

The Churches of Christ Salute You

Lesson Two

(Romans 16:16)

February 17, 2008

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

Overview:

1. Paul wrote to the Romans about the “churches of Christ.”
2. A plurality of churches did not mean a number of different denominations.
3. Instead, each was a local body of believers that belonged to Christ.
4. Since we also are a church of Christ, there are many lessons to be learned from these early churches.

Introduction:

1. The church at Antioch becomes central to the story of Christianity due to the work of Paul the Apostle.
2. Antioch of Syria was located 300 miles north of Jerusalem.
3. However, Christians persecuted in Jerusalem traveled there and began preaching the Gospel (Acts 8:4; 11:19).
4. Following Peter’s preaching to the household of Cornelius, Antioch is the first place recorded in Scripture where Gentiles were taught and converted (Acts 11:20-21).
5. It was to Antioch that Paul came (at the urging of Barnabas) and from Antioch that Paul would go forth on his evangelistic journeys (Acts 11:25-26).
6. Consider these lessons from the church at Antioch...

I. It Was An Educated Church

- A. They were founded upon the Truth of the Gospel (Acts 11:20-21).
- B. They were built up in the Truth of the Gospel (Acts 11:22-26).
 1. Barnabas continued to teach this same Truth.
 2. Paul joined him and together they taught at Antioch for a year.
- C. Their education would continue for their entire lives as Christians.
 1. They were not converted and then forgotten or neglected.
 2. They had to continue to grow in grace and knowledge.
 3. They had to continue with an open heart to desire to be taught.
- D. Because they were taught and lived the Truth, they were called Christians!
 1. Literally, they were “called by God,” Christians.
 2. This was a divinely given name for the followers of Christ (Isa. 62:2).
 3. Consider what God did not call them...

II. It Was An Engaged Church

- A. This congregation was aware of happenings in the world (Acts 11:27-30).
 1. They were not isolationists, monastic or snobs.
 2. They were both informed and concerned.
 3. They even knew what was happening in other congregations.
- B. This church was ready and willing to engage the needs and problems in the world and the church.
 1. Many were new converts to Christ.
 2. The “eldest” Christians were only a few years old.
 3. Many were Gentiles, now called upon to help Jews.
- C. They engaged in the work because they first determined to do it (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 12; 9:6-7)!
- D. How willing are we to meet the needs of our community?

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- III. It Was An Embracing Church
- A. They were united with one another in spite of heritage (Acts 13:1).
 - 1. Barnabas was a Jew from the tribe of Levi and the island of Cyprus (Acts 4:36).
 - 2. Simeon was called Niger – indicating that he was black-skinned.
 - 3. Lucius was from Cyrene, a country west of Egypt on the African coast.
 - 4. Manaen had been brought up (possibly as a foster brother) with Herod Antipas who ruled Galilee and Perea.
 - 5. Saul was a Jew from the city of Tarsus in Cilicia and a persecutor of the church.
 - 6. Yet, they all labored together in harmony as prophets and teachers!
 - 7. Wayne Cox wrote: *“A Cyprian Jew, a black man, a Gentile, an aristocrat, and a former rabbi – it would be hard to find a more diverse group than these! Yet, there is no prejudice among them – they are all one. How did this come about? How was it possible? And, can it be possible for the church today? It can if we know what they knew. They knew the church was a place for every race culture and color (Gal. 3:26-28). They knew that God ‘so loved the world’ (John 3:16)...”*
 - B. They were united with one another in spite of history (Acts 11:29-30).
 - C. They were united with one another in spite of honor (Acts 13:2-3).
- IV. It Was An Effective Church
- A. They were a serving congregation (Acts 13:2).
 - 1. How did they minister?
 - 2. By doing whatever God commanded and opportunity presented!
 - 3. If we want to be effective, we must be working! {Lifeboat}
 - B. They were a dedicated congregation – so much so that they fasted.
 - 1. Fasting is voluntary and optional, but a sign of dedication.
 - 2. If we want to be effective, we must be dedicated!
 - C. They were a submissive congregation (Acts 13:2b-3).
 - 1. When God commanded, they obeyed.
 - 2. If we want to be effective, we must be submissive!
- V. It Was An Evangelistic Church
- A. It began due to evangelism.
 - B. The church sent and supported Paul and Barnabas in the Spirit’s work (Acts 14:26-28; 15:35-41; 18:22; 18:23).
 - C. They did not say, “We need to keep Paul here with us!”
 - D. They saw the great need to evangelize.
 - 1. On January 16, 2008, the world’s population was 6,644,429,894!
 - 2. Every second, three babies are born and two people die.
 - 3. We may not be able to go, but we can send and support!

Conclusion:

- 1. May we learn to imitate the good qualities of these Christians.
- 2. May we strive to be a faithful and dedicated congregation of the Lord.