

# Readings

## Scripture

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. <sup>22</sup> The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. <sup>25</sup> So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, <sup>26</sup> and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

<sup>27</sup> Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup> 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). <sup>29</sup> So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. <sup>30</sup> And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

- Acts 11:19-30 (English Standard Version)

## Reflection

Why are you called a Christian? The name Christian means that you identify completely with Christ because you are his disciple. But for many Christians this identification seems to apply only in a Sunday worship service. During the week, many Christians appear to have put aside the Christian nametag that they display on Sundays when they sing praises to God, read Scripture, pray, and listen to a sermon. How do some Christians live? Some live for the sake of money; others are in the process of destroying their bodies through chemical dependence; and still others use vile and profane language as part of their daily speech. The question, "Why are you called a Christian?" is personal and to the point. It makes many Christians blush.

- Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* (p. 423-424)

"Why are you called a Christian?"

"Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so I share in his anointing.

I am anointed  
to confess his name,  
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,  
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life,  
and afterward to reign with Christ  
over all creation  
for all eternity."

- Heidelberg Catechism Q&A #32

# Sermon Outline

**Growth in Grace**  
Acts 11:19-30

*The Acts of the Apostles*  
Brad Anderson

*Growth in grace is the hallmark of anyone who is called "Christian"...* (Acts 11:23-24)

**In which situations does our growth in grace tend to be most noticeable?**

**Growth in grace is most noticeable when living under persecution...**

(Acts 11:19-21)

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**Growth in grace is most noticeable while living in community with very different people...** (Acts 11:25-26)

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**Growth in grace is most noticeable while living with open hearts toward the needs of others...** (Acts 11:27-30)

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**Reflection Questions** (taken in part from the *Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- What is the farthest from home you've been? Why were you there?
- Antioch was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. What might the apostles feel as they hear the gospel is taking root there?
- How does Luke describe the character of Barnabas in Acts 11:22-26 (See also Acts 4:36-37; 9:27-28)?
- From what you know about Barnabas, why do you think he went to find Saul and bring him to Antioch?
- The name "Christian" was not first applied to the church by itself. The church was so named by those in the city of Antioch who were not followers of Jesus. From what you are reading in Acts to this point, what qualities or confusions might have been associated with the name, "Christian"? How might the testimonies of Paul and Barnabas have confirmed those qualities or confusions?
- What would you consider evidence of the grace of God at work in your life? In your church?
- How would you answer the question, "Why are you called a Christian?" Would your neighbor answer for you in a similar way? Why or why not?