

Sharing and Caring

Peter's Testimony and a Fruitful Church **The Empowered Church Series - Part 21**

Acts 11:1-30
7/8/23-7/9/23

Introduction

- **Apprenticeship Model** - Most concepts in sharing Christianity with others are based on an apprenticeship model. This means that the proper way to express Christianity is both in words AND in action. It's founded on vocalizing/teaching and expression/illustration. In other words it's very difficult for people to understand the heart and essence of Christianity if we only use our words, or only use our actions. It is in the combination of the two that it's more fully shown.
- **Human Groupings** - Human beings tend to fall into groupings of similarities, but between groups there is a lot of difference. For example, if we were going to study **personalities** we would see that a lot of us are people-people, and a lot of us are not. We would see that many of us are **planners** but some of us are absolutely not. There are some groups of us that are **intellectual** and groups of us that are feelers and emotive. I'm sure that most of us have heard of the **5 Love Languages** that says that there are groupings of people who receive and give love in certain ways and they struggle to receive or give love in others. The key is trying to love someone in a way that they can understand and receive.
- **Learning Styles** - The same premise exists in how we process and receive information. Not everyone comprehends things the same. Some of us learn best by **hearing**. Some of us learn best by **experiencing**. Some of us learn best **visually** and some **tactile**. Notice how we try to hit a variety of styles here **at Bridgeway**. There is the emotional-musical-immersive and experiential part of worship. There is informational and intellectual transfer or knowledge along with inspiration in the message. Many times there is interactive prayer times at the end. Many times we have painting worship leaders up here to give the visual and artistic folks something to engage with. We adjust the lighting for the atmospheric people. There's fellowship in greeting. **The whole point is to provide the best opportunity for people to CONNECT with God.**
- **Necessary Elements** - But some things are BEST demonstrated through certain methods. For example, storytelling is best done theatrically. Academic fact instruction is best done in verbal transference. Emotional understanding is best experienced. You get the point. So, when it comes to sharing Christianity with the people around us, there's a way to do it well and a way not to...

We are called to SHOW and TELL.

- **Recap & Context**

- **The Last Time** - the last time we were together (a month ago), Peter, one of the big dogs of the early Christian Church, had a vision where God announced to him that He was bringing in Non-Jews, or Gentiles, into the family of God. This was shocking and was about to turn the whole religious world upside down. Peter then witnessed the Gentiles have their own personal Pentecost where the Holy Spirit come upon them with power, signs, and wonders.
- **Now** - he's come back to his homebase with the other big dog apostles in Jerusalem and is going to give this report to his fellow leaders who he knows are going to be not only skeptical but likely resistant because of the extreme nature of the news.

Lesson

- **Ministry Heat**

- **Peter Receives Criticism for Ministry to Gentiles**

- **Acts 11:1-3** - *"Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."*
 - **Word gets out** - everyone heard what happened with Peter and the Gentiles.
 - **Recapping the Jew/Gentile conflict** - I have talked extensively on this in prior messages, so I'll say this quickly. For a lot of reasons, good and bad, the Jews and Gentiles didn't get along. There were all sorts of ritual cleanliness issues that kept them apart for thousands of years.
 - **Resistance to godly ministry** - the circumcision party went after Peter for sharing the gospel and ministering with 'unclean people.'
 - **Who is the circumcision party?**¹ - sounds like the most uncomfortable and awkward party on the planet. Who are these guys? They are the traditional Jews who struggled to leave the old covenant behind when they received Jesus. They wanted to do the old AND the new. They believed that in order to get to God you STILL had to become Jewish and THEN you could get the good stuff that Jesus brought. They are religious combo people. They caused a lot of problems not just for Peter but for Paul as well.

¹ "Here it refers more particularly to those Jewish believers who were specially zealous for the law and insisted that there should be no social intercourse between circumcised and uncircumcised." NICNT, F.F. Bruce

- **Criticisms: Where is our focus?** - where was their focus, on salvation or problems? [complete] Talk about the weird things that people do when they criticize ministry.
- **The danger of going off old information** - there is such a danger of going off old information from God. He is still speaking. Although He will never contradict what He said prior in Scripture and that's our anchor and firm foundation, the Holy Spirit is on the move and doing new, fresh things. Our job is to continue listening to the Lord and not just live off tradition. Also **it's important to realize that God may be doing a new work in others that you aren't a part of.**
- **The rumblings of persecution**² - although here we have a smaller, more connected community (Circumcision party) giving Peter heat, it's not long after this and the Roman Empire starts to have misgivings about this new Christian upstart again and begins more intense persecution, which we will see soon.
- **Holy Animals Batman**
 - **Peter Recaps His Heavenly Vision**
 - **Acts 11:4-10** - *"But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven."*
 - **Peter explained it**³ - Instead of simply being frustrated that they would react this way, he understood. **He was just like them at the beginning.** If he hadn't had the experience that he had, he would have been resistant too (not as much as the circumcision party but still resistant). He didn't

² "...if the news got around that the leader of the apostles himself had begun to fraternize with Gentiles, that goodwill would soon be dissipated. And in fact it may well have turned out so. It was not long after this that Herod Agrippa I, appointed ruler of Judaea by the Emperor Claudius in A.D. 41, executed James the son of Zebedee and then, in view of the approval with which this action met, arrested Peter in his turn (12:1-3). About the same time, too, James the brother of Jesus emerges as acknowledged leader of the Jerusalem church, rather than any one of the twelve apostles (cf. 12:17; 15:13)." NICNT (New International Commentary on the New Testament), by F.F. Bruce.

³ "Although it abridges the fuller account in chapter 10, yet it introduces one or two details which are absent there. In verses 5 and 6 there is a vividness in Peter's description of the great sheet which contrasts with the comparative colorlessness of the third-person account in 10:11-12. Whereas three categories of animal are distinguished in 10:12, 11:6 distinguishes four, adding wild beasts to the domestic quadrupeds, as in the creation narrative of Genesis. The wording of Peter's refusal in verse 8 is closer even than that of 10:14 to Ezekiel's protest when he was directed to eat "unclean" food: "abominable flesh has never entered into my mouth" (Ezek. 4:14)." NICNT

just storm off and say, 'you don't get it.' He explained it as best as he could and let the Lord deal with the outcome.

- **The gist of the vision⁴** - unclean animals and a voice telling Peter to violate kosher laws. Peter admits his resistance. He also cites the voice from God challenging him and the new information.

- **Where No Man Has Gone Before**

- **Peter Explains the Mission from God**

- **Acts 11:11-14** - *"And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'*

- **More of the story** - Peter then explains how God used that vision to prep him for the action step next. Gentiles showed up at the house asking for him to come minister to them.
- **The Holy Spirit told me** - this is so powerful. How was it conveyed? **Regardless could the Holy Spirit get us to do something out of our comfort zone?**
- **Backup Messianic Jews** - Peter points out that other Jewish believers were there too. It wasn't just him. Witnesses are important when you are trying to convince people that something incredible happened and they aren't going to believe you.
- **An accompanying angelic visitation and vision** - Peter points out that he wasn't the only one who had a visitation and vision, Cornelius did too which meant that God was orchestrating the situation. **It was a divine appointment that Peter could not ignore.**
- **God set up an opportunity** - Peter is blatant about his view that God set him up to preach to these Gentiles. There was nothing he could do.

- **Seismic Shift**

- **The Church Weighs the Matter**

- **Acts 11:15-18** - *"As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If*

⁴ We covered this extensively in a prior message.

then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

- **It wasn't my doing** - Peter points out that he was simply preaching the gospel when things got weird. He didn't instigate it. It was ALL GOD.
 - **Just like us** - Peter connects the dots of the Jewish Pentecost and now the Gentile Pentecost.
 - **Confirmation** - Peter links it to Scripture and the Lord Jesus by citing that it was the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised, that occurred that day. It was not random, it was specific.
 - **What was I to do?** - again Peter pushes the responsibility onto God so that they would know that they are not assessing the work of a man (peter) but the work of God, so they need to take it more seriously.
 - **Stunned into silence** - they had to take a minute to get their mind wrapped around this.
 - **Glorified God** - they kept their focus on God and what happened to bring glory to His name. They were able to celebrate the win for the Kingdom even though it meant discomfort for them.⁵
 - It's hard to praise when you are still being critical.⁶
 - **It's a new day for the Church** - they conclude that, 'well, I guess the Gentiles are family now.' That is so shocking in its context and causes so much dramatic shift. But what God said goes. Period. The Church has never been the same.
 - **The power of testimony** - There is power in sharing our testimonies so that those without our experience can hear what God is doing. Peter told his experience. God can't do the same thing to everyone. Our stories have to motivate others. If we don't share, they don't hear.
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- **Church Growth**
 - **The Church Begins to Geographically Expand**
 - **Acts 11:19-21** - *"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus*

⁵ "It may be surmised that the endorsement of Peter's action was more wholehearted on the part of his fellow-apostles than on the part of the zealous rank and file of the Jerusalem church. This may have been one reason for the speed with which James the Just was henceforth acknowledged as the undisputed leader of the mother-church: James at least enjoyed a public reputation which was unspotted by any suspicion of fraternizing with Gentiles." NICNT

⁶ "Their objections ceased; their praise began." NICNT

and Antioch,⁷ speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also,⁸ preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.”

- **Meanwhile in the big picture** - Luke, the author of this book, takes a step back to explain what God was doing was far bigger than simply Peter and the Church in Jerusalem. **The Holy Spirit was going worldwide and calling His leaders to follow His lead.**
 - **The persecution of Stephen incident** - **do a brief recap of this.**
 - **The Jewish-focused ministry** - some only ministered to Jews at the time even though they were in Gentile areas (Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch). That’s not bad, Jews needed reaching too. Those leaders had a different assignment.
 - **The Hellenist-focused ministry** - some were called and directed to minister to the Hellenists in Antioch too (disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene).
 - **More Jesus revolution** - again we see that beautiful anointing phrase, ‘the hand of the Lord was with them,’ and we see the result, ‘a great number who believed turned to the Lord.’ **This is revival. This is the hard work of ministry matched with the anointing hand of the Holy Spirit.** This is what we seek today at Bridgeway.
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- **A New Rebel Base**
 - **The Church Supports the Move of God**
 - **Acts 11:22-26** - *“The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to*

⁷ “some of them made their way north along the Phoenician seaboard, from which some took ship for Cyprus, while others continued farther north until they reached Antioch on the Orontes. Antioch on the Orontes (modern Antakya in the Hatay province of Turkey), situated some eighteen miles upstream, was founded in 300 B.C. by Seleucus Nicator, first ruler of the Seleucid dynasty, and was named by him after his father Antiochus. He had already given his own name to Seleucia Pieria at the mouth of the Orontes, the port of Antioch (cf. 13:4). As the capital of the Seleucid monarchy Antioch rapidly became a city of great importance. When Pompey reorganized Western Asia in 64 B.C. he made Antioch a free city; it became the seat of administration of the Roman province of Syria. It was at this time the third largest city in the Graeco-Roman world (surpassed in population only by Rome and Alexandria). It was planned from the first on the Hippodamian grid pattern; it was enlarged and adorned by Augustus and Tiberius, while Herod the Great provided colonnades on either side of its main street and paved the street itself with polished stone. The produce of Syria and lands farther east passed through it on its way to the west; it was a commercial center as well as a political capital. Because of its situation between the urbanized Mediterranean world and the eastern desert, it was even more cosmopolitan than most Hellenistic cities. Here Christianity first displayed its cosmopolitan character.” NICNT

⁸ “Thus far, the Hellenistic disciples who had fled from the persecution in Jerusalem had confined their evangelizing activity to the Jewish communities of the various places to which they came. The members of those communities were predominantly Hellenists like themselves. The idea that the gospel could have any relevance for non-Jews was not one that would naturally occur to them. But in Antioch some daring spirits among them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene,²² took a momentous step forward. If the gospel was so good for Jews, might it not be good for Gentiles also? At any rate, they would make the experiment. So they began to make known to the Greek population of Antioch the claims of Jesus as Lord and Savior.” NICNT

the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for⁹ Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called¹⁰ Christians.”

- **Checkup time¹¹** - When the leaders in Jerusalem started hearing about this Gentile revival happening they sent one of their best to check it out: Barnabas.
- **Barnabas¹²** - an incredible man of the Lord. Luke describes him as: a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith. Everyone loved this guy.
 - **He saw joy** - notice his focus. He's excited about the new movement of God.
 - **He exhorted them to be focused and committed to the Lord** - he is not just about positive thinking and being the easy to hear hero. He had a message that came with challenge.
- **Significant shift to Antioch¹³** - although it doesn't look like it right now, history shows that this was a massive shift. **It moved the headquarters of**

⁹ “The verb ἀναζητέω, over and above its general meaning, “is specially used of searching for human beings, with an implication of difficulty, as in the NT passages” (J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Edinburgh, 1930], p. 32). Cf. Luke 2:44. For the likelihood that Paul was disinherited cf. his statement in Phil. 3:8 that for Christ’s sake he had “suffered the loss of all things.” During those years in Syria and Cilicia (cf. Gal. 1:21) he probably endured some of the sufferings listed in 2 Cor. 11:23–27 and underwent the mysterious experience described in 2 Cor. 12:2–9. Moreover, it may be inferred from a number of allusions in his letters that Paul had begun Gentile evangelization on his own initiative before Barnabas brought him to Antioch (cf. Gal. 1:23). His commission to proclaim the Son of God *among the Gentiles* was evidently received on the Damascus road (Gal. 1:16), and his references in Gal. 2:2, 7 to his evangelization of Gentiles probably point back to a time earlier than his association with Barnabas in the work at Antioch. See also 22:21 (pp. 418–19). Barnabas indeed may have known something of Paul’s evangelistic activity in Cilicia and was moved on that account to bring him to Antioch. The present narrative strengthens the impression received from 9:27 that Barnabas had some knowledge of him even before his Damascus-road conversion.” NICNT

¹⁰ “The verb translated “came to be known as” is χρηματίζω, literally meaning “to transact business.” To transact business under a particular name is in effect to be publicly known by that name. E. J. Bickerman, “The Name of Christians,” HTR 42 (1949), pp. 71–124, argues that χρηματίζω must mean “assume the name,” “style oneself,” and that it was therefore the disciples themselves who first adopted the designation “Christians,” meaning thereby “servants of Christ,” *ministri regis* (cf. οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 1 Cor. 15:23), just as the *Caesariani* were the emperor’s servants (οἱ τοῦ Καίσαρος). This intransitive χρηματίζω must be distinguished from χρηματίζω meaning “give an oracular response” (used in the passive in 10:22). Cf. MHT II, p. 265. The term Χριστιανός is a Latin formation (with suffix -ianός from -ianus). In the NT it is used only by non-Christians (*pace* Bickerman)—in 26:28 on the lips of the younger Agrippa, and in 1 Pet. 4:16 in the language of the indictment when one is made to suffer “as a Christian.” The earliest occurrences of the term in non-Christian literature are in Josephus *Ant.* 18.64 (where “the tribe of Christians” is said to be called after “the so-called Christ”); Pliny, *Epistles* 10.96–97 (correspondence with Trajan about Christians in Bithynia); Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.3–4 (where Nero’s scapegoats for the fire of A.D. 64 are those “people loathed for their vices, who were commonly styled Christians—a name derived from Christ, who was executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor”); and Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2 (“punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition”).” NICNT

¹¹ “They considered themselves responsible for the direction of the movement in all its extensions. Therefore, as Peter and John had earlier gone to Samaria to investigate Philip’s missionary service there, so now Jerusalem sent a delegate to Antioch to look into the strange events that were being enacted in that city. It was a critical moment: much—far more than they could have realized—depended on their choice of a delegate.” NICNT

¹² “In the providence of God, they chose the best man for this delicate and important work—Barnabas, the “son of encouragement” (4:36). Barnabas himself was a Cypriot Jew by birth, like some of those who had begun to preach the gospel to the Antiochene Gentiles, and his sympathies would in any case be wider than those of such Jerusalem believers as had never set foot outside Judaea. It may indeed be that he took the initiative in offering his services for this mission, and his offer was eagerly accepted.” NICNT

¹³ “Jewish colonization in Antioch began practically from the city’s foundation. By the beginning of the Christian era, proselytes to Judaism are said to have been specially numerous in Antioch; we have already met Nicolaus, a proselyte from Antioch, as a leader among the Hellenists in the

the early Christian Church out of Jerusalem where it started and more into an international spot in Antioch.¹⁴ It will thrive there. Notice that it says, 'a great many people were added to the Lord.' That's a big deal.

- **Barnabas gets Saul from Tarsus¹⁵** - Barnabas knew that if there was one leader who would be fired up to take on this new movement with him, it would be his buddy Saul/Paul, so he goes back to Saul's hometown and convinces him to come join the church plant and movement.
- **A new yearlong ministry** - together like an incredible duo, Paul and Barnabas led and taught the fledgling Gentile Christian church in Antioch and got it up and running and equipped. They were teachers primarily, sharing the Truths of God.
- **First called Christians at Antioch¹⁶** - the name that we all take for granted and assume was first coined here. Tradition says that it was initially an insult that people would say about believers, that they were little copycats of Jesus Christ. The believers chose to harness that and turn it around for good and embraced the name as an honor to be named a 'little Christ.'

- **Fused by Tragedy**

- **Need Bonds the Ethnically Diverse Church**

- **Acts 11:27-30** - *"Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world¹⁷ (this took place in the days of Claudius). ²⁹ So the disciples determined, every one according*

primitive Jerusalem church (6:5). Many other nationalities were represented among its residents: it is Antioch that the Roman satirist Juvenal has in mind when he complains that "the sewage of the Syrian Orontes has for long been discharging itself into the Tiber." The city's reputation for moral laxity was enhanced by the cult of Artemis and Apollo at Daphne, five miles distant, where the ancient Syrian worship of Astarte and her consort, with its ritual prostitution, was carried on under Greek nomenclature.¹⁹ But a new chapter in the history of Antioch was about to be written, for it was to be the metropolis of Gentile Christianity." NICNT

¹⁴ "Antioch was a cosmopolitan city, where Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian rubbed shoulders, where Mediterranean civilization met the Syrian desert; racial and religious differences which loomed so large in Judaea seemed much less important here. The church of Antioch from the outset had an *ethos* quite distinct from that of the Jerusalem church." NICNT

¹⁵ "Several years had gone by since Saul of Tarsus had been escorted to Caesarea by his new friends in Jerusalem and put on board a ship bound for his native city. Barnabas could think of no one more eminently suited for the responsibility of sharing his ministry in Antioch. He therefore went to Tarsus in person to seek him out—a task of some difficulty, perhaps, since Saul appears to have been disinherited for his joining the followers of Jesus and could no longer be found at his ancestral home. Barnabas found him, however, and took him to Antioch." NICNT

¹⁶ "Christ—*Christos*, the Greek form of the title Messiah ("the anointed one")—might be the name of an office to Greek-speaking Jews, but to the pagans of Antioch it was simply the name of a man of whom these people were always talking: a curious name, to be sure, unless it was the same as *Chrēstos* ("serviceable"), a name attested for slaves and free persons alike. "Who are these people?" one Antiochene would ask another, as two or three unofficial missionaries gathered a knot of more or less interested hearers and disputants around them in one of the city colonnades. "Oh, these are the people who are always talking about *Christos*, the Christ-people, the Christians." Just as, in Palestine, the adherents of the Herod dynasty were called Herodians, so, says Luke, in Antioch the adherents of Jesus the Christ first came to be popularly known as Christians." NICNT

¹⁷ "throughout the whole Roman world." NICNT

to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰ And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul."

- **These days** - there is no clear indication of when this happened and how long after the last story. It seems that after a year of them ministering in Antioch, this happened.
- **Prophets from the Jerusalem church** - we are going to see one particular prophet step up and deliver the message but notice that there were prophets, plural, in Jerusalem. That was **their title, their role, their assignment**.
- **Agabus** - he is the prophet who delivered the message. Do we know anything about this guy? **[complete]**
- **What prophecy is¹⁸** - there is a beautiful description here: **"foretold by the Holy Spirit..."** Although prophecy can be God giving a message about now or the past, this particular prophecy was the foretelling kind. It was calling out what was GOING to happen. That's wild. Does this still happen? Yes, but more rarely, unfortunately.
 - **Power of Prophecy** - **[complete]** looking at both polar opposites. Being over sensitive and under sensitive. How it works today. The church heard the news and matched it with relational maturity and spiritual maturity.
 - **The content of the prophecy** - there was **a famine coming** that was going to really hit Jerusalem but would have ramifications in other locations as well.
 - **How did they know it would hit Jerusalem specifically?¹⁹** - if it's a Rome-wide famine, why assume Jerusalem and not Antioch? I think there's two pieces: 1.) The Holy Spirit likely gave more details to Agabus that aren't recorded. 2.) The Jerusalem church may have been known to be financially weak and unstable.
 - **How the Bible uses the term 'worldwide'** - sometimes it means their worldwide (the extent of the region they know), not worldwide as we think of it (globally). **Give examples.**

¹⁸ "The gift of prophecy in the apostolic church was like the gift of tongues in that it was exercised under the inspiration of God; it differed from it in that it was expressed in the speaker's ordinary language. The place for this spiritual gift in the church is recognized in the Pauline letters: Paul regarded it as of high value and ranked the prophet next after the apostle. Here and there the narrative of Acts illustrates how it was exercised." NICNT

¹⁹ "How the Christians of Antioch inferred from the general terms of Agabus's prophecy that Judaea would be specially hard hit by the predicted famine Luke does not say. We know that Judaea did in fact suffer severely from a famine at some point between A.D. 45 and 48. At that time Helena, queen-mother of Adiabene, a Jewish proselyte, bought grain in Egypt and figs in Cyprus and had them taken to Jerusalem for distribution, while her son King Izates sent a large sum of money to the authorities in Jerusalem to be used for famine relief. The church of Antioch similarly organized a relief fund for the mother-church." NICNT

- **Did it happen? When?** – yes, it really happened.²⁰ By the time Luke wrote this it had already happened, so he was recapping the scenario. It was added that it happened during the reign of **Claudius who ruled during** (A.D. 41-54) – a 13-year reign is a small slice of history that we can dial in. It's **roughly 9 years after Jesus died that he came to the throne**, which means we are only 10 years into Christianity so far. **It's all very new.**
- **Response to the need** - Notice that the point that God revealed the prophecy was that they would do something about it. It could have been a call to pray for the Jerusalem church, or a call to tangibly act and support. **They determined as a group of leaders that they were being led to give financially.**
 - **Everyone able and according** – Notice the parameters of the freewill, non-coerced, non-mandatory, giving to a need here. God was looking for those who He could give THROUGH. Therefore those who were ABLE and those who gave ACCORDINGLY, collected a gift for the Jerusalem church (the 'brothers in Judea').
 - **They didn't just pray.** They did something. They enthusiastically gave.
 - **Everyone using their gifts/talents/resources** – teachers, leaders, givers, prophets.
 - **Barnabas & Saul deliver it** - The two big dog missionaries delivered it likely because they were the Jewish big dog representatives that not only knew the Jerusalem church leaders well but could explain what it was all about well and be respected.
 - **The bigger impact** - in my opinion this is all a **God setup. He knew that as the Gentile revolution grew there was going to be a tendency of jealousy and separation.** God used a famine as a need to stimulate one church giving to another to keep them one. The Jews wouldn't be as jealous in Jerusalem if they knew that God was using the Gentile to support them as brothers. They would remain connected and healthy and **not let it splinter into two separate churches. It would be tempting for the new Gentile Church that was growing in size, power, influence, and money to**

²⁰ "Such famine conditions, says Luke, were actually experienced in the principate of Claudius (A.D. 41–54). We know from other sources that Claudius's principate was marked by a succession of bad harvests and consequent scarcity in various parts of the empire—in Rome, Greece, and Egypt as well as in Judaea... Famine conditions are attested for Rome, at the beginning of Claudius's rule (Dio Cassius, *History* 60.11), for Egypt, in his fifth year (P. Mich. 123, 127), for Greece, in his eighth or ninth year (Eusebius, *Chronicle*, Year of Abraham 2065), and again in Rome, between his ninth and eleventh years (Tacitus *Annals* 12.43; Orosius *History* 7.6.17). More generally, Suetonius says that his principate was marked by "persistent droughts" (*Claud* 18.2)." NICNT

say they didn't need the judgmental Jews at Jerusalem anymore. That's what happens today when a new church plant does great. They forget who got them there. But these leaders were wise and watched out for this.

Conclusion

- **Sometimes needs connect us** - It's tempting to try to ONLY be the one who helps others, but if you never have a need most people struggle to bond with you. Sometimes it's in helping you that they feel welcomed into your world. Other times we are called by God to help others with our words and our deeds. At the end of the day there is enough need to go around and if we operate in a healthy and mature way, it will bring about COMMUNITY, and that's what we want in the Church. [possibly have those who are comfortable praying for others - pray for those in their vicinity]