

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 24 “The Spread of the Gospel”

I. Introduction - We are in a series on *Acts*. We are going through the entire book and looking at how the Church was born in revival and this caused the Gospel to go viral.

A. We've studied multiple revivals in the early church. These include Pentecost in *Acts 2* - 3,000 saved, healing of lame man - *Acts 3-4* - 5,000 saved, signs and wonders and the healings off Peter's shadow - *Acts 5* - all Jerusalem filled with the doctrine of Christ., and the revival in Samaria - *Acts 8* - All of the city filled with joy, and the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles from *Acts 10*.

B. Last week we studied the first part of *Acts 11* and how Peter defended the outpouring of the spirit on the Gentiles to the church in Jerusalem (they thought only Jews could be saved). Today we are going to look at how the gospel continued to spread to Gentile regions after Peter's defense.

II. The Spread of the Gospel

A. **Galatians 4:25-27** This passage is symbolic of the church. The church is Jerusalem from above. It is being compared to the desolate woman and has more children than the married woman. Do you realize how supernatural this was?

1. The events of *Acts 11* we are going to study today occurred 12-15 years after the resurrection. Can you imagine thinking the church would have taken as great a foothold as it did when there was just 120 in the upper room. It's supernatural.
2. By this point, it's already growing much faster than Judaism.
3. **Isaiah 54:1-3** this is a prophetic picture of the expansion of the church.

B. **Acts 11:19-26 The Church Established in Antioch**

1. **Acts 11:19-20** Those from Cyprus (island in Mediterranean and Cyrene (north Africa) came and preached to the Greeks at Antioch.
2. **Acts 11:21 The hand of the Lord represents His favor and power. This is what caused many to turn to the Lord.**
3. Antioch - Wealthy, cosmopolitan city located between two trade routes. (3rd most important in Roman empire). Was located 300 miles north of Jerusalem.
 - a. The early church began to flourish here (Antioch is called the cradle of Christianity because it sent missionaries out all of over the world.)
 - b. Incidentally because it was founded by the Greeks and Romans were in charge there was quite a bit of idolatry and sexual immorality here too.
Just because a city has problems doesn't mean God can't use it.

4. When the church in Jerusalem heard what was happening they sent a key leader, Barnabas, to Antioch to strengthen the church there. He encouraged them to continue to walk with Jesus.
5. Barnabas then went and found Paul and brought him to Antioch. They spent a year teaching the believers there.
 - a. This was an important year because they established many in faith. This is part of what caused Antioch to become a major missionary city (it didn't happen by chance.) It happened as people were taught the word.
 - b. **Acts 13:1-2** There were many teaching in Antioch (team). This is also where Paul was eventually sent from (it's important to note Paul was in the ministry working before he received his ultimate call. Many aren't faithful in a little so they never receive their high call.
6. This name Christian did not originate with the followers of Christ but was a term of scorn used by the opponents of Christianity to criticize the followers of Jesus as acting just like that Jesus of Nazareth who claimed to be the Christ. Although the unbelievers did not intend this name to be flattering, it was actually one of the highest compliments that a believer could be paid.

C. Acts 11:27-30 Relief Brought to the Church in Jerusalem

1. Agabus prophesied of a great famine that would hit the whole world. History tells us there was a great famine in the fourth year of Claudius which was 45 A.D.
2. **1 Thessalonians 5:19-21** The reason the Bible says to not despise prophecies is because it's easy to do (example 2020). We are always to test prophecies and then hold to that which is good. To not allow prophecy at all quenches the spirit.
3. The church at Antioch heeded this prophecy. They must have tested it and felt like it was God. They then took up an offering and sent relief to those in Judea where the church of Jerusalem was.
 - a. God does not bless us just so we can bless others. He blesses us because He wants to lavish His goodness on us. Out of that, however, we should use the things we have been blessed with to bless other people.
 - b. I want to submit to you that one of the reasons this upstart Gentile church flourished was because it had a hard time taking care of others.
 - c. "With great power comes great responsibility" - Winston Churchill

III. Conclusion - On a weekend where we are celebrating the birth of our nation and the freedom that it offers, we need to be mindful of those who paid a great price for us to have freedom. The best way we can honor their sacrifice is to bring the message of freedom of Christ to other people. "With great power comes great responsibility."

A. Call Up Prayer Team

B. Pray Closing Prayer