

The Prosperity of Antioch Church

By *H.T Chen*

“Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. 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. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”(Acts 11:19-21). This passage records how the Antioch Church was established; afterward, the gospel prospered at this place and it became the evangelical center during the apostolic time. This process is exactly the model of development for churches today. Below are some factors for mutual learning.

- 1. Having fervor for evangelism:** After the gospel had spread to Antioch, those who believed and baptized into God continued the evangelical work; brining more people to God. At this time, the number of members in church increased and work became more strenuous. While such news spread to the church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch to encourage them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. With increasing believers, Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul to work with him. Both of them worked for the gospel in one heart; thus, many were brought to the Lord (Acts 11:22-26).
- 2. Having outstanding workers:** After members of the church increased in numbers and gospel works spread, problems of internal pasturing and strengthening the faith followed. On that day Jerusalem Church sent an outstanding worker there. The Bible says, *“For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”*. (Acts 11:22-26) Barnabas’ affability, along with Saul’s gifts, and active zeal toward evangelical work allowed the two workers to work together; causing work in Antioch to progress day by day.
- 3. Having the spirit of oneness:** During the reign of Roman Emperor Claudius, there was a severe famine in Judea. Many believers were affected and their lives struck with difficulties. At this time, the late-founded Gentile Church in Antioch

showed the spirit of one family in Christ. They exerted every effort to contribute, each offering according to their own ability. In addition, they sent two workers, Barnabas and Saul, to bring their contribution to the Elders in Jerusalem in subsidizing the lacking of the brothers in Judea. This spirit of sympathy and unity is truly moving. This is certainly an essential condition to the prosperity of a church. (Acts 11:27-30)

- 4. Having the strong supporter:** *“In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers; Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they worshipped the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.”* (Acts 13:1-4) The prospering of works in Antioch Church was the result of their submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; enabling them to travel abroad to evangelize, passing through Cyprus – Perga – Pisidia – Iconium – Lystra then back to Antioch (Acts chapter 13,14). This travel had done beautiful work for the gospel. Their foot steps prevailed oversea, thus setting a good foundation of future World Evangelism.

This good fight was able to be fought because the Antioch Church became the back support of the workers. It was also the source of power for the prosperity of the church.

This is the prosperity of Antioch Church. Their virtues are the prerequisites and learning for churches today. May the Spirit of God move all churches in emulation of the good examples set by Antioch Church, and together prosper the church of God to glorify His holy name. Amen!

