

Midtown Messenger

Volume 2

January 20, 2019

Issue 3

GOOD MEN ARE NOT PREJUDICE

Ronnie Scherffius

The twenty-first century church has not always properly handled differences among brethren well. But neither did our brethren in the first century. One of the greatest struggles for Christians in the early church centered on differences between Jews and Gentiles. Should the gospel go to the Gentiles? (Acts 11:15) Shouldn't Gentiles conform to the old law with its traditions? (Acts 15) Can Jews and Gentiles mix together as equals? (Acts 11:1-3; Gal. 2:11-13)

The challenge this presented for first century Christians may be hard for us fully to comprehend, but if we will simply consider the division and bitterness that exists in the world today because of economic and educational distinctions, and ethnic differences and social classes, and people of differing nationalities we can quickly associate ourselves with the struggles our first century brethren had in overcoming generations of handed down hatred and cultural contempt.

An example of this challenge being met with Christian love and perfect peace is seen in the man Barnabas. Let's note the inspired text and make some observations:

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none **but unto the Jews only**. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto **the Grecians [Greeks!]**, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great

number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and **they sent forth Barnabas**, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, **was glad**, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For **he was a good man**, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people were added unto the Lord. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:19–26)

Acts chapter ten is the record of the gospel going to the household of Cornelius—the first Gentiles converted to the gospel of Christ. But here we have a very fine distinction that in Antioch, some 250 plus miles north of Caesarea where Peter preached to Cornelius, the gospel is also being preached to the pagan world! Note that the text states specifically those Jews who were scattered from Jerusalem because of persecution preached to “Jews only.” But when men came from Cyprus and Cyrene they preached, not to Jews only, but to the Grecians, or Hellenists. The Jew/Grecian distinction indicates that these Hellenists were not Greek speaking Jews but

Greeks. Put this with the fact that the previous chapter (Acts 10) is a record of the first Gentile converts it stands to reason that a further record is being given of the non-Jews (Gentiles) hearing/receiving the gospel.

Note the circumstances, the Gentiles had come into the faith, but the church was still mostly Jewish. Hearing that Greeks had now received the gospel in Antioch among Jewish brethren, a man is sent who is fair-minded, encouraging, and who does not allow differences to determine his Christian love. Barnabas, of all the men who could have been sent, the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas.

Two things to note just here. First, Barnabas' reaction: "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, *was glad*" (Acts 11:23). He was not alarmed, taken back, or ill effected but glad that both his fellowman had received the gospel and that his brethren had received them. BUT what is most impressive is the description of his character: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts 11:24).

It is truly a sad state that the world in which we live is greatly disturbed and divided by prejudice and cultural differences, social and economic status, educational background, and many other temporal differences that have absolutely no bearing on one's eternal fate. It is a tragedy that such can from time to time be seen among God's people! Brethren let us never draw lines of distinction for those which would separate us from Christ. One who is in Christ is my sister. One who is washed by the blood of Christ is my brother. We have the same Father and the same Lord! Nothing should separate us!

Barnabas knew this. He was a good man.

From Fear to Fear

Christianity is under attack. Of this there can be no doubt. While some Christians remain oblivious to this or somehow believe they are immune to its effects, the growing reality in the world and in this country warns of dark days ahead for all those who seek to be true to the cause of Christ. The very real threat of direct attacks that lie an ocean away, seen in the kidnappings perpetrated by Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, the bomb-

ings directed against those professing a faith in Christ in Egypt, and the persecution perpetrated by ISIS in Syria, may seem limited and unrelated by some, but they reveal a pattern that cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the subtle path Satan took for decades, stripping morality and Christian values from the cultural conscience and thereby slowing but surely pushing Christianity into the background through both court decisions and legislation, has now evolved into an open advocacy for immorality and secular humanism and an open hostility toward morality and Christian values and expression. But in this we are not alone. Others have gone through similar situations throughout the centuries. Even David, long ago, felt the pain of seeing wickedness seemingly triumph, and his response offers perspective and hope. In his reflection recorded in the sixty-fourth psalm, David found himself thrust outside of his kingdom by the plotting of his own son, Absalom. However, David accepted this with dignity despite the sense of fear that loomed throughout it all. Instead of letting his fear control him, he turned to God in faith and prayed for deliverance and safety in the midst of the storm (Psa. 64:1-2). David had to listen to personal attacks, both verbal and physical, as the forces with Absalom took advantage of their newfound power to express their wickedness (Psa. 64:3-4). How sad that such brazenness so often accompanies evil when it comes to power (Psa. 64:5-6). Regardless, God's people can have assurance that God Himself will address the evil in a manner so sudden that no one will expect it (Psa. 64:7). On His own timetable He will bring them down (Psa. 64:8), so that while they sought to have men fear them while they feared no one, in the end, men will come to fear God (Psa. 64:9). This must be our confidence too. We may not know how or when God will bring down those who promote wickedness from an evil heart, but we can know with certainty that He will. They may take the country down with them, but they will fall from their lofty sense of self-importance, and the eternal kingdom of God will still stand (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 16:18-19). Therefore, "The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and trust in Him. And all the upright in heart shall glory" (Psa. 64:10). The cause of Christ may not now be popular, morality may not be appreciated, and persecution may be our plight, but the rejection of the world does not define us. In fact, more than ever, our faith must speak from a heart dedicated more than ever to the truth and to our God. There may be many reasons to fear in the upcoming years, but our fear of God should trump them all.

-Selected-

PRIVILEGED TO SERVE

Week of January 20, 2019

Sunday Morning:

Announcements: Bryant Siegel
Scripture Reading: Manny Flonnory

Lord's Supper & Offering

Bread: Mark FitzSimmons
Fruit of the Vine: Clifton Rutherford
Offering: Lupe Escojido
Assist: BJ Davis, Sammy Scherffius, Isaac Jobs

Sunday Evening: Mark FitzSimmons, Clifton Rutherford

Prayer

A.M. Closing: Doug Jobs
P.M. Closing: Tom Pitchford

Ushers: Don Lynn
Allen Clifton

Wednesday Devotional: Will Burleson

Open/Close Building: Steve Randle

Sound System: Trenton Jenkins

Greeters:
Don Lynn
Allen Clifton

Prepare Communion: Steve Randle

To Our Visitors: We welcome you to our service. Perhaps this is the first time you have visited us. It is our desire to have you return often and give us a chance to become better acquainted with you. You will find visitor cards on the back of the pew in front of you. Please fill one out.

Ladies' Day hosted by MidTown church of Christ will be Saturday, February 2, 2019 with speaker Wendy Gibson. She will be speaking on "The Proverbial Woman." Registration begins at 9am. Ladies, please make plans to attend and bring a friend. Lunch will be provided.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

LES DALTRY, who fell last week; CONNIE RAGON, sister of Bennie Jamison, who passed away last week; RICHARD HILL AND MICKEY TISUE, who had medical procedures last week; DON WALKER, who's heart transplant was unsuccessful.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 2: Ladies Day hosted by MidTown
Feb: 22-24: Southwest School of Bible Studies: Student Lectures hosted by MidTown. Potluck luncheon will follow morning services and there will be a 1pm afternoon service in lieu of the 5pm service.

AREA EVENTS

Jan. 25-27: "Defending the Truth" @ Port Lavaca, speaker Kyle Butt.
Feb. 28-Mar. 3: Arise: Spiritual Growth workshop @ SW church of Christ
Mar. 29-31: Gospel meeting @ Adams Street church of Christ. More info on the bulletin board in hallway.
Mar. 30: South Texas Youth Lectures @ Adams Street . More info on the bulletin board in hallway.

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES:

Happy Birthday: Nina Siegel (21); Phillip Garcia (24); Sandy Bryson (25), Pat Gooch (26); Julia Atkinson (26)

Happy Anniversary: Richard & Marva Hill (25)

KEEP IN PRAYER

MIDTOWN MEMBERS

Jeff Cannady Ann Pantel
Dee Gilpatrick Clark Withers

SHUT-INS

Faye Henderson Sandy Malone

FRIENDS & FAMILY

Kim Neel-Farthing Vikram Gottam
(daughter of Joyce) (brother-in-law of Archana Verma)

If you would like to add or remove a name on the "Keep in Prayer" List, please see Nina Siegel.

MIDTOWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

Minister: Ronnie Scherffius
Secretary: Nina Siegel

TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Class: 9:00AM
Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00AM
Sunday Evening Worship: 5:00PM
Wednesday Bible Class: 7:00PM

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Week of January 13, 2019

Bible Class.....110
A.M. Worship.....140
P.M. Worship.....97
Wednesday Bible Study.....74

Offering \$4,461

QUICK REFERENCE

Use this quick reference to help you grow in knowledge:

Satan

Roaring Lion.....1 Peter 5:8
God of this world.....2 Cor. 4:4
John 14:30; Mat. 13:19; 2 Cor. 11:14



SUPPORTED WORKS

India - Mani Pagidipalli
New Zealand - James & Emily Cammock
Bible Land Passages - John & Carla Moore
Southwest School of Bible Studies - Cody Kilgore

GO PAPERLESS!

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