

Acts 11:19-30, 13:1-3

**** Opening Remarks**

- <Acts> has the perfect answer for saints looking for ways to keep the H.S. fire rekindled.
- God gave us therein the true model of “saints and churches pleasing to him” in the Antioch church, whose members were called “Christians”. Evidence abounds of the presence of God’s hand in every member, their families and the church. God put the church to great use in the work of regional and world evangelization, not because of their particular zeal but because they saw what others did not!
- May each member of this church be blessed with what the Antioch Christians enjoyed. More importantly we have to see that “God is using each one of us and our families” and to “look for evidence thereof”.

**** Scripture Reading: Acts 11:19-30, 13:1-3**

1. The Antioch church was founded by “saints who had passed the test of Pentecost”.

God’s grace filled the Antioch church <11:23> with conversion of many <11:21> who loved learning “the gospel of Christ” <11:26>. Many disciples were raised and became known as “Christians” <11:26>; empowered financially, the church was also able to help the church in Jerusalem. <11:30> They were so blessed because they had gained the ability to “discern God’s revelation, his voice, power and work”; in “meeting God” and “cultivating a good relationship with him” their faith began to grow and develop.

1) Religious believers in the temple

- They have not yet met God; neither have they established any relationship with him or known how to communicate and walk with him.
- They come to the temple for various reasons: they want to receive blessings; they fear condemnation; they desire to know God more; they want to be holy; they want to do more good deeds...
- All those who did not begin their life of faith in terms of “relationships” will necessarily end up becoming “Pharisees”, Sadducees, Herodians and Zealots”.
- They will not only fail in all their original objectives; they already live under condemnation and death and will certainly suffer serious consequences.

2) Saints who experienced Pentecost

- The most important occurrence during Pentecost (focus of last Sunday’s sermon) is not “the violent wind, the tongues of fire and speaking in other tongues”. When they were filled with the H.S., they were reminded of “the Lord’s teaching, accomplishments, prophecies and promises”, were strengthened in faith, gained the vision for the “evidence of God’s presence with them”, and were able to write out “Christ’s teachings, accomplishments, prophecies and promises” as revelations in the N.T. for later generations.

= This is how the H.S. fills saints of all ages (restoring them to God’s revelations, faith and evidence) throughout the 2000 year history. In the same way, the H.S. continues its work today through saints who have heard and believed the gospel of Christ..

←→ We cannot run after “phenomena”, neither can we remain in “the knowledge of truth without either power or

evidence”.

=> Therefore saints who have experienced Pentecost are able to meet God, cultivate good relationships with him, communicate and walk with him and serve him by God’s word and the H.S., witnesses of Christ. = This is the true meaning of <Joh 4:24>.

=> Therefore only saints who “have experienced Pentecost” are able to know “God’s personality, prompting, voice, fragrance, power and work”.

3) We need to confirm whether we are the saints who have experienced Pentecost.

- Evidence abounds. = We have listened to and heard many “words that come from the mouth of God (the gospel of Christ)” and believed in what we have “heard”.

- All we have to do is to sum up well “the gospel of Christ we have heard so far”, establish the eternal relationship “between God and me”, and build “the temple given through Christ” (Format our world view, view of history, value system, life system, view of marriage and children, view of economics, view of the church and service, etc.). When we test and approve God’s good will in everything with the new thought system and vision thus established, we’ll be able to receive the promptings of the H.S., discern “God’s work”, and become witnesses filled with “faith, power and evidence”.

- As we repeat the experience of “living by the Spirit” for some time, we’ll develop “the fixed view”, thereby receiving “empowered thoughts, empowered language and empowered living” to “drive out demons by the Spirit and enjoy the Kingdom” and help others to cast out demons, raise them from the dead and heal them....”

2. The Antioch church was made up of “saints who were able to preach the gospel”

Saints of the Antioch church preached the gospel not only to the Jews, but also to the Greeks (gentiles) <11:20>, expanded their ministries through them and added the number of the saved. <11:21> More important than preaching the gospel is the ability to perceive “the work of the H.S. on others” and know such ability is predicated upon the ability to perceive God’s work on me”.

1) “Saints having experienced Pentecost” can experience the rekindling of the Spirit’s fire within seeing through “the world’s darkness” and “the weakening of the church”.

- They can differentiate “religion and gospel” and “religious believers and Christians”.

- They have confirmed evidence within: “regardless of the kind of audience I have, as long as they are able to understand the messages and testimonies I share, they will be born again, sanctified and triumphant”.

- They are able to see through “the weaknesses of the modern day church” and are greatly burdened with messages to “preach thereto”.

- God has already prepared a group of his people at the time when a saint has gained “the secrets of Emmanuel”. Therefore that saint will certainly see “the opening of the door to preach the gospel” in his/her life and living.

2) Saints who experienced Pentecost know the kind of messages and testimonies to deliver; they also know how to build up new believers.

- They can deliver messages and testimonies capable of helping people “meet God, confirm their identity, cultivate a good relationship with God, communicate and walk with God.

- They can preach messages that are specific as to audience and locale, well-designed and practical.

3) “Saints who have experienced Pentecost” are able to discover “God’s work on other people”.

- on the 3000 Jews of Jerusalem <2:37-41>/ on the Samaritans <8:4-25>/ on the Ethiopian eunuch <8:40>/ Cornelius and his family <10:1-48> and on those receiving Peter’s report about them / on the Greeks in Antioch <11:20>

- Because of their personal experience, they are able to tell who the eight kinds of blessed people are; they can also tell the work of the H.S. and know God’s schedule.

4) The people we meet

- Despite the differences in their backgrounds and circumstances, they react the same way to the “messages of the gospel” and their lives are changed the same way after they hear and believe the gospel (they are either of this country or from Taiwan, China, Singapore, and Malaysia; they are of different nationalities).

- This is because they are all made in heaven and have one father, one lord, one spirit, one baptism and one body.

=> When I value “the work of the H.S. in my heart” and, as a result, want to learn to grasp the secrets thereof more, I’ll see doors opened for the spreading the gospel.

=> I need to confirm that not only I am “beloved” but also my co-workers and those around me are “all beloved”. I need not only to reaffirm myself as beloved but also to treasure the body of Christ and my co-workers. I need to strive to join up well with others and equip with “the secrets of the H.S.” as well as pray for the ministries God has prepared in each of our life’s network and get ready to be used by the Lord.

3. The Antioch church was made up of “saints who had the vision of world evangelization”.

A very important reason God used the Antioch church was that they had had “the vision of world evangelization” and had prayed as they were equipping themselves. The H.S. had them place their hands on “Paul and Barnabas” and send them off as missionaries to bless the entire world. The entire world and history have all been changed because of their prayer.

1) What they did is not the result of “day-dreaming” but serves as evidence of having firmly believed in “the promises God has given”.

- examples throughout the entire bible: promises received by those who have been called = Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Apostles

- promises Lord Christ gave his disciples after his work was done = <Mat 28:18-20; Mar 16:15-20; Luk 24:44-49; Act 1:8>

- promises that can be fulfilled, regardless of the circumstances = I don’t need special conditions to have God’s promises fulfilled; rather, their fulfillment is accomplished by discovering God’s good will in the conditions I have and restoring Emmanuel in those conditions.

2) This is not our “exaggeration and pride”; we are already in possession of the messages of the gospel of Christ and testimonies thereof” that can change “the whole world and the entire history”.

- Regardless of nationality, class, age, and gender, all face the same problem (fundamental problem) and all need the same answer (the secrets of Emmanuel revealed through Christ)= God lives regardless of time and place; he lives in us all. What we need is nothing but restoration to “the true God, God the Trinity”. = we all have our daily lives to live: we live with our families, at work, in the church, in the field of daily living and relationships and we need the same answer.

- The saints in Antioch are called Christians (Christ-like men, gospel men, Godly men, the Christ revealed). They do not only believe at a conceptual level “what it is about the truth of Christ”, they also are able to live out their lives “in Christ” and see that God’s grace is with them in everything and that all peoples need the blessings they enjoy.

3) It is not that they “do not know where to begin”; rather, they already have “a world-scale life’s network”.

- Antioch= capital of the ancient Syrian Empire, whose metropolitan population in the N.T. times exceeded 500,000. Its inhabitants came from all over the world (multi-ethnic); it was an international city.

- Therefore, the work of the Antioch saints’ ministry is not ethnocentric. The saints have a network that is worldwide.

- In <Act 13:1-3> Paul and Barnabas were being sent off into the life’s network of each of the saints in Antioch.

- As soon as their ministry began, those missionaries of Antioch were led into many more new networks, thereby expanding their pray network more and more.

4) The ministry of the Antioch church proceeded in a “positive cycle” of “equipping, sending off, accomplishing, reporting back and expanding”.

=> studying for a year 「 understanding the entire bible by the gospel of Christ 」 → many teachers were equipped → sending off the most capable teachers, Paul and Barnabas → continuing to pray for their ministries and seeing the flourishing of “the greater and more difficult” ministries led by God → After each mission, Paul and Barnabas reported back to the Antioch church → the saints of the church all received “the vision for missions” and “rekindled heart”, prayed together for them and participated in the missions with financial support and manpower → there was a growing number of places with intercessors, including individuals and families.

5) We need to confirm: our church is “the Antioch church of today”.

- Our church also has been given “the promises, the gospel messages and testimonies” that the Antioch church was given; we have “the world-scale life’s network” as well; each week we receive more of the “calls from Macedonia from all over the world”; we have experienced many missions God has accomplished; and we will witness the ever expanding of those missions.

=> Do not get excited and do not exaggerate but stay even calmer and humbler for “the call and vision from above” <Isa 43:1-21, 60:1-22; Act 1:8>. In our current schedule, we are all well poised to take part in the ministry of “equipping, joining up, interceding, sending off and expanding”.

=> We need a long-term plan for laying a solid foundation for “the gospel ministry” and for the training of our children and descendants.

**** Ending Remarks**

**** Prayer Topics of the Week ****

1) Am I a saint who “has experienced Pentecost”? : Am I able to recognize God’s “personality, touching, voice, fragrance, power and work”? Have I grasped the secrets of “being filled with the H.S.” and “living by the H.S.” at any time? (Ref. Outline #1(2) and (3))

2) Saints who “have experienced Pentecost” are able to discover “God’s work on other people”: Am I able to tell

who are among the “eight kinds of blessed people” and their blessed schedule? Do I have confirmed evidence that, “regardless of my audience, as long as they understand the messages and testimonies I share, they will surely experience regeneration, sanctification and triumph”? What is it that I still need to be equipped with?

3) Our church is “the Antioch church of today”: *What kind of ministry do I have in this church? Am I able to see that my ministry is essential to the entire operation of our church? To what extent am I taking part in the ministry of “equipping, joining up, interceding, sending off and expanding”? Do I need to try harder? What kind of prayers do I pray for my children, descendants and the flock under my care?*