



August 4, 2024

“What’s in a Name?”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Camp starts August 29th

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com

Like us on Facebook (aletheiachristianfellowship) Listen on PodBean (Aletheia Christian Fellowship)

Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com

For the Kids: Did you know that you teach other kids how to treat you?

ACTS 11:19–26 ~

The Hellenistic Jewish Christians scattered farther north, further from the reach of the Jews.

Phoenicia:

Cyprus:

Antioch:

A metropolis... from μήτηρ (mā-tār), and πόλις (pō-lēs).

The Jewish Christians saw in Gentiles the dividing differences and ignored the unifying similarities.

Practical application versus principles...

Pray continuously that you would be in-tune with the Holy Spirit as to how you should handle the difficulties of life. This is what the final stanza in the Lord’s Prayer is about.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Almighty God has commanded us to Agapê and remember that Agapê implies boundaries.

When you set appropriate boundaries, do it for the right reasons...

Some Hellenistic Jewish Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene were willing to share Christ with some pagans. So, God was able to love more people, in this case, Gentiles, through His willing disciples in Antioch.

The report was met with considerable angst and skepticism in Jerusalem. So, they sent Barnabas to investigate.

The “Son of Encouragement” in verse 23 began to “encourage” the new Christians.

נָבִי (nä-vē), in Hebrew means a prophet...

Greek is παρακαλέω (pä-řä-kä-lě-ō), means to encourage...

God blessed the Gentile outreach to the point that Barnabas needed help. He recruited his former classmate, Saul.

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” It was initially a disparaging insult.

ACTS 11:27–30 ~

Prophets were a very necessary component of early Christianity because there wasn't a New Testament Bible yet.

The famine started in Rome in 42 A.D.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

WELCOME CHILDREN: Did you know that you teach other kids how to treat you? Other kids test you by treating you in a certain way and they decide if that's okay or not by how you respond – by how you react to them. Did you know that?

A kid might be nice to you most of the time, but then once in a while they will do something to you that is not nice. How do you act when that happens?

Sometimes you meet a kid and he or she is just plain mean to you – what do you do about that?

How we treat others is our choice and usually if you are nice others will be nice in return, but sometimes it doesn't work that way. Sometimes a kid will not be nice in return and what I'm trying to tell you is that how you respond to them teaches them what they can get away with in the future with you.

If someone is a bully to you, letting them get away with it only teaches them that it is okay to keep being a bully to you.

You have to stand up to bullies because allowing someone to keep bullying you doesn't do any good for

you, or for other kids who might get in the bully's way, and it doesn't help the bully either.

Anytime someone treats you in a way that hurts you or makes you feel uncomfortable you need to let them know that it is not okay with you. Tell them politely if you can, report them to someone who can help otherwise – your parents, teacher, pastor, or police.

One other thing you can do is to pray for them. Pray that God would bless them and help them become the person God wants them to be.

DISMISS CHILDREN:

Acts 11:19–26, 19So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. 20But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks as well, preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. 21And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. 22The news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23Then when he arrived and

witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And considerable numbers were added to the Lord. 25And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; 26and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers of people; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Luke starts with “So then,” meaning that what he’s about to write comes because the Christian church, which was still a nearly all Jewish club headquartered in Jerusalem, had just marveled that Gentiles could be saved. We’re moving on to the next development in that same direction.

He described the scattering of the Hellenistic Christians as due to the murder of Stephen rather than as the persecution led by Saul, because Saul was, by this point, a Christian living back in his hometown of Tarsus.

The conversion of the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his household took place in the mid to late 30’s A.D.

We are now in the late 30's to early 40's A.D.
Christianity has been growing for about a decade.

The Hellenistic Jewish Christians, those born outside of what is modern-day Israel, were not only more targeted for persecution in the early days, they were also far more comfortable moving around the Roman Empire. It made sense for them to scatter. While many of them initially fled to Samaria, over time they continued north further from the reach of the Jews.

Phoenicia was a powerful seafaring nation made up of a loose confederation of independent city states including Tyre and Sidon, as well as Beirut. They were absorbed into the Assyrian Empire about the same time as the Northern Kingdom of Israel. After that they were conquered by the Greeks and then by the Romans in 63 B.C. At the time that we were looking at the Phoenician cities had some autonomy under the overall control of the Roman Governor of Syria, who was based in Antioch.

Farther north was the island of Cyprus with Barnabas' hometown, the capital city Salamis. Then beyond that was what at the time was the third largest and third most important city in the Roman Empire after Rome

and Alexandria, Egypt. Antioch on the Orontes, then the capital city of the Roman province of Syria, had been the capital city of the Seleucid Empire. It was a massive city designated as a metropolis. Meaning “mother city,” from Greek μήτηρ (mā-tār), mother and πόλις (pō-lēs), city.

Notice, that in keeping with what we’ve been talking about over the last couple of weeks, it not only didn’t occur to the Jewish Christians to preach to pagan Gentiles, they were intentionally opposed to sharing eternal Life in Christ with people they deemed unworthy.

I said that oftentimes we modern Christians act the same. We think of those who are who are different than us as the enemy, just as the Jewish Christians 2,000 years ago did. They saw in Gentiles the dividing differences and ignored the unifying similarities.

Gentiles were different than them, they didn’t worship the same God, they had shocking moral values, they had bizarre political leanings and they had strange attitudes and behaviors. Focusing on the differences the Jewish Christians saw the Gentile people as the

unsavable enemy. Perhaps a bit like Jonah they saw their possible salvation as an insult.

All I was trying to say before is that we shouldn't make the same mistake. We have the New Testament and 2,000 years of Christian history to guide us - they didn't. I fully understand that we all want some practical application, stories, examples, and steps to take to bridge the gap between principles and practice, between theory and activity.

The problem with that is I could talk for 20 sermons and never give you the correct application, story, example, or steps that would fit the particular situation that you end up actually facing.

My dear friends... It's all about principles, but to make them work, you need to work them out. Pray without ceasing that you would be in-tune with and led by the Holy Spirit within you as to how you should handle the trials and tribulations of life. This is precisely what the final stanza in the Lord's Prayer is all about.

Father God as you lead me through life I know and understand that there will be all manner of obstacles, distractions, and ordeals. Please do not allow these

things be temptations of my human weakness whereby I will surely fail, but instead, let them all be tests of your character within me whereby we will always overcome, and my faith will be strengthened, and in that way, I will be delivered away from all evil, both spiritual and physical, both external and internal.

If you want to know what to do stop clouding your mind with the distractions of this world and instead fill your mind with the things of God. Be a Christian in all that you do and do not waver or apologize for the Truth... Just make sure that you know the difference between Truth and human opinion, and then apply Truth with ἀγάπη, μακροθυμία, χρηστότης, πραΰτης, καὶ ἐγκράτεια. That's Godly love, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

That's really it and the way it plays out will vary depending upon the distinct circumstances of every new situation. Never forget that Almighty God has commanded us to Agapê but also realize that Agapê implies boundaries.

It is impossible to love someone and at the same time allow them to hurt themselves so parameters, boundaries, limits, whatever you want to call them must

be established and the clearer those lines are the better you can Agapê.

Examples do a disservice to the principle because they tend to restrict your imagination for all the other possible applications, but I'll give you one anyway... Let your spouse walk on you and you have just allowed them to get away with bullying. Do that more than once and you have allowed their sinful bullying of you to become an acceptable tool used to control you.

You say, "well, as a Christian, I'm trying to be the bigger person." In such a case, you have mistaken agreeableness with Godliness and passivity with love. If you actually love your spouse, you will set a boundary where they know that bullying you to control you is unacceptable and sinful behavior.

Now, if you do set appropriate boundaries, do it for the right reasons – do it for God-honoring Agapê, not for yourself. There is a supernatural, spiritual element to motive. You can do the exact same thing and have monumentally different outcomes based solely on the motive behind your actions.

Again, I can give examples, but the goal is for you to grasp the concepts and come up with your own examples and then, through the more than ample power and encouragement of the Holy Spirit, put those examples into practice in your life.

Principles allow for every contingency where rules, regulations, and laws never do. Learn to take the principles that God teaches in and through His Holy Word and develop your plan of action appropriate to the situation.

Another thing that bears some explanation is the seemingly negative, discouraging, or even scolding nature of the sermons. I would remind you that my mandate from Almighty God, both personally, as well as Biblically, is to push you. Sermons are designed to move you closer to the Biblical Jesus and I get 30-40 minutes 3 or 4 times a month to do that. I will always push you for your benefit through encouragement that will come in the form of appeal, exhortation, pleading, applauding, comforting, and yes, through chastisement, as I am led by the Holy Spirit.

At times, probably everyone has felt like it's all chastisement and no encouragement. The simple truth

is that whether it is one or the other, has far more to do with you than it does with what I say. The fact is that every chastisement is an encouragement to allow God to have His way with you more. How you take it is up to you.

The person taking offense where none was intended was looking for an offense. In that vein, this is the third sermon that I wrote for today. I threw the other two away because I got lost in the weeds explaining all of these concepts further trying to make them clearer... It's just not possible with our limited time together. Our Sunday school class can help, and I've never refused to meet with anyone in this church, but beyond that you must take the principles and work out the ramifications for yourselves.

Some Hellenistic Jewish Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene were more positively disposed to Gentiles and shared Christ with them. It's kind of fascinating and I would love a little more explanation as to why they were more open to the enemy.

Luke uses the term Greeks instead of Gentiles here and that means something even though the two terms

were basically interchangeable. Both Cyprus and Cyrene were known as famous Greek centers.

Was their willingness to share Christ because of their upbringing in close association with Greek people and culture? Was it simply a matter of circumstances in Antioch, like their neighbors or their landlords were Greeks? Was it because they were more in-tune with and better led by the Holy Spirit? Whatever the reason, they preached the Gospel to Greeks who were a subset of Gentiles and often thought of as the same by Jews.

So, God was able to love more people, through His willing disciples in Antioch. In this case, Greeks, probably non-specific Gentiles, but stressing their pagan beliefs in the Grecco-Roman pantheon of gods, goddesses, and other mystical beings.

Word of this incredible development quickly reached church headquarters in Jerusalem.

Even though a Gentile convert to Judaism and a household of Gentiles who honored the One True God had been Saved there was no push to preach to more Gentiles, let alone pagan Gentiles who worshipped a

pantheon of false gods. A few enlightened Gentiles were sort of okay, but we can't let in more. What would the neighbors say? What is it going to do to property values and crime? If God insists on a few outliers, a couple of token Gentiles, okay, but let's not get crazy!

You should imagine that the report from Antioch was met with considerable angst and skepticism in Jerusalem. What to do? Well, let's send Peter and John to them like we did when the Samaritans received the Lord. Well, how would two Galilean Apostles do in the massive capital city of the vast Syrian province fare?

Wait a moment, what about the church stalwart Barnabas? He's from the capital city of Cyprus, he's a Gamaliel trained Pharisee from the tribe of Levi and an original Jerusalem Christian who has been incredibly generous in his giving and faithful in his support. He is fluent in Greek and comfortable in large Hellenistic cities – let's send him.

At this point Barnabas was ordained by the original Apostles as an Apostle and sent out, which is what the title means, as not just their representative, but as the direct representative of the Risen Jesus.

You may remember that Barnabas was a name the Apostles gave him. His name was Joseph, his nickname Barnabas means the “Son of Encouragement.”

It is a little play on words in verse 23 where the “Son of Encouragement,” began to “encourage” the new Christians who were formerly pagans.

As a sidenote, the word encouragement, like so many words in modern English doesn't exactly mean to us what we meant to them. The idea is to give another person courage. Courage isn't bestowed simply by cheering a person on. It has to do with exhorting them, teaching them, correcting them, consoling them, chastising them and above all by telling them the Truth.

Telling someone that they can do something that they can't isn't encouragement, it is sabotage. The Aramaic word in Barnabas' nickname is basically the same as נְבִיא (nä-vē), in Hebrew... נְבִיא means a prophet. A prophet was considered an encourager of the people because he told them the Truth from God. Sometimes that Truth was the last thing anyone wanted to hear,

but hearing it was the best possible thing to encourage them to do right.

The word in Greek is παρακαλέω (pä-řä-kä-lě-ō), nearly always translated as encourage, it literally means to call someone alongside of you and means to aid, help, comfort, encourage, exhort, beseech, entreat, admonish, console, appeal, and to speak the Truth. No wonder that Jesus is called the παράκλητος (pä-řä-klā-tōs), and the Holy Spirit is called the other παράκλητος the One's Who παρακαλέω you and me.

The Paraclete and the other Paraclete minister through me as your paraclete in this setting and they want to minister through you as a paraclete to the lost as well as to the Body. Will you allow that?

Of course, Barnabas, a man with the things of God foremost in his mind, rejoiced and praised God for the Saved Gentiles and he immediately began encouraging them by all means at his disposal so that they would do what? What was Barnabas' goal in encouraging them?

So that each one of them would remain true to the Lord Jesus Christ with a resolute, firm, determined, and unwavering heart. That is exactly my purpose here.

Luke reminds us about how devoted Barnabas was and how filled with and motivated by the Holy Spirit He was as a way to confirm that his actions in dealing with these new Gentile converts was God's plan, purpose, and desire, not merely Barnabas' reaction.

Because of this new openness to Gentiles the evangelistic outreach in Antioch bloomed to the point that Barnabas needed help. He went to find his former classmate Saul.

We left Saul in Tarsus and that's where Barnabas found him and recruited him for the preaching and teaching mission in Antioch. They were hard at work in that way for a year and the Christian community there exploded with new converts.

Up until then, Christianity was largely seen as a movement within Judaism. It was a new and growing Jewish denomination if you will, but now that Gentiles were outnumbering Jews in the church at Antioch a

new name for these Believers emerged... “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

It was initially a disparaging insult used by pagans and then by Jews to diminish and demean the disciples. The title is derived from Latin, not Greek, and it means a supporter of Christ.

How’s that a bad thing? Back then it was identical to identifying a person’s beliefs with a political figure and then bashing that figure and so bashing that person.

There’s a similar phenomenon today... The people opposed to Trump coined the phrase “Never Trumpers” and so extended the title Trumper to anyone who was more conservative than them. The Left picked up on it and called all conservatives Trumpers in order to paint all conservatives as being identical to Trump. If you like that designation, it’s because you are proud to be associated with Trump.

It was similar for the early Believers. Their enemies derided the idea that Christ had come and especially that a criminal executed in disgrace could be that Christ so they painted the disciples as the same as the dishonored Christ that they followed. Well, the

Believers were proud to be associated with Jesus and so they embraced the title.

The designator Christian has always meant that you personally identify with Jesus the Christ. Do you, publicly and unashamedly identify with Christ?

Acts 11:27–30, 27Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28One of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that there would definitely be a severe famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. 29And to the extent that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30And they did this, sending it with Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

Prophets were a very necessary component of early Christianity because there was no New Testament Bible yet. Another thing to note is just like the terms Apostle, Deacon, Elder, and others, there are nuances of meaning for the title prophet.

In the loosest sense I am currently operating as a prophet, but that is not even close to what Elijah was doing on Mount Carmel.

The last thing I'll say is that prophets in Christianity have always been subject to church leadership. Here the Jerusalem church sent the prophets to Antioch. Personally, I have not met a self-described prophet who was subject to anyone.

The Holy Spirit through Agabus predicted a severe famine which did occur in the reign of Claudius. The famine started in Rome in 42 A.D. and continued to wreak havoc in the empire until 47 A.D. The prophecy would have likely come before 42 A.D., but that doesn't tell us when Barnabas and Saul took the collection from Antioch and the surrounding area down to the Jerusalem church.

Part of the problem with a famine beginning in Rome is the government would start buying up all the resources directing everything to Rome and making the famine worse elsewhere. Since the Christians in Antioch sent money – they would have had to do that early enough for the people in Jerusalem to have something to buy. We can conclude that sometime in the early to mid-forties A.D. the two Antioch preaching teachers set out for Jerusalem.

Note that Paul is still called Saul and that Barnabas still has first billing. More importantly, notice how willing the Gentile and Jewish Christians in and around Antioch were in coming to the aid of their fellow Christians in need.

That is a Christian legacy that is still very much in effect. Even five years ago, America was the most charitable country in the world. Our generosity was driven by our underlying gratitude based upon our national Judeo-Christian ethic.

As America has become more secular our giving has gone down. We are still number three in the world, but we have been overtaken as number one by Indonesia where nearly 90% of the people are Muslim.

Love one another and I think that at least as far as our financial generosity we do. Let us continue to be generous, not just with our money, but with our time and our patience as well.

Let us honor Jesus by proudly claiming the title of Christian.