

# Holy Mission

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One of the first people we met here in Omaha, other than those who were involved in our interview process here at church was Amy.

Amy lived right across the street from us. She, and her husband Michael, had become good friends with Pastor Seth and his wife – who lived in our house prior to our arrival. Amy, at the time, was a stay at home mom who also ran a daycare business from her home. She had a key to our house and when there were people coming to work on the house to get it ready for our arrival, they would get the key from her.

They have been good friends over the years – we have spent time in their home and they in ours. We have prayed together, worked together, and have many wonderful memories of our time with them.

They sold their house and moved at the beginning of this summer. They felt called to the mission field. They have raised the money to support themselves. They have sold their home and vehicles so they would have some backup in case some of the money that has been pledged does not come through.

When they left here, they spent a couple of months in Colorado Springs training for the mission post. A few weeks ago they moved to Southern France, where they will undergo more training in both French, the official language where they will be serving, and in mission service.

They will move to Africa sometime next spring – to the city of Dakar in the country of Senegal. A couple weeks ago, their three young boys entered a local school where only French is spoken.

They are a modern-day example of a family who has allowed God to turn their lives in a totally new direction in order to obey His call and are embracing the new opportunities God is placing in their path.

For them, this is uncharted territory. Of course, they have expectations and dreams; but they are not guaranteed they will be free of suffering and hardship. They have no idea how their children will adapt to their new surroundings. They don't know what suffering may come to their family because of this choice.

## God's Promises

The only thing they can count on for sure is that God has promised to walk with them. There are two promises that I believe are especially relevant here. The first, Jesus spoke at the end of His instructions to His followers the night He was arrested. It is recorded in John 16:

*"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33, NLT)



There are actually two promises here. One we don't often reference and one we love to quote.

He promises that we will have "many trials and sorrows" here on this earth – we can all attest to the reality of this.

However, Jesus assures us that He has overcome the world. This happened at the cross and on resurrection morning! We know the ending to the story. Because we know the ending, and we know Jesus, we can survive the trials and sorrows!

The other promise was the last thing Jesus communicated to His disciples as He was ascending into Heaven. It was preceded by a command. We find it recorded in Matthew 28:

*"... Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT)

His plan for us includes going out into the world and telling about Him. And His promise is that He will always be with us – right down till the end.

## Antioch

In our study of the *Book of Acts*, we have arrived at a pivotal point. Up to now, it has been a general history of the early church – from here on out, it follows Paul's life. Other Apostles are mentioned only as they cross paths with Paul.

We find the record of Paul's first missionary trip in **Acts 13 – 14**.

This story actually begins back in Jerusalem with Paul holding the coats and approving of Stephen's murder (see **Acts 7**). As the persecution he spearheaded took root, many of the believers left Jerusalem and relocated in various places outside Judea.

One of these groups ended up in Antioch where they continued their joyful worship, loving fellowship, and outreach to others. This resulted in a thriving Christian community including both Jews and Gentiles.

When the Apostles in Jerusalem got word of the success of the Christian community there, they sent Barnabas to check things out. After working there for a while, he went and found Paul, who was living and working in his home town of Tarsus, and brought him to Antioch to help with the work there – which brought wonderful results.

After about a year, the Holy Spirit communicated to the church that they should set aside, or ordain, Paul and Barnabas and send them on a missionary trip. Which is what they did! They headed out with only the assurance of Jesus' promises and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## Paul's First Missionary Trip

We won't look at this trip in detail although it is fascinating. I suggest that you may want to read it later (it's found in **Acts 13 – 14**) along with the corresponding chapters in the book **Acts of the Apostles** (**Chapter 16**, **Chapter 17**, and **Chapter 18**). We will just look at an outline of the main events today.

- They first went to **Cyprus**. They went town to town preaching at the Jewish Synagogues, ending up in Paphos in the palace of Sergius Paulus, the governor. There they encountered a Jewish sorcerer (basically a witch doctor), who opposed them. Through a miracle, he was temporarily blinded, blunting his influence, and the governor became a believer.
- Then they took a boat back to the mainland and traveled to **Antioch of Pisidia**. The overwhelming interest in their message made the unbelieving local Jews so jealous that they incited a mob and ran them out of town.
- Their next stop was **Iconium** where again, a large number of Jews and Gentiles believed. And, again, the unbelieving Jews started working against them and after a while were able to incite a mob to grab them to stone them. Paul and Barnabas found out about it and managed to get out of town just ahead of the planned mob actions.
- Next, they went to **Lystra**. While Paul was preaching there he noticed a man who had been crippled from birth who appeared to have faith. He called to the man to stand up and walk, which he did. The people were so impressed they assumed that Paul and Barnabas were gods in human form and were preparing to offer sacrifices to them. When the apostles realized what was happening, they denied they were gods and were able to stop the sacrifices. Meanwhile some of the Jews from Iconium caught up to them and turned the crowd against Paul and Barnabas. Paul was stoned and then dragged outside of the city and left – they thought he was dead. When the believers gathered around him, he regained consciousness and went back into the city where he was cared for. He and Barnabas left the city the following day.
- They then went to **Derbe**, where they preached leading to many people coming to Christ. There was no drama recorded there.



Then, instead of heading home a different way, they made their way back through each of the cities they had worked in. The *Book of Acts* records that in each city:

... They strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. (Acts 14:22-23, NLT)

And then ...

... They returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. And they stayed there with the believers for a long time. (Acts 14:26-28, NLT)

## What About Now?

When we think about Paul's first missionary journey we see time of joy, frustration, and pain – both physical and mental – all the while being sustained and directed by God's Spirit.

As I think about the journey our former neighbors, Amy & Michael, are on – I wonder what they will experience.

I wonder what joys they will experience? And, what about the frustrations – and the pain.

These were all things we talked about before they went. They understand their physical safety is not guaranteed. They know there will be dark moments and obstacles that seem unsurmountable. They know they may face deep sorrows.

But, they have given themselves to God, expecting to be used by Him knowing that while their eternity is secure in Him, nothing in this life is guaranteed, except:

*"... Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33, NLT)

They have stepped into God's command to

*"... Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you."* (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT)

Because they know that Jesus promised:

*"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20, NLT)

What about you and me?

The truth is we are all missionaries – as Christians, it’s part of our job description.

The story of Paul’s first Missionary Trip is full of unsung heroes – individuals who gave themselves to Jesus and represented Him day after day, month after month, and year after year in their communities.

What Paul and Barnabas did was critical – it brought large numbers of people into God’s family. But they did not stay all that long in any one location.

It was the local people, like you and me, who carried on. They were the ones who lived and worked in the community. They were the ones who shopped at the local markets. They were the ones who put flesh and blood onto the message of God’s love.

God needs people like Paul, Barnabas, Amy and Michael. But He also needs people like Steve, Calvin, Anita, Louie, Jeff, Brenda, John, Diane, Trey, Joshua – He needs each one of you! He needs people who know our community – people who work here, shop here, go to school here, interact regularly with their neighbors.

God needs people who will be the flesh and blood of the Gospel in your neighborhood, at your job, at your school. He needs people, who through hundreds of little things day in and day out illustrate the love and care of our Heavenly Father.

He needs you and me to declare with our actions and our words that “God is Love” (1 John 4:16) and that all are invited to come to Him (Matthew 28:18-20).

His command includes you and me too:

*“... Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.”*  
(Matthew 28:19-20, NLT)

His promise is also for you and me.

*“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:20, NLT)

*“... Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33, NLT)

Let’s pray:

*Dear Lord, please fill us with Your Holy Spirit and help us to step into your command as we depend on your promise. Please use us to make Yourself known to our community. Amen.*

## Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing BibleGateway.com. In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

## Previous Sermons in this Series – click on the title to access it.

1. January 6, 2018: **The End - The Beginning**
2. January 20, 2018: **Holy Fire**
3. January 27, 2018: **Holy Love**
4. February 17, 2018: **Holy Boldness**
5. February 24, 2018: **Un-Holy Deception**
6. March 31, 2018: **Holy Gift**
7. April 7, 2018: **Holy Response**
8. April 21, 2018: **Holy Rescue**
9. May 5, 2018: **Holy Martyr**
10. June 30, 2018: **Holy Appointment**
11. July 14, 2018: **Holy Encounter**
12. August 25, 2018: **Holy Gentiles**
13. September 1: **Un-Believing Prayer**

## Scripture References

**Joshua 1:3-9 (NIV):** *“I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup>Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates – all the Hittite country – to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. <sup>5</sup>No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. <sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.*

*<sup>7</sup>“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:3-9, NIV)*

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT):** *Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am*

*humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)*

**Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT):** *Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT)*

**John 16:33 (NLT):** *I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, NLT)*

**Acts 13 – 14 (NLT):** *Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. <sup>2</sup>One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.” <sup>3</sup>So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.*

### **Paul's First Missionary Journey**

<sup>4</sup>*So Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit. They went down to the seaport of Seleucia and then sailed for the island of Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.*

<sup>6</sup>*Afterward they traveled from town to town across the entire island until finally they reached Paphos, where they met a Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. <sup>7</sup>He had attached himself to the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor invited Barnabas and Saul to visit him, for he wanted to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>But Elymas, the sorcerer (as his name means in Greek), interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing.*

<sup>9</sup>*Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. <sup>10</sup>Then he said, “You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? <sup>11</sup>Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time.” Instantly mist and darkness came over the man’s eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him.*

<sup>12</sup>*When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.*

## Paul Preaches in Antioch of Pisidia

<sup>13</sup> Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> But Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia.

On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. <sup>15</sup> After the usual readings from the books of Moses and the prophets, those in charge of the service sent them this message: “Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, come and give it.”

<sup>16</sup> So Paul stood, lifted his hand to quiet them, and started speaking. “Men of Israel,” he said, “and you God-fearing Gentiles, listen to me.

<sup>17</sup> “The God of this nation of Israel chose our ancestors and made them multiply and grow strong during their stay in Egypt. Then with a powerful arm he led them out of their slavery. <sup>18</sup> He put up with them through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup> Then he destroyed seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to Israel as an inheritance. <sup>20</sup> All this took about 450 years.

“After that, God gave them judges to rule until the time of Samuel the prophet. <sup>21</sup> Then the people begged for a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. <sup>22</sup> But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.’

<sup>23</sup> “And it is one of King David’s descendants, Jesus, who is God’s promised Savior of Israel!

<sup>24</sup> Before he came, John the Baptist preached that all the people of Israel needed to repent of their sins and turn to God and be baptized. <sup>25</sup> As John was finishing his ministry he asked, ‘Do you think I am the Messiah? No, I am not! But he is coming soon – and I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the sandals on his feet.’

<sup>26</sup> “Brothers – you sons of Abraham, and also you God-fearing Gentiles – this message of salvation has been sent to us! <sup>27</sup> The people in Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize Jesus as the one the prophets had spoken about. Instead, they condemned him, and in doing this they fulfilled the prophets’ words that are read every Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> They found no legal reason to execute him, but they asked Pilate to have him killed anyway.

<sup>29</sup> “When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. <sup>30</sup> But God raised him from the dead! <sup>31</sup> And over a period of many days he appeared to those who had gone with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people of Israel.

<sup>32</sup> “And now we are here to bring you this Good News. The promise was made to our ancestors, <sup>33</sup> and God has now fulfilled it for us, their descendants, by raising Jesus. This is what the second psalm says about Jesus:

‘You are my Son. Today I have become your Father.’ (Ps. 2:7)

<sup>34</sup> “For God had promised to raise him from the dead, not leaving him to rot in the grave. He said, ‘I will give you the sacred blessings I promised to David.’

<sup>35</sup> “Another psalm explains it more fully:

‘You will not allow your Holy One to rot in the grave.’

<sup>36</sup> “This is not a reference to David, for after David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died and was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. <sup>37</sup> No, it was a reference to someone else – someone whom God raised and whose body did not decay.

<sup>38</sup> “Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. <sup>39</sup> Everyone who believes in him is made right in God’s sight – something the law of Moses could never do. <sup>40</sup> Be careful! Don’t let the prophets’ words apply to you. For they said,

<sup>41</sup> ‘Look, you mockers, be amazed and die! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn’t believe even if someone told you about it.’ ”

<sup>42</sup> As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week. <sup>43</sup> Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God.

### **Paul Turns to the Gentiles**

<sup>44</sup> The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord.

<sup>45</sup> But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

<sup>46</sup> Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, “It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For the Lord gave us this command when he said,

‘I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.’ ”

<sup>48</sup> When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. <sup>49</sup> So the Lord’s message spread throughout that region.

<sup>50</sup> Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. <sup>51</sup> So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium. <sup>52</sup> And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

### **Paul and Barnabas in Iconium**

**14** The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. <sup>3</sup> But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. <sup>4</sup> But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

<sup>5</sup> Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them.

<sup>6</sup> When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia – to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. <sup>7</sup> And there they preached the Good News.

### **Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe**

<sup>8</sup> While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting <sup>9</sup> and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. <sup>10</sup> So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

<sup>11</sup> When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!" <sup>12</sup> They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. <sup>13</sup> Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

<sup>14</sup> But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, <sup>15</sup> "Friends, why are you doing this? We are merely human beings – just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. <sup>16</sup> In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, <sup>17</sup> but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts." <sup>18</sup> But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

<sup>19</sup> Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. <sup>20</sup> But as the believers gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

### **Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch of Syria**

<sup>21</sup> After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, <sup>22</sup> where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup> Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom

they had put their trust. <sup>24</sup> Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. <sup>25</sup> They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia.

<sup>26</sup> Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. <sup>27</sup> Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. <sup>28</sup> And they stayed there with the believers for a long time. (**Acts 13 – 14**, NLT)

**Philippians 4:4-7 (NLT):** Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

(**Philippians 4:4-7**, NLT)

**Philippians 4:4-7 (the Message):** Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!

<sup>6-7</sup> Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. (**Philippians 4:4-7**, the Message)

**1 John 3:16-18 (NLT):** We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup> If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion – how can God's love be in that person?

<sup>18</sup> Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. (**1 John 3:16-18**, NLT)

**1 John 4:7-21 (NLT):** Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

<sup>9</sup> God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. <sup>10</sup> This is real love – not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

<sup>13</sup> And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. <sup>14</sup> Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> All who declare that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. <sup>16</sup> We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. <sup>17</sup> And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world.

<sup>18</sup> Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. <sup>19</sup> We love each other because he loved us first.

<sup>20</sup> If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? <sup>21</sup> And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers. (1 John 4:7-21, NLT)

## E.G. White Quotations

**The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 16, The Gospel Message in Antioch, pages 155-165:** After the disciples had been driven from Jerusalem by persecution, the gospel message spread rapidly through the regions lying beyond the limits of Palestine; and many small companies of believers were formed in important centers. Some of the disciples "traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word." Their labors were usually confined to the Hebrew and Greek Jews, large colonies of whom were at this time to be found in nearly all the cities of the world.

Among the places mentioned where the gospel was gladly received is Antioch, at that time the metropolis of Syria. The extensive commerce carried on from that populous center brought to the city many people of various nationalities. Besides, Antioch was favorably known as a resort for lovers of ease and pleasure, because of its healthful situation, its beautiful surroundings, and the wealth, culture, and refinement (Page 156) to be found there. In the days of the apostles it had become a city of luxury and vice.

The gospel was publicly taught in Antioch by certain disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came "preaching the Lord Jesus." "The hand of the Lord was with them," and their earnest labors were productive of fruit. "A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

"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." Upon arrival in his new field of labor, Barnabas saw the work that had already been accomplished by divine grace, and he "was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

The labors of Barnabas in Antioch were richly blessed, and many were added to the number of believers there. As the work developed, Barnabas felt the need of suitable help in order to

advance in the opening providences of God, and he went to Tarsus to seek for Paul, who, after his departure from Jerusalem some time before, had been laboring in "the regions of Syria and Cilicia," proclaiming "the faith which once he destroyed." Galatians 1:21, 23. Barnabas was successful in finding Paul and in persuading him to return with him as a companion in ministry.

In the populous city of Antioch, Paul found an excellent field of labor. His learning, wisdom, and zeal exerted a powerful influence over the inhabitants and frequenters of that city of culture; and he proved just the help that Barnabas needed. For a year the two disciples labored unitedly (Page 157) in faithful ministry, bringing to many a saving knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth, the world's Redeemer.

It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. The name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation. Continually they were recounting the incidents that had occurred during the days of His earthly ministry, when His disciples were blessed with His personal presence. Untiringly they dwelt upon His teachings and His miracles of healing. With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He had prayed for those who persecuted Him. His resurrection and ascension, and His work in heaven as the Mediator for fallen man, were topics on which they rejoiced to dwell. Well might the heathen call them Christians, since they preached Christ and addressed their prayers to God through Him.

It was God who gave to them the name of Christian. This is a royal name, given to all who join themselves to Christ. It was of this name that James wrote later, "Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" James 2:6, 7. And Peter declared, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." 1 Peter 4:16, 14. (Page 158)

The believers at Antioch realized that God was willing to work in their lives "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13. Living, as they were, in the midst of a people who seemed to care but little for the things of eternal value, they sought to arrest the attention of the honest in heart, and to bear positive testimony concerning Him whom they loved and served. In their humble ministry they learned to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to make effective the word of life. And so, in the various walks of life, they daily bore testimony of their faith in Christ.

The example of the followers of Christ at Antioch should be an inspiration to every believer living in the great cities of the world today. While it is in the order of God that chosen workers of consecration and talent should be stationed in important centers of population to lead out in public efforts, it is also His purpose that the church members living in these cities shall use their

*God-given talents in working for souls. There are rich blessings in store for those who surrender fully to the call of God. As such workers endeavor to win souls to Jesus, they will find that many who never could have been reached in any other way are ready to respond to intelligent personal effort.*

*The cause of God in the earth today is in need of living representatives of Bible truth. The ordained ministers alone are not equal to the task of warning the great cities. God is calling not only upon ministers, but also upon physicians, nurses, colporteurs, Bible workers, and other consecrated laymen of varied talent who have a knowledge of (Page 159) the word of God and who know the power of His grace, to consider the needs of the unwarned cities. Time is rapidly passing, and there is much to be done. Every agency must be set in operation, that present opportunities may be wisely improved.*

*Paul's labors at Antioch, in association with Barnabas, strengthened him in his conviction that the Lord had called him to do a special work for the Gentile world. At the time of Paul's conversion, the Lord had declared that he was to be made a minister to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." Acts 26:18. The angel that appeared to Ananias had said of Paul, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15. And Paul himself, later in his Christian experience, while praying in the temple at Jerusalem, had been visited by an angel from heaven, who bade him, "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Acts 22:21.*

*Thus the Lord had given Paul his commission to enter the broad missionary field of the Gentile world. To prepare him for this extensive and difficult work, God had brought him into close connection with Himself and had opened before his enraptured vision views of the beauty and glory of heaven. To him had been given the ministry of making known "the mystery" which had been "kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25) – "the mystery of His (Page 160) will" (Ephesians 1:9), "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof," declares Paul, "I was made a minister ... Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:5-11.*

*God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel*

ministry. They had now reached a point in their Christian experience when God was about to entrust them with the carrying forward of a difficult missionary enterprise, in the prosecution of which they would need every advantage that could be obtained through the agency of the church.

"There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen ... and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the **(Page 161)** Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority.

The Christian church was at this time entering upon an important era. The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls. The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14) that had so long separated the Jewish and the Gentile world, would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy, and their authority as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews. God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.

Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying **(Page 162)** on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one's authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God.

To the Jew this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads. When an animal was devoted to sacrifice, the hand of the one invested with priestly authority was laid upon the head of the victim. And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they, by that action, asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed.

At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands. There is only the simple record of their ordination and of the bearing that it had on their future work.

*The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church. Years before, when the divine purpose concerning Paul was first revealed to him by the Saviour Himself, Paul was immediately afterward brought (Page 163) into contact with members of the newly organized church at Damascus. Furthermore, the church at that place was not long left in darkness as to the personal experience of the converted Pharisee. And now, when the divine commission given at that time was to be more fully carried out, the Holy Spirit, again bearing witness concerning Paul as a chosen vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, laid upon the church the work of ordaining him and his fellow laborer. As the leaders of the church in Antioch "ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."*

*God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church – Christ's body – is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.*

*There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, (Page 164) especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God.*

*Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown. The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to co-operate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God.*

Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from this time that he afterward (Page 165) dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church.

While the light of the gospel was shining brightly at Antioch, an important work was continued by the apostles who had remained in Jerusalem. Every year, at the time of the festivals, many Jews from all lands came to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. Some of these pilgrims were men of fervent piety and earnest students of the prophecies. They were looking and longing for the advent of the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel. While Jerusalem was filled with these strangers, the apostles preached Christ with unflinching courage, though they knew that in so doing they were placing their lives in constant jeopardy. The Spirit of God set its seal upon their labors; many converts to the faith were made; and these, returning to their homes in different parts of the world, scattered the seeds of truth through all nations and among all classes of society.

Prominent among the apostles who engaged in this work were Peter, James, and John, who felt confident that God had appointed them to preach Christ among their countrymen at home. Faithfully and wisely they labored, testifying of the things they had seen and heard, and appealing to "a more sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19), in an effort to persuade "the house of Israel. . . that God hath made that same Jesus, whom" the Jews "crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). (**The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 16, The Gospel Message in Antioch, pages 155-165**)

**The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 17, Heralds of the Gospel, pages 166-176:** "Sent forth by the Holy Ghost," Paul and Barnabas, after their ordination by the brethren in Antioch, "departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Thus the apostles began their first missionary journey.

Cyprus was one of the places to which the believers had fled from Jerusalem because of the persecution following the death of Stephen. It was from Cyprus that certain men had journeyed to Antioch, "preaching the Lord Jesus." Acts 11:20. Barnabas himself was "of the country of Cyprus" (Acts 4:36); and now he and Paul, accompanied by John Mark, a kinsman of Barnabas, visited this island field.

Mark's mother was a convert to the Christian religion, and her home at Jerusalem was an asylum for the disciples. There they were always sure of a welcome and a season of rest. It was during one of these visits of the apostles to his (Page 167) mother's home, that Mark proposed to Paul and Barnabas that he should accompany them on their missionary tour. He felt the favor of God in his heart and longed to devote himself entirely to the work of the gospel ministry.

Arriving at Salamis, the apostles "preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews ... And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus: which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a

*prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."*

*Not without a struggle does Satan allow the kingdom of God to be built up in the earth. The forces of evil are engaged in unceasing warfare against the agencies appointed for the spread of the gospel, and these powers of darkness are especially active when the truth is proclaimed before men of repute and sterling integrity. Thus it was when Sergius Paulus, the deputy of Cyprus, was listening to the gospel message. The deputy had sent for the apostles, that he might be instructed in the message they had come to bear, and now the forces of evil, working through the sorcerer Elymas, sought with their baleful suggestions to turn him from the faith and so thwart the purpose of God.*

*Thus the fallen foe ever works to keep in his ranks men of influence who, if converted, might render effective service in God's cause. But the faithful gospel worker need not (Page 168) fear defeat at the hand of the enemy; for it is his privilege to be endued with power from above to withstand every satanic influence.*

*Although sorely beset by Satan, Paul had the courage to rebuke the one through whom the enemy was working. "Filled with the Holy Ghost," the apostle "set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."*

*The sorcerer had closed his eyes to the evidences of gospel truth, and the Lord, in righteous anger, caused his natural eyes to be closed, shutting out from him the light of day. This blindness was not permanent, but only for a season, that he might be warned to repent and seek pardon of the God whom he had so grievously offended. The confusion into which he was thus brought made of no effect his subtle arts against the doctrine of Christ. The fact that he was obliged to grope about in blindness proved to all that the miracles which the apostles had performed, and which Elymas had denounced as sleight of hand, were wrought by the power of God. The deputy, convinced of the truth of the doctrine taught by the apostles, accepted the gospel. (Page 169)*

*Elymas was not a man of education, yet he was peculiarly fitted to do the work of Satan. Those who preach the truth of God will meet the wily foe in many different forms. Sometimes it will be in the person of learned, but more often of ignorant, men, whom Satan has trained to be successful instruments to deceive souls. It is the duty of the minister of Christ to stand faithful at his post, in the fear of God and in the power of His might. Thus he may put to confusion the hosts of Satan and may triumph in the name of the Lord.*

*Paul and his company continued their journey, going to Perga, in Pamphylia. Their way was toilsome; they encountered hardships and privations, and were beset with dangers on every side. In the towns and cities through which they passed, and along the lonely highways, they were surrounded by dangers seen and unseen. But Paul and Barnabas had learned to trust God's power to deliver. Their hearts were filled with fervent love for perishing souls. As faithful shepherds in search of the lost sheep, they gave no thought to their own ease and convenience. Forgetful of self, they faltered not when weary, hungry, and cold. They had in view but one object--the salvation of those who had wandered far from the fold.*

*It was here that Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable (Page 170) circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem.*

*This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after years his solicitude in Mark's behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the blessing of God, and the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker.*

*Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark and received him as a fellow laborer. He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker "unto the kingdom of God," and "a comfort unto me." Colossians 4:11. Again, not long before his own death, he spoke of Mark as "profitable" to him "for the ministry." 2 Timothy 4:11.*

*After the departure of Mark, Paul and Barnabas visited Antioch in Pisidia and on the Sabbath day went into the Jewish synagogue and sat down. "After the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto (Page 171) them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Being thus invited to speak, "Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." Then followed a wonderful discourse. He proceeded to give a history of the manner in which the Lord had dealt with the Jews from the time of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and how a Saviour had been promised, of the seed of David, and he boldly declared that "of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: when John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there cometh One after me, whose*

shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose." Thus with power he preached Jesus as the Saviour of men, the Messiah of prophecy.

Having made this declaration, Paul said, "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him."

Paul did not hesitate to speak the plain truth concerning the rejection of the Saviour by the Jewish leaders. "Though they found no cause of death in Him," the apostle declared, "yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when (Page 172) they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. But God raised Him from the dead: and He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people."

"We declare unto you glad tidings," the apostle continued, "how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore He saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption."

And now, having spoken plainly of the fulfillment of familiar prophecies concerning the Messiah, Paul preached unto them repentance and the remission of sin through the merits of Jesus their Saviour. "Be it known unto you," he said, "that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The Spirit of God accompanied the words that were spoken, and hearts were touched. The apostle's appeal to Old Testament prophecies, and his declaration that these had been fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, (Page 173) carried conviction to many a soul longing for the advent of the promised Messiah. And the speaker's words of assurance that the "glad tidings" of salvation were for Jew and Gentile alike, brought hope and joy to those who had not been numbered among the children of Abraham according to the flesh.

"When the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." The congregation having finally broken up, "many of the Jews and religious proselytes," who had accepted the glad tidings borne to them that day, "followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."

*The interest aroused in Antioch of Pisidia by Paul's discourse brought together on the next Sabbath day, "almost the whole city ... to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.*

*"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."*

*"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." They rejoiced exceedingly that (Page 174) Christ recognized them as the children of God, and with grateful hearts they listened to the word preached. Those who believed were zealous in communicating the gospel message to others, and thus "the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."*

*Centuries before, the pen of inspiration had traced this ingathering of the Gentiles; but those prophetic utterances had been but dimly understood. Hosea had said: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." And again: I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." Hosea 1:10; 2:23.*

*The Saviour Himself, during His earthly ministry, foretold the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. In the parable of the vineyard He declared to the impenitent Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:43. And after His resurrection He commissioned His disciples to go "into all the world" and "teach all nations." They were to leave none unwarned, but were to "preach the gospel to every creature." Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.*

*In turning to the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas did not cease laboring for the Jews elsewhere, wherever there was a favorable opportunity to gain a hearing. (Page 175) Later, in Thessalonica, in Corinth, in Ephesus, and in other important centers, Paul and his companions in labor preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. But their chief energies were henceforth directed toward the building up of the kingdom of God in heathen territory, among peoples who had but little or no knowledge of the true God and of His Son.*

*The hearts of Paul and his associate workers were drawn out in behalf of those who were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Through the untiring*

ministrations of the apostles to the Gentiles, the "strangers and foreigners," who "sometimes were far off," learned that they had been "made nigh by the blood of Christ," and that through faith in His atoning sacrifice they might become "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Ephesians 2:12, 13, 19.

Advancing in faith, Paul labored unceasingly for the upbuilding of God's kingdom among those who had been neglected by the teachers in Israel. Constantly he exalted Christ Jesus as "the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15), and exhorted the believers to be "rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith." Colossians 2:7.

To those who believe, Christ is a sure foundation. Upon this living stone, Jews and Gentiles alike may build. It is broad enough for all and strong enough to sustain the weight and burden of the whole world. This is a fact (Page 176) plainly recognized by Paul himself. In the closing days of his ministry, when addressing a group of Gentile believers who had remained steadfast in their love of the gospel truth, the apostle wrote, "Ye ... are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." Ephesians 2:19, 20.

As the gospel message spread in Pisidia, the unbelieving Jews of Antioch in their blind prejudice "stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them" from that district.

The apostles were not discouraged by this treatment; they remembered the words of their Master: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5:11, 12.

The gospel message was advancing, and the apostles had every reason for feeling encouraged. Their labors had been richly blessed among the Pisidians at Antioch, and the believers whom they left to carry forward the work alone for a time, "were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." (The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 17, Heralds of the Gospel, pages 166-176)

**The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 18, Preaching Among the Heathen, pages 177-187:** From Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium. In this place, as at Antioch, they began their labors in the synagogue of their own people. They met with marked success; "a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." But in Iconium, as in other places where the apostles labored, "the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."

The apostles, however, were not turned aside from their mission, for many were accepting the gospel of Christ. In the face of opposition, envy, and prejudice they went on with their work, "speaking boldly in the Lord," and God "gave testimony unto the word of His grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." These evidences of divine approval had a powerful influence on those whose minds were open to conviction, and converts to the gospel multiplied. (Page 178)

*The increasing popularity of the message borne by the apostles, filled the unbelieving Jews with envy and hatred, and they determined to stop the labors of Paul and Barnabas at once. By means of false and exaggerated reports they led the authorities to fear that the entire city was in danger of being incited to insurrection. They declared that large numbers were attaching themselves to the apostles and suggested that it was for secret and dangerous designs.*

*In consequence of these charges the disciples were repeatedly brought before the authorities; but their defense was so clear and sensible, and their statement of what they were teaching so calm and comprehensive, that a strong influence was exerted in their favor. Although the magistrates were prejudiced against them by the false statements they had heard, they dared not condemn them. They could but acknowledge that the teachings of Paul and Barnabas tended to make men virtuous, law-abiding citizens, and that the morals and order of the city would improve if the truths taught by the apostles were accepted.*

*Through the opposition that the disciples met, the message of truth gained great publicity; the Jews saw that their efforts to thwart the work of the new teachers resulted only in adding greater numbers to the new faith. "The multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles."*

*So enraged were the leaders among the Jews by the turn that matters were taking, that they determined to gain their ends by violence. Arousing the worst passions of the (Page 179) ignorant, noisy mob, they succeeded in creating a tumult, which they attributed to the teaching of the disciples. By this false charge they hoped to gain the help of the magistrates in carrying out their purpose. They determined that the apostles should have no opportunity to vindicate themselves and that the mob should interfere by stoning Paul and Barnabas, thus putting an end to their labors.*

*Friends of the apostles, though unbelievers, warned them of the malicious designs of the Jews and urged them not to expose themselves needlessly to the fury of the mob, but to escape for their lives. Paul and Barnabas accordingly departed in secret from Iconium, leaving the believers to carry on the work alone for a time. But they by no means took final leave; they purposed to return after the excitement had abated, and complete the work begun.*

*In every age and in every land, God's messengers have been called upon to meet bitter opposition from those who deliberately chose to reject the light of heaven. Often, by misrepresentation and falsehood, the enemies of the gospel have seemingly triumphed, closing the doors by which God's messengers might gain access to the people. But these doors cannot remain forever closed, and often, as God's servants have returned after a time to resume their labors, the Lord has wrought mightily in their behalf, enabling them to establish memorials to the glory of His name.*

*Driven by persecution from Iconium, the apostles went to Lystra and Derbe, in Lycaonia. These towns were inhabited largely by a heathen, superstitious people, but among (Page 180) them*

were some who were willing to hear and accept the gospel message. In these places and in the surrounding country the apostles decided to labor, hoping to avoid Jewish prejudice and persecution.

In Lystra there was no Jewish synagogue, though a few Jews were living in the town. Many of the inhabitants of Lystra worshiped at a temple dedicated to Jupiter. When Paul and Barnabas appeared in the town and, gathering the Lystrians about them, explained the simple truths of the gospel, many sought to connect these doctrines with their own superstitious belief in the worship of Jupiter.

The apostles endeavored to impart to these idolaters a knowledge of God the Creator and of His Son, the Saviour of the human race. They first directed attention to the wonderful works of God – the sun, the moon, and the stars, the beautiful order of the recurring seasons, the mighty snow-capped mountains, the lofty trees, and other varied wonders of nature, which showed a skill beyond human comprehension. Through these works of the Almighty, the apostles led the minds of the heathen to a contemplation of the great Ruler of the universe.

Having made plain these fundamental truths concerning the Creator, the apostles told the Lystrians of the Son of God, who came from heaven to our world because He loved the children of men. They spoke of His life and ministry, His rejection by those He came to save, His trial and crucifixion, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven, there to act as man's advocate. Thus, in the Spirit (Page 181) and power of God, Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Lystra.

At one time, while Paul was telling the people of Christ's work as a healer of the sick and afflicted, he saw among his hearers a cripple whose eyes were fastened on him and who received and believed his words. Paul's heart went out in sympathy toward the afflicted man, in whom he discerned one who "had faith to be healed." In the presence of the idolatrous assembly Paul commanded the cripple to stand upright on his feet. Heretofore the sufferer had been able to take a sitting posture only, but now he instantly obeyed Paul's command and for the first time in his life stood on his feet. Strength came with this effort of faith, and he who had been a cripple "leaped and walked."

"When the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." This statement was in harmony with a tradition of theirs that the gods occasionally visited the earth. Barnabas they called Jupiter, the father of gods, because of his venerable appearance, his dignified bearing, and the mildness and benevolence expressed in his countenance. Paul they believe to be Mercury, "because he was the chief speaker," earnest and active, and eloquent with words of warning and exhortation.

The Lystrians, eager to show their gratitude, prevailed upon the priest of Jupiter to do the apostles honor, and he "brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people." Paul and Barnabas, who had sought retirement and rest, were not

aware of **(Page 182)** these preparations. Soon, however, their attention was attracted by the sound of music and the enthusiastic shouting of a large crowd who had come to the house where they were staying.

When the apostles ascertained the cause of this visit and its attendant excitement, "they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people" in the hope of preventing further proceedings. In a loud, ringing voice, which rose above the shouting of the people, Paul demanded their attention; and as the tumult suddenly ceased, he said: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Notwithstanding the positive denial of the apostles that they were divine, and notwithstanding Paul's endeavors to direct the minds of the people to the true God as the only object worthy of adoration, it was almost impossible to turn the heathen from their intention to offer sacrifice. So firm had been their belief that these men were indeed gods, and so great their enthusiasm, that they were loath to acknowledge their error. The record says that they were "scarce restrained."

The Lystrians reasoned that they had beheld with their own eyes the miraculous power exercised by the apostles. **(Page 183)** They had seen a cripple who had never before been able to walk, made to rejoice in perfect health and strength. It was only after much persuasion on the part of Paul, and careful explanation regarding the mission of himself and Barnabas as representatives of the God of heaven and of His Son, the great Healer, that the people were persuaded to give up their purpose.

The labors of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra were suddenly checked by the malice of "certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium," who, upon learning of the success of the apostles' work among the Lycaonians, had determined to follow them and persecute them. On arriving at Lystra, these Jews soon succeeded in inspiring the people with the same bitterness of spirit that actuated their own minds. By words of misrepresentation and calumny those who had recently regarded Paul and Barnabas as divine beings were persuaded that in reality the apostles were worse than murderers and were deserving of death.

The disappointment that the Lystrians had suffered in being refused the privilege of offering sacrifice to the apostles, prepared them to turn against Paul and Barnabas with an enthusiasm approaching that with which they had hailed them as gods. Incited by the Jews, they planned to attack the apostles by force. The Jews charged them not to allow Paul an opportunity to speak, alleging that if they were to grant him this privilege, he would bewitch the people.

Soon the murderous designs of the enemies of the gospel were carried out. Yielding to the influence of evil, the Lystrians became possessed with a satanic fury and, seizing Paul, **(Page 184)**

mercilessly stoned him. The apostle thought that his end had come. The martyrdom of Stephen, and the cruel part that he himself had acted upon that occasion, came vividly to his mind. Covered with bruises and faint with pain, he fell to the ground, and the infuriated mob "drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead."

In this dark and trying hour the company of Lystrian believers, who through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas had been converted to the faith of Jesus, remained loyal and true. The unreasoning opposition and cruel persecution by their enemies served only to confirm the faith of these devoted brethren; and now, in the face of danger and scorn, they showed their loyalty by gathering sorrowfully about the form of him whom they believed to be dead.

What was their surprise when in the midst of their lamentations the apostle suddenly lifted up his head and rose to his feet with the praise of God upon his lips. To the believers this unexpected restoration of God's servant was regarded as a miracle of divine power and seemed to set the signet of Heaven upon their change of belief. They rejoiced with inexpressible gladness and praised God with renewed faith.

Among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields. This was a young man named Timothy. When Paul was dragged out of the city, this youthful disciple was among the number who took their stand beside his apparently lifeless body and who saw him (Page 185) arise, bruised and covered with blood, but with praises upon his lips because he had been permitted to suffer for the sake of Christ.

The day following the stoning of Paul, the apostles departed for Derbe, where their labors were blessed, and many souls were led to receive Christ as the Saviour. But "when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many," neither Paul nor Barnabas was content to take up work elsewhere without confirming the faith of the converts whom they had been compelled to leave alone for a time in the places where they had recently labored. And so, undaunted by danger, "they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith." Many had accepted the glad tidings of the gospel and had thus exposed themselves to reproach and opposition. These the apostles sought to establish in the faith in order that the work done might abide.

As an important factor in the spiritual growth of the new converts the apostles were careful to surround them with the safeguards of gospel order. Churches were duly organized in all places in Lycaonia and Pisidia where there were believers. Officers were appointed in each church, and proper order and system were established for the conduct of all the affairs pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the believers.

This was in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry. Those who in (Page 186) any place were

by his labor led to accept Christ as the Saviour were at the proper time organized into a church. Even when the believers were but few in number, this was done. The Christians were thus taught to help one another, remembering the promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20.

And Paul did not forget the churches thus established. The care of these churches rested on his mind as an ever-increasing burden. However small a company might be, it was nevertheless the object of his constant solicitude. He watched over the smaller churches tenderly, realizing that they were in need of special care in order that the members might be thoroughly established in the truth and taught to put forth earnest, unselfish efforts for those around them.

In all their missionary endeavors Paul and Barnabas sought to follow Christ's example of willing sacrifice and faithful, earnest labor for souls. Wide-awake, zealous, untiring, they did not consult inclination or personal ease, but with prayerful anxiety and unceasing activity they sowed the seed of truth. And with the sowing of the seed, the apostles were careful to give to all who took their stand for the gospel, practical instruction that was of untold value. This spirit of earnestness and godly fear made upon the minds of the new disciples a lasting impression regarding the importance of the gospel message.

When men of promise and ability were converted, as in the case of Timothy, Paul and Barnabas sought earnestly (Page 187) to show them the necessity of laboring in the vineyard. And when the apostles left for another place, the faith of these men did not fail, but rather increased. They had been faithfully instructed in the way of the Lord, and had been taught how to labor unselfishly, earnestly, perseveringly, for the salvation of their fellow men. This careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands.

The first missionary journey was fast drawing to a close. Commending the newly organized churches to the Lord, the apostles went to Pamphylia, "and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia, and thence sailed to Antioch." (The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 18, Preaching Among the Heathen, pages 177-187)