire, and they just had to give it out. And so they spoke, it says here, they preached, it's really spoke the word, to none but unto the Jews only. Now, that's a rather startling thing, because what it means, in effect, is that they were just doing familiar, natural talking with one another. They didn't come in with the accoutrements of a campaign. They simply came into the city and Begin to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. They preached Jesus is Lord. They were speaking unto them. It says here they traveled to Phenice and Cyprus preaching the word to none but Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus. That speaking is just the ordinary speech, but they preached in their speech. That's an ideal thing, isn't it? That's really what every Christian ought to do. He shouldn't necessarily aspire to stand behind a pulpit, but he should aspire to speak the word of the Lord Jesus, familiar, natural talk.

It reminds me of, was it not Andrew, who when he came to know the Lord first of all went to Peter his brother and John says, "And he brought him to Jesus." That's the greatest thing that one man can do for another, to bring them to Christ. And that's what these were doing. They didn't have great meetings with great preachers. They didn't have any great preachers, you know. We say, you should hear the great Mr. Blustering Bombast who stirs the air with vaporous grand eloquence, but we're not saved by intellectual treats. We're not saved by philosophy and keen thinking. We are saved through the gospel, and that's what they were doing, simply speaking the word.

And notice verse 21 says, "And the hand of the Lord was with them." Now, Luke tells us that his book in the beginning is the continuation of the work of the risen Christ. So as they spoke about the Lord Jesus, saying that he was the Lord, the one promised in the Old Testament, the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. We don't labor alone, and in fact, our success is ultimately traceable to the Lord. "No man can come to me," Jesus said, "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." That's the hand of the Lord. And the hand of the Lord was with these simple believers, and they were coming to Christ.

Now, the mission of Barnabas follows. The tidings of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem. They were the staid brethren down there. They had been Christians longer. So they heard about what was happening in Antioch, so they sent one of their favored fellows, Barnabas, to Antioch to find out what was going on up there. And they sent the right man, because he was a man who was willing to enlarge his theories so that they fit the facts, which were there before him. "When he came, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Notice what he saw, he saw the "grace of God." Beware of human intrusion here. There are people who think that grace only comes through ritual. There are some who think that grace only comes when we descent. That is, it can only come through us. "Some will only allow the word that really blows where it listeth to make

music only in the pipes of their organs," Mr. Spurgeon said. Now that's, I think, beautifully put. We tend to think that we can only be blessed through the purity of the truth that we preach. If that were true, of course, people would only be saved in Believers Chapel, where you have the truth and you have the purity of the truth. No, no, now we shouldn't believe that. We should realize that God does save through his truth, and often times our pride, which sometimes becomes arrogance is really a hindrance, even when we have the truth.

Well, he saw the grace of God, that's what he saw. And what he felt was just as remarkable. He was glad. There are not too many people who get glad when others are being used by the Lord. What about our distinctive principles in Jerusalem? Were they being practiced? I do believe that you ought to follow everything that the Bible says, but you should remember that the Lord blesses the measure of truth that people do have. And sometimes they don't understand why they're being blessed, but he blesses the measure of truth that people have. And sometimes when we have a lot of truth, and it's not ministered fervently, faithfully, prayerfully, the Lord has to discipline us.

And he uses people who may not know as much as we, using the measure of the truth they have, not their falsehood. He never uses falsehood, but he will use the measure of the truth they have. He was glad when he saw what he saw there, and what he told them was that they should cleave unto the Lord. I think that's rather interesting. He did not say, "Now what you need is a pastor. That's the first thing you need. You need a pastor of your church." Or he didn't say, "Now you ought to form a number of committees here, since you've got a great crowd here, you'll not be able to carry on the work of the Lord if you don't organize yourself. And further, I think it would be a good idea to set up a budget in order that you do not spend too much of the money that's pouring in out of the freewill offerings of people who have been saved. And a Christian education director would help you, too, because you've got a lot of young people in your group." And so on, and so on, and so on in Antioch. For Barnabas, the most important

thing was to cleave to the Lord. He exhorted them to cleave to the Lord. Now, that doesn't mean, of course, that they were simply to acquiesce in everything, but they were to become Christians by turning to and cleaving to him and avoiding the things that were bad.

You notice he says, "Cleave to the Lord," of course, the Lord, as they understood the Lord. We are not saying "Of the Lord, not theology." But the Lord, as good theology understands him, it is a personal relationship, however. I know that many people feel, and rightly so, about some theologians, they feel just like Mary felt when she said, "They've taken away the body of my Lord, and we don't know where to find him." That's the way that we feel about a lot of our theologians, because when they get through, our faith is gone. Theology is good, but we should remember that theology is ultimately to clarify our personal relationship with the Lord God. Both are necessary.

Well, what he was, he was a good man. Let me tell you what verse 24 means to me. He was a good man, because he was full of the Holy Spirit, that is, he was under the control of the spirit. And he was under the control of the Spirit, because he was full of faith. And much people were added unto the church. No, much people were added to the Lord. They were added to the Lord, and then to the church. That's important, to the Lord and then to the church; not to the church and then the Lord.

Well, he was a good man. He could rise above his prejudices, and you notice the preeminence of some of the gentler traits. Now, I want to take a couple of more minutes. Barnabas saw that this work was too great for him, and he did what very few preachers would do. He said, "You know, we need somebody else." And he thought immediately of the Apostle Paul. He knew Paul, they had had acquaintance before. He looked at this crowd of people who were gathering. They needed some teaching. He knew Paul. He said, "We need Paul." "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul." That's what makes Barnabas such a tremendous New Testament character, a man, a son of consolation he's called, a son of exhortation. And so he goes and he gets Paul, says,

"Paul come on down, we need your help." I always think of Dr. Chafer who said of Dr. Arno Gaebelein that Gaebelein wrote him a card one time that said, "I'm at such and such a Bible conference, having a wonderful time. I'm the only speaker." Have you ever attending Bible conferences when there are three or four different speakers and some of them are bad, and some may be better than you are. You have, I think, the feelings that Gaebelein had. "This is a great conference, I'm the only speaker."

Well, Barnabas could have been one of the speakers, but he wanted Paul there. And so he called. And notice in verse 26, one last thing I'd like for you to notice, "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." In other words, the two, at least, combined in the ministry of the word of God to them. There was no such thing as one man ministry in the early church. There was Barnabas and there was Paul, and they two of them were involved in the teaching of the one group of believers. It was gifted ministry. The Bible teaches gifted ministry, not one-man ministry, not two-man ministry, not four-man ministry, not *the* pastor, but gifted ministry, as wide as the gifts. And they taught the people, and they were called Christians.

I would like to suggest that they were called Christians, not because that's the best name for Christians, that was a name attached to them. It's not a bad name; it's just an insufficient name. Everybody is inclined to say they're Christians, but Christians does not really explain exactly what we are. The New Testament uses the term disciple, an adherent of a teacher. That fades out, incidentally, in the New Testament. Believers is very commonly used, because it expresses trust in a person. Saints, well that's suffered from misuse by a large religious organization, because now it's largely restricted by them to dead people, and people who have been dead for a considerable period of time. Brethren, well that's a maligned word by insincerity in the church, and sarcasm by the world. It does relate us to the Father as possessed of supernatural life, not Plymouth

Brethren; Dallas Brethren is what we are. Brethren is later used in verse 29. I think that they were called Christians first there at Antioch simply because that is the name that the world attached to them. Some how or other they are related to the Messiah, at least they got that message. Well, our time is up. We must stop.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these insights into the life of the Apostle Paul and of the people with whom he had to deal. And we are particularly grateful for this picture of the church in Antioch where the gospel Begin to go out to Gentiles, the movement that ultimately has reached to us. Lord, help us to...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]