

Saturday, August 20, 2022 ▪ Read Acts 11:19–30

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom does v19 begin by referring? When were they scattered? Where did they go? What did they do? To whom? To which sort of Jews did they preach in Antioch (v20)? What (Whom!) did they preach? What was with them (v21)? With what result? Where did news of this go (v22)? Whom did they send? What did he see when he came (v23)? And what did he encourage them to do? What sort of man was he (v24)? What was the outcome of his character and labors? Where does he go in v25? To do what? Where did he bring Saul (v26)? What did they assemble? For how long? To do what? With what result? What happened in these days (v27)? What did a prophet show (v28)? When did this happen? What did these well-taught disciples do (v29)? How did each determine how much to send? To whom did they send it? By whose hands (v30)?

What does Jesus use to build up His church on earth? Acts 11:19–30 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord’s Day. In these twelve verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Jesus uses preaching, encouragement, and teaching to build His church.**

Jesus uses preaching to build His church, vv19–21.

We could well have begun with persecution! But those who were scattered after the persecution went around preaching. We saw almost this exact statement in 8:4. Now, we learn that they have gone not only throughout Judea and Samaria (cf. 8:1), but are now spreading into North Africa and the Mediterranean. Those who had grown up in Hellenistic Jewish communities were preaching to the same, and they did so when they came to Antioch (v20).

The content of their preaching is familiar now: the Lord Jesus. We’ve seen several apostolic sermons in Acts, and the most recent is a good example. Peter’s sermon in Acts 10:34–43 was all about Who Jesus is, what He has done, what He is doing, and His coming glorious return.

Again, it is not the preaching by itself, but the Lord Who uses that preaching, “the hand of the Lord was with them” (v21a). The result is that “a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” So the preaching of the Lord Jesus is used by the power of the Lord Jesus to turn people to the Lord Jesus.

Jesus uses encouragement to build His church, vv22–24.

When the church in Jerusalem hears about this large, new church in Antioch, they send Barnabas, the son of encouragement, to them (v22). The apostles had given him this name for his selflessness, and he was a good candidate for this group, since he himself was from Cyprus (cf. 4:36–37).

When Barnabas sees the new congregation, he sees what vv19–21 taught us to see: the grace of God. We must resist the fleshly temptation to see our own works. One might have seen the zeal of those who traveled far, or the soundness of those who preached theologically correctly, or the repentance and faith of the great number who had done so. But v23 sums this all up by saying that Barnabas saw the grace of God!

Seeing this, Barnabas was glad. How easily one warms to ministry when he is rejoicing over God’s working in it! Now Barnabas encourages them to live their faith from the inside out. This “encouraging” is more than just telling or even teaching. It is an urging and helping in which he does whatever he can to help make this a reality for them.

He teaches them to start in the inside: setting forth or purposing their hearts. What an easy step to forget, but what a hard thing discipleship is without it! We must be in the habit of purposing our hearts, of intentionally inclining ourselves in and toward the will of Christ. And from a heart thus conditioned, we are to continue with the Lord. We don’t come to Him to remain as we are. We come to Him to continue with Him.

As much as the conduct of his shepherding was used, v24 implies that his character in the shepherding was just as essential. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. He had made progress in killing what remained from his previous self. He was full of the Holy Spirit now. What remained was not from him but from Christ; it was Christ Who lived in him; the life he lived, he lived by faith in the Son of God Who loved him and gave Himself for him (cf. Gal 2:20).

Just as previously the preaching had resulted in “a great number” believing, so now by this pastoring “a great many people were added to the Lord.”

Jesus uses teaching to build His church, v25–30.

Now there was a problem, and not a bad one to have: so many people had been saved so quickly that there was a great need for teaching. Barnabas knew another Hellenistic Jewish convert who was perfect for the job! He had vouched for Saul back in 9:27–28. Now he goes and gets him from Tarsus.

For a whole year, Barnabas and Saul gather the church for teaching. And what happens by this teaching? The disciples in Antioch become so full of the knowledge of Christ and so much like the character of Christ that they come to be called “Christ-folk”—Christians!

And this Christlikeness would be borne out in the first opportunity they have to sacrifice their own interests for others, just as their Master had done. This great famine is “throughout all the world” (v28), not regional. What they are giving up is what they will need for themselves. But their brothers in Judea will need it too, and they gladly lay it out.

Teaching is the way to true Christian living. And true teaching will form the behavior of a man, not just his ideas. Believers come to offer their bodies as living sacrifices through being transformed by the renewing of their minds (cf. Rom 12:1–2).

Here, then, are three of the great activities in the gospel ministry: preaching, encouraging (we might say “pastoring”), and teaching. These are what Christ uses to grow His people in number and in grace.

How are you making use of the preaching that the Lord Jesus has given you to have in His church? How are you making use of all of the helps from your elders, and from others, for setting forth your heart toward the Lord? How are you making use of all of the helps from your elders, and from others, for continuing with the Lord? How are you making use of all of the teaching that the Lord Jesus has given you to have in His church? What fruit do you hope to see in your life from all of these things?

Sample prayer: Lord Jesus, we thank You that it is You who are building up Your church through the men and the means that You have appointed. Please help our preachers to be diligent in their effort and sound in their message. Please help our pastors to rejoice over Your work, to address our need for religion that comes from the heart, and to be men of impeccable character and self-forgetful faith. Please give us thorough and careful teaching, together with our own attentiveness to that teaching. And, use it to make us more and more knowers of Christ and followers of Christ, which we ask in the Name of Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32B “Instruction I Will Give to You” or TPH175 “Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Exodus 22 verses 16 and 17. These are the words of God. If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, He shall surely pay the bride price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money.

According to the bride price of virgins. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent work.

A couple of things that are necessary for differentiating, what sort of situation this these two verses are treating in the first, is this word entices, which can mean seduces allures persuades. In the context, we might even say romances This is not a rape situation where the woman is unwilling that is handled in Deuteronomy 22:25-27.

And of course the man in that situation is executed and it is not an adultery situation. Neither of them have been betrothed If she were not even married, if she were just betrothed than they would be considered adulterers. And again, the penalty for that in Deuteronomy 22 is execution is death.

This is a situation where Man has Romance a woman and before they are betrothed or married? They willingly commit immorality. They indulge in the actions of the marriage bed without the benefit of the marriage that makes up the marriage bet. And in that case, the penalty is actually here.

We might say very merciful Since we know that in any other situation, the the same action would require death. And yet, although it has merciful in that, it is not immediate death. The penalty is actually extremely severe because by romancing and then fornicating, these two have cut off from themselves.

Any hope of marrying any other again, they just eliminated all of the options that they might have. Had The man has put himself out 50 shekels, which is, or shakalim. If you want to pluralize it in Hebrew a the almost twice the price of a maid servant for instance, but the bride price was 50 and he loses the 50, whether or not he gets the bride.

And you can imagine that verse 17 would usually be the clause that takes effect. If this was one of my daughters, absolutely, the father would utterly refuse to give her to him. This is not the man who romant the man, who romanced my daughter and led her into fornication.

And now I want her to be consigned, to be the bride of such a man for the rest of her earthly days. Absolutely not better for her to be an unmarried daughter in my house upstanding house where God will be known and her soul will be cared for than to be a wife in such a man's house.

Would utterly refuse? And so the man is out, 50 chaqueline. He's also known as a fornicator. He probably cannot get married himself at all. What other Father is going to give his daughter to such a man, after all of this has taken place. And of course, the daughter having been spoiled.

Or despoiled, we could even say because of the enticing. The romancing that took place that brought her into this situation. She would have no hope of marriage either which ultimately does end up being a death sentence. And even if a child were to result from that union, that child would be brought up in the household of her parents as a step brother of sorts and would belong to that household.

And the man's name would not be perpetuated in Israel. And so they would live out their days as it were, but a godly person desires that, even after they leave this world, they leave more image bearers in this world and especially when evangelism was not really an option, right?

The the Israelites didn't have a plethora of people that they could evangelize and convert and we don't get the idea that they were particularly interested in such things, and it wasn't the time yet of the outpouring of the spirit in which God who has elected all whom. He is going to save was going to gather in the nations and mass, You know, those Gentiles who do come in after that mixed multitude in Exodus chapter 12, that came out with them in Egypt, those Gentiles who do come in, are the exceptions and not the rule.

Now, if you are a childless Christian, you still have the opportunity to leave renewed image bearers behind you, by way of evangelism. And of course, if you are a believer to whom the Lord gives children. One of your the legacy that you leave is, especially in God's blessing, upon your bringing, up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord that they would fear him, and become believers in.

Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit attending. The means that are theirs as a privilege of being in your home as a privilege of being in the church. But for these two, the couple and exodus 22, 16 and 17, Their legacy dice, their name and the the most important form of influence, that one can have perishes from the earth.

And so there is something like a death sentence but it's one that takes the rest of their lives to finally and sadly be executed. And so you see the Lord takes the aping of where the attempt to have the action of the marriage bed without marriage. He takes it.

Extremely seriously. And this is a tremendous rebuke to a culture and even a church culture, that doesn't take it seriously. This is a tremendous rebuke to each of our hearts when we are tempted to lust or desire, either the, the physical action, or even without betrothal The Romancing that leads to that physical action, the desire to have the heart component of marriage, without marriage is inwardly and spiritually, similar and analogous and parallel.

And there are many, who offend God, both by putting themselves at risk of desiring, the physical component because we're whole beings and the two go together and not only do they put themselves at risk of that but they indulge their hearts in this enticing or alluring or romancing that brings these two into under the the dreadful penalty in verses 16 and 17.

And if a father after reading and understanding these passages, These two verses would still give his daughter to such a man, as this I'm surely, they're must be greatly extenuating circumstances or else the extenuating circumstances. Just he's not a father who cares enough about his daughter's soul which itself would be a curse to find out.

The daughter in such a situation as almost always used to happen. I don't know how perverted our culture has become, so that consciences are seared but the daughter almost always has instant regret. And if not instant regret than eventual and lingering and horrible regret and She may consider it a curse even if her dead agrees.

So the Lord takes us very seriously, and this is one reason why we should not only Be careful about the physical purity, the marriage vet purity, but also the enticing or alluring of the heart before. Betrothal that we would have that we would have chosen and commit it. That a marriage is a good match.

It's wise, She is godly and that he is godly and that we have every reason to believe that they will do well. And we've made a commitment based upon that. And then in the context of that commitment, leading up to the wedding day, you start that enticing. That romancing, that persuading, so that in between the betrothal and the wedding.

You have the emotional foundation, the heart foundation of what will be, what will be enjoyed, and finally celebrate it and the marriage bed on the wedding night. The Lord help us to take marriage and purity of marriage and the heart and the marriage bed. As seriously as the seventh, commandment teaches us.

And even as this part of the Israelite civil law that he gave them teaches us. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven. We thank you for this portion of your word. We thank you. Lord that as you have given us to move steadily through your words together as a family and the years of to bringing up of these, your children in this one of your households that you cover everything that we need to hear.

And particularly this thing that in the context of our culture, we so desperately need to hear we pray that you had help us to first and foremost, give our hearts to you. And second of all desire to have good marriage in the order in which your words teaches us, I pray Lord that you would give to all godly marriages.

This affection and alluring and romance that you have designed to be the heart component. And that it would be kept pure, the wife only for her husband and the husband's heart only for his wife. We thank you for the picture that you give us even in Hosea of your graciously, drawing out to yourself in the wilderness.

The rejected and adulterous wife, whom you bring back to yourself for indeed. That is what we have been. And yet you have loved us and given yourself for us and taken ourselves to you. Pray. Lord. That, that not only the future marriages of our children, but my, and my wife's marriage, all of the marriages represented in our congregation.

And in all the congregations of your church that they might have both heart romance and marriage bed celebration, and that the heart romance would be kept pure and exclusive. And that the marriage vet celebration would be kept pure and exclusive. Oh, Lord, teach us to to treat this. As weightily as your word does as you do and help us to love you with this part of our lives.

And with all of our lives for we ask it through Jesus. Amen.