

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

July 7, 2013

26. The Church in Antioch

Acts 11:19-30

As we continue with our sermon series entitled “THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH” using the Book of Acts, today we shall focus on the Church that was established in Antioch. The disciples that were scattered by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen traveled all over the place initially spreading the good news of salvation only among the Jews. Peter’s witness to Cornelius and those that gathered in his household was the first recorded instance of the disciples’ witness and sharing the good news of salvation among the Gentiles. Then some men among those scattered to Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and preached the good news about the Lord Jesus and the salvation He offers to the Greeks. Many people believed and turned to Lord Jesus Christ and this is how the Church in Antioch began.

Every church needs to continue to do the work of the church that involves encouragement for worship, fellowship, evangelism, discipleship and do outreach ministry to those in need. If this is done faithfully, the church will become fruitful and grow healthily. The disciples will acquire the attributes and character of Christ and their lives will be worthy of praise. In fact, they will be the image of Christ reflecting Him to the world to see, so that they will be called “Christ-like” people or Christians.

Thus our text for today reads, “Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. 27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:19-30).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them. The work of the church includes worship, fellowship, witnessing/evangelism, discipleship, and outreach ministry to those in need.

- That every Church needs to have “a Barnabas”, a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith that encourages others to worship, fellowship, evangelize, disciple and do outreach ministry to others.
- Every believer being humble like Barnabas to understand that they cannot do the work of the church by themselves. Rather you should know someone who is capable of assisting you always, like Barnabas went and got Saul.
- Taking time (may be over a year) to disciple believers so that they can truly reflect Christ and practice Christianity in its truest sense.
- Having prophets to prepare God’s people for the future with outreach ministry to meet all the necessary needs that might arise among God’s people and others.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, “Amen!”

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

July 14, 2013

27. Peter’s Miraculous Escape From Prison

Acts 12:1-19a

The early church enjoyed the benefits of miracles, signs and wonders. Today we shall focus on the miraculous escape of Peter from prison as we continue with our sermon series entitled “THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH” using the Book of Acts. The question to address today is: Do miracles still happen today? The response to this question is a resounding, “Yes!” If so, then it is imperative that we define a miracle.

The early church suffered many hardships and so it took miracles to happen for the early disciples to continue in their new found faith in Jesus Christ. Miracles are not the works of the church but its beneficial by-products. What then is a miracle? A miracle is a 1) A surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is considered to be divine and 2) A highly improbable or extraordinary event, development, or accomplishment. Simply then, a miracle is a supernatural occurrence or event that cannot be explained naturally

or scientifically. If this is the case, then miracles must begin with fervent prayers. In other words, miracles are by-products of fervent prayers. In the case of Peter after his arrest and imprisonment, his miraculous escape from prison began with a “continuous fervent prayer meeting” at the house of the mother of John Mark. James 5:16b instructs us that the fervent prayers of a righteous man avails much. This means that the fervent prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective to produce miracles. Unfortunately, sometimes we Christians pray without faith and expectation; that is why we never receive our miracles. Albeit, God continues to perform miracles whenever His followers face various adversities, His followers need to continue fervently in prayers and trusting God to vindicate them. Therefore, prayer is an essential work of the church. Christians need to always P-U-S-H (Pray-Until-Something-Happens).

Thus our text for today reads, “It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. 8 Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.” 12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!” 15 “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.” 16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. “Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this,” he said, and then he left for another place. 18 In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. 19 After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed” (Acts 12:1-19a).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them. The work of the church includes fervent prayer (PUSH = Praying Until Sometime

Happens). This kind of prayers unlocks the prison of darkness and set the prisoners free.

- Miracles that follow the fervent prayers of believers. This always surprises the opposition and confirms that God has got the backs of believers since a miracle is a supernatural event or occurrence.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, “Amen!”

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

July 21, 2013

28. Herod’s Death; and Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

Acts 12: 19b-13:3

The continuous manifestation of miracles, signs and wonders in the early church never stopped. God honored and rewarded the faith, prayers and obedience of the believers to the Holy Spirit this way thereby making a strong statement to the rest of the world that He was behind this new movement of believers. At times God had to remove the obstacles hindering the furtherance of his kingdom so that it can continue to grow and flourish. Today we shall focus on Herod’s Death and the Sending off of Barnabas and Saul for ministering among the Gentiles as we continue with our sermon series entitled “THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH” using the Book of Acts. God had to get rid of arrogant king Herod for the work of the Church to flourish and expand to the ends of the then known world.

The early church and/or disciples experienced God great interventions to refute deceit, disobedience, idolatry and arrogance so that their faith can be well established. As such the early disciples witnessed many miracles, signs and wonders. On one of such occasions, Herod thought he was great and powerful, and wanted to share God’s glory with him. He was suddenly struck dead and eaten by worms as the people watched. In all this, the significance of the prayers of the saints cannot be underestimated. This is because the fervent prayers of believers always move the Spirit of God to action. In every Church, there ought to be believers identified as prophets

and teachers who are fervently worshiping, praying and fasting to seek God's will for the direction to which the church should go. Why then is the church today engaged in gossips more than in worshipping, praying and fasting? Do you really want to know why? It is because of self pride. And you all know that pride comes before the fall of any individual!

Thus our text for today reads, "Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. 20 He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply. 21 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. 22 They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." 23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But the word of God continued to spread and flourish. 25 When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark. 13:1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 12:19b-13:3).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them. The work of the church includes fervent prayer (PUSH = Praying Until Sometime Happens). This kind of prayers fasting removes hindrances and unlocks the doors for ministry and the Church to grow.
- Prophets and teachers in the church engaging in worshipping the Lord and fasting to hear from the Holy Spirit before sending off ministers for the service the Lord has.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, "Amen!"

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. R.D. Jacobs, Evangelist

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

July 28, 2013

29. Paul and Barnabas on the Island of Cyprus

Acts 13:4-12

A Christian is a regenerated being who is now saved. A sinner who has been forgiven and is born again in Christ! A Christian is one who now has the Holy Spirit within them as the Leading Force of their lives. And, it is when these Spirit Filled Believers come together that you find the Church! The Church is not a building, but the gathering of Spirit Filled Believers; because wherever they gather God is in the midst of them. The gathering of the Saints together is of great importance as the people that you surround yourself with will influence you in some way. For far too long, Christians have exalted non Christian/ungodly people to places of influence in their lives. Thus allowing them to lead and influence their lives and not the Holy Spirit. Christians must surround themselves with other Spirit Filled Believers that will positively influence them.

The Influence that Paul and Barnabas had was quite amazing while they were on the Island of Cyprus. After the New Testament Church in Antioch, which had Prophets and Teachers, had prayed and ministered together to God the Holy Spirit said to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work they were called to. And, after prayer, fasting and the laying on of hands they sent them out on their first missionary trip. (Acts 13:1-3) From the Country of Syria where the Antioch Church was they went to the neighboring city of Seleucia then they sailed to a small island alongside Syria- Cyprus,

There they began to preach the Word of God in the Synagogue of the Jews. Acts (13:5) They wanted to be an Influence to the Jewish brothers that the Messiah, the Anointed one, the Christ that they had been waiting on had come – In the Person of Jesus Christ. The Church should still be this type of influencing force in the World and not the World influencing the Church. Paul and Barnabas were on a mission to be a positive influence on the Island of Cyprus. They traveled throughout the Island from the city of Salamis to Paphos (Acts 13:5-6) and in Paphos they encountered Sergius Paulus the deputy of the city who wanted to hear the Word of God and Barjesus who with him and was a hindrance to him hearing the Word of God. The deputy had surrounded himself with someone that wanted to have a negative Influence on him and wanted to keep him from hearing the Word of God. The ones that you surround yourself with will Influence you either negatively or positively. That is why Christians need to surround themselves with other Believers who are Spirit Filled and that desire the best for them, for not all friends have your best interested in mind. That is why you must surround yourself with other Believers who desire the best for you and allow the Holy Spirit to direct you and not man nor the flesh.

The Church has to be a positive Influence on the World as Paul and Barnabas were on the Island of Paphos because the Work of the Church is found in leading unbelievers to faith in Jesus Christ! This is the way that the Church Grows with New Believers as the Power of the Holy Ghost Convicts, Convinces, and Converts unbelievers like Sergius Paulus. (Acts 13:12) So we see that the Work of the Church and the Growth of the Church begins with Believers who are filled

with the Holy Ghost and under His direction. It begins with Christians influencing the non believing world and not the world influencing the Church. It begins with Christians letting the Light of Jesus shine through them to lead others from darkness to Jesus- who is the Light of the world. And, it begins with Christians spreading the Doctrine of Jesus Christ which is Repent and Believe. That is to repent/ask forgiveness for your sins and believe that Jesus Lived Died and was Resurrected from the dead and you shall be saved.

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