

Monday, 1 October 2018 Acts 11:19-25

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul,

The Hand (the Greek word carries the sense of power) of the Lord, the filling of the Holy Spirit and faith, all tied together in the advancement of the Church in the early years. The Holy Spirit is not only the channel through with the LORD, God, the Almighty communicates with His people, the Spirit is the empowerer that enables the people of God to do the work of the Kingdom and guides them in the faith/belief/trust/commitment/obedience necessary to do that work.

Tuesday, 2 October 2018 Acts 11:27-30

Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Luke gives this report as historical fact; something that was very familiar to his readers. It validates the report and also allows us to place the event in historical context, as before a famine which occurred about 45-47AD. It also assists in dating the writing of Acts as sometime after the reign of Claudius. This prophecy took place less than ten years after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. Think of the explosive growth of the faith that took place in that short period. Christianity was already moving far beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria; on to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) A blink of the eye in the span of history.

Wednesday, 3 October 2018 Acts 13:1-1-2

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers,

Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

I am beginning to get an appreciation for the suggestion that this book of the Bible should be named the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Over and over and over again, the actions of the apostles and others were initiated and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Have we lost that access to the Spirit today? No, He's still there, seeking to advance the Kingdom day by day and even as explosively. It is that the spirit of the age has dulled our hearing. A spirit of self-sufficiency and faith in our powers. The Age of Enlightenment has sullied even the Church.

Thursday, 4 October 2018 Acts 13:3-5

Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

What no meeting of the Missions Committee or the Trustees or the Outreach Committee? **NO!** The leaders of the Church in Antioch fasted, prayed, laid hands on Barabas and Saul, and sent them off. This mission, this expansion of the Church, began at the instigation of the Holy Spirit while the Church was worshiping and fasting. Might this not be a powerful combination that the Church needs to readopt today?

Friday, 5 October 2018

Acts 13:6-10

When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?"

Filled with the Spirit—Armed, loaded, cocked, all that is left is aim and fire. That is the condition that I am in as a child of the living God; I need only the boldness, the willingness to aim and fire. What has dulled this sense of the immediacy of the Spirit to

send a Word caliber bullet straight into the heart of an unbeliever? Do I want to be liked by this world more than I want to hear that "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? I am ashamed to admit it must be so.

Saturday, 6 October 2018 Acts 13:47-52

For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Why were the disciples filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit? I can see two reasons here, and both are a sound instruction to me. The first is the Word of the Lord was spreading throughout the region. Their trip had not been in vain, Gentiles were believing. They heard the massive celebrations in Heaven for each sinner who believed.

The second is that as with Peter and John earlier, they had been seen as fit to suffer for the sake of their Lord.

When was the last time I was filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit because the Spirit had used me to bring one more soul into heaven?

Lord's Day, 7 October 2018 Psalm 119:15-16

I will meditate on Your precepts and fix my eyes on Your ways. I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

I will -- it is an intentional decision, not a casual whim. I will -- it is an oath, a promise. I will -- it is a way of life. I will meditate! I will fix my eyes! I will delight! I will not forget! I will seek Your face! I will seek Your Kingdom! I will obey Your commandments! For I am Your child, redeemed by Your blood, transformed by the Holy Spirit; I am a new man in You. Praise You, my Lord and my Master.

VOICES TOGETHER

Daily Meditations from the Scriptures



October 1-7, 2018

Prayer of the week, based on Paul's prayer in: Ephesians 1:3ff

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Lord, I am overwhelmed by the richness and power of this prayer. To be blessed in the Heavens with EVERY spiritual blessing is a richness beyond my comprehension. And to think that this prayer of the Apostle Paul was written almost 2000 years ago but that precious 'us' sprinkled through the passage carries through to us, the saints of the 21st century; too much for my simple mind. I can only lift my voice along with my brothers in the Fellowship in praise and thanksgiving.

Hallelujah, my Lord and Savior. *Amen*

To fear or not to fear, that is the question.

The fear of the Lord, an expression that occurs many times in Scripture, 142 in the ESV in various forms, is not well understood in the Church today. For many, the phrase represents a weak and flabby description of an overly saccharine spiritual being of some sort. It certainly does not include the concept of the LORD, God the Almighty who spoke all things into being and who controls all things.

Join with me in examining the fear of the LORD and seeking an understanding of life in the Kingdom of Heaven in the here and now as guided by that fear.

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