

Guest Speaker Rodger Burnett

Grace of God as Seen in Antioch

1. In verses 1-18, Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church were outraged because Peter dared to fellowship with Gentiles (remember Peter's visit to Cornelius last week in Acts 10). These Jewish believers were *not* an impartial group! What did these Jews do right (v. 2,3), and what did they do wrong?
2. How did Peter handle this confrontation (v. 4)? What can we learn from his response to the angry Jews when dealing with others? Give at least two examples in a theoretical family situation and two examples in a theoretical church situation.
3. After Peter explained what had happened with Cornelius and in *the right manner*, what did the Jewish Christians do? How can following Peter's example cause our relationships to grow and bring glory to God, rather than division to our family or church?
4. Look at Acts 8:3-5 and 9:1-3. What were two specific results of Stephen's martyrdom? Read 11:19-21. What is another result? Do you think Stephen knew that his simple obedience to Christ and willingness to boldly testify for Him would produce such results? What can we learn from his example?
5. What part did Barnabas have in this account (v. 22-26)? Why did the Jerusalem church choose to send him as its delegate—what were his spiritual qualifications? And his other qualifications (4:36,37)? How does this help define qualifications for choosing leaders for specific tasks in the church?
6. Read verse 26. What does the ending "-ian" mean on "Christian"? This word is only used two other times in the New Testament, in Acts 26:28 and I Peter 4:16. What are some NT synonyms for "Christian" (page through your Bible and find five or more)? Why might usage of other names be more exact or descriptive for our day?

¹Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, ³saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" ⁴But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying: ⁵"I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. ⁶When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. ⁷And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'" ⁸But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.' ⁹But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' ¹⁰Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. ¹²Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, ¹⁴who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.' ¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" ¹⁸When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

¹⁹Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. ²⁰But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

²²Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. ²³When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. ²⁴For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

²⁷And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. ³⁰This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Pastoral Candidate Troy Weigert

Read: Acts 12

Monday

v. 1-3 — Herod killed James the son of Zebedee, one of the “Sons of Thunder.” He then had Peter arrested and put into prison. The family of James might have been tempted to despair or question why God would allow their beloved family member to be killed. The Bible is clear that God works according to the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11). Why should the sovereignty of God bring us great comfort, especially during hard times (Ps. 34:8; Rom. 8:28,29)?

Tuesday

v. 4-6 — Herod arrested Peter, doubled the guards, locked him in the inner prison, and had him chained between two soldiers. From a human standpoint, Peter's situation was hopeless. How did Peter react to his circumstances (v. 6a)? Read Psalm 37:1-20; Peter put the teaching of Psalm 37 into practice in his life. Can you think of any other Bible verses that might help you rest in the Lord during trials?

Wednesday

v. 4-11 — You could say that Peter was in the maximum security wing of Herod's prison. Read Acts 5:17-24 and Matthew 28:1-15 for some insight as to why Herod took such extreme security precautions. He did not want to suffer embarrassment if Peter should happen to “escape.” Did any of these human measures hinder the plan and work of God (Dan. 4:34,35)?

Thursday

v. 12-16 — The members of the Jerusalem church were praying for Peter's release (v. 5,12). Did they expect God to answer their prayers? I am reminded of the farmer who would walk his fields daily asking God to send rain on his crops, yet he never once brought an umbrella. Do you tend to pray expecting God to answer, or do you tend to let circumstances intimidate?

Friday

v. 17-19 — God had miraculously released Peter from prison and spared him from execution. It is clear that God could have kept Peter alive regardless of the circumstances, yet we find Peter, “motioning with his hand for them to be silent” and leaving to go to, “another place.” Peter did not choose to stay near the prison and test God; rather he applied wisdom by leaving the area and avoiding Herod. We can apply a lesson from Peter today by avoiding the sin of testing God and by using biblical wisdom in every area of our lives.

Saturday

v. 20-25 — Herod again displays his self-centered and two-faced character. When in Judea, Herod would play the part of a strict Jew, but when among Gentiles he would live as the worst of heathens, even accepting worship as a “god” much like a roman emperor. Take a look at your own life; do you act one way at work, home or among friends, and another way at church?
