

The Hand of the Lord was with Them

Acts 11:19-30

April 11, 2021

How do we know that the hand of the Lord is upon the church in favor?

What are the evidences of God's blessing?

We have in our text the brief story of the Church in Antioch.

What was Antioch like?

What is the evidence that the Hand of the Lord was with them?

1) The Rank and File were Front and Center in Ministry.

The evangelists are unnamed.

Three times in this passage a large number of converts are mentioned. (Acts 11:21; 11:24; 11:26)

2) They Targeted an Every Member Ministry

The members were the ministers; they served, they evangelized.

The pastors were equippers, teachers, and encouragers.

3) The Wider Church noticed and approves of their ministry

Barnabas. Who was he?

What does Barnabas do in Antioch?

He witnessed the grace of God, rejoiced, and encouraged it.

Barnabas, a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, full of faith.

4) Godly leadership.

Christians need more than pure encouragement. They need teaching.

5) Godly discipleship; warm-hearted, practical Biblical teaching.

6) The world around them knew that there was something different about them.

They were first called Christians in Antioch.

7) Generous giving

Notice, they were not fighting with their brothers, they were sacrificing for them.

Do you see the grace of God in this fellowship?

Do you rejoice in it, and seek to fan it into flames?

Biblical Priorities for the Church

If we accept these things — individualism, and relativism, and consumerism — it will change the church and make the church like the culture, and then you know what happens? The more the church is like the culture, the less relevant the church is to the culture, because it's not saying the one prophetic thing that it has to say....

In this individualistic culture, in this relativistic culture, where is the kingdom of God growing? It's growing in congregations where the message 'It is not all about you 'and 'God's word is the inerrant, authoritative rule of faith and practice' —where those messages are being preached. The churches that have adapted to relativism and individualism—in thirty years they won't exist. They literally will not exist. But if you look around the world where God is at work, the churches that are healthy, the churches that are proclaiming the truth, they are the churches that believe in the absolute truth of God's Word; they believe in the God-centeredness of life, they understand that we're not spiritual religious "customers" and God's not the store clerk who had better provide what we want in the color that we want it, and do it snappy and with a smile. No, it's in churches that understand that God is the living God and we are His creatures, not His lord and master, and they proclaim with joy and they live out with authenticity and integrity the truth of that Word, and the world says 'You know, that's totally against everything else that everybody else is telling me in this culture, but that's strangely magnetic to me. It has the ring of truth to it; it has the ring of joy to it, and I want to hear more.'

Heavenly Father, help us to rest on You, to be the church that You call us to be in the word; to resist the siren song of the world; to understand how the world thinks, but not to think like the world; to understand what the world wants, but to be determined not to give the world what it wants, but what it needs; to love the world without loving the things of this world. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

~Ligon Duncan