



Approaching God

Read Psalm 22 and begin with an opening prayer

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. (Psalm 22:1-5)

We can be honest with God as we approach him today. But we should also remember our emotions at times are a poor indication of God's faithfulness and have little to do with the way he works. Start with the Lord this morning by being aware of your feelings, but confessing His faithfulness.

Acts 11:19-30

Passage Introduction: The Church at Antioch

Verse 19 picks up a storyline that has not been mentioned since the stoning of Stephen. At the beginning of Acts 8, we learned that Stephen's martyrdom and the persecution against the Jerusalem church caused many Jews to scatter. This passage records the final step of the gospel's beginning to be proclaimed to the Gentiles - specifically, the formation of a Gentile church in the city of Antioch in Syria.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Use the space in the margin to jot down notes, or themes/ideas that stand out as important.

Acts 11:19-30 - 19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. **20** Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. **21** The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. **22** News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. **23** When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. **24** He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. **25** Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, **26** and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great

The fact that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch probably reflects a label applied by the unbelieving public in Antioch. It showed that the disciples were beginning to have an identity of their own apart from other Jews.

numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) **29** The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. **30** This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2-3 things you learn about God in this passage and the mission of the Gospel?
- Barnabas had spoken up for Saul in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). How does he again show his confidence in Saul in this passage? What are practical ways you can encourage a fellow Christian this week?
- When Barnabas arrived in Antioch he saw the grace of God and was glad (vs. 23) What he saw was not just a large and motley crowd of unlikely looking people crowding into someone's house for praise and bible teaching, but rather God's grace at work. It took humility and faith to see that, thanks to the Holy Spirit at work. Where do you see the grace of God at work? Think especially of settings which are looked down on by others.

Key Takeaway:

Are there any personal applications that are important for you to consider as a result of today's study?

Close in Prayer:

If you bear the name "Christian," pray that you will literally be a *Christ person*, one of the "Messiah people", that your life will always reflect the life of Christ. Pray that you will respond to criticism with grace and a clear and calm explanation fo the gospel.